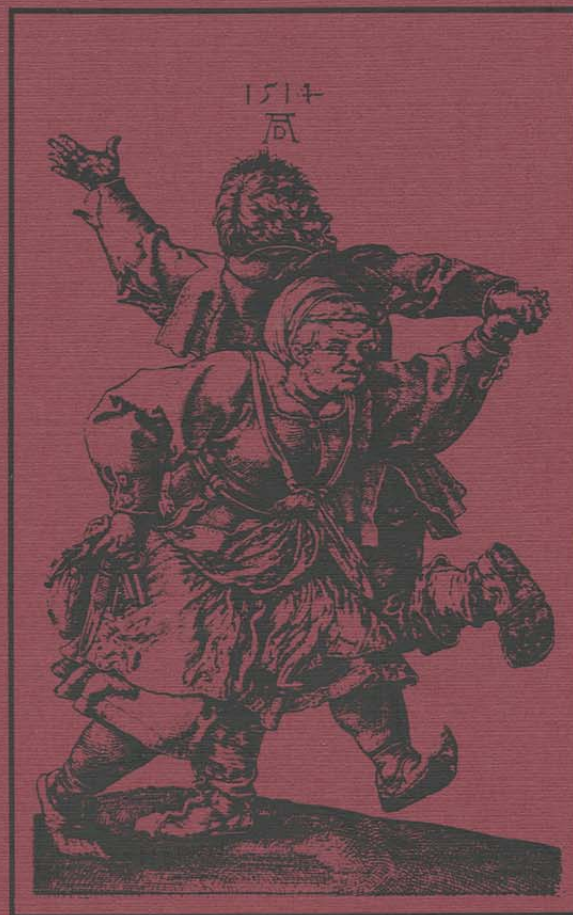


COMMUNICATION AS PERFORMANCE



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A TRAINING PROGRAM IN MOVEMENT, VOICE, AND BREATHING

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The following training program in movement, voice, and breathing is designed principally for actors. It is suitable for an actor's training but is also essential to the qualified actor for his morning exercises, before rehearsals and performances.

That such exercises are performed by professional, i.e., qualified actors, does not unfortunately go without saying. Every operatic singer warms up, but actors frequently believe that warming up the voice is not necessary, that the voice is at their disposal regardless. They have practiced speech training at acting school, but later they all too often forget it and put it to one side. But the fact is that the voice is their most important instrument, the voice not being understood in isolation but in conjunction with the body and facial expressions. To keep this instrument in good running order, to improve and develop it, should be a matter of course.

But voice training is not only a necessity for actors. Every "normal" person should cultivate and train his voice. But the great majority of our fellows do not regard voice training as necessary. The voice is taken for granted and is used, in some way or another. Only a few people—for example, those who attend adult education courses where speech exercises are carried out or people with voice or speech impediments—regard them as necessary. And the others criticize the people who go to such courses, asking why such a thing is needed anyway: after all they can already speak correctly. It is a scarcely held opinion that the voice isn't *always* at our disposal, that we are not yet in a position to speak, or frequently speak inadequately, or do not sufficiently utilize our voice potential.

It's worth considering the words of Leonardo da Vinci: "Die Erkenntnis, die nicht durch die Sinne gegangen ist, kann keine andere Wahrheit erzeugen als die schädliche"¹ (knowledge which has not been experienced by the senses can only produce a truth which is harmful). This program is based on knowledge about the voice and speech which is to be found in the literature on the subject and sets out to apply this knowledge in such a way that it can be absorbed by the

senses. One of the great opportunities offered by speech education is to combine theory and practice.

So the exercises should appeal to the senses and be fun, just as the theater, which these exercises are designed to serve via professional (and amateur) actors, should be enjoyable to the senses: "Nicht einmal zu lehren sollte ihm zugemutet werden, jedenfalls nichts Nützlicheres, als wie man sich genußvoll bewegt, in körperlicher oder geistiger Hinsicht"² (it [the theater] should not even be expected to teach, at any rate nothing more useful than the way in which one can move pleasurably, in a physical or mental respect).

Perhaps the exercises are fun partly because they can seem, at least to non-actors, very "strange." Not normal, not everyday, perhaps childlike. It is certainly not to everyone's taste to suddenly move like a samurai and utter a war-cry out of the blue, especially when somebody else could be looking at them or come along at that moment depending on where one performs the exercises. But it is definitely possible to convince them that these "strange" exercises have a deeper meaning. They feel it, too, when they perform the exercises correctly. And experience has proved that students of literature (and of theology, law, medicine, etc.) enjoy for once doing something different at their university from pursuing scholarly studies.

The training program involves the whole body. The voice can never be treated in isolation; it is formed by the movements of the whole body. The program does not only involve the voice box but the whole person, from head to toe. A powerful "sound-column" and a voice which can carry far can only result from the interplay of all (positive) energies. The body should act like a resonance-chamber.

Since it is the task of the actor "die vielschichtigen Elemente der intelligiblen und emotional-sinnlichen Ebene in einer stimmigen Polyphonie situationsbezogen zu konkretisieren"³ (to put into concrete terms the multi-layered elements of the intellectual, emotional, and sensuous plane in a harmonious polyphony with reference to a situation), then a training program

for actors must appeal in most of its content to the imagination, provide situations, stimulate action and a relationship to a partner.

The exercises are designed to produce loosening-up, relaxation, voice-formation, resonance, the extension of the throat and nose areas, correct breathing and articulation, in which the voice, at least in tendency, should sit as far forward as possible, near the teeth and lips.

The program is meant for a group. But it is possible to compile one's own individual program. But one should make sure that the preliminary exercises are not omitted (e.g. ex. 1-10 requires the preparatory ex. 1-9).

1 Warming-up exercises

The participants stand in a circle.

1. Run thru the whole room at your own pace. Run in all directions, do not touch any of the other participants. Concentrate all your attention on your running.
2. Change from running to skipping.
3. Find a partner and skip together. Leave your partner (don't forget to say Goodbye!) and skip on alone.
4. Finish the skipping and start to run again. Run back into the circle and run on the spot. Gradually reduce your speed and then only move your feet slightly—onto your toes and then your heels—without leaving the floor.
5. Now begin to move your hips from one side to the other—3 inches to the right, 3 inches to the left (think of Marilyn Monroe!)—for about half a minute. Then stand still.
6. Shake out your arms and legs. Relax.

Optional exercises you can perform if you have time

- a. Walk through the room without touching the other participants. Then change to walking as if you were made of rubber.
- b. The rubber movements once again, but this time in *slow motion*.
- c. Rubber movements again, but very quickly (think of old silent films!).

d. Normal walking pace again. Change to walking like a robot, but don't make any sounds.

e. Robot movements again, but this time with robot noises.

f. Exercise "e" once again, this time both *movement and sounds* in slow motion, as if a tape or record is running at the wrong speed.

g. Normal walking pace again — window shopping! You meet an old friend. Greet him/her, but only in mime — don't say a word. Now walk arm in arm with your old friend, still window shopping.

Now take leave of each other, still miming. Walk on alone for a while. You meet another old friend. Greet him/her with movement and speech. Window-shop with your friend and comment on all the nice things you see in the windows.

h. Take leave of your friend and return to the original circle.

i. *The human machine*: One participant begins to make a movement with an appropriate sound. He keeps making this sound and movement during the whole exercise. A second participant goes over to him, holds him and begins to make his own movement and sound—it can be in a different rhythm and at a different pitch. The third participant joins in and then all the others one after the other until they have built a human machine. There is a sudden power failure! The machine runs down.

The electricity has been reconnected! The machine starts up again.

7. Stand with your legs slightly apart. Both arms are stretched out over your head lightly holding hands with the palms upwards. Swing your arms backwards about 4 or 5 times (but don't make a hollow back!) and then fall forward like a rag-doll and swing your arms loosely through your legs. Repeat the whole exercise 3 or 4 times.

8. Stand on tip-toe, look toward the ceiling. Stretch your arms one after the other as if you were climbing up a mountain-side (rock-climbing). Move your feet accordingly. Once again relax and fall forward like a rag-doll.
9. Stand with your feet apart, bend your knees slightly, hands on your thighs. Now go into a squatting position and seesaw up and down about 4 times. Go into upright position again, then squat and seesaw once more. Repeat the whole exercise three or four times.
10. Stand with feet slightly apart. Swing your left leg over your right leg to a position of 180° and then jump back into starting position (360°). The arms swing round with the body — the left foot does not touch the floor.
11. You are a Japanese samurai (think of the films by Akira Kurosawa). Hold your sword (use your imagination or a bamboo stick, perhaps) in front of your face with both hands and do exercise 10 again.
12. Find a partner (he is your enemy!) and do exercise 11 once again, but this time let out a war-cry which comes from the whole body and not just your voice.

II Relaxing exercises

1. We begin with another exercise from Japan adapted from the Japanese art of archery. Stand with your feet slightly apart. Grip the stretched forefinger of your left hand with your right hand (i. e. with all the fingers of the right hand excluding the little finger; grip mainly with your thumb and forefinger; the thumb should be placed sideways against the forefinger). Pull on your finger until you are standing in a very erect position. At the same time hiss an "S." Still hissing, let go of your finger, your arms fling backwards (don't break!) and at the moment you let go a shout very loudly "ah" (this results in the sound "s-s-s-sah!") Repeat twice.
2.
 - a. Rub your hands together until they are very hot. Then use your hands like a silk scarf to caress your face. Do this twice.
 - b. Repeat the exercise. When you come

to your cheeks let out the sound which comes out of the movement, because your cheeks are slightly pressed together.

3. *Face massage:* Using the fore- and middle finger of both hands and starting in the middle, gently massage your forehead in a half-circle upwards and outwards to the temples. Now massage from the top of the nose downwards and then upwards and outwards to the outside corner of the eyes. Now position the fingers in the groove under the nose (philtrum) and gently move them to the left and right massaging the cheeks. As above but massaging the chin. Massage the neck sideways and downwards. Repeat each movement several times.
4.
 - a. Yawn and stretch your whole body as if you've just gotten up.
 - b. Exercise "4-a" again, but this time recite any text you like during the yawning.
5. Lean against the wall or a door (or a tree if you are outside), close your eyes and think of a beautiful scene in the country in the evening.

III Voice production and reverberation

1. Stand with your feet slightly apart. Using the sound "ng" as in "sing" move your right arm in front of your face, outwards in a semicircle toward the floor, simultaneously send your voice from the highest register to the lowest (imitate the sound of a dying siren or a motor-bike race).
2. Do the exercise again. When you reach the floor let go of the sound with a "ger" as in "finger" (but not in "singer"): "nger."
3. Stand with your right foot in front of your left one (fencing position). Run through the room whipping. At every crack of the whip produce the sound "nger" as in "finger" (keep your throat open).
4. Find a partner. Do the whipping exercise again (alternately). But whip in the space between — don't whip your partner! Jump in the air at each crack of the whip.

5. Stand with feet slightly apart, hand gently outstretched at waist level. Imagine you are holding a heavy ball. Move the ball backwards over your shoulder (but without stretching!), then forwards lightly bending your right knee and then let go of the ball as if you were bowling. Keep your eyes on the ball *all the time* until it has reached the target. At the same time produce the sound "zing" and as you let go of the ball pronounce loudly the letter "a": "zing — ga!"

Repeat with the left hand.

Repeat the whole exercise using all the vowels: "zing — ge" / "zing — gi" / "zing — go" / "zing — gu"

6. Now take the vowels separately and pronounce them trying to express a feeling (in a situation) with them, e. g. pronounce "a" expressing that you haven't understood something; pronounce "o" expressing astonishment.
Use your voice and body movements. You can also act out a scene with a partner. Next step: Take short words like "ouch," "gee," "wow" and pronounce them using body movement to support your voice.
7. Find a partner. Start to shout at him/her and insult him/her using all the swear words you can think of! (Remember it's just fun!) Move your body, use your feet as in boxing (Mohammed Ali) or fencing. Your voice shouldn't only come out of your throat but out of your whole body! This exercise will help you to achieve this.
8. Stand with feet slightly apart. Hold your right forefinger loosely under your nose. Throw your finger upwards, nudge your nose, your arm moves in a semicircle, bring arm down to your side. As you nudge your nose produce the sound "ZIMM" — hold onto the "M" until your arm is at rest—the "M" must resound in your whole body.
Repeat with "ZOMM" and "ZEMM." (One of these words should be pronounced from soprano to bass.)
9. Now we take the letters "m" and "n."
Produce the sounds one after the other until they flow into each other: "m-n-m-n-m-n m." It sounds a bit like bees humming!

Keep your chin loose, your lips and nostrils vibrate slightly. Go up and down the scale with this sound getting louder and then softer (crescendo / decrescendo). Add to these two letters the sound "ng" as in "sing." Let them resound — the mouth movement is like chewing gum! <Source: Jesch>.

10. Take the sound "DONG" —elongate it, let it resound.
Pretend you are a bell. Let the word "DONG" ring. One person in the group begins, then all the members of the group one after the other produce the sound "DONG" (or "DING") but at a different pitch and in a different rhythm. Move your body like a pendulum—don't forget the arms!
11. *Tug-of-war*: Divide into two groups. Imagine you are playing tug-of-war. The first man (Captain) from each team shouts "PU-LL." Your movements must be realistic.

Change the Captain a few times.

IV Breathing exercises

1. Crouch on all fours (crawling position), knees slightly apart, feet at an angle of 45° to the floor, arms stretched a shoulder-width apart, hands parallel, with the fingers pointing forwards, your back straight. Let your lungs gently fill themselves with air; the stomach falls downwards; we follow this movement with the small of our backs. When you get the feeling that you must do it, breathe out. Push the air out using the letter "f"; the stomach moves upwards; follow this movement, and arch your back like a cat.
At the end of the exercise come back into the starting position, curl up small, and relax.
2. Back to crawling position. 20 yards in front of us, there are five puppies. We whistle to them to come to us. But not all of them want to, so we must repeat our whistling!
3. Crawling position. You are in Alaska. You have the dying ashes of a fire in front of you (and no matches!). You must blow life back into the fire—your own life depends on it.

4. Sit down relaxed. Blow bubbles (now and again, pop your neighbor's bubbles!).
 5. We're at a camping site. We want to inflate an air mattress. Don't use a pump but your own breath! Don't forget to close the valve between each blow! Don't take a breath before you start — just blow — the movement comes from your sides. If you inhale before each blowing movement, you expend too much energy — it's also physically unhealthy and the wrong breathing technique. If you do the exercise properly you automatically get enough breath without having to breathe in and without its being heard.
 6. It's supper time. You have just prepared a hot soup. But it's too hot to eat and you're in a hurry to get to the theater, so you must blow on it. You're dressed in your best clothes, so please blow carefully! You're standing at the table and must blow onto each spoonful before you can eat it. Don't draw in breath — just blow <Source for exercises 2-6: Coblenzer>.
 7. You're a film star in a film from the Forties (Humphrey Bogart/ George Raft). You're in a bar and want a beer. Order it from the waitress using the following words: *Baby / bring me a beer / but please bring a Beck's beer / a Beck's beer in a bottle.* Really imagine the situation — you're dying for a beer (although there probably wasn't any Beck's beer in the Forties!). This exercise only works when your intention is clear. Please observe the intervals between the phrases.
 8. Situation: Daughter wants to go to a dance. Father tells her to be home at 10 o'clock. But she doesn't want to. You are the daughter. Walk through the room and show your father what you think of his suggestion: nudge your forehead with your forefinger and say "pe." Repeat several times. You needn't draw in breath. When you aspirate the "pe" correctly you automatically get enough breath.
 9. It's Christmas. At the very top of the Christmas tree a candle is still burning. It's time to visit your relatives. You can't leave the candle burning, so you must jump up and blow it out. It takes 5 or 6 tries before the candle is out.
 10. Two robbers are standing outside a bank which they want to rob. The lookout, however, has seen the police. He warns his accomplices with the word "Pssst!" Pronounce the last letter ("t") clearly. Make the appropriate movement (forefinger in front of your mouth).
 11. You've got a ball in your hand. Run round the room, moderate pace, bouncing the ball like a basketball player as you run. Count the bounces out loud 1 - 30. The effect will be that you'll breathe 30 times *automatically* without really noticing it. You won't have a chance to draw in breath <Source: Coblenzer>.
 12. *Partner work: Patting massage*
Please remove all rings before starting. One of the partners stands in the "rag-doll" position. All the limbs are loose—feet slightly apart—head bent downwards. He's standing near a clear mountain stream (is there such a thing?!!) and wants to have a drink. Using the right hand, scoop up some water and gulp it in. Now blow out the air with full cheeks using the sound "fff" and let the hand drop. Repeat this movement for about 3 minutes. After one partner has scooped twice, the other one, who is standing on the left-hand side of the bent-over figure, begins quickly and energetically to pat the partner's back (keep the hands loose) in an anti-clockwise direction starting just below the heart in a circle until he reaches the heart again. (Don't pat the spine!) Every time the partner breathes out he pauses. (Important: after each pause, start patting again where you left off.) He can see what his partner is doing by his hand movements, but his attention should always be on his patting. After about three minutes the "rag-doll" will feel relaxed because his *contracted* muscles have been patted—it's like tenderizing steak! <Source: Wolf / Aderhold >
- Now change positions.

V Articulation

Lip exercises

1. *Lip massage:* With your top teeth, gently massage your bottom lip; with your bottom teeth, gently massage your top lip.

2. Imagine you're walking along eating an apple. Bite it, chew it, and remove any bits of apple from your teeth. (You may also make the appropriate noises!)
 3. *Loosening-up the tongue:* Move your tongue gently over your lips and incisors a few times.
 4. Hold your body loosely, your mouth is open, bottom jaw very loose, and your tongue is half hanging out. Walk through the room pretending you are the village idiot.
 5. You are a cat lapping up a saucer of milk.
 6. Use the sounds "*digger dogger digger dogger digger.*" Repeat them very quickly. Move your tongue and lips precisely.
 7. Start a motorbike — kick the starter and then rev up. The lips imitate the sound of starting: "*Brrrm.*" Make the sound with both lips.
 8. A partner exercise: Hold an excited conversation using the sound "*Brrr . . .*" (in various registers). Don't forget to make suitable gestures.
 9. Speak the following sounds at a medium pace: "*bahbóoboobah boobáhbahboo.*"
Now say it faster and faster and gradually begin to dance at the same time. Take your partners!
 10. Now let's do something slow. We'll take the word *blues*. Say *blue* on the first beat and take a step with your right foot. On the second beat pronounce the *s* at the same time clapping and dropping your right hip gently. Now do the same with your left foot and left hip. Keep on walking. Get quieter and quieter until you drop to a whisper. Then stop speaking and only move your lips. Only the clapping can be heard—try to clap all together so that it sounds like a single clap — listen to your neighbor. Now gradually get louder again until you reach the original volume.
 11. The next exercise, like the previous (and following) ones, is designed to project the voice out of the larynx to the lips and teeth.
- Now we are going to use dentals (and labials again). Let's sing *The Banana Boat Song* by Harry Belafonte:
Day-0 . . . *Come Mr. T(D) allyman, t(d)ally me banana / Daylight come and me wan' go hom . . . A beautiful bunch o' ripe banana . . . / Highly deadly black t(d)aranzla . . .*
Dance to it.
You could use various songs to practice the labials or dentals, songs like *Be-Bop-A-Lula (She's my baby)* by Gene Vincent or *Boom Boom* by The Animals (composed by John Lee Hooker): "*Boom, boom, boom, boom / Gonna shoot you right down . . .*"
12. Let's move for a moment to a game of table tennis. Play against each other using the words "*Plop*" and "*Plap*" for the sound of the ball. Choose your own speed and make the appropriate movements. Really catch hold of the words with your lips as you speak them.
 13. Speak the following tongue-twister: "*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper.*"
 14. Use Bo Diddley's rhythm; it goes like this: "*dúm-dadadadúmdumdúm*" (hand jive). Sing it with your body.
 15. Form a line standing behind each other—put your hands on your neighbor's waist and imitate a train leaving the station. Right foot first starting slowly and getting faster. Copy the sound of the train with "*shee-shoo*" — "*shee*" to the first step and "*shoo*" to the next — making a really pronounced movement of the lips. Get slower as you re-enter the station. Stop and start again. Now repeat the exercise saying "*choo-choo*" instead.
 16. You are in a background vocal group. Think of Raelets or Sinatra's accompanying singers. Act out the situation singing the incredible inspired and inspiring lyric "*shoo-bee-doo-bee-doo.*" This is your grand finale—put your heart and your soul into it!

NOTES

¹Quoted from: Christa Wolf, "Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: *Kassandra*." *Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen*, (Sammlung Luchterhand 456) Darmstadt / Neuwied 1983, p. 122.

²Bertolt Brecht, "Kleines Organon Für das Theater," in: B. B., *Schriften zum Theater 2, Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 16, (Werkausgabe Edition Suhrkamp) Frankfurt a. M. 1967, § 3, pp. 663f.

³Rudolf Rösener, "Sprecherziehung in der Schauspielerausbildung," In: *Sprechen*, October 1983, pp. 40-42, here p. 41.

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(These titles include reference to further literature.)

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