

TEACHING ACTING TO SINGERS

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Harnessing Historical Techniques to Empower Modern Performers

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This thesis was supervised by Professor Michael Burden and was submitted at the University of Oxford in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The thesis was originally submitted in February 2021, and this revised version was submitted in February 2023. The title page image is an illustration of the gesture of painful recollection from Johann Jacob Engel's acting treatise *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785).

This work is dedicated to my father, who left this world as I was about to embark on my operatic adventure, and to my son, who came into our lives during the period of writing up.

Abstract

This thesis examines how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century acting techniques could be used in conjunction with twentieth- and twenty-first-century theory and praxis to create modern acting tools for the dramatic training of classical singers. Classical singing curricula tend to focus overwhelmingly on the vocal element of performance, with acting and movement classes ordinarily comprising only a fraction of the overall tuition. This thesis argues that techniques deriving from historical acting are by their nature especially suitable for the training of singers and can be effective and beneficial even when taught within a short timeframe.

The historical precepts underpinning this work's theoretical foundations are drawn from a large corpus of treatises published across Europe between 1528 and 1832, and from a contextual investigation of the London stage in the first half of the eighteenth century. Historical insights are then brought into conversation with modern theatrical practices and studies in pedagogy, drama and psychology to produce blueprints for new techniques, which are subsequently refined through application in teaching settings.

Chapter 1 outlines the theoretical basis of historical acting: classical beauty, the art of rhetoric and naturalness. Chapter 2 explores more technical aspects of the craft, proposing a classification system of gesture relevant to opera. Chapter 3 expands the enquiry into the practice and training of eighteenth-century performers and begins the methodological discussion for the new teaching method. Finally, Chapter 4 examines key stages in the development of the new teaching method and outlines the main exercises comprising it.

The new teaching method aims to equip singers with a compendium of innovative and specialised tools for aiding their preparation and performance in the visual domain (movement and gesture). While the resulting skills are especially fitting for pre-1900 operatic repertoire, they can be used to perform repertoire from any period. The broad applicability of this method and its targeted development for the conservatoire curriculum could significantly improve the acting training provision for classical singers.

Contents

| | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Abstract | vii |
| Contents | viii |
| Acknowledgements | xi |
| List of Figures | xiii |
| Editorial Note | xv |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 1. Theoretical Foundations | 21 |
| Beauty | 23 |
| Rhetoric | 36 |
| Naturalness | 48 |
| Humours and Emotion | 54 |
| Temperaments and Character | 67 |
| Nature Improved | 76 |
| Art Concealed | 82 |
| Chapter 2. Technical Groundwork | 93 |
| Austin's <i>Chironomia</i> | 94 |
| Gesture Classification | 101 |
| Agent | 102 |
| Signification | 111 |
| Qualities of Gesture | 121 |
| Congruous | 124 |
| Varied | 126 |
| Amplified | 127 |
| Moderated | 130 |
| Timely | 136 |
| Unaffected | 147 |
| Breaking the Rules | 150 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 3. Contextual Investigation | 155 |
| Singers | 156 |
| Nicolini | 157 |
| Senesino | 160 |
| Farinelli | 165 |
| Theatrical Education | 168 |
| Actors | 170 |
| Barton Booth | 170 |
| Robert Wilks | 174 |
| David Garrick | 176 |
| The Garrick Paradox | 185 |
| Chapter 4. Building the New Teaching Method | 195 |
| Passions | 199 |
| Face Gym Exercise | 202 |
| Passion Embodiment Exercise | 222 |
| Characterisation | 238 |
| Status Embodiment Exercise | 242 |
| Age Embodiment Exercise | 245 |
| Temperament Embodiment Exercise | 246 |
| Magic Mirror Exercise | 264 |
| Animal Exercise | 266 |
| Gestures | 273 |
| Core Principles | 277 |
| Gestural Notation | 281 |
| Score of Gestures | 289 |
| Improvisation | 298 |
| Conclusion | 307 |
| Appendix I. Handouts | 311 |
| Appendix II. Empirical Work | 333 |
| Select Bibliography | 341 |
| Bibliography | 347 |

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List of Figures

| | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 1 | Roman copy of <i>Kanon</i> by Polykleitos | 26 |
| 2 | <i>Belvedere Hermes</i> and a clothed drawing of it by Jelgerhuis | 27 |
| 3 | Faulty posture and proper posture by Lang | 30 |
| 4 | Law of contrast in ensemble composition and sitting by Jelgerhuis | 31 |
| 5 | Ripa's emblems for Art and Decorum | 35 |
| 6 | Frontispiece of Bulwer's <i>Chironomia</i> | 43 |
| 7 | The passion of admiration by Le Brun | 62 |
| 8 | The passions of anger and love by Le Brun | 64 |
| 9 | The passion of fright expressed in the face by Le Brun and Jelgerhuis | 66 |
| 10 | The passion of fright expressed in the whole body by Jelgerhuis | 67 |
| 11 | Six significant gestures as performed by Siddons | 97 |
| 12 | Notation for hand positions in the vertical and horizontal planes | 98 |
| 13 | Caricature from a performance of Handel's <i>Flavio</i> , by Vanderbank | 109 |
| 14 | Gesture of apprehension, Engel and Siddons | 120 |
| 15 | Hatred expressed naturally and adjusted for the stage by Jelgerhuis | 130 |
| 16 | Incorrect and correct disposition of the fingers by Jelgerhuis | 151 |
| 17 | Garrick as Richard III by Hogarth | 152 |
| 18 | Nicolini rehearsing in London by Ricci | 158 |
| 19 | Senesino as Bertarido in Handel's <i>Rodelinda</i> , by Vanderbank | 162 |
| 20 | Garrick as King Lear by Wilson | 178 |
| 21 | The passion of rage by Le Brun and in performance | 201 |
| 22 | Diagram of mimetic muscles | 207 |
| 23 | The 'big face/small face' warm-up routine | 208 |
| 24 | A collage for the passion of fear by Participant A | 209 |
| 25 | Students practising facial expressions in pairs | 210 |

| | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 26 | First four expressions from face gym exercise | 211 |
| 27 | Duchenne and non-Duchenne smiles | 217 |
| 28 | Imitating facial expression of laughter by Le Brun | 219 |
| 29 | The passion of joy by Le Brun | 226 |
| 30 | Plutchik's wheel of emotions | 231 |
| 31 | Tamerlano's characters plotted on Eysenck's diagram | 251 |
| 32 | Temperaments and their traits by Eysenck | 252 |
| 33 | Students practising the temperament embodiment exercise | 255 |
| 34 | Circle of Temperaments | 260 |
| 35 | Performers practising the magic mirror exercise | 265 |
| 36 | Physiognomic drawings of pig and ox by Della Porta and Le Brun | 268 |
| 37 | Students practising the animal exercise | 270 |
| 38 | Physiognomic drawings of lion and bear by Le Brun | 272 |
| 39 | Gay's <i>Miser and Plutus</i> with notation and drawings | 285 |
| 40 | Dispositions of the hand in Austin's Gestural Notation resource | 286 |
| 41 | Hand positions in Austin's Gestural Notation resource | 287 |
| 42 | First line of Gay's <i>Miser</i> in Austin's Gestural Notation resource | 288 |

Editorial Note

For the titles and quotations from historical treatises I chose to respect the spelling, accents and capitalisation of the originals. I include the full titles of historical sources the first time I cite them for the convenience of the reader and because they often contain illuminating descriptions of the source. I also opted for reproducing the publishers' details in full, as several editions of the same texts sometimes exist, often including variations, and as a useful reference given that some of the material is rare and not easily accessible. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

Introduction

I do not know if a perfect Singer can at the same time be a perfect Actor; for the Mind being at once divided by two different Operations, he will probably incline more to one than the other: It being, however, much more difficult to sing well than to act well, the Merit of the first is beyond the second. What a Felicity would it be, to possess both in a perfect Degree!¹

Writing in the eighteenth century, composer and singer Pier Francesco Tosi (1653–1732) acknowledged that it was rare for an opera singer to excel in both of the principal components of their craft—singing and acting—and viewed the former as the more important. The art critic Jean-Baptiste Dubos (1670–1742) wrote that ‘were a tragedy to have its declamation written in notes, it would have the same merit as an opera; that is, very indifferent actors might execute it tolerably’,² as, in

¹Pier Francesco Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song; or, Sentiments on the Ancient and Modern Singers. Written in Italian by Pier. Francesco Tosi, of the Phil-Harmonic Academy at Bologna. Translated into English by Mr. Galliard. Useful for all Performers, Instrumental as well as Vocal. To which are added Explanatory Annotations, and Examples in Musick* (London: Printed for J. Wilcox, at Virgil’s Head, in the Strand, 1743), p.152. Tosi’s original treatise was published in Italian in 1723: Idem, *Opinioni de’ cantori antichi, e moderni, o sieno osservazioni, sopra il canto figurato di Pierfrancesco Tosi Accademico Filarmonico. Dedicate a sua eccellenza My Lord Peterborough Generale di Sbarco Dell’Armi Reali della Gran Brettagna* (Bologna: Lelio dalla Volpe, 1723).

²Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music. With an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Theatrical Entertainments of the Ancients. Written in French by the Abbé Du Bos, Member and perpetual Secretary of the French Academy. Translated into English by Thomas Nugent, Gent. From the fifth Edition revised, corrected, and enlarged by the Author, Volume III*, trans. by Thomas Nugent (London: Printed for John Nourse, at the Lamb, opposite Katherine-Street in the Strand, 1748), p.235. Dubos’ treatise was originally published in Paris in 1719: Idem, *Reflexions critiques sur la poesie et sur la peinture* (Paris: Jean Mariette, ruë Saint Jacques, aux Colonnes d’Hercules, 1719). It was highly influential across Europe among music

opera, many of the interpretative decisions in the vocal domain that actors would have to make on their own (such as pitch, dynamics, pacing, etc.) have already been laid down by the composer. This posits a much sharper technical separation between acting in the vocal and physical domains in opera than in spoken theatre, where the two domains tend to be interwoven more tightly in both training and performance. In the traditional pedagogical context of operatic performance, the elements of acting that belong to the vocal domain are placed under the umbrella of ‘singing’, together with a plethora of other technical and musical elements that do not directly relate to acting, while the term ‘acting’ is used to refer to the visual elements of the performance, such as movement, gesture and characterisation.

This technical and terminological separation creates a notional conflict of interest between acting and singing that has beleaguered singers since the early days of opera. For young opera singers today, however, it is unequivocally clear that their craft involves acting as much as it does singing. The live screening of operas in cinemas and the creation of a growing number of specialised online streaming services are gradually changing the way opera is consumed.³ Singers have been brought closer to the audience, who in turn became much more aware of the visual aspects of their performance. In recent years there has been an increasing demand for masterclasses by stage directors, and new courses are created to train opera stage directors. Nevertheless, although singers care about their acting skills, singing is still—in the UK at least—the predominant focus of an opera singer’s training.

A 2016 report commissioned by the National Opera Studio to examine the current state of operatic training in Britain and the ways it should evolve to meet

theorists and authors of other important treatises on gesture, and although its title does not make direct reference to acting, eight of its chapters deal with gesture and theatrical expression.

³The Covid-19 pandemic served only to further accelerate this transformation.

the changing needs of the profession identified serious gaps in the teaching of critical skill sets such as acting.⁴ According to the report, ‘the over-separation of voice and physicality remains a challenge, risking a dissociation between musicianship/voice and whole-body performance’, something deemed ‘artistically undesirable and professionally a drawback’ for a multifaceted artform like opera.⁵ Although the average singing student in the UK spends seven or more years in training before entering the profession, stage directors find that ‘more advanced dramatic skills’ are required.⁶ A singer’s acting skills could be the deciding factor for getting or not getting a role,⁷ and can have a considerable effect on a performance’s reception by the audience.⁸ A director commenting on the current state of singers’ training said that ‘a couple of hours a week of “acting”, isolated from other disciplines, isn’t good enough’ and that it needs to be ‘equal emphasis on learning how to perform in character as much as vocal training’ in order to ‘compensate for the years of one-on-one tuition that comes with pure vocal training’.⁹ The centrality of the voice gives a huge advantage to singing tuition in successfully claiming the scarce time and space available in singers’ packed schedules and overbooked conservatoire buildings, limiting the scope for a significant and rapid increase in acting tuition to be implemented.¹⁰ Acting training does not compete

⁴Graham Devlin and Fanny Martin, *Opera Training for Singers in the UK: How should it evolve to meet the changing needs of the profession? A study commissioned by National Opera Studio* (London: National Opera Studio, 2016), p.34.

⁵Ibid. One of the stage directors interviewed for the report advocated the end of ‘the divorce between musical preparation and dramatic preparation that currently exists in most institutions that are training young singers’ because if through training we show ‘young singers that there is a separation between music and text/drama in opera, they will continue to emerge from their training unprepared for the “real world” of an operatic career where dramatic demands are frequently greater than musical demands’. Ibid., p.xviii.

⁶Ibid., pp.20, 5.

⁷A stage director interviewed for the report said: ‘We’ve done auditions with singers doing exactly the same thing, same voice. But you can separate them on their acting ability’. Ibid., p.37.

⁸A company director who was interviewed for the report said that ‘the feedback we have from our audience is never about singing’ but ‘about the emotions, credibility, the clarity of the story’. Ibid., p.34.

⁹Ibid., p.xix.

¹⁰The report observed that ‘The emphasis currently put on the voice often puts time-table pressure on the development of dramatic skills’ and that ‘students cut acting or movement

for time in the curriculum only with vocal training: there is a host of other elements that also need to be included, such as several foreign languages, academic studies, ensemble singing, teaching skills, music business studies, repertoire classes in opera, oratorio, French *mélodie*, German *Lieder*, Baroque ornamentation, contemporary repertoire, and many more. As a response to that, among the report's suggestions for increasing the acting tuition was not only the 're-orientation of colleges' timetables', but even 'the inclusion of a foundation year (perhaps in conjunction with a drama school) for singers with no dramatic experience in order to enable them to work through scenes for all the elements that go into building a character (e.g. intensity, sub-text, physical fluidity and motivation) and integrate them with their singing practice'.¹¹ It was also advised that conservatoires 'should review their approach to the curriculum with the aim of integrating drama (and movement) more fully with music—through a compulsory daily (or, at least, thrice weekly) class as soon as it is clear that dramatic singing will be part of a particular student's career objectives'.¹²

Completely redesigning the model of conservatoire tuition by including obligatory daily acting classes, or by adding a foundation year for acting lessons in the already long and expensive training of singers, would undoubtedly improve the balance between singing and acting.¹³ Such radical change, however, although extremely beneficial in the long run, could be exceedingly difficult to quickly implement due to the complicated nature of academic accreditation of degree courses, and could carry a large amount of cost, uncertainty and risk even for a large institution. In this thesis I attempt to offer a different solution for improving singers' acting skills, by proposing a new teaching method for acting which would not

classes in favour of additional singing sessions, sometimes encouraged by singing teachers who regard their discipline as more important'. Ibid., p.35.

¹¹Ibid., p.36.

¹²Ibid., p.42.

¹³Ibid., p.20.

require a complete reimagining of the canonic conservatoire training but be designed to fit within the confines of the current curriculum and latch on to existing routines and established practices. The solution and the methods behind its realisation, as well as my motivation for embarking on this research, emerged during my own operatic training and subsequently my work as a teacher.

I started my training as an actor in Greece, mainly working with Stanislavski, Meisner and physical theatre techniques, before moving to the UK in 2008 to train and work as an opera singer. In my time as a singer, I sang in 161 performances, participated in forty-six opera productions and performed twenty-three principal roles, and my performing experience as well as the observation of hundreds of colleagues I shared the stage and rehearsal room with over the years afforded me a deep understanding of the singer's craft and the way singers think and work. The technical separation between singing and acting in operatic performance outlined earlier is not arbitrary but has been created and is maintained by a combination of causes. The vast majority of singers come from a mainly musical background, and although they attend acting and movement classes from their first year in college, the imbalance between the time allotted for the teaching of vocal technique and acting reinforces the assigned importance of the voice's place in the singer's craft. Many students embarking on the study of classical singing think that acting is only relevant to opera and has little use in other repertoires or contexts (such as art song or concert performances), but even for the ones interested in a career in opera the curriculum will not allow them to specialise in that genre until much further into their studies (normally at the postgraduate level, with only limited opportunities for fully-staged productions during their undergraduate years). It is not only the singers' background and curriculum arrangement that assigns a back seat to acting but also the way acting tuition is experienced. A number of modern acting techniques cannot be easily consolidated with singing,¹⁴ and even

¹⁴Some acting techniques are not compatible not only because the nature of the repertoire forces vocal production to commandeer a large amount of mental and physical focus, but also because

compatible acting techniques are often presented in a way that makes them less readily applicable because the focus on music and voice does not equip singers with the tools to analyse and integrate them into their practice holistically.¹⁵

I first discovered historical acting twelve years ago,¹⁶ and it was a complete revelation because it seemed that many of its constituent ideas and techniques were particularly fitting to the way singers approach their craft, as it aimed to produce beautiful yet powerful and natural-looking performances, helping performers to outwardly portray vivid and clear emotions and dramatic character while remaining internally calm and in control. The more I learned about historical acting the more ideas and techniques I discovered that seemed almost custom-made for classical singers, which made me gravitate towards research, teaching and directing, where the scope of experimentation was more expansive. I first started teaching acting to singers in 2012 at City University London, where I experimented with historical acting techniques and witnessed their impact on teaching and performance.¹⁷ Armed with knowledge from this initial experimentation, in 2013 I designed a training course based on historical acting techniques for an international

performance is highly dependent on elements of style, musical conventions and stagecraft. For example, techniques such as those of Strasberg and Meisner might work well for theatre, film and television, where in comparison to opera there is much greater freedom for shaping the performance by organically responding to stimuli in an automatic and instinctive manner. In opera, the singer's body doubles as an agent for physical expression and a musical instrument and so tension needs to be regulated at all times, and the words of the libretto are tied to specific note values and pitches in the score which, regardless of the overall tempo, have a predefined rhythmic relationship.

¹⁵The minimal integration between acting and singing during training was identified as a contributor to inadequate acting skills in graduates by Devlin and Martin, pp.35, x, xxiii.

¹⁶The definition of the term 'historical acting' as used in this thesis is discussed below, p.8. I was introduced to historical acting by Andrew Lawrence-King and Steven Player in the context of a production of Peri's *Euridice* performed in the Lumen Church, London, in July 2011. I played the role of Plutone and, this being an experimental production with a focus on historical acting reconstruction, I was given the opportunity to engage in extensive conversations with Lawrence-King and Player on the principles of historical acting and elements of practice, igniting my interest and helping me begin my research in this field.

¹⁷The majority of these techniques were used for teaching general acting skills. The work concluded on an end-of-year public showcase titled 'Italian Opera Through the Centuries', consisting of scenes from operas from the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Feedback from students, as well as questionnaire responses from the audience and discussions with opera professionals who were invited to attend the performance, helped set the direction for my research and teaching practice for the following decade.

summer course at the University of Burgos. The limited time of the course meant that my approach had to become more systematic and result-focused, which led to the creation of an early version of a coherent teaching method. In 2014 I transitioned from singing and began the work on this thesis while continuing teaching and directing, training to date more than 350 singers either in purely educational contexts (courses, workshops, masterclasses) or as part of operatic productions. My 2018 appointment as Professor of Historical Performance at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London, gave me the opportunity to apply my developing teaching method to singers within a conservatoire context and directed the focus of my (until then mainly historical) research towards pedagogy and the science of learning, which has influenced and directed my research work.

The nature of the operatic genre ensures that the relationship between singing and acting in training and performance was, is and will always be fraught to some degree. Although a greater balance between the two can be observed on operatic stages today than in previous centuries, some industry professionals still bemoan the deification of the voice and the negative impact this attitude has on the training of singers, requesting broader changes. This thesis attempts to offer a solution to this problem that could be implemented without radical restructuring of the conservatoire curriculum by endeavouring to answer this question: How could historical acting techniques and ideals, in conjunction with twentieth- and twenty-first-century understanding and theatrical practices, be used to create a new teaching method that could form part of the dramatic training of classical singers?

Classical singing training curricula tend to focus overwhelmingly on the vocal element of performance, and while acting and movement classes are in most cases included, they form only a small proportion of the overall tuition, in many cases framing acting as auxiliary in the minds of the singers. This thesis argues that historical acting techniques could prove particularly effective as a means for improving the dramatic training of classical singers in a conservatoire setting and

suggests means of overcoming some of the difficulties singers face in their dramatic development by harnessing ideas, principles and techniques from historical acting to create a modern teaching method that can fit within the time constraints of existing curricula, yet deliver substantive and lasting results. Historical acting is used as the theoretical starting point and is further informed by the work of twentieth- and twenty-first-century theorists and practitioners. This facilitates the bridging of any gaps in tacit knowledge resulting from the interruption of historical acting's oral transmission, and aids the refinement and targeting of techniques through hybridisation. The result is a modern teaching method where historical and contemporary techniques have been integrated, which aims to equip singers with a compendium of tools to help their preparation and performance in the visual domain. Although the use of historical building blocks would allow the skills deriving from this method to be fitting for the performance of pre-1900 operatic repertoire, most could also be used to perform repertoire from any period and be adapted to many different styles of performance.

As the term 'historical acting' is extensive and can refer to the performance practice of actors or singers of any period in the past, it is necessary to define its meaning in the context of this thesis. From the masked performances of the ancient Greek *hypocrités* to the acting of the early twentieth century, each period and performance genre has its own unique stylistic identity. In this thesis, 'historical acting' refers broadly to the 'high style' used across Europe from the early seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century to perform serious (non-comic) roles in spoken theatre and opera.¹⁸ The high style was characterised by three central principles: adherence to classical aesthetic ideals, a rhetorical approach to acting, and the aspiration for every action represented to appear natural. These

¹⁸The term high style (*hoogen stijl*) is used by Jelgerhuis to refer to the acting used for tragedy, as opposed to the style employed in comedies of the same period. Johannes Jelgerhuis, *Theoretische Lessen over de Gesticulatie en Mimiek: Gegeven aan de Kweekelingen van het Fonds ter Opleiding en Onderrigting van Toneelkunstenaars aan den Stads Schouwburg te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Meyer Warnars, 1827), p.238.

principles were shared with the art of the orator and aimed to imbue the performance with beauty to delight the audience (*delectare*) and power to move it (*movere*).¹⁹

At the core of this study lies a corpus of 140 historical treatises on acting, rhetoric, gesture, movement, emotions, personality and aesthetics.²⁰ These treatises were published in England, France, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands between 1528 and 1832 and although each of them approaches elements pertinent to acting from a different perspective and with a different focus, often containing regional particularities and genre-related variances, there is great consistency in the underlying theoretical elements. One of the main reasons for this consistency is that all of these treatises share as their theoretical foundations the same classical sources, and they endeavour to illuminate the same (often unattainable) ideal. While each sheds light on it from a different direction, the greatest majority of them advocate the same set of objectives: moving and delighting the audience through beauty, rhetoric and naturalness.²¹

For researchers working towards reconstructing the particular acting style of a single genre from a specific time in history, differences in approach are of critical consequence. However, the aim of this thesis is not to chart a path toward performing a particular work or repertoire as faithfully as possible in the way it was performed at the time of its creation but to use historical acting techniques as theoretical and practical building blocks for creating modern acting tools for singers. With that objective in mind, access to a wealth of diverse approaches is highly advantageous, as it allows us to examine historical acting on a macroscopic

¹⁹The three objectives of rhetoric were to teach (*docere*), to move (*movere*) and to delight (*delectare*). The didactic element is the preserve of the playwright/librettist and composer, while the other two are the domain of both them and the performers. For a detailed discussion on rhetoric see Chapter 1 (p.36).

²⁰See Select Bibliography, p.341.

²¹The principles of beauty, rhetoric and naturalness are the exclusive focus of Chapter 1 where they are examined in detail.

scale and choose from a wide range of materials in order to achieve the desired results.²²

Historical treatises are indispensable guides to the ideals of historical acting, owing to their scholarly resources and systematic approach to the subject matter. However, treatises did not dictate practice nor necessarily reflect what was done on stage, especially as it is almost impossible for someone to thoroughly attain the ideals they outline because of the inherent theoretical contradictions at the heart of the style, where nature and artifice are locked in a ceaseless tug of war. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century performers had to face this paradox head-on and take it in their stride, each finding their unique balance between the two opposing sides, leading to a multiplicity of approaches practised in the same period, the same country, or even on the same stage. In the context of the current research project, these divergences in approach do not pose a problem; they provide a unique opportunity. Discovering how different performers may have understood and responded to the ideals and rules of historical acting could result in a more comprehensive understanding of the inner workings of this long-lost craft and, in turn, could provide a wealth of technical clues and potential methodological possibilities.

To take advantage of these possibilities, the investigation moves beyond acting treatises and considers a greater variety of sources that will allow the construction of a wider context.²³ Period commentaries, reviews, images and letters add more pieces to the puzzle of our understanding, offering unique methodological insights, while rhetoric, aesthetics and humourism offer us a useful theoretical backdrop.

²²Even two entirely contrasting techniques that aim to produce the same outcome could be equally valuable, as technique A might work only for singer A, and singer B might only respond positively to technique B. Singer A and B could then find themselves harmoniously sharing the same stage, using an acting style that appears consistent and is attuned to the same principles, even though each performer's preparation and approach may have been different.

²³Following Robert Hume's advocacy of archaeo-historicism, 'a scholarly method by which one attempts—across formidable barriers—to recreate the events and outlook of an earlier period' by looking at the wider artistic, philosophical, and historical contexts. Robert D. Hume, *Reconstructing Contexts: The Aims and Principles of Archaeo-Historicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.vii.

The sheer amount of source material required for constructing this wider context radically increases the scope of the study. Although in order to create a coherent technical understanding a large number of treatises related to the high style of acting from all around Europe and across three centuries has been examined, it would have been impossible for a single researcher, working within the narrow bounds of a doctoral dissertation, to also look in meaningful depth at period commentaries, reviews, images and letters within the same large spatio-temporal tract. Therefore, the scope of the contextual investigation is limited to England in the first half of the eighteenth century.

The range has to be restricted, but the choice of period and place is not arbitrary. England is an ideal focus for this study's contextual investigation, not only in practical terms of immediately available resources, but also because in eighteenth-century England there was a particular interest in the art of acting and rhetoric, which led to fervent discourse and the translation of several French treatises. The first half of the eighteenth century offers a manageable span while it conveniently lies within the Neoclassical period,²⁴ the Age of Enlightenment and the approximate period during which the style of acting we are examining was commonly used (1600–1840). This period of focus also encompasses the birth, establishment and flourishing of the genre of *opera seria*, which serves as an apt centrepiece for points of practice in the course of this thesis.

Opera was born at the turn of the seventeenth century in what was claimed to be an attempt to revive ancient Greek tragedy.²⁵ During the course of the

²⁴Not to be confused with the twentieth-century neoclassical movement in music. Although there are many different neoclassical submovements relating to country and artistic genre, this refers to the broader Neoclassical period, which starts in the middle of the seventeenth century with a focus on theatre bringing dramaturgy, aesthetics and acting style closer to the ideals of classical antiquity. Neoclassicism in theatre ran its course in the middle of the eighteenth century, when neoclassicism in the visual arts took the baton and carried it into the early nineteenth century.

²⁵*Dafne* (1598), composed by Jacopo Peri (1561–1633), has been credited as the first opera, and his *Euridice* (1600) is the earliest surviving opera. The composer Giulio Caccini (1551–1618), in the epistle dedicatory of his own *Euridice* (published in 1600 but first performed in 1602) wrote that he composed it in *stile rappresentativo* (representational style; an early monodic compositional style used for the first operas and across the seventeenth century) because this was also the style the ancient Greeks used when they performed their tragedies and other sung

century, however, it progressively strayed from its classical roots, mixing tragic and comic elements, often at the brink of the grotesque. Influenced by the French movement of Neoclassical theatre,²⁶ the members of the Arcadian Academy in Rome endeavoured to return opera to ‘the jurisdiction of the Aristotelian precepts’,²⁷ leading to the creation of a new model of tragic opera which today we call *opera seria*.²⁸ That genre is ideal as the focal point of the current research project, not only because it shares the Neoclassic heritage with historical acting, but because it provides a unique lens through which to look at historical acting as a pan-European craft. While spoken theatre and operatic genres such as *tragédie lyrique* remained largely restricted within one nation’s borders, *opera seria* was performed by Italians across Europe, traversing national barriers and leading to

stories: ‘Havendo io composto in musica in stile rappresentatiuo la fauola d’Euridice [...] questa è quella maniera altresì [...] eßere stata vsata da gli antichi Greci nel rappresentare le lore Tragedie, & altre fauole adoperando il canto’. Giulio Caccini, *L’Euridice composta in musica in Stile Rappresentativo* (Firenze: Appresso Giorgio Marescotti, 1600), Epistle Dedicatory, no pagination. Jane Brown helpfully suggests that the genre of opera was ‘multiply neoclassical’ as ‘Greek tragedy reborn from neoplatonism, Aristotelianism, and the Vitruvian revival’. Jane K. Brown, *The Persistence of Allegory: Drama and Neoclassicism from Shakespeare to Wagner* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p.153. Thomas Forrest Kelly argues that from the birth of the operatic genre, operas ‘were not supposed to be musical events, but dramatic ones, “authentic” revivals of the style of Classical antiquity’, and that all operas between 1600 and 1750 share a focus on declamation, drama and rhetoric. Thomas Forrest Kelly, *Early Music: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.56.

²⁶The most influential plays that mark the beginning and end of the period of Neoclassical theatre in France are Pierre Corneille’s *Médée* (1635) and Jean Racine’s *Phèdre* (1677). Following closely the theatre of classical antiquity, French Neoclassicist playwrights focused on purity of dramatic form (writing either tragedy or comedy, but not mixing the two genres), verisimilitude and decorum in action and characterisation, and a bid for pleasing, moving and educating the audience (corresponding with the aims of rhetoric: *delectare*, *movere* and *docere*). This had a direct influence on the style of acting, leading to the purification and clearer delineation of the high style. A great number of French treatises on *actio* were published during this period, and treatises published in the following century used text from Neoclassical plays for their discussions and examples (for a definition of *actio* see Chapter 1, p.37).

²⁷Giuseppe Marco Antonio Baretti, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy; with Observations on the Mistakes of Some Travellers, with Regard to that Country*, Volume 1, (London: Printed for T. Davies, in Russel-Street, Covent-Garden; and L. Davies and C. Rymes, in Holborn, 1768), p.178. In his preface to his opera *Epulone* (1675) the composer Francesco Fulvio Frugoni (1620–1686) argued against the mixing of tragic and comic characters, and not long after Charles de Saint-Évremond’s (1613–1703) attack on Italian opera in 1685, the founding of the Arcadian Academy in Rome in 1690 catalysed the return of the opera to its classical roots.

²⁸The term most commonly used in the period under review to refer to this new model of tragic opera was *dramma per musica* (drama set to music).

cross-pollination.²⁹ Moreover, London during our period of focus was the location of one of *opera seria*'s most eminent exponents, George Frideric Handel (1685–1759), a German who spent his formative years in Italy. Handel's operas are now not only a firm part of the repertoire of opera houses all over the world but also part of the canonic training of singers, with 'a Handel aria' often being a staple requirement for exams and auditions. For this reason, to elucidate any points of practice examples will be taken mainly from operas composed by Handel, and especially the opera *Tamerlano* (1724) which has been chosen as a representative case study, being an *opera seria* written by Handel on a popular dramatic subject and with a libretto based on a Neoclassical French tragedy.³⁰

It would be helpful at this point to provide an interim summary of the spatio-temporal purview of the conceptual part of the primary research for this thesis. Although the prospective teaching method is not meant to be genre-specific but applicable as a general basis for the acting training of classical singers, its technical and theoretical foundations are based on the visual elements of tragic acting as drawn from a corpus of treatises published across Europe between 1528 and 1832, further informed by a contextual investigation that focuses on the London stage in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Treatises and other primary sources include detailed discussions of the principles and mechanics of historical acting. However, a comprehensive apprehension of a craft so profoundly physical cannot be fully achieved without the aid

²⁹The influence of the acting of Italian opera singers on the English stage is examined in Chapter 3.

³⁰The libretto of Handel's *Tamerlano* was an adaptation by Nicola Francesco Haym (1678–1729) based on two versions of a libretto originally by Agostino Gaetano Piovene (1671–1733), who in turn based his story on Jaques Nicolas Pradon's (1632–1698) Neoclassical French tragedy *Tamerlan* (1676). The story of Timur and Ottoman emperor Bayezid I was the subject of many plays and over two dozen operas in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, most notably Christopher Marlow's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), Racine's *Bajazet* (1672), Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane* (1702), Francesco Gasparini's *Bajazet* (1711), Antonio Vivaldi's *Bajazet* (1725) and Antonio Sacchini's *Tamerlano* (1773). An in-depth investigation of the origins of Handel's *Tamerlano* can be found in: John Merrill Knapp, 'Handel's "Tamerlano:" The Creation of an Opera' *The Musical Quarterly*, 56 (July, 1970):3.

of corporeal experience and empirical observation. Commenting on the influential eighteenth-century acting treatise by Johann Jacob Engel (1741–1802),³¹ Johannes Jelgerhuis (1770–1836) wrote that even ‘Professor Engel’s systematic and respectable work on the theory of acting’ has ‘only limited value for the performer’, but had it ‘been illuminated by knowledge derived from practical stage experience’ it would ‘have proven useful and even indispensable to actors’.³² François Hédelin d’Aubignac (1604–1676) argued that when one learns a craft there are elements of tacit knowledge that cannot be replaced by theory alone but require practical experience and oral tuition next to a teacher.³³ Acting is also an orally transmitted

³¹Engel was a philosopher, academic, theatre director, playwright and a leading figure of the German Enlightenment. His treatise *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (Ideas for a Mimicry) was written in epistolary form and includes thirty-four illustrations. It was originally released in two volumes, published in 1785 and 1786: Johann Jacob Engel, *Ideen zu einer Mimik. Mit erläuternden Kupfertafeln* (Berlin: Auf Kosten des Verfassers und in Commission bey August Mylius, 1785–1786).

³²Johannes Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons on the Principles of Gesticulation and Mimic Expression’ trans. by Alfred Siemon Golding in: *Classicistic Acting: Two centuries of a performance tradition at the Amsterdam Schouwburg* (Boston: University Press of America, 1984), p.242. Jelgerhuis was a painter, actor, teacher of acting and stage director. His treatise *Theoretische Lessen over de Gesticulatie en Mimiiek* (Theoretical Lessons on Gesticulation and Mimicry) is particularly important in the context of this thesis because it was published as a manual for an acting course he taught at the Amsterdam Civic Theatre: Idem, *Theoretische Lessen, op.cit.*. The treatise is accompanied by hundreds of drawings, George Brandt noting that although it is published in the first half of the nineteenth century it ‘[epitomises] the neo-classical ideas of the preceding century’. George W. Brandt, *German and Dutch Theatre 1600–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.488.

³³According to d’Aubignac ‘in the Execution of all general Rules, there are observations to be made, of which there is no mention, when one teaches only the Theory, and which nevertheless are of great importance’ giving two examples, on the art of architecture and lute playing: ‘Thus Architecture teacheth the beauty and symmetry of Buildings, their noble Proportions, and all the rest of their magnificent Appearance, but does not descend to express a thousand necessary Contrivances, of which the Master of the House is to take care, when he puts his hand to the Work. If the Art of playing upon the Lute were reduc’d into Rules, it could teach onely general things, as the number of the strings and touches, the manner of making the Accords, the measures, passages, quavers, &c. but still one would be forc’d to have recourse to the Master himself, to learn, in the Execution of all this, the nicest way of touching the strings, the changing of the measures, the most graceful way how to give a good motion to ones playing, and many more particulars, which could not well be committed to writing, and so must either be neglected or learned of the Masters themselves’. François Hédelin d’Aubignac, *The Whole Art of the Stage. Containing Not only the Rules of the Drammatick Art, but many curious Observations about it. Which may be of great use to the Authors, Actors, and Spectators of Plays. Together with much Critical Learning about the Stage and Plays of the Antients. Written in French by the command of Cardinal Richelieu. By Monsieur Hedelin, Abbot of Aubignac, and now made English* (London: Printed for the Author, and sold by William Cadman at the Pope’s-Head in the New Exchange; Rich. Bentley, in Russel-street, Covent-Garden; Sam. Smith at the Prince’s Arms in St. Paul’s Church-Yard; & T. Fox in Westminster-Hall, 1684). D’Aubignac’s original

craft, so in order to gain a coherent understanding of the precepts and technical elements of historical acting, whose oral transmission has been interrupted, theory should be combined with practical experimentation.³⁴

Looking for an alternative to established approaches to historical dance reenactment which could create a stronger link between academic research and performance, Mark Franko proposed the following notion of *construction*: ‘a form of mannerism that replaces simulation with theoretical analysis’ which aims ‘at retrieving a theory of effects that can be theatrically experienced as unique in the contemporary moment while still purveying historicalness’.³⁵ Although Franko’s constructive approach was designed as a basis for reconstructing performance, elements of its theoretical framework could be aptly utilised for the creation of a new acting technique. Teaching can be considered a craft in its own right, and its practical nature requires a conversation between theory and practice. The teaching of a performing art—itself also inherently practical—forces the conversation between theory and practice to take place on two levels: the art of teaching and the art of performing. Franko’s construction does not attempt to recreate a particular performance but rather ‘sacrifices the reproduction of a work to the replication of its most powerful intended effects’, focusing on capturing ‘the theatrical force of the original’ through the genesis of something inherently modern.³⁶

treatise was published in Paris in 1657: Idem, *La Pratique du Theatre: Oeuvre tres-necessaire a tous ceux qui veulent s’appliquer a la Composition des Poëmes Dramatiques, qui font profession de les Reciter en public, ou qui prennent plaisir d’en voir les Representations* (Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, au Palais, sur le deuxième Perron, allant à la Sancte-Chapelle, à l’Escu de France, 1657). The treatise mainly focuses on dramatic theory but is peppered with references to performance practice and audience reception.

³⁴In the second half of the nineteenth century, the writing and performance of theatre and opera started being shaped by realism and naturalism, instigating a progressive movement away from the high style of the previous century, which expressionism and modernism in the early twentieth century further accelerated. Although social realism in the East retained some elements of the high style, the West continued moving in a different direction. By the end of the Second World War the acting technique which is the focus of this thesis was confined to historical documents until the first attempts for its revival in the 1970s.

³⁵Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*, Revised Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.12–13.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp.132–133.

Transposing the notion of construction to our context, this thesis does not aim to reconstruct or revive a historical teaching method for acting, but rather to (a) construct a new teaching method that incorporates powerful techniques from historical teaching methods that could be particularly useful to classical singers and (b) create modern techniques that have the capacity to produce historical acting's most powerful intended effects. Although this new construction would be in essence modern, its foundation and supporting structure would be based on historical theoretical models. This construction, following Franko's model, would first require a deconstruction: an analysis of a broad range of primary sources in order to distil historical acting's theoretical underpinnings.³⁷ Deconstruction allows for the active rethinking of historical sources before they are constructed anew through practice and empirical inquiry. In my own case, the dual-level conversation between theory and practice in the contexts of teaching and performance was realised by pairing my eight years of scholarly research on this thesis with teaching and directing singers of varying abilities and ages and at various stages of development, which offered invaluable insights, informing and guiding my research. Furthermore, observations of my own practice have been complemented by reviewing the process of practitioners in related fields: although the object of this thesis is not reconstruction but the creation of a modern teaching method, fruitful insights have also been drawn by the work of a number of contemporary directors reconstructing historical acting, such as Helga Hill, Sigrid T'Hooft, Marshall Pynkoski, Gilbert Blin, Jed Wentz, and Eugène Green and his students Benjamin Lazar, Louise Moaty and Jean-Denis Monory.

Although every idea and technique uncovered through practice and historical sources could potentially be a beneficial addition to a performer's toolbox,

³⁷To "deconstruct" historical dance is to get at its root sources through an analysis of the choreography's theoretical underpinnings. One cannot deconstruct a piece of choreography only by looking at it in reconstruction. The deconstruction needs to be worked out through an analysis of all available primary sources (librettos, theory, pictorial representations, etc.) before it can be implemented in choreography. The move from reconstruction to construction is also a move toward the creation of choreography that actively rethinks historical sources'. *Ibid.*, p.135.

attempting to incorporate and consolidate everything within the ambit of a teaching method would acutely increase its scope and complexity, thus diminishing its overall value and effectiveness. To more clearly direct the new teaching method's broad focus, the experimentation and selection process was guided by certain criteria: every exercise created had to contribute directly or indirectly to at least one of the three central principles of historical acting (beauty, rhetoric and nature), to be relevant to students studying classical singing on an undergraduate level, to be realisable either straightforwardly or in a hybrid form with the assistance of modern understanding and theatrical practices, and be applicable within the span of one academic year. The exercises of the new method are suitable for serious (non-comic) acting and focus on developing the visual (non-vocal) elements of the singers' performance.³⁸

The cumulative value of the various techniques of the new teaching method was assessed through three types of evidence: feedback from students, my own observations from experiments, and discussions with professional pedagogues. The pedagogues were persons of high professional standing and experience, including holders of leadership roles within higher education establishments, who have observed the application of some of the techniques of the new method and are suitably positioned to assess how elements of the new method fit within the classical singing curriculum and helped me shape and refine them.³⁹ My observations

³⁸Although the new teaching method has been designed with non-comic acting in mind, many of the skills develops could also be used effectively for the performance of comedy, with several comic case studies having been utilised for the development some of its constituent exercises (see discussions in Chapter 4, pp.200, 203 and 284).

³⁹The pedagogues who contributed to the development of this method by providing feedback through interviews and discussions arranged for the purposes of this thesis: Dame Emma Kirkby, renowned early music specialist, Visiting Professor at the Guildhall and my collaborator in a number of educational projects; Dr Christopher Suckling, Head of the Department of Historical Performance at the Guildhall where I have taught since 2018; Dr Lawrence Zazzo, Head of Performance at Newcastle University where I taught in 2019–2020 and 2021–2022; and Ella Marchment, Director of Opera at Shenandoah Conservatory where I taught in 2021–2022. Emma Kirkby, interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 2 May 2022); Christopher Suckling, interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 29 August 2022); Lawrence Zazzo, interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 2 January 2022); and Ella Marchment, interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 30 August 2022).

included reflections from key moments of my own practice as a teacher of acting and stage director that defined the new teaching method's direction, and in particular from my teaching at the Guildhall School⁴⁰ and my work in four experimental student productions devised as an exploration of the teaching of historical acting techniques: Pergolesi's *Livietta e Tracollo* (2014), Molière's *The Doctor In Spite of Himself* (2015), Purcell's *The Prophetess* (2015) and Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* (2016). The trainees' feedback came from the participants in an empirical inquiry which took place in the academic year 2021–2022 and was designed to test some of the developed techniques in a more controlled environment in order to gauge their effectiveness and gain a qualitative understanding of their impact through a collection of self-reflections, reflections from participants and photographic material.⁴¹



This Introduction concludes with a review of the key points discussed and an outline of the structure of the thesis' ensuing chapters.

The main argument of this thesis is that techniques deriving from historical acting could make a significant contribution to the dramatic training of classical singers today. The aim of the thesis is to use historical acting as a theoretical starting point, and in conjunction with twentieth- and twenty-first-century understanding and theatrical practices to create a new teaching method that can be implemented within the curriculum of a conservatoire. The theoretical building blocks for this teaching method have been acquired through a corpus of treatises published across Europe between 1528 and 1832, and have been further shaped by a contextual investigation of the London stage during the first half of the

⁴⁰Although I could reflect on my teaching through autoethnographic practice, Guildhall's ethics regulations did not allow me to explicitly interview my own students for research purposes owing to a potential conflict of interests. However, personal observations and students' feedback from my teaching at Guildhall had a profound impact and contributed to shaping my work.

⁴¹For more information about the Empirical Inquiry see Appendix II, p.333.

eighteenth century. Every technique included in the method had to contribute directly or indirectly to at least one of the three central principles of historical acting (beauty, rhetoric and naturalness), to be relevant to classical singers, to be realisable and level-appropriate, and to be applicable within a short to medium timeframe.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 takes a first step towards building a broad picture of the theoretical foundations of historical acting, outlining the three main principles: beauty, the art of rhetoric and naturalness. Chapter 2 continues the examination of historical acting by proposing and breaking down in detail a new classification system of gesture specifically designed for the new teaching method, and discusses a number of rules, before introducing the concept that rules can be broken for dramatic effect. Chapter 3 expands the contextual investigation into elements of performance practice of a number of eighteenth-century performers, before delving into the antagonistic coexistence of nature and artifice at the heart of the style, preparing the ground for the development of the new teaching method in the next chapter. Chapter 4 consolidates the historical work of the previous chapters and sets out—with technical notes, examples and discussion on pedagogy—the exercises comprising the new teaching method. The new exercises are based on hybrid techniques developed with the help of twentieth- and twenty-first-century understanding and theatrical practices, and are divided into three broad thematic units, relating to the expression of passions (emotions and feelings), characterisation and gesture. The constituent parts of the new teaching method could be used as building blocks for the pedagogical process of drama teachers and acting coaches working with classical singers.

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical Foundations

An excellent Actor. Whatsoever is commendable in the graue Orator, is most exquisitly perfect in him; for by a full and significant action of body, he charmes our attention [...] He doth not striue to make nature monstrous, she is often seen in the same Scæne with him, but neither on Stilts nor Crutches [...] By his action he fortifies morall precepts with example; for what we see him personate, we thinke truely done before vs: a man of a deepe thought might apprehend, the Ghosts of our ancient *Heroes* walk't againe, and take him (at seuerall times) for many of them. Hee is much affected to painting, and tis a question whether that make him an excellent Plaier, or his playing an exquisite painter.¹

When sketching the character of ‘An excellent Actor’, the poet and playwright John Webster (1580–1630) outlined three essential elements: actors should have perfected the skills of oratorical delivery, captivating the audience’s attention with ample use of meaningful movement and gesture; their action should appear natural and the portrayal of the characters believable; and they should study fine arts, which would allow them to make their stage representation look like a beautiful

¹Excerpt from Webster’s description of the character of ‘An excellent Actor’, published in 1615 as part of a collection of archetypal personae. John Webster, ‘New Characters (drawne to the life) of seuerall persons, in seuerall qualities’ in: *New and Choise characters of seuerall Authors: Together with that exquisite and vnmatcht Poeme, the Wife, written by Syr Thomas Ouerburie. With the former Charecters and conceited Newes, All in one volume. With many other things added to the fixt Impression* (London: Printed by Thomas Creede, for Laurence L’isle, at the Tygershead in Pauls Church-yard, 1615), no pagination. Only elements relating to the visual elements of acting are included. Webster’s authorship was established by Frank Laurence Lucas, *The Complete Works of John Webster* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1927), pp.6–14.

painting. The aim of this thesis is to use historical acting as the premise for creating a new teaching method for singers, and the three principles articulated by Webster, *rhetoric*, *naturalness* and *beauty*, have a central place as they reflect historical acting's theoretical foundations. This chapter aims to provide a close examination of these principles, allowing the following chapters to use them as a conceptual starting point for exploring more practical elements of this craft.

The examination begins with beauty, tracing the origins of historical acting in the thoughts and ideas of the Greco-Roman world of classical antiquity as revived by Renaissance humanists. Material objects and philosophical ideas deriving from Neoplatonist philosophy influenced the concept of beauty in all visual arts, and performers were asked to study statues and paintings to imbue their posture and gestures with classical decorum. Decorum, the essence of classical beauty, guided every aspect of the performance, with dignified harmony, order, balance and variety extending to movement and characterisation, distilling the essence of nobility and tragicity. The concept of beauty was intertwined with utility, and a performer's decorous postures, gestures and movements could not be considered beautiful in a classical sense if they failed to fulfil acting's intended task: to move the audience. This turns our examination to rhetoric, a craft that aims to teach, to move and to delight. The last and largest part of this chapter is dedicated to naturalness and examines the paradoxical coexistence of nature and artifice at the core of historical acting, as discussed in the Introduction. This examination encompasses four main topics: the theory of the humours, which provides a historical framework for understanding the natural expression of emotions; the theory of the four temperaments, which equips us with a useful theoretical model to use later as the basis for character analysis and the portrayal of believable characters on stage; the notion that acting should be a legitimate depiction of nature, but nature beautified and improved by art; and the concept of unaffected ease, where naturalness in performance is achieved by the deliberate concealment of the art that shaped natural expression.

Beauty

During the fifteenth century, the spread of new ideas following the exodus of scholars from Constantinople instigated the Italian Renaissance, ushering Europe into a new era of fervent artistic creation, and the cultural, artistic and philosophical principles developed during this period were to dominate European arts for several succeeding centuries. A core figure in the revival of Platonic theory was the Italian humanist and philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), who published in 1484 a Latin translation of the complete works of Plato, with an introduction and commentary.² Between the fifteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century his translation appeared in hundreds of editions across Europe and ‘impacted thinkers and writers for hundreds of years’.³ The extensive attention of Platonic discourse to beauty, and particularly the post-Plato developments by the neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus (c. 204 CE–270 CE), allowed Neoplatonism to become a central philosophical premise in the field of the visual arts.⁴ Influenced by classical philosophical thought and material objects from classical antiquity, the paintings and sculptures of humanist artists became exemplary distillations of classical beauty.

In historical acting, the disposition of the performers’ bodies on stage was modelled on humanist works of art and was subjected to the rules of classical beauty. William Cooke (1757–1832) wrote that it is necessary ‘for an actor to acquire all the assistances he can from art, compatible with the nature of his profession’.⁵ The compatibility of the arts of statuary and painting with acting lies in

²Michael J. B. Allen, ‘The Renaissance: Platonism’ in: Richard H. Popkin, editor, *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p.303.

³Sophia Howlett, *Marsilio Ficino and His World* (New York: Palgrave, 2016), pp.166, 5.

⁴Stéphane Toussaint, “‘My Friend Ficino’”. Art History and Neoplatonism: From Intellectual to Material Beauty’ in: Berthold Hub and Sergius Kodera, editors, *Iconology, Neoplatonism, and the Arts in the Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 2021), pp.38–45.

⁵William Cooke, *The Elements of Dramatic Criticism. Containing An Analysis of the Stage under the following Heads, Tragedy, Tragi-comedy, Comedy, Pantomime, and Farce. With a Sketch of the Education of the Greek and Roman Actors; Concluding with some General Instructions for succeeding in the Art of Acting* (London: Printed for G. Kearsly, in Fleet-street; and G. Robinson, in Pater-noster-row, 1775), p.199.

their common reliance on communicating character and emotion visually through posture and gesture. The playwright Paul Hiffernan (1719–1777) suggested that an actor needs to be ‘a living and moving epitome of those arts that rank foremost among the polite’, suggesting that from ‘*Sculpture* performers are to learn pleasing attitudes, and how to stand still with firmness and grace: from *History-Painting* the diversified energy of the passions in the human countenance, with the body’s suitable action to each’.⁶ Jelgerhuis further explicated this connection by contending that ‘acting is nothing but a rapid succession of postures, as it were—a concatenation of stationary, statuesque actions of the arms and hands, the legs and the feet, and the turning movements of the head’, and advised his students to study statues carefully.⁷ Studying statues allowed performers not only to imitate particular statuesque postures and gestures but also to intuitively deduce the principles used for their creation.⁸ Neoplatonists were proponents of the Pythagorean⁹ view that beauty is objective and can be achieved by adherence to ‘solid principles of Art’.¹⁰ These principles were elemental formulas inherent in nature,¹¹ and as Pythagoras used mathematical formulas to calculate the length of strings that produced beautiful harmonies, so the ‘Grecian masters’ developed

⁶Paul Hiffernan, *Dramatic Genius. In Five Books* (London: Printed for the Author, 1770), pp.71, 118.

⁷Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op.cit.*, pp.303, 296.

⁸Cooke wrote that being ‘sufficiently studied’ in ‘Greek and Roman statues, gesses, busts, &c.’ will allow performers not only to ‘adopt their several attitudes with ease’, but also ‘to be acquainted with the justness and truth, of their principles’. Cooke, *op.cit.*, p.201. He makes specific recommendations of statues that are ‘the most perfect of their kind, in their various expressions’: he suggests male performers study ‘The two Antinouses. The Hercules Farnese. The Apollo Belvidere. The Apollo De Medicis, The Caracalla. The fighting, and Dying Gladiators’; for female performers, he suggests ‘The Venus De Medicis. The Venus De Calipædia. Diana, Flora, and The Graces’. *Ibid.*, pp.199–201.

⁹The Greek philosopher, musician, and mathematician Pythagoras (c. 570 BCE–495 BCE) observed that specific lengths of strings of equal tension on a lyre created harmonious sound, deducing that beauty in nature is concealed in numerical ratios and can be achieved by the application of mathematical formulas.

¹⁰William Salmon, *Polygraphice; or The Arts of Drawing, Engraving, Etching, Limning, Painting, Washing, Varnishing, Gilding, Colouring, Dying, Beautifying and Perfuming*, The Second Edition, with many large Additions (London: Printed by E. T. and R. H. for R. Jones at the Sign of the Golden Lyon in Little Brittain, 1673), p.280.

¹¹John Hyman, ‘Is Beauty in the Eye of the Beholder?’ *Think*, 1 (Spring 2002):1, pp.81–82.

systems and formulas that could achieve beauty in the visual domain.¹² Plotinus wrote that

imperceptible harmonies in sounds which bring about the perceptible ones make the soul conscious of their beauty in the same way, showing the same thing as regards another of the senses. It follows that perceptible harmonies are measured by numbers, not according to any and every formula but according to one which serves to produce form in order to master matter. So much for perceptible beauties, images and shadows, which, as it were, sally forth and arrive in matter, adorning it and exciting us when they appear.¹³

The Greek sculptor Polykleitos (c. 450 BCE–420 BCE) was the first to attempt to define the formula that produces these perceptible beauties. His treatise is now lost, and we know about it only through the writings of the renowned physician and philosopher Galen of Pergamon (c. 130 CE–210 CE), but the statue he made as a demonstration of the principles outlined in his treatise survives in several Roman copies. This statue (Figure 1) is known as the *Kanon* (Κανών), Greek for ‘rule’ or ‘general principle’. The spear-bearing figure is designed to be a depiction of ideal beauty: of perfect *symmetria*. The classical notion of symmetry was ‘richer than its current use to indicate bilateral mirroring’, to the extent that ‘Plato describes virtuous souls as symmetrical’.¹⁴ Polykleitos’ statue is symmetrical in the sense that it presents the human form in a balanced and harmonious way. Symmetry in the geometrical sense is avoided: the weight of the body resting on the right leg, the left leg bent, the hips tilting towards the left, and the shoulders slightly tilting towards the right. This stance, as adopted in Italian Renaissance and early modern art theory, was called *contrapposto*. Jelgerhuis laid out the ripple effect

¹²Salmon, *Polygraphice*, *op. cit.*, p.280.

¹³Plotinus, ‘On Beauty’, *Enneads* I.6.3, translated in: Plotinus; Oleg V. Bychkov and Anne Sheppard, editors, *Greek and Roman Aesthetics*, trans. by Oleg V. Bychkov and Anne Sheppard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.188.

¹⁴Crispin Sartwell, ‘Beauty’ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (2017) (URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/beauty>).

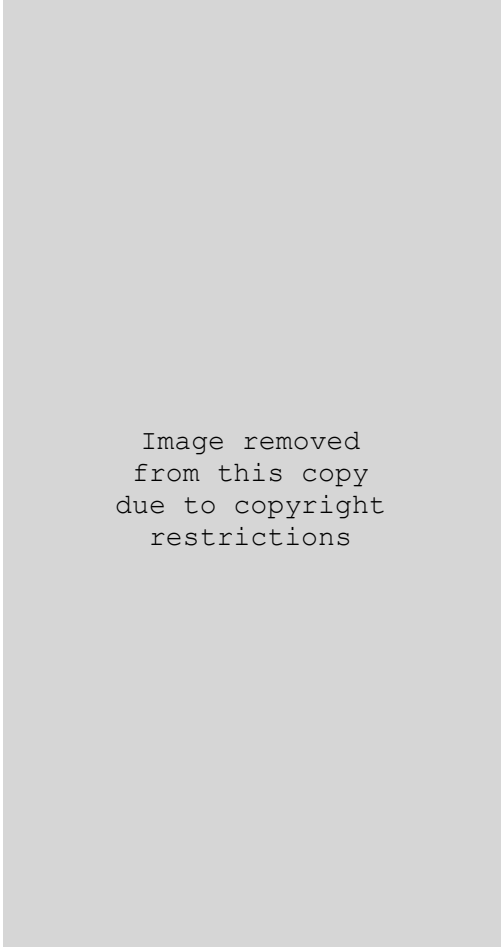


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FIGURE 1. A Roman copy after a bronze original of the *Doryphoros* statue by Polykleitos, also known as *Kanon*, at the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Italy.

of contrast contrapposto effects across the body by using a drawing of the statue of Antinous (Figure 2) as his example:

Mark well how the eyes turn in another direction from the way the head is facing, for contrast. Note carefully, also, the noble grace and flexion characteristic of its posture, although the figure at first appearance does not seem to twist its body. The original has lost its hands and its left arm. But what a noble curving line the figure has! Note the downward slope of the left shoulder, the thrusting up of the left hip, the easy stance of the right foot and leg, the bent right thigh and knee, the weight on the left foot—the whole figure makes a gracious serpentine line tracing from the top of the head to the tip

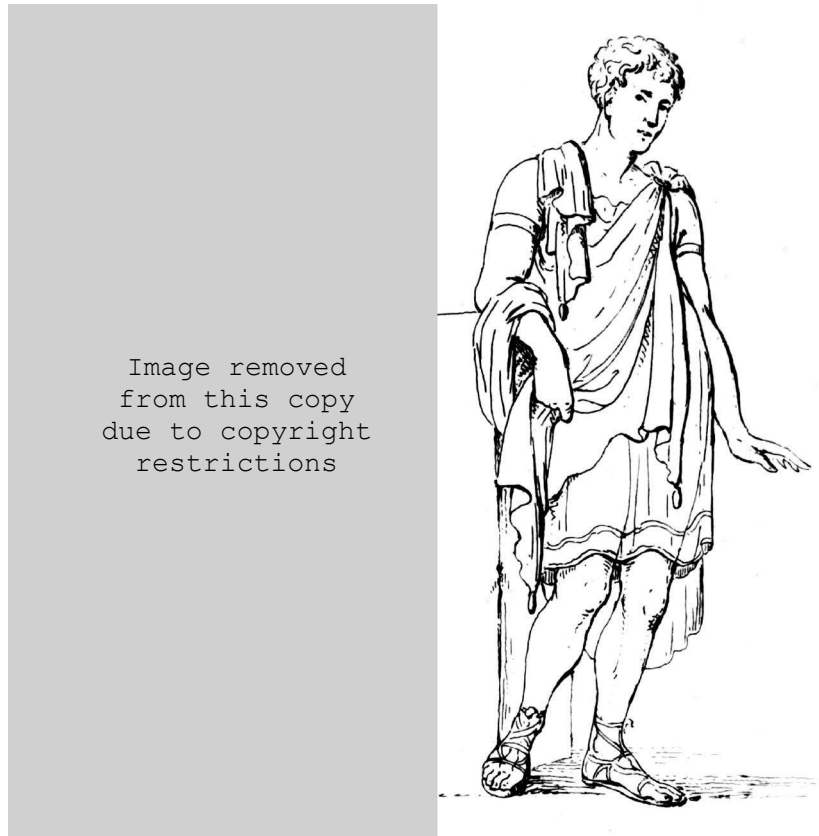


FIGURE 2. Roman copy of the Praxitelian statue *Belvedere Hermes* (formerly known as *Belvedere Antinous*) at the Museo Pio Clementino of Vatican (left), and a clothed drawing of the same statue by Jelgerhuis (right).

of the toes. Since the right shoulder is raised, the left hip is displaced gently upwards to its limit, by way of contrast, without any violation of aesthetic propriety.¹⁵

In his seminal treatise *The Analysis of Beauty*, the painter William Hogarth (1697–1764) delineated the concept of the serpentine line of beauty, a wavy line in an *S* shape, which is neither too curved, nor too flat, and whose optimal curvature can be observed in nature in animal horns, human bones and muscles.¹⁶ As we saw in Jelgerhuis' description of *Antinous*, the contrapposto stance casts the human

¹⁵Jelgerhuis, 'Lessons', *op. cit.*, p.294.

¹⁶William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty. Written with a view of fixing the fluctuating Ideas of Taste* (London: Printed by J. Reeves for the Author, And Sold by him at his House in Leicester-Fields, 1753), Chapter X, pp.50–67.

body in a winding form that follows the serpentine line of beauty in several dimensions.¹⁷ Hogarth saw ‘regularity and sameness’ as lacking ‘elegance and true taste’,¹⁸ and contrapposto breaks away from the rigidity of mirror symmetry, creating a dynamic and varied—and thus more aesthetically pleasing—presentation of the body.

The dancing master John Weaver (1673–1760) set apart explicitly the idea of the physical beauty of the body and beauty which derives from its disposition (which he called grace): nature can make a person beautiful in terms of the proportion of their limbs or facial characteristics (where geometrical symmetry increases the sense of beauty), but this beauty can be spoiled when the carriage of the body does not conform to the rules of classical beauty (where geometrical symmetry should be avoided and the essence of beauty is represented by the serpentine line).¹⁹ This concurs with Hogarth, according to whom beauty in a work of art ‘is not owing to any greater degree of exactness in the *proportions* of its parts, but merely to the more *pleasing turns, and intertwistings of the lines*, which compose its external form’.²⁰ From its invention in the fifth century BCE, contrapposto dominated the pictorial and plastic arts through the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods, and until the late sixth century CE. Revived again

¹⁷Such dispositions of the body and limbs as appear most graceful when seen at rest, depend upon gentle winding contrasts, mostly govern’d by the precise serpentine line’. Ibid., p.135.

¹⁸Ibid., p.63.

¹⁹From the Symmetry, and Harmony of all Parts of a Body, of a regular Proportion, *Beauty* arises. From a just Position, Disposition, and Contrast of such proportionate Parts, *Grace* arises. There is a great Difference betwixt Beauty, and Grace; for a Body may be regular, and beautiful in all its Parts, and yet not agreeable to the Eye; for Beauty (as *Galen* says) is nothing else but a just Accord, and mutual Harmony of the Members, animated by a healthful Constitution [...] A regular and natural Carriage of the Body; a just Position of the Feet in Standing; with an unconstrain’d, contrasted Motion in Walking, gives Gracefulness to the Shape’. John Weaver, *Anatomical and Mechanical Lectures upon Dancing. Wherein Rules and Institutions for that Art are laid down and demonstrated. As they were Read at the Academy in Chancery Lane* (London: Printed for J. Brotherton, and W. Meadows, at the Black Bull in Cornhill; J. Graves, near White’s Chocolate House in St. Jame’s Street; and W. Chetwood, at Cato’s Head in Russel Street, Covent Garden, 1721), pp.89–90. Weaver is a significant figure because of his many writings. He published twelve books and three magazine articles between 1706 and 1733, and his publications offer great insight into the theatrical dance during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, as well as the theoretical trends on performance in that period.

²⁰W. Hogarth, *op. cit.*, p.58.

during the Renaissance, this posture exerted a strong influence across all artistic spheres, including the performing arts, and it is still used by models in the fashion industry.²¹

When used on stage, the contrapposto stance makes a considerable contribution in helping the performer break the geometrical symmetry, or what Jelgerhuis calls ‘the law of contrast’ or ‘principle of contrast’.²² The law of contrast was a central tenet in historical acting and extended beyond the stance to every stage action. For example, Jelgerhuis asked performers to avoid ‘gesturing simultaneously in the same way with both hands, especially when these are held at the same height’, and to stop the ‘miserable practice’ where ‘the feet are placed parallel to each other or turned out at an even angle from each other’; instead when ‘one limb is raised, the other is correspondingly lowered’ and, equally, ‘the action of the feet requires counterpositioning of one movement with another’.²³ The law of contrast is most clearly elucidated by theatre director Franz Lang (1654–1725) in his treatise *Dissertatio de actione scenica* (Dissertation on Stage Action) through the juxtaposition of two contrasting examples: one exhibiting an ‘entirely faulty’ posture and another showing a proper posture (Figure 3).²⁴ Lang wrote that the first shows an actor with his feet planted parallel and next to each other, making the body appear wooden and lifeless, while the arrangement of arms, elbows and hands is also artless and devoid of beauty.²⁵ On the other plate, the actor’s arms

²¹Two recent scientific studies have shown that owing to evolutionary adaptive preferences the contrapposto stance increases the perception of attractiveness, which is probably why it is a posture commonly adopted by fashion models. Farid Pazhoohi et al., ‘Waist-to-Hip Ratio as Supernormal Stimuli: Effect of Contrapposto Pose and Viewing Angle’ *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 49 (April 2020); idem, ‘Becoming sexy: Contrapposto pose increases attractiveness ratings and modulates observers’ brain activity’ *Biological Psychology* 151 (March 2020).

²²Jelgerhuis does not actually use the words ‘law’ or ‘principle’, but the sense is implied by the context, so ‘law of contrast’ would be adopted here as a shorthand for the overall concept. Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, pp.271, 335.

²³*Ibid.*, pp.313, 308.

²⁴‘Et primò quidem figuram exhibeo prorsus vitiosam, ut ex contrariis contraria elucescant’. Franz Lang, *Dissertatio de actione scenica, cum figuris eandem explicantibus, et observationibus quibusdam de arte comica. Accesserunt imagines symbolicae pro exhibitione & vestitu theatri* (Munich: Typis Mariæ Magdalenaë Riedlin, 1727), p.19.

²⁵‘Considera igitur in figura prima positionem pedum, quomodo plantæ ad unam quodammodo rectamque lineam sint positæ, cùm deberent à se invicem aversæ collocari. Unde totius corporis

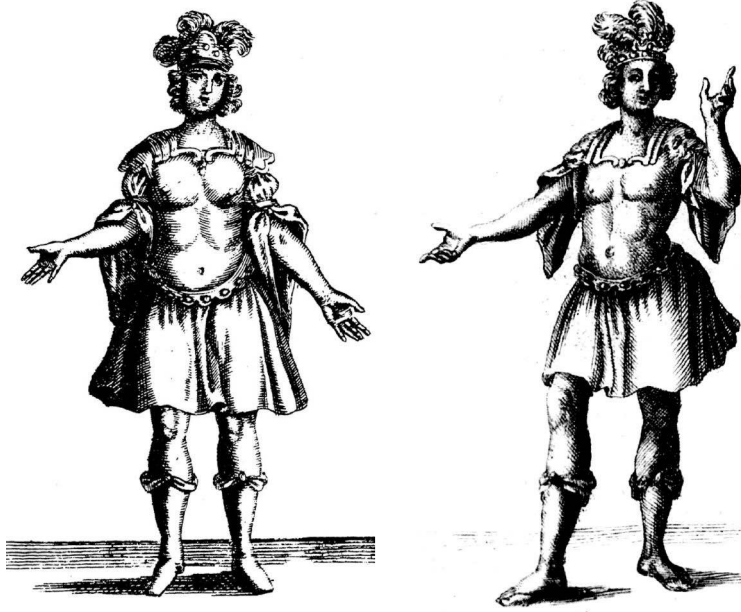


FIGURE 3. Two plates from Lang's *Dissertatio de actione scenica*, illustrating the faulty posture (left) and the proper posture (right).

are not extended identically: one is higher and the other lower; one stretched out and straight, and the other contracted and elevated, with the elbows turned away from the body.²⁶ He argues that this is 'clearly the proper posture, because it is the form rightly observed by expert painters and sculptors'.²⁷ James Fordyce (1720–1796) wrote that the soul 'naturally loves Action and Variety in every thing, and wants always to be entertained, awakened, and interested',²⁸ and by comparing Lang's faulty and proper postures we clearly see the impact contrapposto has on the presentation of the body on stage in making the performer's figure appear more dynamic and varied. The difference in weight distribution between the two feet (manifested by the tilting of the waist and the bending of one knee) creates

vitiosus existit situs, ut veluti stipes & statua inanimis adstet actor. Sed & brachia, & cubiti, & manus in hac figura nihil artis ac decori habent'. Ibid..

²⁶'ut gemina brachia non se moveant in pari extensione, modoque æquali; sed unum sublimius sit, alterum depressius: unum magis extensum & rectum, alterum contractius, etsi sit elevatum, aversis semper cubitis à corpore'. Ibid., p.28.

²⁷'Id quod planè fieri oportet, & quod in suis iconibus pictores periti & statuarii bene observant'. Ibid., pp.28–29.

²⁸James Fordyce, *An Essay on the Action Proper for the Pulpit* (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, 1753), p.38.



FIGURE 4. Two plates from Jelgerhuis' *Theoretische Lessen*, showing how the law of contrast can be applied in ensemble composition (left) and in the sitting position (right).

a sense of imminent movement, and forces different parts of the body to angle in different directions (the line that connects the two feet is angled to the left, the torso is turned to the right, the head faces slightly to the left and the eyes straight out to the audience) causing diverse shading which makes the figure appear more three-dimensional and further amplifying the sense of variety.

The principles of variety and contrast, which we saw that acting shared with the pictorial arts, did not apply just to the disposition of the performer's body on an individual level, but also on the stage as a whole.²⁹ Jelgerhuis wrote that it is 'the hallmark of the trained actor' when acting in ensemble scenes to see that 'all the figures contrive to be grouped according to the principle of contrast, and similarly all dedicated actors strive to achieve suitable contrast in their stage composition'.³⁰ To attain these principles of ensemble composition the actor was advised to study 'prints and paintings' and 'casts of famous sculpture groupings', but also how 'accomplished actors form pictorial arrangements when they perform'.³¹ Figure 4 (left) shows a drawing by Jelgerhuis which illustrates an example of such arrangement, asking his students to notice how elevations, turns and dispositions

²⁹Vera Mowry Roberts, *On Stage: A History of Theatre* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p.247.

³⁰Jelgerhuis, 'Lessons', *op. cit.*, p.335.

³¹*Ibid.*, p.336.

of the bodies are utilised to serve variety and contrast.³² Each of the four actors pictured occupies a different level (actor 4, 1, 2 and 3 from highest to lowest respectively); actors 4 and 1 have contrasting weight distributions; actors 2 and 3 turn their bodies inwards while actors 4 and 1 are turned outwards; and even the kneeling or sitting actors place their legs in counterpoise. Figure 4 (right) shows another example of a properly seated figure, with Jelgerhuis warning the actors that sitting with the legs in the same position or underneath the chair is ‘ungainly and ugly’, ‘monotonous to the view and destroys the sense of decorum’.³³

Thus far classical beauty in the art of acting has been defined as the representation of the body on stage in a way that makes it appear balanced, harmonious and dynamic, which is achieved when elements of the external form follow the serpentine line of beauty and are guided by the principles of variety and contrast. Contrapposto endowed the posture with these qualities automatically, and it was then the responsibility of the performers to extend their application to movement and gestures, both on an individual and an ensemble level. While ancient Greek statues, as well as Renaissance paintings and sculptures, provided distillations of the aesthetic qualities of classical beauty and were used by performers as their models, beauty in historical acting transcended mere aesthetic qualities. In the next segment we will see that it also incorporated the qualities of dignity, propriety and majesty.

In the Introduction we defined historical acting in the context of this thesis as the style of acting used to perform tragedy (in theatre and opera) from the early seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, also called the ‘high style’.³⁴ Aristotle had defined tragedy as the imitation of an action which is

³²Ibid., p.335.

³³Ibid., pp.272–273 Golding translates as decorum the word ‘welstand’, which in modern Dutch means ‘wealth’, but in Dutch of the period could be translated as ‘looks well’ or ‘presents itself well’. Idem, *Theoretische Lessen, op. cit.*, p.42.

³⁴See Introduction, p.8.

spoudaea (σπουδαία),³⁵ complete and of a certain magnitude, that needs to be acted and not narrated, and through pity and fear to effect the purging of these passions.³⁶ Expanding on the Aristotelian rules, the physician and poet Hippolyte-Jules Pilet de La Ménardière (1610–1663) wrote that ‘since tragedy is nothing but an imitation; not the imitation of a man, but of some action of a man, an illustrious man: it is necessary that this action, which is to serve as a subject, should be significant and remarkable, and that all the speeches that will serve to express it should be proportionate to it: they should be serious, substantial and worthy of the majesty of this magnificent poem’.³⁷ He continues by writing that as a consequence ‘the subjects of the tragedies are the actions of kings, great princes, princesses and rules of empires’ because the passions of these elevated personages are equally elevated and can be more affecting as they ‘strike our imagination with more vehemence, astonishment and terror’.³⁸ The σπουδαιότης and magnitude of the tragic action, required equally σπουδαία—serious, moral, worthy, illustrious—and exalted personages to be assigned to. This in turn required that the movements and gestures the actors used to convey the drama and portray their characters looked equally dignified, decent³⁹ and elevated.⁴⁰ Discussing the nature of tragedy,

³⁵There is no direct equivalent in English for the word *spoudaios* (σπουδαῖος), which can mean serious, good, important, noteworthy, remarkable or illustrious.

³⁶ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἔχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι’ ἀπαγγελίας, δι’ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449b 23–27.

³⁷Hippolyte-Jules Pilet de La Ménardière, *La poétique* (Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, au Palais, dans la Galerie des Merciers, à l’Escu de France, 1639), pp.16–17.

³⁸Ibid., p.17.

³⁹As gestures demonstrate the passions, affections, and dispositions of the mind, the decency in gestures reflected the moral qualities of the portrayed character. Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue; In Two Treatises. I. Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design. II. Concerning Moral Good and Evil*, Edition Second, Corrected and Enlarg’d (London: Printed for J. Darby, A. Bettersworth, F. Fayram, J. Pemberton, C. Rivington, J. Hooke, F. Clay, J. Batley, and E. Symon, 1726), pp.43, 230.

⁴⁰Elevation relates to the size of movement and gesture which does not only aim to adhere to the tragedy’s subject matter and personages, but also relates directly to beauty, because, according to Aristotle, for something to be called beautiful, be it a living thing or anything that is composed of parts, it should not only have its parts arranged with propriety but also have a certain magnitude, as beauty relies on magnitude and order: ἔτι δ’ ἐπεὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ ζῶον καὶ ἅπαν πρᾶγμα ὃ συνέστηκεν ἐκ τινῶν οὐ μόνον ταῦτα τεταγμένα δεῖ ἔχειν ἀλλὰ καὶ μέγεθος ὑπάρχειν μὴ τὸ τυχόν· τὸ γὰρ καλὸν ἐν μεγέθει καὶ τάξει ἐστίν. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450b 35–38.

Roger Pickering (d. 1755) wrote that as ‘the Characters in TRAGEDY are generally laid in high, or, at least, genteel Life, the *Figure* of an Actor is of no small Moment’,⁴¹ and Hiffernan wrote that in tragic acting owing to ‘the gravity of the business, the solemnity of the scene, and elevation of the chief personages in general, a commanding aspect, a dignity of gesture, and a majesty of speaking are required’.⁴²

The idea of beauty that extends to the aesthetic elements of tragicality and incorporates nobility and propriety is encapsulated by the word decorum.⁴³ Tosi wrote that action on the stage ‘cannot be beautiful, if not expressed with that Decorum with which Princes speak, or those who know how to speak to Princes’,⁴⁴ and George Puttenham (1529–1590) wrote in his influential treatise on poetry and rhetoric that decorum, which is called by the Greeks *prepon* (πρέπον), meaning correct or proper, is the visual equivalent of harmony in music, representing all things good, comely, pleasant, virtuous, beautiful and proportionate that please the eye, and can be translated in English as decency, seemliness, comeliness or pleasant approach.⁴⁵ Figure 5 includes a realisation of the emblem of decorum as described by the Italian iconographer Cesare Ripa (1560–1622): decorum is symbolised as a young man, handsome (‘because Decorum is the *Ornament* of human Life’) and noble (‘because always accompanied with *Decency*’), wearing lion’s skin (denoting the ‘*Strength of Mind*’ which is a characteristic of ‘Observers of due Decorum’), and holding a branch of amaranth (which ‘never withers’ and ‘denotes *Continuance*’), and wearing shoes of ancient actors—both comic and tragic—that symbolise ‘Decency in the *Gesture* and *Behaviour*’ (on the left foot

⁴¹Roger Pickering, *Reflections upon Theatrical Expression in Tragedy. With a proper Introduction, and Appendix* (London: W. Johnston, St. Paul’s Church-yard, 1755), p.19.

⁴²Hiffernan, *op. cit.*, p.100.

⁴³Vasily Sesemann; Mykolas Drunga and Leonidas Donskis, editors, *Vasily Sesemann: Selected Papers*, trans. by Mykolas Drunga (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp.29, 196.

⁴⁴Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, *op. cit.*, pp.66–67.

⁴⁵George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie. Contrived into three Bookes: The first of Poets and Poesie, the second of Proportion, the third of Ornament* (Printed by Richard Field, dwelling in the black-Friers, neere Ludgate, 1589), pp.219–220.

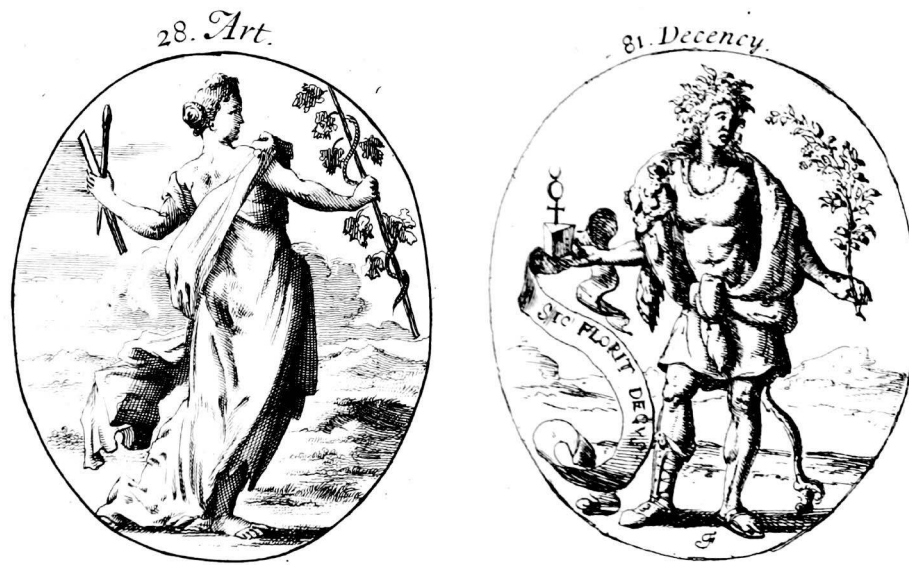


FIGURE 5. Isaac Fuller's realisation of the emblems of Art and Decorum (here titled Decency), from the 1709 English edition of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*.

a *soccus*, the loose-fitting slipper worn by ancient comedians, and on the right foot a *cothurnus* or baskin, the tall laced boot worn by ancient tragedians).⁴⁶

Beauty, therefore, in the context of historical acting can be defined as movement and gesture which abides by the rules of variety, contrast, decorum (the sense of propriety, seemliness, order, balance, decency, dignity and nobility) and majesty. Tragic acting, however, was not meant to offer merely aesthetic pleasure: its purpose was to move the audience, and so acting was engineered to combine beauty with utility. The philosopher George Berkeley (1685–1753) argued that our perception of beauty does not rest on the eye alone, and something can be

⁴⁶Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia: or, Moral Emblems, by Cæsar Ripa. Wherein are Express'd Various Images of Virtues, Vices, Passions, Arts, Humours, Elements and Celestial Bodies; As Design'd by the Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Modern Italians: Useful for Orators, Poets, Painters, Sculptors, and all Lovers of Ingenuity: Illustrated with Three Hundred Twenty-six Humane Figures, with their Explanations; Newly design'd, and engraven on Copper, by I. Fuller, Painter, and other Masters*, trans. by P. Tempest (London: Printed by Benj. Motte, 1709), p.21. Ripa's influential treatise *Iconologia* was originally published in Venice in 1593, followed by several new editions and translations across Europe. A quintessential product of the Renaissance, it includes more than 600 descriptions of emblems and their symbolisms. The treatise was aimed at painters but became a source of inspiration of many arts, including theater and opera.

aesthetically pleasing but may not be called beautiful if it fails to achieve its purpose.⁴⁷ Similarly, journalist, politician and writer on aesthetics Edmund Burke (1729–1797) wrote that a work of art is ‘praised or censured, in the whole or in some part, when the end for which it was designed is or is not properly answered’.⁴⁸ Therefore, variety, contrast, decorum and majesty are not enough to qualify acting as truly beautiful if the end for which it was designed (achieving catharsis through the communication of strong characters and passions that profoundly move the audience) is not fulfilled. To this end, historical acting borrowed tools from rhetoric, the art of persuasion.

Rhetoric

As with the classical philosophy of beauty, some works on the art of rhetoric (or oratory⁴⁹) by Aristotle⁵⁰, Cicero,⁵¹ and Quintilian⁵² were rediscovered during the Renaissance, and their teachings penetrated all arts. Cicero was the first to define the three duties of the ideal orator (known as the *tria officia oratoris*): to teach (*docere*), to delight (*delectere*) and to move (*movere*), writing that ‘it is

⁴⁷Berkeley gives the example of a chair which cannot be judged as beautiful purely on aesthetic grounds if it is uncomfortable to sit on: ‘Could the Chair you sit on, think you, be reckon’d well proportioned or hansom, if it had not such a Height, Breath, Wideness, and was not so far reclined as to afford a convenient Seat? ALC. It could not. EUPH. The Beauty, therefore, or Symmetry of a Chair cannot be apprehended but by knowing its use, and comparing its Figure with that use, which cannot be done by the Eye alone, but is the Effect of Judgement. It is therefore, one thing to see an Object, and another to discern its Beauty. ALC. I admit this to be true’. George Berkeley, *Alciphron: or, the Minute Philosopher in Seven Dialogues. Containing an Apology for the Christian Religion, against those who are called Free-thinkers*, Volume First, (London: Printed for J. Tonson in the Strand, 1732), philosophical dialogue on beauty between Alciphron and Euphranor, Dialogue 3, Section 8, pp.175–176.

⁴⁸Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, in Pall-mall, 1757), pp.167–168.

⁴⁹The term oratory comes from the word *orator*, the Latin for rhetorician. In the eighteenth century, oratory was often used as a synonym for rhetoric. Its modern meaning refers more to utterance and action, the performative rather than the theoretical elements of rhetoric. In this thesis, because of the focus on the eighteenth century, both terms will be used interchangeably.

⁵⁰Aristotle (384 BCE–322 BCE), *Rhetoric* (c. 350 BCE).

⁵¹Cicero (106 BCE–43 BCE), *De Oratore* (55 BCE), *De Partitionibus Oratoriae* (54 BCE), *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* (52 BCE), *Orator ad M. Brutum* (46 BCE).

⁵²Quintilian (35 CE–100 CE), *Institutio Oratoria* (c. 95 CE).

a duty to teach, it is an honour to please, it is necessary to move'.⁵³ He divided rhetoric into five canons: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *pronunciatio*, referring respectively to the invention of an argument, its organisation, stylistic expression, memorisation, and finally its delivery, which comprises ornaments of utterance (vocal effects) and action (gestures, movements, facial expressions, and other visual effects—also known as *actio*).⁵⁴ The first three elements relate chiefly to composition and had a great impact on playwrights and music composers, but they do not apply directly to acting. Singers were required to memorise their recitatives and arias in order to believably portray a character, so for them *memoria* was an important element. However, the element most influential to the theory of historical acting was *pronunciatio*. In English, *pronunciatio* was often directly translated as 'pronunciation' and it referred to both vocal performance and action,⁵⁵ though, to highlight its importance and power the English actor Thomas Heywood (1574–1641) suggested that *actio* should be separated from *pronunciatio* and be made into the sixth element of rhetoric.⁵⁶

⁵³Optimus est enim orator, qui dicendo animos audientium et docet et delectat et permovet. Docere debitum est, delectare honorarium, permovere necessarium'. Cicero, *De Optimo Genere Oratorum*, 1.3.

⁵⁴Because all that an *Orator* has to do is [...] To *Invent* proper Arguments; To *Dispose* of 'em in a right Method; To *Adorn* 'em with beautiful *Tropes*, *Figures*, and fine *Turns*; and to *Pronounce* 'em with the Ornaments of *Utterance* and *Action*'. John Holmes, *The Art of Rhetoric made easy: or, the Elements of Oratory. Briefly stated, and fitted for the Practice of the Studious Youth of Great-Britain and Ireland* (London: Printed by A. Parker; and sold by A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, in Pater-noster-Row, 1793), p.3.

⁵⁵For example Thomas Wilson (1525–1581) wrote that 'Pronunciation standeth partely in fash-ionyng the tongue, and partely in framynge the gesture'. Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique, for the use of all suche as are studious of Eloquence, sette forth in English* (London: Richardus Graftonus, typographus Regius excudebat, 1553), f. 119r. The writer in logic and rhetoric Abraham Fraunce (1559–1592) in his today extremely rare treatise (it appears that Bodleian Library has the only known copy in existence) uses both 'Vtterance or Pronunciation' to refer to *pronunciatio*, writing that it 'hath two parts, Voyce and Gesture, the one pertaining to the eare, the other belonging to the eye'. Abraham Fraunce, *The Arcadian Rhetorike: Or The Præcepts of Rhetorike made paine by examples, Greeke, Latin, English, Italian, French, Spanish, out of Homers Ilias, and Odissea, Virgils Æglogs, Georgikes, and Æneis, Sir Philip Sydneis Arcadia, Songs and Sonets, Torquato Tassoos Goffredo, Aminta, Torrismondo, Salust his Iudith, and both his Semaines, Boscan and Garcilassoos Sonets and Æglogs* (London: Printed by Thomas Orwin, 1588), Second Booke, Chapter 1, 'Of vtterance or pronunciation', no pagination.

⁵⁶*Tully* in his booke *ad Caium Herennium*, requires fiue things in an Orator, *Inuention*, *Dis-position*, *Eloquution* *Memory*, and *Pronuntiation*, yet all are imperfect without the sixt, which is *Action*: for be his inuention neuer so fluent and exquisite, his disposition and order neuer

The Roman Catholic priest, poet and playwright Richard Flecknoe (d. 1678) wrote of the celebrated Shakespearian actor Richard Burbage (1567–1619) that he ‘had all the parts of an excellent Orator, (animating his words with speaking, and Speech with Action) his Auditors being never more delighted then when he spake, nor more sorry then when he held his peace; yet even thên, he was an excellent Actor still, never falling in his Part when he had done speaking; but with his looks and gesture, maintaining it still unto the heighth’.⁵⁷ A decade later he turned this into a poem to praise Charles Hart (1625–1683), whose adherence to dramatic rules, ability to transform to any character and beautiful and moving oratorical action made him Burbage’s rightful successor:

Who did appear so *gracefully* o’th’ *Stage*,
 He was th’ *Admir’d example* of the *Age*;
 And so observ’d all your *Drammatique Laws*,
 He n’ere went off the *Stage* but with *applause*:

[...]

Who a delightful *Protaeus* was, and cou’d
Transform himself into what *shape* he wou’d;
 And of an *excellent Oratour* had all
 In *voice* and *gesture* we *delightful* call:

[...]

Such even the nicest Criticks must allow

so composed and formall, his eloquence, and elaborate phrases neuer so materiall and pithy, his memory neuer so firme & retentiue, his pronuntiation neuer so musicall and plausiue, yet without a comely and elegant gesture, a gracious and a bewitching kinde of action, a naturall and a familiar motion of the head, the hand, the body, and a moderate and fit countenance sutable to all the rest, I hold all the rest as nothing’. Thomas Heywood, *An Apology For Actors. Containing three briefe Treatises. 1 Their Antiquity. 2 Their ancient Dignity. 3 The true use of their quality* (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1612), *An Apology for Actors*, and first touching their Antiquity, no pagination.

⁵⁷Richard Flecknoe, ‘A Short Discourse of the English Stage. To his Excellency, the Lord Marquess of Newcastle’ in: *Love’s Kingdom. A Pastoral Trage-Comedy. Not as it was Acted at the Theatre near Lincolns-Inn, but as it was written, and since corrected by Richard Flecknoe. With a short Treatise of the English Stage, &c. by the same Author.* (London: Printed by R. Wood for the Author, 1664), no pagination.

*Burbadge was once, And such Charles Hart is now.*⁵⁸

Movement and gesture were considered a core part of the art of rhetoric, and although the ephemeral nature of movement and gesture made it a much more challenging subject to write about, there are hardly any historical treatises on rhetoric that do not devote a section to it. Bernard Lamy (1640–1715) wrote that ‘*Pronunciation* is of such advantage to an Orator, that it deserves to be treated on at large; for there is a Rhetorick in the eye, the motion and air of the Body, that perswades as much as Arguments’.⁵⁹ He attributed this advantage of the performative elements of rhetoric to the power that senses—and vision in particular—have over reason.⁶⁰ Similarly, the philosopher and scientist Francis Bacon (1561–1626) wrote that ‘the Lyneaments of the bodie doe disclose the disposition and inclination of the minde’, and criticised Aristotle for not examining rhetorical gesture to greater lengths in his otherwise comprehensive writings.⁶¹ Michel le Faucheur

⁵⁸Idem, ‘Of an Excellent Actor: Or, The praises of Richard Burbadge. To Charles Hart.’ in: *Euterpe Revived. Or, Epigrams made at several Times, in the years 1672, 1673, & 1674 on persons of the greatest Honour and Quality, most of them now living* (Printed at London, and are to be sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster, 1675). John Downes wrote that Hart ‘was concern’d he Perform’d with that Exactness and Perfection that not any of his Successors have Equall’d him’ and that he acted the role of Alexander ‘with such Grandeur and Agreeable Majesty, That one of the Court was pleas’d to Honour him with this Commendation; That *Hart* might Teach any king on Earth how to Comport himself’. John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus, or an Historical Review of the Stage: After it had been Suppres’d by means of the late Unhappy Civil War, begun in 1641, till the Time of King Charles the IIs. Restoration in May 1660. Giving an Account of its Rise again; of the Time and Places the Governours of both the Companies first Erected their Theatres. The Names of the Principal Actors and Actresses, who Perform’d in the Chiefest Plays in each House. With the Names of the most taking Plays; and Modern Poets. For the space of 46 Years, and during the Reign of Three Kings, and part of our present Sovereign Lady Queen Anne, from 1660, to 1706* (London: Printed and Sold by H. Playford, at his House in Arundel-street, near the Water-side, 1708), p.16.

⁵⁹Bernard Lamy, *The Art of Speaking: Written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal: In pursuance of a former Treatise, Intituled, The Art of Thinking* (London: Printed by W. Godbid, and are to be Sold by M. Pitt, at the Angel against the little North Door of St. Paul’s Church, 1676), The Fourth Part, p.163. Lamy’s original treatise was published in French in 1675: Idem, *De l’art de parler* (Paris: André Pralard, ruë S. Jacques, à l’Occasion, 1675).

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Francis Bacon, *The second Booke of the proficiencie or advancement of Learning, Divine and Humane* (London: Printed for Henrie Tomes, and are to be sould at his shop at Graies Inne, Gate in Holborne, 1605), p.37. Aristotle believed that the ability of an argument to move rests predominantly on the structure of the argument (*dispositio*) and less on its delivery (*pronunciatio*): ‘beleefe that procedes from our invention, comes partly from the behaviour of the speaker; partly from the passions of the hearer: but especially from the proofes of what we alledge’. Aristotle, ‘A Brief of The Art of Rhetorick. Containing in substance All that Aristotle hath

(1585–1657) called gesture ‘the very Life, Soul and *Quintessence* of Rhetoric’,⁶² and the music theorist Johann Mattheson (1681–1764) wrote that gesture has ‘greater force of all words’ and that ‘without it the greatest orator is nothing’.⁶³ The celebrated actor, theorist, and critic Luigi Riccoboni (1676–1753) wrote that ‘the most forcible and the most irrefragable Arguments, when committed to Paper, can never affect us with the same Force as when animated by the Energy of Expression and the Beauty of Action’.⁶⁴ To convey the same idea, the physician John Bulwer (1606–1656) who wrote the first English treatise devoted exclusively to gesture, related an anecdote about Queen Elizabeth I, who

written in his Three Books of that Subject, Except onely what is not applicable to the English Tongue’ in: R. F. Junior, editor, *A Compendium of the Art of Logick and Rhetorick in the English Tongue. Containing All that Peter Ramus, Aristotle, and Others have writ thereon: With Plain Directions for the more easie understanding and practice of the same* (London: Printed by Thomas Maxey, 1651), p.140.

⁶²Michel le Faucheur, *The Art of Speaking in Publick: or An essay on the Action of an Orator; As to his Pronunciation and Gesture. Useful in the Senate or Theatre, the Court, the Camp, as well as the Bar and Pulpit. The Second Edition Corrected. With an Introduction relating to the Famous Mr. Henly’s present Oratory* (London: Printed for N. Cox, in Story’s Passage, Westminster, and sold by him and the Booksellers in London, Oxford and Cambridge, 1727), p.xvii. The original treatise was published in French in Paris after le Faucheur’s death, by his friend Valentin Conrard: Idem, *Traité de l’action de l’orateur, ou de la prononciation et du geste* (Paris: Augustin Courbé, au Palais, en la Gallerie des Merciers, à la Palme, 1657). It appeared in a great number of editions in France, and it was translated into English and published in London in three editions during the first half of the eighteenth century: the first in 1702 (for more details about the publication date of the first English edition see note 77 on page 46); the second in 1727, Idem, *The Art of Speaking in Publick, op.cit.*; and the third in 1750, Idem, *An Essay upon Pronunciation and Gesture, founded upon the best Rules and Authorities of the Ancients, Ecclesiastical and Civil, And Adorned with the Finest Rules of Elocution* (London: Printed for C. Hitch, in Pater-noster-row, 1750). In addition, an anonymous pamphlet circulated in 1716 plagiarised heavily le Faucheur’s first English edition: *Some Rules for Speaking and Action; To be observed At the Bar, in the Pulpit, and the Senate, and by every one that Speaks in Publick. In a Letter to a Friend* (London: Printed for W. Mears, at the Lamb without Temple-Bar, 1716).

⁶³Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), quoted translated in: Judy Turling, *The Weapons of Rhetoric: A guide for musicians and audiences* (St Albans: Corda Music Publications, 2005), p.130.

⁶⁴Luigi Riccoboni, ‘Reflections upon Declamation, or, *The Art of Speaking in Public, &c.*’ in: *An Historical and Critical Account of the Theatres in Europe. Viz. The Italian, Spanish, French, English, Dutch, Flemish, and German Theatres. In which is contain’d a Review of the Manner, Persons and Character of the Actors; intermix’d with many Curious Dissertations upon the Drama. Together with Two Celebrated Essays: An Essay on Action, or, The Art of Speaking in Public: And, A Comparison of the Ancient and Modern Drama. By the famous Lewis Riccoboni of the Italian Theatre at Paris. The Whole illustrated with Notes by the Author and Translator* (London: Printed for T. Waller, in the Temple; and R. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, 1741), p.5.

having heard, or rather seen a Sermon that was preached before Her with the advantage of pronunciation, was much affected and taken therewith, and having the same Sermon afterwards presented unto Her, when She came to read it, and found not the insinuations of elocution and gesture, gave Her judgement of it, That it was one of the best Sermons She ever heard, and the worst she ever read.⁶⁵

Cicero had written that facial expression and hand gestures play a crucial role in oratory, making an indescribable difference to delivery to the extent that eloquence cannot exist without them; quoting the celebrated orator Demosthenes who had said that the three most important elements of rhetoric are action, action and action.⁶⁶ In the frontspiece of Bulwer's *Chironomia* (Figure 6, p. 43), Demosthenes

⁶⁵John Bulwer, *Chirologia: or the Naturall Language of the Hand Composed of the speaking motions, and discoursing gestures thereof Whereunto is added Chironomia: or, the Art of manuell rhetoricke. Consisting of the Naturall Expressions, digested by Art in the Hand, as the chieffest Instrument of Eloquence by Historical Manifestos, exemplified out of the Authentique Registers of Common Life, and Civil Conversation. With Types, or Chyrograms: Along wish'd for illustration of his Argument* (London: Printed by Tho. Harper, and are to be sold by R. Whitaker, at his shop in Pauls Church-yard, 1644), *Chirologia*, p.6. Le Faucheur also used a very similar anecdote to make the same point, see Michel le Faucheur, *An Essay upon the Action of an Orator; as to his Pronunciation & Gesture. Useful both for Divines and Lawyers, and necessary for all Young Gentlemen, that study how to Speak well in Publick. Done out of French* (London: Printed for Nich. Cox at the Golden Bible without Temple-Barr, 1702), p.8.

⁶⁶Dicerem etiam de gestu, cum quo junctus est voltus. Quibus omnibus, dici vix potest, quantum intersit, quemadmodum utatur orator. Nam & infantes, actionis dignitate, eloquentiae saepè fructum tulerunt: & diserti, deformitate agendi, multi, infantes putati sunt: ut jam non sine causa Demosthenes tribuerit & primas, & secundas, & tertias actioni. Si enim eloquentia nulla sine hac, haec autem sine eloquentia tanta est: certè plurimùm in dicendo potest'. Marcus Tullius Cicero; Jacobus Proust, editor, *Liber de Claris Oratoribus, qui dicitur Brutus. Ad M. Brutum Orator. Ad C. Trebatium Topica. Oratoriæ Parititiones. Liber de Optimo Genere Oratorum. Cum Interpretatione ac Notis, Quas in Usam Serenissimi Delphini*, Volume 3 (Oxonii: Typographeo Clarendoniano, Impensis Stephani Fletcher Bibliopolae, 1718), p.151. Hall and Bond write that for most orators their craft was 'something they did', not just 'a literary pursuit but a performance art'. Jon Hall and Robin Bond, 'Performative Elements in Cicero's Orations: an Experimental Approach' *Prudentia*, 34 (2002):2, p.228. Hall and Bond have experimented with reconstructing ancient rhetorical gesture in Cicero's speeches through workshops, as well as the publication of this article and an accompanying DVD in which they detail their methodological approach: Idem, *Performing Cicero's Speeches: An Experimental Workshop* (DVD, Wild Sweet Productions, 2002). Hall has published extensively on the reconstruction and teaching of rhetorical gesture, including a DVD in which he performs Cicero's *Pro Archia Poeta*: Jon Hall, 'Performing Cicero in the Classroom' *The Classical Journal*, 95 (January, 2000):2, Idem, 'Cicero and Quintilian on the Oratorical Use of Hand Gestures' *The Classical Quarterly*, 54 (May, 2004):1, Idem, 'Oratorical Delivery and the Emotions: Theory and Practice' in: William Dominik and Jon Hall, editors, *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), Idem, 'Teaching Ciceronian Delivery' *Classical Outlook*, 84 (2007), and Idem, *Performing*

is depicted diligently practising his gestures in front of a mirror adorned with the words ‘Actio–Actio–Actio’, while being coached by the actor Andronicus. At the other side of the mirror, the celebrated Roman actor Roscius teaches gestures to Cicero.

The conversation between actors and orators has continued since the foundation of rhetoric, and each profession has been learning and borrowing delivery techniques from the other ever since.⁶⁷ In her seminal monograph *Actio and Persuasion*, Goodden argued that *actio* was ‘one of the most important constitutive elements of the orator’s art’, as orators were aware of the ‘human impressionability to visual signals’ and their potential for ‘enhancing their orations through bodily attitude, gesture and facial expression’.⁶⁸ For the philosopher and rhetor Dion Chrysostomos (c. 40 CE–115 CE) the only difference between an actor and an orator was that the first rehearsed and memorised the spoken text while the second was expected to improvise it to some degree.⁶⁹ According to Enders, this ‘generic

Cicero’s Pro Archia (DVD, Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2008). Several practical aspects of rhetorical delivery in antiquity can be found in: Elaine Fantham, ‘Quintilian on Performance: Traditional and Personal Elements in ‘Institutio’ 11.3’ *Phoenix*, 36 (Autumn, 1982):3.

⁶⁷Gregory Aldrete wrote that the ‘link between actor and orator is particularly significant, and evidence suggests that each studied the other and that they even borrowed specific gestures from one another in order to hone their performative skills’. Gregory S. Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p.xx. Aldrete’s study offers an excellent introduction to the subject of ancient gestural communication, its power, and its value, including many examples of rhetorical gestures (both descriptions and drawings) as described in ancient Greek and Roman sources. The importance of body movement and gesture in rhetoric made it an ideal source for acting techniques throughout the centuries. Hall provides a plethora of examples connecting acting techniques of Renaissance and Jacobean tragedy with their ancient counterpart: Edith Hall, ‘The ancient actor’s presence since the Renaissance’ in: Patricia Easterling and Edith Hall, editors, *Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Corbeill examines gesture and body movement in a wide range of activities in ancient Rome and the relationships formed between human bodies and their cultural environment, identifying the use of non-verbal communication within the context of the Roman society: Anthony Corbeill, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). Graf deals with the differences and similarities in the use of gestures between orators and actors in ancient Rome: Fritz Graf, ‘Gestures and conventions: the gestures of Roman actors and orators’ in: *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

⁶⁸Angelica Goodden, *Actio and Persuasion: Dramatic Performance in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.10.

⁶⁹Blake Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives: John Chrysostom’s Attack on Spiritual Marriage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p.61.



FIGURE 6. Frontispiece of John Bulwer's *Chironomia* (1644), engraved by William Marshall.

fluidity between rhetoric and drama' has 'often rendered distinctions between the two discourses elusive',⁷⁰ and although Quintilian had advised budding orators against the adoption of an exaggerated histrionic style, he urged them to study with an actor by their side, who would coach their voice and gestures.⁷¹ He wrote that orators should endeavour to

⁷⁰Jody Enders, 'Dramatic Rhetoric and Rhetorical Drama: Orators and Actors' in: Craig Kallendorf, editor, *Landmark Essays on Rhetoric and Literature* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999), p.66.

⁷¹Quintilian, *De Institutione Oratoria Libri Duodecim Innumeris Locis Emendati Ex Recensione Ulrici Obrechtii* (Argentorati: Sumptibus Joh. Reinholdi Dulsseckeri, 1698), p.69.

move the arms correctly, avoid using the hands like ignorant peasants, avoid inelegant posture, avoid showing neglect to the movement of the feet, and avoid inclining the head and feet in opposition to the rest of the body. For none should deny that these elements are all part of delivery, and delivery should not be separated from rhetoric. And certainly none should be indignant to learn, especially since *chironomia*, which is (as the name itself shows) the law of gesture, arose in heroic times, it was adopted by the finest Greeks, it was tried by Socrates, it formed part of Plato’s civil virtues, and Chrysippus did not omit it from his precepts of liberal education.⁷²

The close link between actors and orators remained strong throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷³ Louis de Cressolles (1568–1634) urged his oratory students to put extremely hard and methodical work into their art of pronunciation and gesture (‘so much energy, toil and care should be put in as if

⁷²‘ijs a quibus gestus motusque formatur, ut recta sint brachia, ne indoctæ rusticæve manus, ne status indecorus, ne qua in proferendis pedibus inscitia, ne caput oculique ab alia corporis inclinatione dissideant. Nam neque hoc esse in parte pronuntiationis negaverit quisquam, nec ipsam pronuntiationem ab oratore secernet. Et certe quod facere oporteat, non indignandum est discere, cum præsertim hæc chironomia, quæ est (ut nomine ipso declaratur) lex gestus, & ab illis temporibus heroicis orta sit, & a summis Græciæ viris, & ab ipso etiam Socrate probata, a Platone quoque in parte civilium posita virtutum, & a Chrysippo in præceptis de liberorum educatione compositis non omitta’. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, I:11. The word *chironomia* mentioned in the text comes from the Greek χειρονομία, a composite of the words hand (χείρ) and law (νόμος), meaning the symbolic and codified movement of the hands. Two important English treatises on gesture, by John Bulwer (1644) and Gilbert Austin (1806), adopt *chironomia* as their title.

⁷³Some studies that examine the profession of ancient actors include: Elaine Fantham, ‘Orator and/et actor’ in: Patricia Easterling and Edith Hall, editors, *Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Alan Lindley Boegehold, *When a Gesture was Expected: A Selection of Examples from Archaic and Classical Greek Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Patricia Easterling and Edith Hall, editors, *Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). The essays in James I. Porter, *Constructions of the Classical Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), attempt to place the actor’s body in a more prominent position within classical studies. This link seems to remain unbroken in the twenty-first century, as the 2016 National Opera Studio report reviewed in the Introduction suggested that singers could emulate actors and public speakers to improve their skills: ‘The colleges and companies may wish to discuss how, jointly, they might help singers develop their self-presentation skills, drawing on actors and experienced public speakers’. Devlin and Martin, *op. cit.*, p.37.

trying to draw liquid from dry pumice stone’) and approved acting on the theatrical stage as a means of strengthening their voice, establishing their gesture, and acquiring ‘an honourable audacity’.⁷⁴ The English playwright and actor Thomas Heywood (c. 1574–1641) wrote that during his time as a student at the University of Cambridge he saw some of the best graduates acting in ‘Tragedyes, Comedyes, Historyes, Pastorals and Shewes’, a practice which ‘teacheth audacity to the bashfull Grammarian’ and ‘makes him a bold Sophister, to argue *pro et contra*’, because

it not onely emboldens a scholler to speake, but instructs him to speake well, and with iudgement, to obserue his comma’s, colons, & full poynts, his parentheses, his breathing spaces, and distinctions, to keepe a decorum in his countenance, neither to frowne when he should smile, nor to make vnseemely and disguised faces in the deliery of his words, not to stare with his eies, draw awry his mouth, confoũd his voice in the hollow of his throat, or teare his words hastily betwixt his teeth, neither to buffet his deske like a mad-man, nor stand in his place like a liewesse Image, demurely plodding, & without any smooth & formal motiõ. It instructs him to fit his phrases to his

⁷⁴Itaq; nunc industria, labore, diligentia, excitanda omnia sunt & inserenda, quodego prope modum dixerim ex arido pumice liquidam vndam haurire. Atq; híc non equidem possum non laudare Præceptores tuos Iuuenti, in dicendo graues, & experientes, & maturo iudicio viros, qui frequenter iubent auditores suos in suggestum conscendere, agere, pronuntiare, scenam etiam & theatrum aliquando tenere, vt non modò vox corroboretur & instituat gestus, verùm etiam honesta quædam audacia ingeneretur’. Louis de Cressolles, *Vacationes autumnales sive de perfecta oratoris actione et pronunciatione. Libri III. In quibus è scriptorum elegantium monumentis, gestuum & vocum rationes non indocta copia & varietate explicantur, & vitia in agendo notantur. Opus omnibus eloquentiæ studiosis, & qui vel sacro, vel profano in loco publice dicunt, utilissimum* (Paris: Sumptibus Sebastiani Cramoisy, via Iacobæa, sub Ciconiis, 1620), Liber Primus, p.89. Cressolle’s treatise, and that by the Jesuit priest and rhetorician Nicolas Caussin (1580–1651), *Eloquentiæ sacræ et humanæ* which was published a year earlier, were two of the earliest texts on the subject to be published in France. According to Chaouche, the language of these treatises (Latin being the official language of instruction in Jesuit colleges) and their size (Cressolles’ text spans 706 pages and Caussin’s 671), would have made it difficult to escape the exclusivity of the Jesuit community and reach the greater public. Sabine Chaouche, *Sept traités sur le jeu du comédien et autres textes: De l’action oratoire à l’art dramatique (1657–1750)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), p.25.

action, and his action to his phrase, and his pronuntiation to them both.⁷⁵

The puritan lawyer William Prynne (1600–1669), in his scathing condemnation of theatre published in 1633, vehemently argued against orators learning boldness, eloquence, action and elocution from acting in plays,⁷⁶ which indicates that it was an established practice. The practice evidently continued in the next century, as the editor’s preface of the three English editions of le Faucheur’s influential treatise on the action of the orator (published in London in 1702, 1727, and 1750) asserted that the book would be beneficial to divinity and law students because they would no longer have to learn gestures by attending the playhouse.⁷⁷ The philosopher and physician John Locke (1632–1704) was wary of rhetoric (calling it the ‘Art

⁷⁵Heywood, *op. cit.*, Chapter ‘An Apology for Actors, and first touching their Antiquity’, no pagination.

⁷⁶William Prynne, *Histrion-Mastix. The Players Scourge, or Actors Tragædie, Divided into Two Parts* (London: Printed by E. A. and W. I. for Michael Sparke, and are to be sold at the Blue Bible, in Greene Arbour, in little Old Bayly, 1633), pp.933–934, 939. Prynne was later forced to formally retract his book which contained many extreme positions: ‘I did once write a Book against Stage-plays, called *Histrion-mastix*, [...] but it was when I had not so cleer a light as now I have; and it is no disparagement for any man to alter his judgement upon better information’. Idem, *Mr William Prynne His Defence of Stage-Plays or A Retracting of a former Book of his called Histrion-Mastix* (London: n.p., 1649), p.5.

⁷⁷Michel le Faucheur, *An Essay upon the Action of an Orator; as to his Pronunciation & Gesture. Useful both for Divines and Lawyers, and necessary for all Young Gentlemen, that study how to Speak well in Publick. Done out of French* (London: Printed for Nich. Cox at the Golden Bible without Temple-Barr, 1702), *op. cit.*, The Translator’s Preface, no pagination. This statement is found in each of the three editions, even though the contents of the preface are revised and altered. In regards to the 1702 publication date of the first translation of le Faucheur’s treatise, it should be noted that many secondary sources and online library catalogues record it as published at around 1680. The book does not include a publication date, and the source for the 1680 date is Donald Wing’s *Short-Title Catalogue (1641–1700)*. It seems, however, that Wing was in error. The book was printed by Nicholas Cox at the Golden Bible without Temple Bar, and every other of his publications I have seen that were printed in the same location (at least ten) are dated between 1702 and 1704. Moreover, the *British Book Trade Index* lists Nicholas Cox at the Golden Bible without Temple Bar from 1702. I also found a record of this book listed as a new edition in *Bibliotheca Annua*, Volume 4, for the years 1702 and 1703, Miscellanies section, number 29, p.57. I brought these findings to the attention of the rare books librarians at Houghton Library at Harvard University (while a visiting research fellow there in 2018), as well as at the Bodleian and British Libraries. Houghton amended their catalogue records immediately, altering the publication date to 1702. The ESTC cataloguing authority, which curates the information on English books from this period and is used by the Bodleian Library and British Library, updated the publication date in June 2020. Many other library catalogues still follow Wing and record the book as published c. 1680. However, most evidence points to 1702 as the most likely date of publication and is therefore used here.

of Deceit and Errour’) because of its power to ‘move the Passions, and thereby mislead the Judgement’, but he admitted that ‘tis in vain to find fault with those Arts of Deceiving, wherein Men find pleasure to be Deceived’.⁷⁸ Although using rhetoric to misguide good judgement in a political or judiciary context carries ethical and moral implications, these do not apply to the context of the tragedy, where the performers are by definition impersonating other characters and the spectators are actively seeking to be deceived so they can be transported into the world of the play or opera and be moved by the elevated actions of the serious and illustrious personages.⁷⁹

So far we have seen that in the context of historical acting the movement and presentation of the performers’ bodies followed the aesthetic rules of classical beauty (contrast, variety and serpentine line of beauty) and tragicality (decorum and majesty), while rhetoric provided the technical framework according to which the dramatic text was processed and the best possible actions were chosen in order to maximise the ability for engaging and moving the audience. Although the largest part of rhetoric concerns invention and composition, its performative element was claimed to have the most visceral effect on spectators, and herein lies the strong connection between actors and orators that made rhetoric the second

⁷⁸John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding. In Four Books* (London: Printed for Tho. Basset, and sold by Edw. Mory at the Sign of the Three Bibles in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1690), p.251. The critique of rhetoric’s power goes as far back as Plato’s attack on the sophists. A detailed discussion can be found in: Marina McCoy, *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷⁹Flecknoe wrote that the stage is ‘a harmless and innocent Recreation; where the minde is recreated and delighted, and that *Ludus Literarum*, or School of good Language and Behaviour, that makes Youth soonest Man, and man soonest good and vertuous, by joyning example to precept, and the pleasure of seeing to that of hearing’. Flecknoe, ‘A Short Discourse of the English Stage’, *op.cit.*, no pagination. Le Faucheur takes a more cautious stance, reminding that the power of the ‘Art of Action’ can still have a corrupting influence, even in the context of a performance, as ‘those Ministers of sensual delights and publick vanities’, as he calls the performers, ‘do lewdly abuse the *Graces of Good Speaking and Gesture* upon the *Stage*, to excite the wit of youth to *Wantonness, Prophaneness and Immorality*; to stir up their blood for *Intemperance and Debauche*, and to set their Passions a Fire upon false pleasures and imaginary satisfactions’. le Faucheur, *An Essay upon the Action of an Orator*, *op.cit.*, p.23.

main principle of historical acting. The following section will examine naturalness, the third, last and most important principle of historical acting.

Naturalness

Although in historical acting corporal expression was formed and was regulated by a series of theoretical and technical precepts deriving from classical beauty and rhetoric, the ultimate goal was a performance that was guided by nature and appeared truthful and believable.⁸⁰ Andrea Perucci (1651–1704) wrote that ‘tragedy and comedy must be represented in such a way that a fictitious thing seems to the eyes of the audience to be genuine, or rather, very genuine’,⁸¹ and Riccoboni argued that ‘Good Sense dictates to us that we never seek for Pleasure in Fiction when we can find it in Truth, especially in a Profession such as that of a Player, which borrows its chief Excellencies from Nature herself’.⁸² Fordyce claimed that ‘[i]n reality, *that Action* alone is Just, which is a Genuine Exhibition of *Nature*, which represents her Feelings and Perceptions, and gives to these a Voice and Body’, because only this natural action could ‘make any thorough or durable Impression’.⁸³ But if the correct and most effective action on stage is a genuine depiction of nature, what is art’s place? Fordyce exclaims:

So powerful a Mistress is *Nature*! In truth, *Nature* must still be Mistress, even in the Works of *Art* themselves. *Art* in general, is only her *Handmaid*, whose business and glory it is to follow and minister to that Sovereign *Directress*. [...] Study is only to be employed in

⁸⁰‘*Art* rul’d by *Nature* must direct the Soul, And ev’ry Gesture, Look, and Word controul’. William Oldys, editor, ‘An Essay on the Theatres: Or, the Art of Acting. In Imitation of Horace’s Art of Poetry. MS. Never before Printed’ Volume V, (London: Printed for T. Osborne, in Gray’s-Inn, 1745), p.545.

⁸¹‘la Tragedia, e la Comedia ha da esser rappresentata di modo che la cosa finta sembri agli occhi de’riguardanti vera, anzi verissima’ Andrea Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa premeditata, ed all’improvviso parti due. Giovevole non solo à chi si diletta di Rappresentare; ma a’Predicatori, Oratori, Accademici, e Curiosi* (Naples: Nella nuova Stampa Di Michele Luigi Mutio, 1699), p.127.

⁸²Riccoboni, ‘Reflections upon Declamation’, *op. cit.*, p.31.

⁸³Fordyce, *op. cit.*, p.19.

a Conformity and Subserviency to Nature, and Art only used as her *Organ*, through which she is to speak; or her *Instrument*, by which she is to perform her Operations.⁸⁴

Action is shaped by art, but art operates under the directorship of nature automatically because art ‘derives its Principles wholly from Nature’ in the first place.⁸⁵ Aaron Hill (1685–1750) blurred the boundaries by asserting that ‘*Art Itself is Nature*; when it teaches *natural Principles*’,⁸⁶ but this paradoxical relationship between art and nature is distilled most eloquently in these verses by Alexander Pope (1688–1744):

Those RULES of old *discover’d*, not *devis’d*,
Are *Nature* still, but *Nature Methodiz’d*;
Nature, like *Monarchy*, is but restrain’d
By the same Laws which first *herself* ordain’d.⁸⁷

The ancient rules of art *are* nature because they have not been devised arbitrarily, but they have been discovered within nature itself. Earlier in this chapter we saw that the origin of the principles of classical beauty was believed to lie in the discovery of formulas hidden in nature that produce harmony in the visual

⁸⁴Ibid., pp.22, 28.

⁸⁵Riccoboni, ‘Reflections upon Declamation’, *op. cit.*, p.4.

⁸⁶Aaron Hill, *The Art of Acting: Deriving Rules from a New Principle, for Touching the Passions in a Natural Manner. An Essay of General Use, to Those, who hear, or speak in Public, and to the Practisers of Many of the Elegant Arts; As Painters, Sculptors, and Designers: But Adapted, in Particular, to the Stage: With View to quicken the Delight of Audiences, And form a Judgement of the Actors, in their Good, or Bad, Performances* (London: Printed for J. Osborn, at the Golden Ball, in Pater-noster Row, 1746), p.vii. Aaron Hill was a poet, playwright and theatrical producer who became particularly interested in acting technique. Between 1734 and 1736, together with the civil servant and writer William Popple (1701–1764), published 173 issues of the theatrical periodical *The Prompter* where Hill wrote under the pseudonym of Mr Broomstick, portraying himself as a revolutionary and urging for greater naturalism on stage. After his retirement, Hill published an acting manual in verse in 1746, *The Art of Acting*, followed by his *Essay on the Art of Acting*, which appeared posthumously in a collection of his works: Idem, ‘An Essay on the Art of Acting’ in: *The Works of the late Aaron Hill, Esq; in Four Volumes. Consisting of Letters on Various Subjects, and of Original Poems, Moral and Facetious. With an Essay of the Art of Acting*, Volume IV (London: Printed for the Benefit of the Family, 1753).

⁸⁷Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (London: Printed for W. Lewis in Russel-Street, Covent-Garden, 1711), p.7.

domain. Similarly, the rules of tragicality and rhetoric were devised after long experimentation with human nature, in a continuous process of extraction, scrutiny and refinement, which resulted in clearly-defined artistic tenets that offer highly effective ways of, respectively, inducing sublimity through pity and fear, and constructing and presenting a persuasive argument. Like monarchs lay down laws that they then are also obliged to abide by, so the rules of art have been laid down by nature, forcing art to find the most effective ways to move and delight us while operating only within the bounds of naturalness: art itself becomes a most affecting, exemplary expression of nature. Therefore, historical acting's components of beauty and rhetoric can be perceived as instances of methodised nature.

The actor's beautiful and rhetorical action was not an end in itself, but a means of telling a story through the depiction of natural-looking emotions and believable characters. Advising actors, Horace (c. 65 BCE–8 BCE) had expressed the importance for natural depiction of emotions:

Your looks must needs alter, as your Subject does
From kind to fierce, from wanton to severe,
For Nature forms, and softens us within,
And writes our fortunes changes in our face.
Pleasure enchants, impetuous Rage transports,
And grief dejects, and wrings the tortur'd Soul,
And these are all interpreted by Speech;
But he whose words and fortunes disagree,
Absurd, unpitied growes a publick Jest.⁸⁸

⁸⁸Horace, *Horace's Art of Poetry. Made English by the Right Honorable the Earl of Roscommon*, trans. by Wentworth Dillon (London: Printed for Henry Herringman at the Blew Anchor in the Lower Walk of the New Exchange, 1680), pp.8–9. Speaking of the art of the ancient Greek tragic actors and their depiction of elevated characters, William Rufus Chetwood (d. 1766) wrote that 'Those of Distinction were to be, by Nature, the very Persons they represented; they were to have the same Elevation of Soul, the same Delicacy of Thought, the same Morality of Life, the same Humanity of Heart, and Sweetness of Affections, that could at once constitute the Patriot, the Hero, the Lover, and the Friend. The Words only belonged to the Author, the Sentiments were, by Nature, their own; and hence flowed that Aptness of Attitude, that Ease in Elocution, that expressive Look, that eloquent Silence, that Freedom of Action, and that Harmony of the Whole, which at once exalted, melted, and subdued a mighty Nation to Elegance and

In the eighteenth century, Charles Gildon (1665–1724) similarly wrote that ‘to express Nature justly, one must be Master of Nature in all its Appearances, which can only be drawn from Observation, which will tell us, that the Passions and Habits of the Mind discover themselves in our Looks, Actions and Gestures’.⁸⁹ Each human emotion is reflected on the face and across the whole body through its unique form and motion.⁹⁰ Actors had to carefully observe the natural expression

Virtue’. William Rufus Chetwood, *A General History of the Stage, from its Origin in Greece down to the present Time. With the Memoirs of most of the principal Performers that have appeared on the English and Irish Stage for the last Fifty Years. With Notes, Antient, Modern, Foreign, Domestic, Serious, Comic, Moral, Merry, Historical, and Geographical, containing many Theatrical Anecdotes; also several Pieces of Poetry, never before published. Collected and Digested by W. R. Chetwood, Twenty Years Prompter to his Majesty’s Company of Comedians at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, London* (London: Printed for W. Owen, near Temple-Bar, 1749), p.106.

⁸⁹Charles Gildon, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, The late Eminent Tragedian. Wherein The Action and Utterance of the Stage, Bar, and Pulpit, are distinctly consider’d. With The Judgement of the late Ingenious Monsieur de St. Evremond, upon the Italian and French Music and Opera’s; in a Letter to the Duke of Buckingham. To which is added, The Amorous Widow, or the Wanton Wife. A Comedy. Written by Mr. Betterton. Now first printed from the Original Copy* (London: Printed for Robert Gosling, at the Mitre, near the Inner-Temple Gate in Fleetstreet, 1710), p.41. Gildon was a prolific professional writer and his *Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton*, despite its title, is really an acting treatise, Betterton’s biography occupying only a few pages. It was hailed by many of his contemporaries as the best acting tutor of its day. Gildon admits that he borrowed many of the rules he presents from the French, with the justification that ‘the *French* drew most of them from *Quintilian* and other Authors’ (p.ix). In the dedicatory epistle he claims to be the first English author to treat this topic, and his comprehensive approach aims at restoring acting in its classical glory: ‘I flatter my self, that, as I am (as far as I know) the first, who in *English* has attempted this Subject, in the Extent of the Discourse before you, so I am apt to believe, that I have pretty well exhausted the Matter’ (p.vi). Although close examination of his text reveals le Faucheur’s 1702 English translation as his source, Gildon does attempt to make his book more relevant to actors of his period, deleting sections and adding to le Faucheur’s advice (which was mainly aimed at lawyers and priests), including personal examples and anecdotes from his contemporaries, such as Elizabeth Barry (1658–1713) and Lucretia Bradshaw (fl. 1714–1741). This makes *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton* a pertinent version of le Faucheur’s treatise to use for the study of historical acting, and so in the bounds of this thesis it is often preferred as a choice of source. Many eighteenth-century treatises include large sections from Gildon’s treatise, for example, Chapter IV (titled ‘*Of the DUTY of a PLAYER*’, pp.36–54) of the treatise by William Oldys (1696–1761), *The History of the English Stage*, is entirely derived from Gildon’s work: William Oldys; Edmund Curll, editor, *The History of the English Stage, from the Restauration to the Present Time. Including the Lives, Characters and Amours, of the most Eminent Actors and Actresses. With Instructions for Public Speaking; wherein the Action and Utterance of the Bar, Stage, and Pulpit are Distinctly considered. By Mr. Thomas Betterton. Adorned with Cuts* (London: Printed for E. Curll, at Pope’s-Head in Rose-Street, Covent-Garden, 1741).

⁹⁰Cicero had said that ‘by nature, every emotion has its own facial expression, tone of voice, and gesture. The entire body of a human being, all the facial expressions and all the utterances of the voice, like the strings on a lyre, “sound” exactly in the way they are struck by each emotion’. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator (De Oratore)*, trans. by James M. May and Jakob Wisse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.292. Of the performance of tragedy, Pickering wrote that ‘THEATRICAL EXPRESSION is of *extensive* Import. It does not imply *Elocution* only,

of emotions in themselves and others, which they then absorbed, distinguished, categorised, memorised and performed on stage. Nevertheless, representing the observed emotions would not be enough unless actors first moulded them to fit the character they represented in the condition they found themselves in. John Hill (1714–1775) wrote that the ‘actor who is to express to us a peculiar passion and its effects, if he wou’d play his character with *Truth*, is not only to assume the emotions, which that passion wou’d produce in the generality of mankind; but he is to give it that peculiar form under which it wou’d appear, when exerting itself in the breast of such a person, as he is giving us the portrait of’.⁹¹ Therefore, actors had to also carefully observe how people of different personalities, age and social status carried themselves and expressed emotions.⁹² As was the case with the various emotions, these character-related observations needed to also be absorbed, distinguished, categorised, memorised and then performed on stage in a truthful manner.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) argued that input from the senses is only processed according to existing knowledge structures, which he called schemata. A schema for Kant was ‘something mediating between the mind’s

or the Delivery of an Actor’s Part, by *Speech*; but comprises, also, *every Attitude* of every Member of the Human Fabrick, as they are *naturally* put in Motion by the *Workings* of the MIND’. Pickering, *op.cit.*, p.17.

⁹¹John Hill, *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing. Interspersed with Theatrical Anecdotes, Critical Remarks on Plays, and Occasional Observations on Audiences* (London: Printed for R. Griffiths, at the Dunciad, in St. Paul’s Church-yard, 1750), p.156. Sir John Hill (no relation of Aaron Hill) dubbed by a biographer ‘one of Georgian England’s most vilified men’, was a touche-à-tout who worked in science, medicine, botany, journalism, acting and publishing. George Rousseau, *The Notorious Sir John Hill: The Man Destroyed by Ambition in the Era of Celebrity* (Lanham: Lehigh University Press, 2012), p.ix. Hill based his treatise on *Le comédien* by playwright, published three years earlier by theorist and critic Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine (1699–1778). In the dedication, Hill wrote that ‘Mons. *Sainte Albine* some years ago gave laws to the *French* stage, which were founded on nature and reason, and therefore very unexceptionable’, and as these led to a rise in the reputation of the French stage ‘[w]hat *St. Albine* laid before the *French* audiences, we submit to the opinion of the Managers of the *British* theatres [...] and we hope to see the future emulation’. Hill added examples from the British stage, including many about Garrick, who is presented as the ideal actor.

⁹²‘The performance of an actor, in whatever scene or character, is only true, when we perceive in him every thing that agrees with the age, condition, and situation of the person he represents’. J. Hill, *op.cit.*, p.156.

logical machinery and the phenomenal world’ and its purpose was ‘to ensure the link between concepts and senses, that is to say, between Form and Content’.⁹³ Actors and singers were to study and imitate the natural expression of emotions and the form of characters they observed in reality, but the way all the visual information was understood and memorised would be relative to their existing internal cognitive models. The psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980), who used Kant’s idea of the schema as a key concept for building his influential pedagogical theory of the Cognitive Development Stages,⁹⁴ wrote that ‘no form of knowledge, not even perceptual knowledge, constitutes a simple copy of reality, because it always includes a process of assimilation to previous structures’.⁹⁵ Hence, the perception of emotions by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century performers differed from that of modern performers. There were considerable differences in how the spectrum of emotions was divided and how the body and mind were thought to have worked. Likewise, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century performers possessed different schemata for understanding human personality and behaviour than today’s performers, which will have shaped their perception (and perceptive ability) and determined how new information was categorised and utilised. As the perception of nature and naturalness is adapted to fit underlying theoretical frameworks and operates within the bounds of existing knowledge structures—and because this thesis aims to use elements of historical acting as building blocks for creating a teaching method for modern performers—it is necessary, before continuing the discussion of naturalness in the context of historical acting, to look closely at the

⁹³Louis Radford, ‘The Semiotics of the Shema. Kant, Piaget, and the Calculator’ in: Michael H. G. Hoffmann, Johannes Lenhard and Falk Seeger, editors, *Activity and Sign: Grounding Mathematics Education* (Boston, MA: Springer, 2005), p.138.

⁹⁴Brady Wagoner, *The Constructive Mind: Bartlett’s Psychology in Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.139.

⁹⁵Jean Piaget, *Biology and Knowledge: An Essay on the Relations between Organic Regulations and Cognitive Processes* trans. by Beatrix Walsh (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p.4. Use of the term schema in this thesis in a pedagogical context relates to Piaget’s theory.

theories that shaped the understanding of emotions and personality in the period under review.

HUMOURS AND EMOTION

The philosopher, dramatist and influential physiognomist Giovanni Battista della Porta (1535–1615) believed that ‘the bond between the soul and the body is so great, that the soul not only follows the body’s tempering, but in fact is itself nothing else but the balancing point of the mixing of every humour in the body, namely of humidity, of dryness, of heat, and of coldness’.⁹⁶ Della Porta makes reference here to the medical theories developed by the ancient Greek physicians Empedocles (c. 495 BCE–440 BCE), Hippocrates (c. 460 BCE–375 BCE), and Galen, who asserted that a person’s health, emotional state, and personality traits were defined by the balance of four fluids inside the body, called the humours: blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm.⁹⁷ The blood was thought to be produced by the liver, the yellow bile by the gallbladder, the black bile ‘was concocted, in some versions, out of the yellow bile or out of the blood, but it was stored in the spleen’, and the phlegm (mucus) was correctly believed to be produced by the lungs.⁹⁸ Empedocles was the first to introduce the notion which led to the conception of humourism: that everything in the universe is composed of four basic elements.⁹⁹ The elemental theory became a basic premise for the western understanding of the world for two millennia, and it had a profound impact on medicine. Galen defined an element as ‘a Body pure, simple, unmixed, from which all Natural things have their Original, they are held to be in number four,

⁹⁶‘tantam esse animi cum corpore copulam, animam non solum sui corporis temperiem sequi, sed animum ipsum nil aliud esse putavit, quam æquabilem humorum omnium in corpore temperationem, scilicet humiditatis, ariditatis, caliditatis, & frigiditatis’. Giovanni Battista della Porta, *De humana physiognomoniam. Libri IIII* (Vico Equense: Apud Iosephum Cacchium, 1586), p.8.

⁹⁷The word humour comes from the Greek *chymos* (χυμός), meaning juice, via the Latin *humor*, meaning liquid.

⁹⁸Noga Arikha, *Passions and Tempers: A History of the Humours* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), p.10.

⁹⁹David Macauley, *Elemental Philosophy: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water as Environmental Ideas* (New York: Suny Press, 2010), p.81.

Fire, Air, Water, Earth; their Operations are, Active as heat and cold, Passive as driness and moisture'.¹⁰⁰ Each of the humours was associated with one of the four elements and with it adopted its unique qualities of temperature (hot or cold) and humidity (wet and dry), as can be seen in this table:

| | Hot | Cold |
|-----|--------------------|--------------------|
| Wet | Blood (Air) | Phlegm (Water) |
| Dry | Yellow bile (Fire) | Black bile (Earth) |

TABLE 1. Humoural qualities and their associated elements.

Overall good physical and mental health was called *eucrasia* (εὐκρασία), good mixing of the humours. Any illness was a sign of *dyscrasia* (δυσκρασία), a bad mixing—also known as *cacochymia* (κακοχυμία), a bad state of the humours. For example, the common treatment for fever was bloodletting, done by cupping, the use of leeches or phlebotomy performed by barber surgeons. This was thought to allow the excess hot and wet blood to leave the body and, together with the consumption of cold and dry food, to stabilise the balance of the humours, dropping the body temperature back to normal. A surplus of hot and dry yellow bile was believed to cause jaundice, colouring the patient’s skin and drying out their mouth. An excess of the cold and wet phlegm (mucus) excreted through the nose or when coughing was seen as the cause of colds or lung disease, which required recovery with hot food in a warm and dry room. The state of melancholy—literally meaning black bile (μέλαινα χολή)—was thought to be caused, as its name indicates, by the accumulation of excess black bile in the body, with the treatment

¹⁰⁰Galen, translated in: Nicholas Culpeper, *Galen’s Art of Physic: Translated into English, and largely Commented on; Together with convenient Medicines for all particular Distempers of the Parts, a Description of the Complexions, their Conditions, and what Diet and Exercise is fittest for them* (London: Printed by Peter Cole, at the sign of the Printing-Press in Cornhil, neer the Royal Exchange, 1652), p.6.

including a combination of bloodletting and induced vomiting, to purge the body and usher a return to *eucrasia*.¹⁰¹

Whereas severe or chronic imbalance of the humours was considered the root of mental or physical disease, the fleeting change of humoural balance was believed to be the source of emotions. According to Galenic medical theory, the balance of the four humours was managed by gasses called animal spirits.¹⁰² It was thought that animal spirits acted as messengers, moving through the nerves and relaying between the brain and the rest of the body signals pertaining to movement, feeling and emotion.¹⁰³ The Jesuit priest and moral psychologist Thomas Wright (1561–1623) in his influential treatise on emotion *The Passions of the Minde* (1601) wrote that ‘spirites and humors wait vpon the Passions,¹⁰⁴ as their Lords and Maisters’.¹⁰⁵ Explaining the mechanism behind the movement of the passions,

¹⁰¹Marke Ahonen, ‘Ancient philosophers on mental illness’ *History of Psychiatry*, 30 (2019):1, p.10.

¹⁰²The word spirit derives from the Latin *spiritus*, air or wind. Galen used the word *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), which likewise translates as air or wind. He asserted that there are three spirits: the natural spirit (πνεῦμα φυσικόν/*spiritus naturalis*), the vital spirit (πνεῦμα ζωτικόν/*spiritus vitalis*) and the animal spirit (πνεῦμα ψυχικόν/*spiritus animalis*). The natural and vital spirits moved through the veins and arteries and regulated basic life processes, such as breathing, nutrition, growth, etc. Any mention of spirits here refers to animal spirits which relate to feeling and motion.

¹⁰³The word ‘animal’ does not relate to beasts, but to the human soul, via the Latin *animus*. Galen called the animal spirit πνεῦμα ψυχικόν. The word ψυχικός means something that relates to the soul, *psyche* (ψυχή), the opposite of σωματικός which relates to the body (σῶμα), and is where the root word ‘psycho-’ comes from.

¹⁰⁴The modern word ‘emotion’ was not in use, so Wright and other historical authors used instead ‘passion’, ‘affection’, ‘motion of the soul’ (or ‘motion of the mind’), or ‘perturbation of the mind’.

¹⁰⁵Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde* (London: Printed by V. S. for W. B., 1601), p.7. A corrected and enlarged edition of Wright’s treatise was published in 1604: Idem, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall. Corrected, enlarged, and with sundry new discourses augmented* (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes for Walter Burre, and are to be sold in Paules Churchyard at the signe of the Crane, 1604). La Ménardièrre, who also wrote two medical treatises, on the treatment of melancholy and the nature of the spirits that serve feelings, referred to passions just as *movements*. de La Ménardièrre, *La poétique, op. cit.*, p.22. La Ménardièrre’s medical treatises, before he turned his attention exclusively to poetry and drama, were: Idem, *Traitté de la Melancholie, Sçavoir si elle est la cause des Effets que l’on remarque dans les Possedees de Loudun. Tiré des Reflexions de M. sur le discours de M. D.* (La Flèche: Martin Guyot, & Gervais Laboe, 1635); Idem, *Raisonnemens de Mesnardiere, Conseiller & Medecin de son Altesse Royale. Sur La Nature des Esprits qui Servent aux Sentimens* (Paris: Iean Camusat, ruë saint Iacques, à la Toison d’Or, 1638).

Wright wrote that when an object or thought (good or bad) comes to our imagination, which is located in the brain, animal spirits rush from the brain and inform the heart, which in turn reacts by producing all the appropriate humours and altering the balance according to the intended passion.¹⁰⁶ The more active the imagination, the larger amount of animal spirits the brain sends to the heart, making it achieve the intended humoural quality (hot, cold, moist or dry) much faster, and leading to a fiercer reaction that stirs the humours more intensely and produces a greater effect.¹⁰⁷

Bulwer concurs that the heart is the seat of affections but the head is where affections originate, explaining that the heart is informed of the intended affection by the means of heat and spirits which stir it into action, turning thoughts into passions by means of matter (the four humours).¹⁰⁸ He then explains how passions are expressed in the body: after the humoural equilibrium is readjusted, the now altered spirits rise to the brain (the chief organ of sense), which then instructs them to travel through the nerves to the muscles of the body (including the muscles of the face, which are the closest to the brain), commanding them to move accordingly, thus drawing on the body the outward signs of the passion.¹⁰⁹ Hill included humoural theory in his understanding of emotional expression in the context of the art of acting, providing this detailed description:

WITHOUT entering into the Disputes of the *Philosophers*, concerning the SEAT of the *Soul*. It will suffice for my present Intention, to assign

¹⁰⁶Wright, *The Passions of the Minde*, *op. cit.*, pp.82–83. Wright refers to animal spirits as ‘purer spirits’ because according to Galen of the three types of spirits (natural, vital and animal), animal spirits were the most refined.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p.84. Very strong passions could unsettle the humours so much that they could create physical illness. Ibid., p.6.

¹⁰⁸John Bulwer, *Pathomyotomia, or a Dissection of the significative Muscles of the Affections of the Minde. Being an Essay to a new Method of observing the most Important movings of the Muscles of the Head, as they are the neerest and Immediate Organs of the Voluntarie or Impetuous motions of the Mind. With the Proposall of a new Nomenclature of the Muscles* (Printed by W. W. for Humphrey Moseley, and are to sold at his Shop at the Princes Armes in St. Pauls Church-yard, 1649), pp.101, 103–104.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp.102–103.

a Throne to the IMAGINATION, upon her little *Gland*, in the Middle of the *Brain*: Whence, the *Animal Spirits*, (surrounding her, like *Life-Guards*) are *detach'd*, for Execution of her *Orders*, into Every Part of her Empire, the *Body*, by a Conveyance, with the *Blood*, and the *Humours*.

HERE, then, the *Imagination*, assuming Conception of some *Image*, or *Purpose*, and That *Ideal* Impression, being communicated to the WILL; there is thrown out, from the *Heart*, an Efflux, or Torrent, for conveying up the SPIRITS, to the *Aid* of that *Imagination*, whereby they were *summon'd*.

THE first, and obvious, Effect, of such a Surplus Effusion of *Spirits*, about the *Brain*, is a sparkling Impression of the Purpose, breaking into the EYES, as the *nearest* Remove, from their *Muster*.

BUT, the *Eyes*, wanting *Space*, to retain so redundant a Tide, The FACE becomes (all over) stamp'd, with Marks of the *same Character*, by a Receipt, (into its *Muscles*) of those *Spirits*, so charg'd by the Imagination, with Execution of that *Specific* Purpose.

CONTINUING to make Ways, by the *Thorax*, They next, descend, through the *Muscles* of the *Breast*, where, by an assimilated Modulation, they impress the *Organs* of SPEECH, with a TONE, correspondent to the Intention.

CROWDING on, into Every Part of the Body, with a Rapidity, as *sudden as Thought*, and, Swelling, as they go, Every *Nerve*, and adapted *Fibre*, They reduce the Whole concurrent Frame, into *one, brac'd, agitated*, TENDENCY, to operate, for Execution of *That* Purpose, which is what we call the PASSION, to be acted.

So that, you see, the *Art of Acting* is no more than a connected Deduction of these plain, and natural *Consequences*.

1st.—The *Imagination* assumes the *Idea*

2dly.—ITS *Marks*, and characteristical Impressions, appear, first, in the FACE; because nearest to the *Seat* of the Imagination.

3dly.—THENCE, impell'd by the *Will*, a comission'd Detachment of the *Animal Spirits* descending, into the dependant Organization of *Muscles*, and *Swelling*, and *adapting* them, in its Progress, bends, and stimulates, their Elastic Powers, into a *Position*, apt to *execute* the Purpose, (or *express* the Warmth of) the *Idea*.

4thly.—THUS, the *Look*, *Air*, *Voice*, and *Action*, proper to a Passion, preconceiv'd, in the *Imagination*, become *a mere, and mechanic*, NECESSITY; without Perplexity, Study, or Difficulty.¹¹⁰

The physical-emotional conception of humourism provided an explanation for the powerful visceral effect corporal eloquence has on people.¹¹¹ According to Galenic theory, a passion relied on a series of internal movements in order to be felt, and so movement and gesture in theatrical performance can encourage 'sympathetic motion in the listener's body that can itself quite literally "move" the humours, or (if one prefers) the heart and soul'.¹¹² Wright offers a vivid image of the emotions being connected closely with our senses and corporeal nature, while reason operates in a distinct domain: 'passions are drowned in corporall organs and instruments, [as well] as sense; reason dependeth of no corporall subiect, but as a Princesse in hir throne, considereth the state of her kingdome'.¹¹³ Words speak only to reason, and although reason can generate passions after careful consideration of these words, images and gestures affect the senses directly and can effect immediate, deeper and stronger reactions. Le Faucheur wrote that speaking 'does

¹¹⁰Aaron Hill and William Popple, 'December 26' *The Prompter* (1735):118, pp.1–2.

¹¹¹Wright wrote that combining speech with action an orator can imprint the passions of the mind deeper into the audience's soul: 'as it appeareth in Comedies, where dumbe shewes often expresse the whole matter, and by gestures in dancing some can giue to vnderstand most mechanicall artes and trades. The Rhetoricians likewise do not content themselues with the simple prununtiation of their Orations, but also prescribe many rules of action, the which they hold so much the better, how much more liuely it representeth the conceits and affections of the minde, because that both thorow the eares, and the eies of their auditors, they intent to imprint them in their soules deeper: for indeede, words & actions spring from the same roote, that is, vnderstanding and affections'. Wright, *The Passions of the Minde*, *op.cit.*, p.196.

¹¹²Tim Carter, 'The search for musical meaning' in: Idem and John Butt, editors, *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.194.

¹¹³Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*, *op.cit.*, p.15.

the main Work in the Minds of those that understand it; but when it is destitute of *Gesture*, which is the *Life* of all *Speech*, (as *Alconius* says) it makes but a *dispassionate* and a *Dead Discourse*.¹¹⁴ In opera, words and action are combined with music, which was also believed to have a powerful effect in moving the humours. This made music ‘a distinct subject of medical interest that straddled the boundaries between body and soul’.¹¹⁵ For example, war songs could increase the pulse and blood production, and love songs decelerate the heartbeat and decrease ‘the melancholic anxiety, turning it into a deeper, calmer contemplation’.¹¹⁶

In the context of *opera seria*, stage movement and gesture worked in harmony with the words and music, cumulatively increasing the effect of the sensory perception on the brain, and, as we saw, leading to more vehement changes in the humoral equilibrium from one elevated passion to another, resulting in a sense of catharsis when the balance was finally restored in the *lieto fine*. In order, therefore, to most effectively move the audience, Baroque librettists, composers and singers needed to have a clear conception of each one of the series of passions they wanted to convey through their text, music or performance. Various theories we now group under the umbrella term ‘doctrine of affections’ provided a methodical division of the emotional spectrum into distinct passions, meaningfully categorised, with advice on how they can be materialised; in our case through figures of speech, music harmonies, or gestures.

Wright adopts the influential taxonomy for the passions devised in the thirteenth century by the friar, theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), writing that there are no more than eleven passions of the mind, six of which are categorised as coveting and five as invading, and they can be grouped in

¹¹⁴le Faucheur, *The Art of Speaking in Publick*, *op. cit.*, pp.171–172.

¹¹⁵Penelope Gouk, ‘Music and the Nervous System in Eighteenth-Century British Medical Thought’ in: James Kennaway, editor, *Music and the Nerves, 1700–1900* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.44.

¹¹⁶Arikha, *op. cit.*, pp.180–181.

five pairs of opposites and one unmatched: love/hatred, desire/abomination, delight/sadness (or pleasure/pain) in the coveting appetite; hope/despair, fear/audacity and ire in the invading.¹¹⁷ The mathematician and natural philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650) suggested a very different division, which became very influential in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by identifying only six main passions (which he called simple or primitive)—admiration, love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness—that can then be combined to produce a large number of compound passions.¹¹⁸ He described admiration as

a sudden surprize of the Soul, which causeth in her an inclination to consider with attention the objects which seem rare, and extraordinary to her; it is caused first by an impression in the brain, that represents the object, as rare and consequently, worthy to be seriously considered: after that, by the motion of the spirits, which are disposed by this impression to tend with might and main, towards that place of the brain where it is, to fortifie, and conserve it there; as also they are thereby disposed to passe from thence into the muscles, which serve to hold the organs of the senses in the same scituation they are, that it may be fomented by them, if it bee by them that it was formed.¹¹⁹

The painter and art theorist Charles Le Brun (1619–1690) based his work on the Cartesian understanding of the passions but focused on their outward expression, which was the reason he became a particularly influential figure for actors. Le Brun

¹¹⁷Wright, *The Passions of the Minde*, *op.cit.*, p.41. In modern scholarship, coveting passions (*passiones concupiscibilis*) are normally translated as ‘concupiscible passions’, and the invading passions (*passiones irascibilis*) as ‘irascible passions’.

¹¹⁸René Descartes, *The Passions Of the Soule In three Books. The first Treating of the Passions in Generall, and occasionally of the whole nature of man. The second, Of the Number, and order of the Passions, and the explication of the six Primitive ones. The third, Of Particular Passions.* (London: Printed for A.C. and are to be sold by J. Martin, and J. Ridley, at the Castle in Fleet-street near Ram-Alley, 1650), p.54. The original treatise was published in French a year before: Idem, *Les passions de l’ame* (Paris: Henry Le Gras, au troisième Pilier de la grand Salle du Palais, à L couronnée, 1649).

¹¹⁹Idem, *The Passions Of the Soule*, *op.cit.*, p.55.

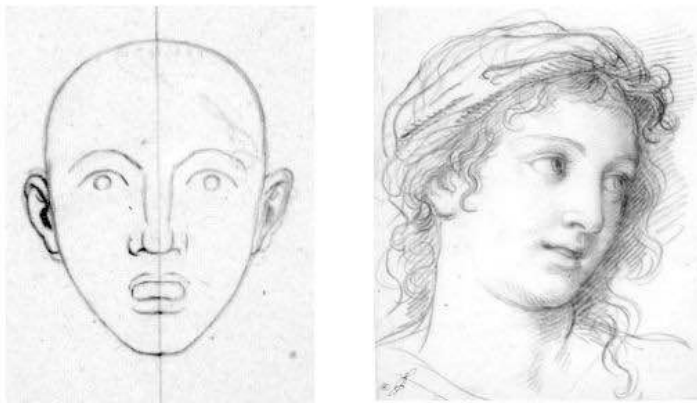


FIGURE 7. Two original drawings by Le Brun for the passion of admiration, which acted as the basis for the engravings found in his treatise. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

gave a series of lectures on the expression of the passions at the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris, material from which was posthumously published in the influential treatise *Conference de Monsieur Le Brun* (1698).¹²⁰ The treatise provides descriptions of twenty-four main and compound passions as they are naturally reflected on the face, accompanied by forty-three plates.¹²¹ Le Brun's

¹²⁰Charles Le Brun, *Conference de Monsieur Le Brun premier Peintre du Roi de France, Chancelier et Directeur de l'Academie de Peinture et Sculpture. Sur l'Expresſion generale & particuliere. Enrichie de Figures gravées par B. Picart* (Paris: E. Picart le Rom. ruë S. Jacques, au Buste de Monseigneur, 1698). The treatise was republished in Amsterdam in 1702: Idem, *Méthode pour apprendre a dessiner les passions, Proposée dans une Conference sur L'Expresſion Générale, et Particuliere* (Amsterdam: François van-der Plaats, 1702). The 1698 version was published in English in 1701: Idem, *The Conference of Monsieur Le Brun, Chief Painter to the French King, Chancellor and Director of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture; Upon Expression, General and Particular. Translated from the French, and Adorned with 43 Copper-Plates* (London: Printed for John Smith at the Lion and Crown in Russel-street in Covent-Garden, Edward Cooper at the Three Pidgeons in Bedford-street, and David Mortier, Bookseller in the Strand, at the Sign of Erasmus's Head, 1701). The 1702 version was translated to English by John Williams and published in London in 1734: Idem, *A Method to learn to Design the Passions, Proposed in a Conference on their General and Particular Expression. Written in French, and illustrated with a great many Figures excellently Designed, by Mr. Le Brun, chief Painter to the French King, Chancellor and Director of the royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture*, trans. by John Williams (London: Printed for the Author; and sold by J. Huggonson, near Sergeants-inn in Chancery-lane; Mr. Croyton, Bookseller in Ipswich; and at the Printsellers and Pamphlet-shops of London and Westminster, 1734).

¹²¹In the rest of this thesis Le Brun is credited as the author of the material from *Conference* (1698) and the various editions and translations, but it should be noted that the authorship of the text is not clear. The plates are all engravings from original sketches by Le Brun, but the text appears to be compiled by notes taken from lectures in the Academy in 1673 by Le Brun's close friend, painter and writer Henri Testelin (1616–1695), and published in 1693 as: Henri Testelin,

taxonomy includes the six Cartesian passions—admiration, love, hatred, desire, joy and sorrow—as well as the mixed passions esteem, veneration/faith, ravisement/ecstasy, scorn/aversion, horror, terror, hope, fear, jealousy, pain, laughter, weeping, anger, despair and rage. The descriptions and designs were based on close inspection of the natural expression of the passions, as he was famously ‘often seen to mind a Quarrel in the Street betwixt various People, and there not only observe the several Degrees of the Passion of Anger rising in the Quarrel, and their different Recess, but the distinct Expressions of it in every Face that was concern’d’.¹²² Figure 7 shows the passion of admiration, and the description of this ‘most temperate of all the Passions wherein the Heart feels the least of Emotion’ explains in careful detail that

all the Parts of the Face also receive very little change. If there be any, ’tis only in the elevation of the Eye-brow, but both Ends will be even, and the Eye rather more opened than ordinary; the Pupil in the centre between the two Eye-lids, without motion, and fixed

‘Extrait des Conférences de l’Académie Royale de Peinture & de Sculpture, leües en présence de Monsieur Colbert, en l’année 1673. Sur L’Expression Generale et Particuliere’ in: *Sentimens de plus habiles Peintres du Tems, sur la pratique de la Peinture et Sculpture, recueillis & mis en Tables de Preceptes. Avec six Discours Academiques, Extraits des Conférences tenuës en l’Académie Royale desdits Arts, & prononcés en présence de dessunt Monsier Colbert, Conseiller du Roi en tous ses Conseils, Controleur General des Finances, Surintendant & Ordonnateur des Bâtimens du Roi, Jardins, Arts & Manufactures de France, protecteur de ladite Academie, assemblée generalement en des jours solempnels pour la delivrance du Prix Royal* (The Hague: Matthieu Rogguet, Imprimeur, dans le Pooten, 1693). Testelin’s book contains extracts from lectures at the Academy (years 1670–1676) and includes drawings and large tables that condense and schematically represent the principles of painting. Testelin is credited as the author of the text, but in his epistle dedicatory he infers that it is a summary of ideas by Le Brun (though Le Brun’s name is not mentioned anywhere else in the book). He dedicates his book to Le Brun as ‘homage and recognition’, describing it as ‘a summary of the precepts of painting’ from ‘judicious reasonings’ he collected from lectures in the Academy and from informal conversations with him over many years, noting that he has taken *almost* all of them (‘presque tous’) from their true source, which is why he calls them extracts: ‘A Monsieur Le Brun, Escuyer [...] Je vous presente cet abregé des preceptes de la Peinture, comme par un droit d’hommage et de reconnoissance puis qu’outre les obligeantes exhortations que vous m’avez toujours faites de recueillir les judicieux raisonnemens des conférences de l’Academie, vous m’en avez vous mesmeourny une si riche abondance dans les entre-tiens familiers dont vous m’avez honoré depuis plusieurs années, que je puis dire les avoir presque tous puisés dans leur veritable source, et qu’ainsy ils ne doivent paroistre que souz le titre d’une si noble extraction’.

¹²²Gildon, *op. cit.*, p.37.

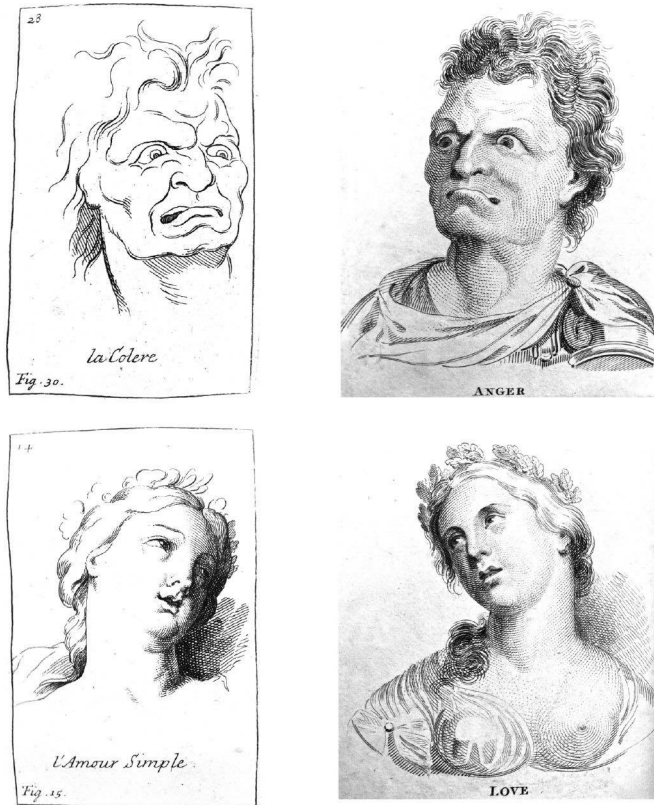


FIGURE 8. Comparison of the passions of anger and love as seen in Le Brun's 1698 *Conference* (left), and the anonymous 1807 *Theatrical Speaker* (right).

upon the object admired. The Mouth also will be somewhat open, but without alteration, any more than the other parts of the face. All the effect of this Passion is an entire suspension of motion, to give the Soul Time to deliberate upon what she has to do, and attentively consider the object that presents itself to her; which if uncommon and extraordinary, what was but, at first, a simple emotion of Admiration, then becomes Esteem.¹²³

Having a good understanding of the signs of outward expression of diverse passions was an important part of the actor's trade,¹²⁴ and Le Brun's detailed descriptions

¹²³Le Brun, *A Method*, *op. cit.*, p.24.

¹²⁴Aaron Hill wrote that 'AN ACTOR is the Professor of an *Art that represents, to the Eyes and Ears of an Audience, the whole Diversity of Passions*', and someone 'whose *Trade* it is, to represent *Human Passions*, cannot be qualified for *That Trade*, without a *Knowledge of those Passions*, and a *Power to put on, at Will, the Marks, and Colours, which distinguish them*'. Aaron Hill and William Popple, 'Friday, June 27' *The Prompter* (1735):66. Along the same

and visual representations of the expression of a large number of passions helped his treatise exert its influence beyond the fine arts and to the theatrical world. Chapter 3 provides accounts of the celebrated English actor David Garrick (1717–1779) making ‘faces in imitation of those by Le Brun’,¹²⁵ and embellished copies of some of Le Brun’s drawings are found more than a century later in the anonymous English acting treatise *The Theatrical Speaker* (Figure 8).¹²⁶ Engel refers several times to Le Brun’s drawings, in his acting treatise using them as a starting point for elaborate descriptions of the expression of the passions on the face and body. For example, this is his idea of how the passion of admiration could be realised on stage:

You will find more drawings than one on the subject of admiration, in Le Brun. The first of these drawings is the most agreeable, and the most exact. If you examine the traits with which the painter characterises this affection, (a name which some, however, deny belonging to admiration) you will remark that the body imitates the expansion of the soul, whilst seeking to seize on a grand object, with which all its representative forces appear to be replete. The mouth and eyes are open, the eyebrows are slightly drawn upwards, the arms are certainly nearer the body than in quick and animated desire, yet they are still somewhat extended; in other respects, the body and the traits of the countenance are in repose.¹²⁷

lines, Jelgerhuis wrote that ‘No study is more useful to the actor than that of the emotions. To this end he should look at pictures of emotional display, read about them, and seek to make their expression his own’. Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, p.354.

¹²⁵John Adolphus, *Memoirs of John Bannister, Comedian*, Volume 1, (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1839), Ch. II, p.30.

¹²⁶*The Theatrical Speaker, or an Elucidation of the whole Science of Acting: containing Comprehensive Rules for accurately exhibiting the Dramatic Passions, with numerous examples for representation* (London: J. Smeeton, 1807).

¹²⁷Johann Jacob Engel and Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action, Adapted to the English Drama. From a work on the subject by M. Engel, member of the Royal Academy of Berlin. Embellished with numerous engravings, expressive of the various passions, and representing the modern costume of the London theatres*, trans. by Henry Siddons (London: Printed for Richard Philips, No. 6, Bridge Street, Blackfriars, 1807), p.71. Engel’s influential treatise *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785–1786) was translated into French, Italian and Dutch, and it was published in English in London in 1807 by the actor and theatre manager



FIGURE 9. Detail from the passion of fear as expressed in the face by Le Brun (left) and Jelgerhuis' copy (right).

Jelgerhuis also used the work of 'the immortal LeBrun' as a core primary source for his teaching, writing that after spending his whole life studying and analysing emotions he can 'state with conviction that LeBrun has included everything that can be said on the subject' and that his systematical and 'excellently researched studies on human feeling have won him the approval of artists who generally recognize him as the authority to follow'.¹²⁸ For example, when discussing the passion of fear, he started by copying for his students one of Le Brun's faces (Figure 9) and then expanded it to show how fright would be expressed by the whole body (Figure 10). He advised his students to 'memorise these passions, repeating their appearance frequently so that [they] can perform them properly and unaffectedly'.¹²⁹

Actors and singers, however, not only needed to understand how passions are expressed and be able to represent them on stage in a legible manner. We saw earlier (p. 52) that to achieve naturalness, the expression of the passions needed to be modified to fit the dramatic character performed. Lewis Theobald

Henry Siddons (1774–1815). Siddons did not strive for accuracy, and freely altered passages to make them more fitting to the English stage. He followed, however, the general ideas of the original, as well as the format, keeping the epistolary style and including sixty-nine newly-made plates representing many of the passions described in the book. Some of the plates copy Engel's designs faithfully, while others display variations (see Figure 14, p.120).

¹²⁸Jelgerhuis, 'Lessons', *op. cit.*, pp.241, 337–338.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, p.362.



FIGURE 10. The passion of fear expressed in the whole body. Jelgerhuis' drawing of Andries Snoek as Hamlet.

(1688–1744), editor and author of the theatrical periodical *The Censor*, wrote that the '*ill-maintaining of the Characters*' is one of the faults of conduct that breaks the decorum of the action,¹³⁰ expanding the idea of decorum to include not only the propriety of action in the context of beauty but also propriety in terms of character development. To that end, humourism provides a tool that can be used towards understanding, developing and representing believable dramatic characters on stage, known as the theory of the four temperaments.

TEMPERAMENTS AND CHARACTER

In addition to the belief that humours regulated health and emotions we have already explored, it was thought that the same humours were also the basis for different personalities. A person in excellent health and a calm state should have all their humours perfectly balanced. This perfect balance did not exist, and each individual had at least one humour in surplus, so even when calm and healthy, possessed a unique humoral equilibrium inherent to them. In his discussion of the expression of the passions, Wright explained that if a person 'is abound more with

¹³⁰Lewis Theobald, 'Saturday, May 18' *The Censor*, 1 (1717):87, p.199.

one humour than another, he sendeth more fewell to nourish the passion, & so it continueth the longer, and the stronger'.¹³¹ For example, we saw that according to the Galenic understanding of emotions, if something triggers anger in a person the heart would draw more yellow bile into the system, changing momentarily the humoral balance to a predominately choleric state, which leads to the person experiencing the passion of anger. Now, if this person in a balanced and calm state has a natural surplus of yellow bile, the heart is going to 'send more fuel to nourish the passion' by bringing more yellow bile into the mix and for longer, making the person experience a fit of violent and protracted anger. However, if the angered person has phlegm as their predominant humour, the same anger trigger will still make the heart draw yellow bile, but it will be much less than in the previous case and the balance of the humours will be restored quicker. The same emotional trigger, therefore, produces a different reaction germane to a person's natural humoral disproportion, which provided an explanation for the diverse personalities. This distinctive homeostatic equilibrium was called temperament.

The word temperament comes from the Latin *temperare*, meaning to combine, to mix, to temper, and refers to this unique mix of the humours which defined someone's personality. There were four temperaments named after the principal humour of the mix: sanguine temperament from blood (Lat. *sanguis*); choleric temperament from yellow bile (Gr. χολή [*chole*]); melancholic temperament from black bile (Gr. μέλαινα χολή [*melaina chole*]); and phlegmatic temperament from phlegm (Gr. φλέγμα [*phlegma*]). The concept of temperaments was central to the understanding of emotions and behaviour, because the qualities of each of the four humours 'constitutionally determined dispositional characteristics that influence the manner in which a person's actions are expressed'.¹³² Temperaments borrowed established associations from their predominant humours: each was linked to one

¹³¹Wright, *The Passions of the Minde, op. cit.*, p.84.

¹³²Robert M. Stelmack and Anastasios Stalikas, 'Galen and the Humour Theory of Temperament' *Personality and Individual Differences*, 12 (1991):3, p.255.

| Temperament | Sanguine | Choleric | Melancholic | Phlegmatic |
|---------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Humour | Blood | Yellow bile | Black bile | Phlegm |
| Element | Air | Fire | Earth | Water |
| Quality | Hot-Wet | Hot-Dry | Cold-Dry | Cold-Wet |
| Season | Spring | Summer | Autumn | Winter |
| Time of day | Morning | Noon | Evening | Night |
| Stage of life | Childhood | Youth | Maturity | Old age |
| Flavour | Sweet | Sour | Bitter | Salty |

TABLE 2. The four temperaments and their most common associations as distilled from a number of ancient, seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century texts.

of the four elements, had a unique hot-cold/wet-dry quality, was related to one of the four seasons, the four stages of human life, and even the four basic flavours, as it can be seen in Table 2.

These associations were critical for physicians, as they impacted the course of treatment, which in many cases would be different for each temperament. However, the use of the theory of temperaments was not confined to the medical domain, but shaped how people classified and understood different personalities. The English physician, botanist and astrologer Nicholas Culpeper (1616–1654) described the choleric temperament as follows:

We call that Man Chollerick in whose Body heat and driness abounds or is predominate [...] they are naturally quick witted, bold, no way shame-fac'd, furious, hasty, quarrelsom, fraudulent, eloquent, corragious, stout-hearted Creatures, not given to sleep much, but much given to jesting, mocking, and lying.¹³³

¹³³Culpeper, *Galen's Art of Physic*, *op.cit.*, pp.53–54.

Through continuous study and observation of human nature, descriptions of temperaments grew longer and more detailed with time. For example, a century later Kant wrote in his seminal book *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798) that the typical choleric person is

hot-tempered, flares up quickly like straw-fire, readily allows himself to be calmed if the other person gives in, is thereupon angry without hatred, and in fact loves the other person all the more for quickly having given in to him.—His activity is *rash*, but not persistent.—He is busy, but reluctant to undertake business himself just because he is not persistent in it; so he likes to be the mere commander-in-chief who presides over it, but does not want to carry it out himself. Hence his ruling passion is ambition; he likes to take part in public affairs and wants to be loudly praised. Accordingly he loves the *show* and pomp of *formalities*; he gladly takes others under his wing and according to appearances is magnanimous, not from love, however, but from pride, for he loves himself more.—He has a high opinion of *order* and therefore appears to be cleverer than he is. He is avaricious in order not to be stingy; polite, but with ceremony; stiff and affected in social intercourse; likes any flatterer who is the butt of his wit; suffers more wounds because of the opposition of others to his *proud* arrogance than the *miser* ever suffers because of opposition to his *avaricious* arrogance; for a little caustic wit directed at him completely blows away the aura of his importance, whereas the miser is at least compensated for this by his profit.—In short, the choleric temperament is the least happy of all, because it calls up the most opposition to itself.¹³⁴

Although increasingly archetypal, the detailed descriptions of temperaments served as excellent schemata for structuring knowledge related to behaviour, emotional

¹³⁴Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. by Robert B. Loudon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.189.

patterns and even appearance, providing clear categories that in turn also shaped people's understanding of the phenomenal world.¹³⁵ Dramatists would have also implicitly thought in terms of temperaments when building their different dramatic characters, even if they did not make explicit reference to them.¹³⁶ However, there are examples of attempts of this tacit knowledge being made explicit, such as the writings of author, poet and librettist Barthold Feind (1678–1721). In February 1705 Handel premiered in Theater am Gänsemarkt in Hamburg his opera *Nero* on a libretto by Feind's rival, Friedrich Christian Feustking (1678–1739). As a response, Feind wrote a libretto on the same subject, and his opera *Octavia*, with music by Reinhard Keiser (1674–1739), opened in the same theatre in the same year. To demonstrate the greater amount of care taken in researching the story and developing the characters in comparison to Feustking, in the printed libretto for *Octavia* Feind included an extensive foreword documenting his process in more detail. Feind expressed his desire to create genuine characters—'to present Nero as a Nero and Seneca as a Seneca'¹³⁷—and when it came to Nero (the title role in Feustking's opera) Feind indulged the spectators with a more detailed description, making his temperament-centric thinking explicit:

That Nero was lecherous in the highest degree is evident from his way of life, which no one described more clearly than Petronius in his

¹³⁵See introduction of Kantian schematism above, p.52.

¹³⁶D'Aubignac similarly regrets the fact that the ancients did not make explicit in their writings technical elements that were considered at the time commonplace, writing that 'if they have writ nothing about it, as to the practical part, it is because that perhaps in their time it was so common, that they could not believe any body capable of not knowing it; and indeed if one look into their works, and make but the least reflection upon the Art they use, one may perceive it almost every where'. d'Aubignac, *The Whole Art of the Stage. Containing Not only the Rules of the Drammatick Art, but many curious Observations about it. Which may be of great use to the Authors, Actors, and Spectators of Plays. Together with much Critical Learning about the Stage and Plays of the Antients. Written in French by the command of Cardinal Richelieu. By Monsieur Hedelin, Abbot of Aubignac, and now made English, op. cit.*, The First Book, p.19.

¹³⁷'so habe auch Nero als einen Nero, und Seneca als einen Seneca vorstellen'. Barthold Feind, *Die Römische Unruhe. Oder: Die Edelmühtige Octavia: In einem Sing-Spiel/ Auf dem grossen Hamburgischen Schau-Platz Aufgeführt* (Hamburg, 1705), Vorbericht, no pagination.

Satyricon, as he fully affirms that which I intend to show in the hand-drying incident, Act III, Scene 8.¹³⁸ If I understand his temperament, I consider him to be a sanguine-melancholic, with a slight mix of yellow bile, which is the temperament I believe he has in this drama, as it will become clear through his interactions. Because this type of people, when they suddenly fall from the pinnacle of happiness, are more affected by the loss of a perfect pleasure than an honourable person would, and think about it far more, so regret tends to become very strong with them, until it finally turns into melancholy, and finally into double melancholy, especially when the remembrance of the multitude of committed vices is added to it.¹³⁹

¹³⁸The hand-drying incident Feind refers to is inspired by Petronius, and in particular the character of Trimalchio, a dissolute rich old man from one of the stories in his *Satyricon*. In the relevant episode, we see Trimalchio playing a ball game with a group of long-haired boys, when at one point he clicks his fingers and a eunuch brings him a silver vessel to urinate. When he emptied his bladder, he ordered some water for his hands, and after washing his fingers a little bit, he grabbed the young boy's hair and wiped his fingers on it. ('videmus senem calvum, tunica vestitum russea, inter pueros capillatos ludentem pila [...] Nam duo spadones in diversa parte circuli stabant, quorum alter matellam tenebat argenteam, alter numerabat pilas [...] Trimalchio digitos concrepuit, ad quod signum matellam spado ludenti subiecit. Exonerata ille vesica aquam poposcit ad manus, digitosque paululum adpersos in capite pueri tersit'.) Petronius, *Satyricon*, 27. Feind wants to bestow on Nero many of Trimalchio's qualities by linking the two through a similar episode in *Octavia*: Nero in disguise is fleeing in the company of Sporus (the young boy the emperor famously castrated and married). In a desperate state, Nero is forced to quench his thirst by drinking water from a puddle, after which he exclaims: 'Will no one now offer a towel to dry a king's hands, for otherwise my boy's soft hair would be used for this purpose?' ('Reicht niemand nun ein Handtuch dar/ Zu trocknen eines Käysers Hände/ Da meiner knaben zartes Haar Mir sonst hiez zu gedient?'). Feind, *Octavia*, Act III, Scene 8, no pagination.

¹³⁹Daß *Nero* im höchsten Grad wollüstig gewesen/ erhellet aus seiner Lebens-Art/ die niemand klährer beschrieben als *Petronius* in seinem *Satyricon*, als welcher dasjenige weitläufiger bekräftiget/ was ich bey Tröcknung seiner Hände im 8. Auftritt des 3. *Actus* gedencke. Erwege ich seine Gemüths-Beschaffenheit/ so halte ich ihn für einen *Sanguineo-Phlegmaticum*, mit der *Cholera* etwas vermischt/ welches *Temperament* ich ihm den fürnehmlich in diesem Schau-Spiel zugelegt/ wie aus seinen *Actionen* mit mehren zu betrachten sein wird. Denn wie dergleichen Leuten/ wenn sie auf einmahl von der höchsten Staffel der Glückseligkeit stürzten/ der Verlust eines vollkommenen Vergnügens mehr/ als einem Ehr geitzigen/ zu Hertzen gehet/ und solchem weit mehr nachsinnen/ so pflaget die Reue auch sehr hefftig bey ihnen zu werden/ biß sie endlich in eine Schwermuht/ die Schwermuht aber gar zuletzt in eine Zweiffelmuht/ zumahl wenn das Andencken so vieler begangenen Laster dazu kömmt/ ausbricht'. Feind, *Octavia*, Vorbericht, no pagination. The libretto of *Octavia* is included in Feind's *Deutsche Gedichte*, a collection of all his writings published three years after the opera's premiere, where he appears to have revised the foreword, changing Nero's temperament to sanguine-phlegmatic with a slight mix of yellow bile ('so halte ich ihn für einen *Sanguineo-Phlegmaticum*, mit der *Cholera* etwas vermischt'). Idem, 'Die Römische Unruhe. Oder: Die Edelmühtige Octavia Musicalisches Schau-Spiel' in: *Deutsche Gedichte/ Bestehend in Musicalischen Schau-Spielen/ Lob- Gluckwünschungs- Berliebten und*

Culpeper describes people of the ‘Sanguine-Melancholly’ commixture as being similar to those of the sanguine temperament (‘merry cheerful Creatures, bountiful, pitiful, courteous, bold, trusty, given much to the games of *Venus*, as though they had been an Apprentice seven yeers to the Trade, a little thing will make them weep, but so soon as ’tis over, no further grief sticks to their Hearts’), but ‘not altogether so merry nor so liberal, a spice of a Melancholly temper being inherent in them’.¹⁴⁰ If we were, for example, to use Culpeper’s description to understand Nero’s character as Feind conceived it, we see that Nero is predominately sanguine,¹⁴¹ and it is the amorous and lustful qualities of his temperament that make him prone to falling in love with Ormoena, the wife of the imprisoned King Tridates. The significant ethical and practical obstacles in fulfilling his powerful desire might have been insurmountable within the thoughtful, considerate and honourable conduct of a purely sanguine person, but in this case, the slight mix of yellow bile (the predominate humour of the choleric temperament) offers Nero the ability to overcome all obstructions through a series of hasty, bold and immoral decisions,¹⁴² such as ordering his wife Octavia to end her own life to clear the way for Ormoena to become his new wife. If Nero’s temperament was just sanguine with a mix of yellow bile, the overpowering sanguine lust, aided by the shameless boldness of the choleric mix, might have kept him firmly on track for accomplishing his plans. However, Feind engineers Nero’s redemption by conceiving his personality as a sanguine-melancholic commixture, where melancholy serves to curb the

Moralischen Gedichten/ Ernst- und schertzhafften Sinn- und Grabschriefften/ Satyren/ Cantaten und allerhand Gattungen. Sammt einer Vorrede Von dem Temperament und Gemuhts-Beschaffenheit eines Poeten/ und Gedancken von der Opera. Erster Theil. Mit Kupffern und einem vollstandigen Register (Stade: Verlegts Heinrich Brummer, 1708), Vorbericht, p. 119.

¹⁴⁰Culpeper, *Galen’s Art of Physic, op. cit.*, pp.62–63, 53.

¹⁴¹According to Culpeper, the sanguine-melancholic commixed temperament is predominately sanguine. A melancholic-sanguine temperament is predominately melancholic, which results in a very different disposition from that of the sanguine-melancholic: ‘Melancholly-Sanguine’ persons ‘are more liberal, bolder, and merrier than Melancholly persons are, as also less cowardly, not so pensive nor solitary, neither are they troubled with such fearful conceits, but are gently, sober, patient, trusty, affable, courteous, studious to do others good’. *Ibid.*, p.62.

¹⁴²See Culpeper’s description of the choleric temperament on p.69.

permissiveness and allow grief and regret to stick to Nero's heart, leading him to reconsider his decisions and restore moral order in a characteristically Neoclassical *lieto fine*. In the last scene, the predominately sanguine Nero, who is brought into his senses by his melancholic commixture, resolves all conflicts across all plot lines and love triumphs.¹⁴³

Feind used the temperaments for constructing a dramaturgically coherent character, but in the context of this thesis, his work is used as an inspiration for constructing a tool for the new teaching method, where temperaments become central to character analysis and performance.¹⁴⁴ The theory of the four temperaments is a distillation of millennia of observation of human nature, presented within an 'elegant theoretical structure' that makes it easy to understand and practically applicable.¹⁴⁵ The detailed descriptions of the characteristics of each temperament and the plethora of associations we saw in Table 2 can be a treasure trove of ideas for singers today, providing a wealth of examples and shorthands that can be used for shaping performance. Another reason for the usefulness of this particular theoretical framework is its astonishing longevity. Although the emergence of the practice of human dissection during the sixteenth century led to the progressive disproof of many of the ancient medical theories, the humoural theory persisted and remained canonical across the early modern

¹⁴³In the final chorus everyone celebrates Cupid's triumph over sorrow, and Octavia's interjects an appeal to Hymen for the restoration of joy in her marriage:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| <i>Chor.</i> | In Spielen und Lachen Kehrt Amor das Leid. |
| <i>Octav.</i> | Mit Schertzen Und Hertzen Muß Hymen den Zunder der Freuden anfachen Nach Traurigkeit. |
| Alle. | In Spielen und Lachen Kehrt Amor das Leid. |

¹⁴⁴See Chapter 4, p.238.

¹⁴⁵Stelmack and Stalikas, *op. cit.*, p.263.

period.¹⁴⁶ The works of Culpeper,¹⁴⁷ as well as the English physicians Thomas Sydenham (1624–1689)¹⁴⁸ and William Salmon (1644–1713)¹⁴⁹ were based on the theory of the humours and received several editions and reprints, and it is not until the second half of the eighteenth century that we see the Scottish physician William Cullen (1710–1790) writing that this ‘doctrine, however ancient and general, appears to me very doubtful’.¹⁵⁰ Although by the nineteenth century this theory was completely discredited as having no scientific basis, it shaped how early modern audiences and performers understood emotions, so in the context of this thesis it provides a corrective lens through which to look at the historical discourse on the perception and performance of passions. The theory of the four temperaments, despite being an offspring of the four humours, far outlived its progenitor to the extent that ‘it would be difficult to think of any scientific theory that has

¹⁴⁶There is a large consensus among scholars about the influence of humoral theory in the first half of the eighteenth century across Europe. For examples see discussions in: Jed Wentz, ‘Gaps, Pauses and Expressive Arms: Reconstructing the Link between Stage Gesture and Musical Timing at the Académie royale de musique’ *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 32 (2009):4, p.616; Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p.36; John Richetti, ‘English Comedy, Restoration and Augustan’ in: Maurice Charney, editor, *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide*, Volume I (Westport: Praeger, 2005), p.263; Marta V. Vicente, *Debating Sex and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.6; and Jill A. Antonides, *Intersections of Dance and Theory: From Martha Graham to Mark Morris* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.81.

¹⁴⁷Nicholas Culpeper, *The English Physitian Enlarged: With Three Hundred, Sixty, and Nine Medicines made of English Herbs that were not in any Impression until this: The Epistle wil Inform you how to know This Impression from any other*. (London: Printed by Peter Cole in Leaden-Hall, and are to be sold at his Shop at the sign of the Printing-press in Cornhil, neer the Royal Exchange, 1653).

¹⁴⁸Thomas Sydenham; John Pechey, editor, *The Whole Works Of that Excellent Practical Physician, Dr. Thomas Sydenham, wherein Not only the History and Cures of Acute Diseases are treated of, after a New and Accurate Method; But also the Shortest and Safest Way of Curing most Chronical Diseases* (London: Printed for R. Wellington, at the Dolphin and Crown, at the West-End of St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1705).

¹⁴⁹William Salmon, *Synopsis Medicinæ. Or a Compedium of Astrological, Galenical, & Chymical Physick. Philosophically deduced from the Principles of Hermes and Hippocrates*. (London: Printed by W. Godbid, for Richard Jones, Bookseller at the Golden Lion in Little Britain, near the Lame Hospital Gate, 1671).

¹⁵⁰William Cullen, *First Lines of the Practice of Physic, For the Use of Students in the University of Edinburgh*, Volume I (Dublin: Printed for Thomas Armitage, No. 4, College-Green, 1777), p.375.

exerted such a continuous and powerful influence in Western thought'.¹⁵¹ It had a notable effect on the field of personality psychology, with a number of notable scientists making explicit use of it for developing their new models of personality typologies, which are harnessed as part of the development of the new approach on characterisation.¹⁵²

NATURE IMPROVED

Having sketched the central ideas behind the historical conception and performance of emotion and character we are now able to continue the exploration of naturalness. We saw that historical acting was regulated by rhetoric and conformed to a series of rules related to beauty—variety, contrast, serpentine line, decorum (propriety, seemliness, order, balance, decency, dignity and nobility) and majesty—while at the same time it had to produce highly truthful representations of emotion and character. Nature was meant to draw the ‘preliminary sketch’ of a performance, while art should realise it and add the final touches.¹⁵³ The paradoxical conjugation of art and nature was aided slightly by the fact that artistic tools were seen as being shaped in the first place in accordance with nature. The line performers had to walk between artifice and nature, however, was still very thin. Responding to those who disparaged oratory because it demanded highly regulated expression, the actor and teacher of rhetoric Thomas Sheridan (1719–1788) wrote that

from the erroneous ideas entertained of that art, they annex strange confused notions, of something artificial in tones, looks, and gesture, that have no foundation in nature, and are the mere inventions of man.

¹⁵¹John A. Doody and John Immerwahr, ‘The Persistence of the Four Temperaments’ *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 66 (1983):3, p.348.

¹⁵²See Chapter 4, p.250.

¹⁵³Il faut que la Nature ébauche le Comédien. Il faut que l’Art acheve de le former’. Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine, *Le Comédien. Ouvrage divisé en deux parties* (Paris: Desaint & Saillant, rue Saint Jean de Beauvais. Et Vincent Fils, rue Saint Severin, 1747), p.16.

But if the true art of oratory be only to exhibit nature drest to advantage; if its objects be, to enable the speaker to display his thoughts and sentiments, in the most perspicuous, pleasing, and forcible manner; so as to enlighten the understanding, charm the ear, and leave the deepest impressions on the minds of the hearers—Can any one but the most vain pedant, or stupid barbarian, say, that such an art is improper for this or any other society in the world?¹⁵⁴

Sheridan's retort, and especially his phrase 'nature dressed to advantage', meaning nature beautified, perfectly sums up the concept of a technique which is based on nature, but includes only those elements of nature which are the most pleasing (*delectare*) and most able to affect (*movere*) the audience.¹⁵⁵ In his treatise on elocution he repeated Cicero's assertion ('every passion has its peculiar tone, so has it, its peculiar look or gesture') and encouraged public speakers to follow their natural instincts, as long as they allow what comes naturally to be shaped by art, since the fundamental parts of elocution are force and grace—force coming from nature and grace from art.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, James Burgh (1714–1775) wrote that nature 'has given to every emotion of the mind its *proper* outward expression' with art only adding '*gracefulness* to what nature leads to', offering the example of children who can express a great variety of emotions from the age of three, naturally, without instruction, and without mistakes.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Thomas Sheridan, *A General Dictionary of the English Language. One main Object of which, is, to establish a plan and permanent Standard of Pronunciation. To which is prefixed a Rhetorical Grammar* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, Pall-Mall; C. Dilly, in the Poultry; and J. Wilkie, St. Paul's Churchyard, 1780), Preface, par. 8, no pagination.

¹⁵⁵*Docere, movere, delectare*: to teach, to move, to delight; the three objectives of oratory.

¹⁵⁶Idem, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution: Together with Two Dissertations on Language; and Some other Tracts relative to those Subjects* (London: Printed by W. Strahan, For A. Millar, R. and J. Dodsley, T. Davies, C. Henderson, J. Wilkie, and E. Dilly, 1762), pp.114, 120–121.

¹⁵⁷James Burgh, *The Art of Speaking. Containing I. An Essay; in which are given Rules for expressing properly the principal Passions and Humours, which occur in Reading, or public Speaking; and II. Lessons taken from the Antients and Moderns (with Additions and Alterations where thought useful) exhibiting a Variety of Matter for Practice; the emphatical Words printed in Italics; with Notes of Direction referring to the Essay. To which are added a Table of the Lessons; and an Index of the various Passions and Humours in the Essay and Lessons* (London: Printed

Many of the eighteenth-century arts embodied a dual identity, whereby ‘Nature and Genius’ are ‘help’d by Instruction and Artificial Improvements’.¹⁵⁸ Ripa captures this dialogue between nature and artifice by symbolising art with the image of an ‘agreeable Woman’ who holds ‘in her right Hand a Hammer, an engraving Tool, and a Pencil’, three tools for ‘intimating *Nature*’, and in her left hand ‘a Stake that supports a Vine’, with the stake representing ‘*Nature*’s Defects, in *holding up* the tender Plant’.¹⁵⁹ John Walker (1732–1807) argued that ‘the object of the Painter’s pencil, the Poet’s pen, and the Rhetorician’s action’ is not ‘that sordid and common nature which is perfectly rude and uncultivated’ but nature ‘[i]mproved and beautiful’; because it might be nature that ‘directs us to art’ but it is art that ‘selects and polishes the beauties of nature’.¹⁶⁰

The celebrated poet, philosopher, scientist, novelist and playwright Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) wrote that the actor should ‘not only imitate nature, but also idealise it’, showing ‘the true united with the beautiful’.¹⁶¹ This idea of idealised nature was the founding principle of the work of Sir Joshua

for T. Longman, J. Buckland, and W. Fenner, in Pater-noster-row; J. Waugh, in Lombard-street; E. Dilly, in the Poultry; and T. Field, in Cheapside, 1761), pp.12–13. Burgh’s treatise was published anonymously and was often attributed erroneously to Sheridan.

¹⁵⁸Lewis Theobald, ‘Saturday, May 18’ *The Censor*, 1 (1717):90, p.204.

¹⁵⁹Ripa, *op. cit.*, p.7. See Figure 5 on page 35 for a realisation of Ripa’s description of the emblem of art.

¹⁶⁰John Walker, *The Academic Speaker; or, a Selection of Parliamentary Debates, Orations, Odes, Scenes, and Speeches, from the Best Writers. Proper to be Read and Recited by Youth at School. To which are prefixed Elements of Gesture; or, Plain and Easy Directions for Keeping the Body in a Graceful Position and acquiring a simple and unaffected Style of Action. Explained and Illustrated by Plates, engraved by Ramberg* (London: Printed for the Author; and sold by G. G. J. and J. Robinson, in Pater-noster Row; and T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1789), p.xiii. Walker continues by making reference to Quintilian’s dictum that it would not suffice for an orator to be ‘a man: he must be an improved and cultivated man: he must be a man favoured by nature and fashioned by art’. *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹‘Zunächst bedenke der Schauspieler, daß er nicht allein die Natur nachahmen, sondern sie auch idealisch vorstellen solle, und er also in seiner Darstellung das Wahre mit dem Schönen zu vereinigen habe’. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ‘Regeln für Schauspieler. 1803.’ in: Bernhard Seuffert and Hans Devrient, editors, *Goethes Werke: Herausgegeben im Auftrage der Großherzogin Sophie von Sachsen: I. Abtheilung: Goethes Literarische Werke*, Volume 40 (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1901), p.153. During his directorship of the Weimar Court Theatre Goethe got intensely involved with directing and theatrical production. In 1803 he dictated to his scribe, Johann Jacob Ludwig Geist, a series of 91 rules for acting tragedy for the benefit of the trainee actors of the Weimar Theatre.

Reynolds (1723–1792), the acclaimed eighteenth-century portraitist, aesthetic theorist and first president of the Royal Academy of Arts. Although Reynolds believed that nature should be the ‘beginning, the middle, and the end of every thing that is valuable in taste’, his idea of nature was not limited to ‘the forms which nature produces’ but was also closely linked to the ‘the nature and internal fabric and organization’ of our minds.¹⁶² The concept Reynolds introduces could be related to the idea of the schemata, the internal cognitive frameworks which shape the way our minds understand and model the natural world. If art was to reproduce these archetypal cognitive constructs it would represent nature in a clean and idealised form, free from the random and meaningless imperfections and blemishes of real-life nature. This would reduce the degree of antagonism between artistic beauty and nature, making them both ‘different ways of expressing the same thing’.¹⁶³ Reynolds wrote that the best artists are not the ones that imitate nature ‘with the greatest fidelity’:

The poet and actor, as well as the painter of genius who is well acquainted with all the variety and sources of pleasure in the mind and imagination, has little regard or attention to common nature, or creeping after common sense. By overleaping those narrow bounds, he more effectually seizes the whole mind, and more powerfully accomplishes his purpose. This success is ignorantly imagined to proceed from inattention to all rules, and in defiance of reason and judgment; whereas it is in truth acting according to the best rules, and the justest reason.

He who thinks nature, in the narrow sense of the word, is alone to be followed, will produce but a scanty entertainment for the imagination: every thing is to be done with which it is natural for the mind to be pleased, whether it proceeds from simplicity or variety, uniformity

¹⁶²Joshua Reynolds, *Seven Discourses Delivered in the Royal Academy by the President* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, in the Strand, Bookseller and Printer to the Royal Academy, 1778), p.276.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

or irregularity: whether the scenes are familiar or exotic; rude, and wild, or enriched and cultivated; for it is natural for the mind to be pleased with all these in their turn. In short, whatever pleases, has in it what is analogous to the mind, and is therefore, in the highest and best sense of the word, natural.¹⁶⁴

For example, if an actor successfully models the character they play on stage to an existing person they know well and they have observed in detail in real life, their stage representation might appear perfectly natural and believable, but all the natural imperfections and diversions from the ideal model that make this particular person unique could act as ‘noise’, diluting the characterisation or even adding confusion (as the audience might attempt to assign meaning to details not connected to the plot). Conversely, if the stage representation is modelled on the description of temperaments, which provide comprehensive archetypal models born out of the distillation of core characteristics from the observation of a multitude of natural examples, then the representation becomes strong, clear and targeted, serving the storytelling much better and in more respects.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, imitation on stage of passions observed in real life will create a weaker effect in comparison to the imitation of Le Brun’s faces, where passions can be seen in a clean and elevated form which still derives from the distillation of an ideal model directly from nature.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, tragic plots demand the aesthetic elements of nobility and tragicality in the expression of passions and character, and pure naturalism could produce results that are actually less believable because they do not correspond with the elevated and idealised passions and characters portrayed. Quintilian had made a distinction between ordinary speech (*sermo vulgaris*) and eloquent speech (*eloquens oratio*), with ordinary speech aiming to convey facts

¹⁶⁴Ibid., pp.276, 283–284.

¹⁶⁵Jelgerhuis argued for ‘Perfection in our art as we renounce a generally prevailing mediocrity in taste and espouse a decorum which aims at representing Nature not quite as it is but as it should be’. Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, p.339.

¹⁶⁶‘Nature left to herself, is under less restraint, and runs into more irregular emotions, than when curb’d and regulated by a proper education’. J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.168.

and facilitate communication, while eloquent speech also had to move and delight the audience by the use of whatever assistance nature required.¹⁶⁷ Like oratory, the tragic operas composed from the birth of the genre until the twentieth century do not deal with the common and every day, but grand subjects and elevated characters, sung in verse and flowery well-composed language, with the added dimension of music which serves only to create further elevation. The performers' action, then, should also belong to 'that species of acting which is to represent the polished elegance, or elevated dignity of human nature'.¹⁶⁸

The rules for improving and beautifying nature were created and regulated with adherence to nature, and aimed to produce art that appears natural, beautiful and moving in the context of the medium and genre they were designed to serve. But, however well-designed might the tools be they cannot automatically guarantee the desired results. The sheer amount and depth of available techniques would make it almost impossible for all the rules to be applied synchronously and in perfection, without incurring the danger of making a performance appear so extraordinarily flawless that it is robbed of the essence of naturalness. Writing on the art of dramatic poetry, the Italian humanist, playwright and teacher of rhetoric Giovanni Battista Giraldi (1504–1573) explained that just as nature, like a judicious and intelligent creator, uses great care and diligence to form its works with beauty and grace to delight our senses, so should poets also put a lot of thought and work into adorning the words delivered by the characters with all the beauty they can muster.¹⁶⁹ He warns them, however, that in this and all

¹⁶⁷'nam mihi aliam quandam videtur habere naturam sermo vulgaris, aliam viri eloquentis oratio; cui si res modo indicare satis esset, nihil ultra verborum proprietatem elaboraret; sed cum debeat delectare, movere, in plurimas animum audientis species impellere, utetur his quoque adiutoriis, quae sunt ab eadem nobis concessa natura'. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, XII:10.43.

¹⁶⁸Hiffernan, *op. cit.*, p.82.

¹⁶⁹Dunque, come la Natura giudicosa componitrice (per uirtù della intelligenza, che la regge) delle cose, ch'ella produce, ha meßa una gran cura & una gran diligenza in fare eßa pelle molle, uaga, soaue, delicata, & datele le sue gratie con i debiti colori, accioche ella s'offra a gli occhi nostri diletteuole, & ci faccia piacere tutto quello, che ella tiene sotto se; cosi dee il Poeta porre molto ingegno, & molto studio in questa parte, che alle uoci appartiene: che eßendo eglino quelle, che uestono i nostri cõcetti, & gli portano a gli occhi dell'intelletto, debbono esser ornate di tutta quella bellezza, che loro puo dare la industria di chi compone'. Giambattista Giraldi, *Discorsi di*

other parts of their craft ‘excessive diligence must be scorned’ to avoid spoiling something they want to improve: because ‘it is sometimes better to be negligent than to be over-diligent’, and their work will be ‘more gratifying and delightful the closer it is to nature, and the less any artifice is apparent in it’.¹⁷⁰ He concludes the passage by giving a general rule: that ‘the most beautiful artifice is so artfully concealed that it can hardly be seen’.¹⁷¹ Giraldi’s rule refers to the notion aptly encapsulated by the Latin phrase *ars est celare artem* (true art is to conceal art).

ART CONCEALED

In his *Essay on Criticism* Pope elegantly summarised in heroic verse the interplay of nature and artifice in the artistic process as we have so far surveyed it:

First follow NATURE, and your Judgment frame
 By her just Standard, which is still the same:
Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
 One *clear, unchang’d*, and *Universal Light*,
 Life, Force, and Beauty, must to all impart,
 At once the *Source*, and *End*, and *Test of Art*.
 That *Art* is best which most resembles *Her*;
 Which still *presides*, yet never does *Appear*;
 In some fair Body thus the sprightly Soul
 With Spirits feeds, with Vigour fills the whole,
 Each Motion guides, and ev’ry Nerve sustains;

M. Giovambattista Giraldi Cinthio nobile ferrarese, e segretario dell’illustrissimo et eccellentiss. Duca di Ferrara intorno al comporre de i Romanzi, delle Comedie, e delle Tragedie, e di altre maniere di Poesie. Con la tavola delle cose piu notabili in tutti essi discorsi contenute (Venice: Appresso Gabriel Ciolito de Ferrari et fratelli, 1554), p.84.

¹⁷⁰Benche in questa non meno, che nelle altre parti si dee schifare la souerchia diligenza, accio che quello, che uogliam far uirtù, non diuenga uitio, & il troppo uolere abbellire non rechi fastidio. Che è meglio alle uolte una negligenza acconciamente usata, che una souerchia diligenza. Perche anco ebi sono piu grati & piu diletano, quanto son piu uicini al naturale, & in loro meno si uede l’artificio. Et per dare di ciò una ragola generale, è da sapere, che il piu bello dell’artificio è con tanta arte nasconderlo, che a pena ui si scorga’. *Ibid.*, pp.84–85.

¹⁷¹Et per dare di ciò una ragola generale, è da sapere, che il piu bello dell’artificio è con tanta arte nasconderlo, che a pena ui si scorga’. *Ibid.*, p.85.

*It self unseen, but in th' Effects, remains.*¹⁷²

Pope designates nature (which since antiquity has been a constant reliable golden standard, and a clear and bright source of inspiration) as the artist's primary model and framework. Art's life (which, in our context, we can connect to movement and action), force (ability to move the audience through rhetorical means) and beauty (classical beauty, tragicality and decorum) must all communicate nature. Nature should be the source and objective of artistic creation, as well as the touchstone by which works of art should be tested; the closer they are to nature the better. Art leads the process, but it should never itself be seen (art concealed). To better explain this notion, Pope compares art with the human soul, providing a fitting metaphor: the soul, inspired by passions through the animal spirits, fires up and animates the whole body, pulling all the strings and guiding its every move; but while we can observe the passions' corporal expression, the soul that drew them on the body is concealed and invisible. In like manner, although art (which should be inspired by nature, guided by nature, and set its sights on nature) is the leading force and director of every aspect of the artistic creation, it should itself not be discernible in the resulting work of art, leaving behind what appears to be nothing but nature.

The notion of art concealment in the context of movement and behaviour was given a name by the Italian humanist, courtier, diplomat, poet and playwright Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529), who called it *sprezzatura*. The term was coined in his book *Il libro del Cortegiano* (the Book of the Courtier, published the year before his death), in which he introduces and defines the term as follows:

But having already thought many times on my own about how this grace is born, disregarding those who have it bequeathed by the heavens, I find a very universal rule, which seems to me to be worth more than any other and regards all things that humans do and say: and

¹⁷²Pope, *op. cit.*, p.7.

this is to keep clear as much as possible (as if it was a very sharp and dangerous obstacle) from affectation; and, to perhaps say a new word, to use with everything a certain *sprezzatura*, which conceals the art and shows that everything done or said comes effortlessly and almost without a thought. It is from this, I believe, that a great part of grace derives; because everyone knows how difficult the rare and well-made things are, so doing them with ease creates great wonder; and on the contrary, the effort and (as they say) the ‘pulling by the hair’ brings great shame and makes everything seem less precious, however great they may be. But one could say, what is true art does not look like art; nor is there anything more to practise than to conceal it; because if it is discovered, it takes away all credit, and leaves the man disgraced. And I remembered having read of some most excellent ancient orators, who among their other skills was the striving to make everyone believe that they were illiterate; and by concealing their knowledge, they showed that their speeches were made very simply, and more than that, that they came from nature and truth rather than study and art; which if it had been known, it could have given an air of doubt to the minds of the people who would have tried to avoid being deceived by it. So you see; allowing the art and intense study to be seen, strips the grace from everything. Which one of you does not laugh when our Mr Pierpaulo dances in his own style, with those little jumps and legs stretched to his tiptoe, without moving the head, as if he is entirely made from wood, with such great concentration, that one is certain that he is counting the steps? Which eye is so blind, that it does not see in this the disgrace of affectation, and the grace in many men and women who are there present, who by this *sprezzata desinvoltura* (which is how many call it in relation to the movement of the body), a word, or a laugh, or a posture adjustment, they show that they have no worry, and that they think no other thing than

that: to make anyone looking at them believe that they do not know how to do anything improper nor are they able to.¹⁷³

Because Castiglione relates *sprezzatura* to the display of movement, we could attempt to transpose his guidance to the movement of the singers on stage: For singers to achieve real grace on stage the audience should not be able to discern the necessary copious practice and study that has gone into their performance. The art that shaped their movement and gestures should be hidden, leaving the performance looking easy, as if it arose naturally, without much effort, and as if no special care and attention had been paid to it. Any visible tension, forced flamboyance or perceptible attempt to impress would have the opposite effect, reducing their art to mere artifice and exposing them to the risk of mockery. Therefore, an intense conscious effort should take place to hide from the public view the technical workings and all the labour that went into the performance, leaving on stage nothing but pure art. This will, in turn, inspire great wonder in the audience and elicit sincere admiration.

Sir Thomas Hoby (1530–1566), who published the first English edition of Castiglione’s treatise, translated *sprezzatura* as ‘recklessness’,¹⁷⁴ while the two translations published in London in the first half of the eighteenth century refer to it as ‘negligence’.¹⁷⁵ The most common word used to translate *sprezzatura* in English

¹⁷³Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano* (Venetia: Nelle case d’Aldo Romano, & d’Andrea d’Asola suo Suocero, 1528), Libro Primo, no paragraphs or page numbers. The expression *tirar per i capegli* (*capelli*), literally meaning ‘pulling by the hair’, is an informal idiomatic expression conveying the sense that something is forced and exaggerated; in the absence of a similar idiom in English it is left here in literal translation and in quotation marks. The terms *sprezzatura* and *sprezzata desinvoltura* are not translated, as their meaning will be discussed presently.

¹⁷⁴Idem, *The Courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure bookes. Very necessary and profitable for yonge Gentilmen and Gentilwomen abiding in Court, Palaice or Place, done into Englyshe by Thomas Hoby*, trans. by Thomas Hoby (London: Imprinted at London by Wyllyam Seres at the signe of the Hedghogge, 1561), no pagination.

¹⁷⁵Idem, *The Courtier. Written in Italian by Balthasar, Count Castiglione. In Four Books. I. Of the Form and Manner of a Court Life. II. Of the Qualifications of a Courtier. III. Of the Accomplishments of a Court Lady. And, IV. Of the Duty of a Prince. Translated from the Original* (London: Printed for A. Bettesworth, E. Curll, J. Battley, J. Clarke, and T. Payne, 1724), p.43; Idem, *Il Cortegiano, or The Courtier: Written by Conte Baldassar Castiglione. And a new Version of the same into English. Together with Several of his Celebrated Pieces, as*

today is ‘nonchalance’, which conveys the sense of calmness and indifference, but, as with ‘recklessness’ and ‘negligence’, it fails to express the skilful intentionality of concealing the art. Castiglione speaks of ‘using’ *sprezzatura*, treating it more as a technique rather than simply an aesthetic quality of movement and gesture.¹⁷⁶ Giraldi similarly suggests that negligence ‘suitably used’ is better than excessive diligence.¹⁷⁷ Describing a similar notion Weaver uses the term ‘artful carelessness’ to refer to it in the context of dance, which seems an appropriate translation for *sprezzatura*, as it includes the elements of intentionality, application and art that go into creating this familiar ease and nonchalant negligence.¹⁷⁸ To achieve carelessness ease Castiglione urges us by all means to avoid affectation.¹⁷⁹ Castiglione’s term *sprezzata desinvoltura* (or *desinvoltura* in the modern Italian spelling), which describes *sprezzatura* in the context of movement, could be rendered accordingly as ‘unaffected ease’.¹⁸⁰

well Latin as Italian, both in Prose and Verse. To which is prefix'd, The Life of the Author. By A. P. Castiglione, of the same Family, trans. by A. P. Castiglione (London: Printed by W. Bowyer, for the Editor, 1727), p.46.

¹⁷⁶‘usar in ogni cosa una certa sprezzatura, che nasconda l’arte’ Idem, *Il libro del Cortegiano* [1528], *op.cit.*. Thomas Hoby translated the phrase as ‘to vse in euery thyng a certain *Recklessness*, to couer art withall’. Idem, *The Courtyer* [1561], *op.cit.*, no pagination.

¹⁷⁷‘Che è meglio alle uolte una negligenza acconciamente usata, che una souerchia diligenza’. Giraldi, *op.cit.*, p.84.

¹⁷⁸John Weaver, *An Essay Towards an History of Dancing, In which the whole Art and its Various Excellencies are in some Measure explain’d. Containing the several Sorts of Dancing, antique and modern, serious, scenical, grotesque, &c. with the Use of it as an Exercise, Qualification, Diversion, &c.* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson at Shakespear’s-Head over-against Catherine-fleet in the Strand, 1712), p.65.

¹⁷⁹‘ciò è fuggir quanto piu si pò: & come un asperissimo, & pericoloso scoglio la affettatione’ (keep clear as much as possible, as if it was a very sharp and dangerous obstacle, from affectation) Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano* [1528], *op.cit.*. Hoby translated *affettazione* as ‘Affectation or curiosity’ Idem, *The Courtyer* [1561], *op.cit.*. Curiosity probably refers not to peculiarity but to particularity, excessive precision or exactness, in the way used by Fraunce: ‘much wauering and ouercurious and nice motion is verie ridiculous’ Fraunce, *op.cit.*, Second Booke, Chapter 3, ‘Of action or gesture of the whole bodie’, no pagination. The 1724 edition translates *affettazione* as ‘too much Exactness’. Castiglione, *The Courtier* [1724], *op.cit.*, p.43.

¹⁸⁰Hill wrote that we ‘must not confound negligent and careless with easy and unaffected playing; the latter, tho’ it does not express any study or labour to the eye, is yet always the effect of a great deal of both; the former is the effect of an insolent indolence, and is an affront upon the understandings of an audience’. J. Hill, *op.cit.*, p.232. The term ‘unaffected ease’ was used by Chetwood to describe the action of George Anne Bellamy (1727–1788), in his poem on *Bellamy*, Chetwood, *op.cit.*, p.113.

Castiglione wrote that unaffected ease in the speaker is achieved when a ‘sonorous, distinct, tuneable, and well managed’ voice is ‘attended with proper Action and Behaviour; which, in my opinion, consists in certain Motions of the Body, not forced and affected, but temper’d with an agreeable Countenance and Motion of the Eyes, as may set off the Words with a Grace and Decorum; and, as much as possible, by the Gestures, signify the Intent and Affection of the Speaker’.¹⁸¹ His description of proper action and behaviour contains the element of beauty (agreeable, graceful and decorous countenance and motion) and the element of rhetoric (meaningful, intentional and moving gestures). The notion of unaffected ease conveys the essence of naturalness.

Concealing the technique, pains and labour that went into creating a work of art, making the process of creation appear unaffected, natural and easy was a core tenet of all humanist arts. D’Angelo comprehensively traces the concept of art concealment in ancient rhetorical sources,¹⁸² and it should come as no surprise that this notion is also filtered into the historical treatises on acting, where numerous references to it can be found. For example, Angelo Ingegneri (1550–1613) wrote that affectation is bad in all things, but in gesture is terrible and totally reprehensible.¹⁸³ Le Faucheur likewise urged speakers to make sure that there is ‘nothing *affected* in your *Gesture*; for, generally speaking, *all Affectation* is *odious*: but it must appear purely *Natural*, as the very *Birth* and *Result* both of the *things* you

¹⁸¹Castiglione, *The Courtier* [1727], *op.cit.*, p.61. Along the same lines, François Nivelon in his manual for genteel behaviour wrote that ‘As the Exterior Part of the human Figure gives the first Impression, it will be no unpleasing Task to adorn that with the amiable Qualities of Decency and genteel Behaviour, which to accomplish, it will be absolutely necessary to assist the Body and Limbs with Attitudes and Motions easy, free and graceful, and thereby distinguish the polite Gentleman from the rude Rustick’. François Nivelon, *The Rudiments of Genteel Behavior* (London: n.p., 1737), no pagination.

¹⁸²See chapter ‘Part of Eloquence is to Hide Eloquence’ in: Paolo D’Angelo, *Sprezzatura: Concealing the Effort of Art from Aristotle to Duchamp*, trans. by Sarin Marchetti (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), pp.14–28.

¹⁸³‘Il gesto consiste nei mouimenti opportuni del corpo, & delle parti sue, & spetialmente delle mani, & molto piu del volto, & soprattutto de gli occhi. [...] Et è da auuertire, che l’affettatione, la quale in tutte le cose è cattiuua, in questa è pessima, & sommamente vitiosa’. Angelo Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa & del modo di rappresentare le favole sceniche* (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, Stampatore Camerale, 1598), p.77.

express and of the *Affection* that moves you to *speak* them'.¹⁸⁴ Reynolds called affectation 'the most hateful of all hateful qualities', writing that

The great end of the art is to strike the imagination. The Painter is therefore to make no ostentation of the means by which this is done; the spectator is only to feel the result in his bosom. An inferior artist is unwilling that any part of his industry should be lost upon the spectator. He takes as much pains to discover, as the greater artist does to conceal, the marks of his subordinate assiduity. In Works of the lower kind, every thing appears studied, and encumbered; it is all boastful art, and open affectation. The ignorant often part from such pictures with wonder in their mouths, and indifference in their hearts.¹⁸⁵

Lamy listed affectation as one of the defects of *actio*,¹⁸⁶ and John Mason (1706–1763) wrote that 'the great Rule' in regards to action is 'to *follow Nature, and avoid Affectation*', making the ability to conceal the art a prerequisite of using art, connecting it to naturalness and persuasion: 'never use Art, if you have not the Art to conceal it: For whatever does not appear natural, can never be agreeable, much less perswasive'.¹⁸⁷ Writing about the action of the orator, Fordyce likewise argued that '[n]o *Action* will have effect, that carries with it the Appearance of *Art*', because

Wherever we observe such an Appearance we are sure immediately to be upon our guard: the Design miscarries the Moment it is perceived: we consider the Preacher as at best a mere *Declaimer*, ambitious of shewing his *own* Talents, not as a Feeling *Speaker*, solicitous to promote *our* Instruction; a Sentiment that never fails of breeding

¹⁸⁴le Faucheur, *An Essay upon the Action of an Orator*, *op.cit.*, p.174.

¹⁸⁵Reynolds, *op.cit.*, pp.144, 108–109.

¹⁸⁶Postures that are indecent, ridiculous, affected, mean, and not to be suffer'd' Lamy, *The Art of Speaking: Written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal: In pursuance of a former Treatise, Intituled, The Art of Thinking*, *op.cit.*, The Fourth Part, p.164.

¹⁸⁷John Mason, *An Essay on Elocution, or, Pronunciation. Intended chiefly for the Assistance of those who instruct others in the Art of Reading. And of those who are often called to speak in Publick* (London: Printed for M. Cooper, at the Globe in Pater-noster Row, 1748), pp.38, 31.

disgust. [...] Whatever Art he employs to enforce and set off his Address with the higher advantage, must be thrown out of Sight from the beginning, and kept concealed all along, under an Air of Grave Simplicity. In short it must be managed so finely as to appear quite *Natural*. It is a sacred, invariable, eternal Rule in every Species of Public Speaking, that is intended to persuade!¹⁸⁸

The French actor Jean Poisson (1692–1721) wrote that action ‘must be noble, natural, graceful, imposing, lively, light; not too outrageous, not too studied, nor too refined’.¹⁸⁹ He went on to identify the three most important rules for action and gesture:

The first one is that it is necessary to study all these things, but to make them so natural that the art is entirely concealed, in order to become more persuasive. The second is that one cannot and should not highlight every word in a long speech. Places which are left out, or, better said, are less marked are like shadows in paintings. Finally, too much art in the action and voice, as well as in the writing of a speech, makes an orator dry, stiff, and pedantic.¹⁹⁰

Poisson’s first rule encapsulates the notion of unaffected ease, where intense study and practice needs to take place in order to master the art of gesture, and then ensure all the work that went into this preparation is completely hidden, leaving

¹⁸⁸Fordyce, *op. cit.*, pp.19–20.

¹⁸⁹‘L’action doit être noble, naturelle, gracieuse, imposante, animée, legere; point outrée, point trop étudiée, ni recherchée’. Jean Poisson, ‘Quelques Reflexions sur l’Art de parler en public’ in: Henri Basnage, editor, *Histoire des ouvrages des savans, mois d’avril, mai & juin, 1709* (Rotterdam: Chez Caspar Fritsch, & Michel Böhm, 1709), p.264. Poisson’s article was edited, expanded, and published in 1717 as a short treatise with the same name, offering practical advice to public speakers, such as the use of voice, memory, body, eyes, face, and hands: Idem, *Réflexions sur l’art de parler en public. Par M. Poisson, Comedien de Sa Majeste le Roy de Pologne, & Electeur de Saxe* (n.p.: n.p., 1717).

¹⁹⁰‘Le premier est, qu’il faut étudier toutes ces choses, mais se les rendre si naturelles, que l’art en soit entierement chaché pour le rendre plus persuasif. Le second est, qu’on ne peut pas, & qu’on ne doit pas tout faire sentir dans un long discours. Les endroits negligez, ou pour mieux dire, moins marquez sont comme les ombres aux tableaux. Enfin le trop d’art dans l’action & dans la voix, ainsi que dans la composition d’un discours rend un Orateur sec, guindé, & pedant’. Idem, ‘Quelques Reflexions sur l’Art de parler en public’, *op. cit.*, p.265.

a seemingly spontaneous, natural and unaffected result. The next two rules introduce alongside the necessity of concealing the art, the element of moderating the amount of art that goes into the performance in the first place, in terms both of the amount of action and the degree of its complexity and refinement. The second rule advocates moderation in the number of gestures used, where not every word needs to be marked by a gesture, and the strategic absence of gesture could serve as does *chiaroscuro* in painting, where shadows amplify the contrast, drawing more focus on the lit elements, and make the depiction seemingly more organic and realistic while increasing the sense of depth and drama. With the third rule, Poisson admonishes punctilious and rarefied action where an exorbitant degree of art is displayed, making the art impossible to conceal and producing affectation. Simplicity and moderation are intrinsic to the quality of unaffected ease,¹⁹¹ as a carefully moderated artistic input would make concealing the art easier, because there would be less that needs to be hidden, creating a more natural-looking result.



This chapter has outlined and examined three main principles that provide the theoretical framework of historical acting: beauty, rhetoric and naturalness. The disposition and movement of the bodies of performers on stage followed a set of aesthetic rules stemming from classical antiquity and the precepts of tragedy, notably contrast, variety, serpentine line of beauty, decorum and majesty. Stage action had to be not only beautiful but had also to move the audience by effectively conveying emotions and dramatic character, and rhetoric, the art of persuasion, provided an ideal reference system for discovering salient elements in the text and

¹⁹¹Jelgerhuis refers to the notions of simplicity and moderation as ‘artless simplicity’ or ‘a sense of dignity without any pretence at conscious elegance’. Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, p.295. Golding translates ‘ongemaakte eenvoudigheid’ as ‘artless simplicity’. The phrase in the original is ‘eenvoudigheid, bij ons bekend voor ongemaaktheid’, which could be rendered as ‘simplicity, which we call artlessness’. Idem, *Theoretische Lessen*, *op. cit.*, p.68.

choosing the most cogent way to bring them out. Although beautiful, appropriate and strategically selected gestures would delight the senses and facilitate a clear understanding, they could not deeply touch the soul unless they appeared natural, as if coming from the heart. To do this, a performer would need to have a detailed and clear awareness of how emotions are naturally expressed in all their different degrees, and how this expression is varied according to people's different personalities. The theories of the four humours and temperaments were based on long observation of nature and provided highly systematised models for the expression of emotions and personality. Emotions and character on stage should appear natural, while at the same time much effort had been devoted to beautifying, augmenting, improving and carefully composing every detail to maximise the effect on the audience. The art, therefore, that went into creating this beautified and improved nature should be concealed. Actively concealing the art is the last but most important step in achieving naturalness.

With a defined theoretical framework in place, the next chapter will continue the investigation of historical acting by building a technical groundwork, which will include a detailed classification system for Baroque gesture specifically aimed at opera and the survey of a number of important staging conventions.

CHAPTER 2

Technical Groundwork

The previous chapter outlined three principles that form the theoretical foundations of historical acting: beauty, rhetoric and naturalness. These principles provide a useful guiding framework for shaping the development of the new teaching method, but the practical nature of the objective of this thesis requires a closer examination of historical acting's technical workings.

This chapter begins with a definition of the term gesture. This is followed by a discussion of *Chironomia* (1806) by Gilbert Austin, a particularly significant historical acting treatise on account of the introduction of a system for notating gestures and a collection of invaluable notated examples that will form a cornerstone of the new teaching method. To facilitate technical discussion, this chapter then outlines a detailed classification system for gesture, based on Austin but expanded or simplified to fit the needs of the new teaching method. The following section introduces the qualities of gesture as defined by Austin, before adapting them for the purpose of teaching acting to modern singers and taking a closer look at the practice of breaking the rules for effect.

The term gesture can be defined in a variety of ways, according to the context within which it is examined. Sheridan defines it as an 'action or posture expressive of sentiment' or just a 'movement of the body',¹ and more poetically

¹Sheridan, *A General Dictionary of the English Language*, *op.cit.*, Volume 1, lemma *gesture*. Exact reproduction of the definitions from: Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which the Words are deduced from their Originals, and Illustrated in their Different Significations by Examples from the best Writers. To which are prefixed, A History of the Language, and An English Grammar. In Two Volumes* (London: Printed by W. Strahan, for J. and

calls it ‘the hand-writing of nature’, which is ‘universally legible’ and ‘contains in itself a power, of exciting similar, or analogous emotions’.² So, unlike the handwriting of humans, which is a culture-dependent skill and without training is meaningless, gestures are bodily movements that can be naturally legible and communicate meaning or emotion across cultural barriers.³ Speaking of rhetorical gesture, Wilson also evokes the element of decorum by defining gesture as ‘a certaine comely moderacion of the countenaunce, and al other partes of mans body, aptely agreeyng to those thynges whiche are spoken’.⁴ As we saw in the previous chapter, gesture for the stage in historical acting shares many similarities with the gesture of the orators: it should be beautiful and decorous, albeit more elevated, and although it should be intentional and shaped by art, the art should be concealed, allowing all movements to seem natural and improvised. So, in the context of this thesis, gesture is defined as any voluntary movement of one or more parts of the body (such as the eyes, face, head, hands, arms, torso, and legs) performed on stage, which adheres to the classical aesthetic conventions but without appearing affected, and which (either in isolation or in combination with the sung text) serves as an expression of meaning, feelings, temperament or mental state.

Austin’s *Chironomia*

The corporeal nature of gesture makes it a challenging subject to speak about, as it is much more conducive to action than to words. Every description and concept discussed in the large number of historical sources on gesture available to us today illuminates a different facet of this craft, contributing to a more practical understanding. Of all the treatises studied for this thesis, one stands out because of its

P. Knapton; T. and T. Longman; C. Hitch and L. Hawes; A. Millar; and R. and J. Dodsley, 1755), Volume 1, lemma *gesture*.

²Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*, *op.cit.*, p.113.

³‘Not like the writing of man, which, having no affinity with its archetype, can be understood only by pains and labour; and, containing no virtue of its own, can, of itself, communicate no emotion’. *Ibid.*

⁴Wilson, *op.cit.*, f. 116v.

particularly explicit way of describing gestures. The Irish clergyman and teacher of rhetoric Gilbert Austin (1753–1837) published an influential treatise on gesture titled *Chironomia* in 1806.⁵ This treatise owes its importance not only to Austin's thorough and methodical approach, but also to the development of a system for notating gestures. Although the treatise was published in the early nineteenth century, Austin's work encapsulates eighteenth-century acting conventions and can be used to better understand the acting technique of eighteenth-century opera singers. According to Adam Kendon, one of the leading experts on the study of gesture, Austin's work 'may be regarded as a summation of the post-Renaissance rhetorical tradition of gesture study'.⁶ Dene Barnett (1917–1997), a central figure in the field of historical acting revival, regarded *Chironomia* as lying 'wholly within the eighteenth century tradition'.⁷ Jed Wentz's more recent in-depth study of Austin's connections with the theatrical stage and his grasp of the dramatic

⁵Gilbert Austin, *Chironomia; or a treatise on rhetorical delivery: comprehending many precepts, both ancient and modern, for the proper regulation of the voice, the countenance and gesture. Together with an investigation of the elements of gesture, and a new method for the notation thereof; illustrated by many figures.* (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, in the Strand; By W. Bulmer, and Co. Cleveland-row, St. James's, 1806).

⁶Adam Kendon, *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.86.

⁷Dene Barnett and Ian Parker, 'Finding the Appropriate Attitude' *Early Music*, 8 (Jan., 1980):1, p.68. Barnett's position as a research fellow and later lecturer of philosophy at Flinders University of South Australia gave him the opportunity and funding to launch a research project on historical acting in the early 1970s. Putting his research into practice, he produced Rameau's opera *Pygmalion* which he toured to major theatres around the world. Ton Witsel, Dene Barnett and Richard Divall, *Pygmalion, by Jean Philippe Rameau: Opera Program* (Adelaide Festival of Arts, 1972). The experience gained from this and his many subsequent productions generated a series of five articles: Dene Barnett, 'The Performance Practice of Acting: The Eighteenth Century, Part I: Ensemble Acting' *Theatre Research International*, 2 (1977):3; Idem, 'The Performance Practice of Acting: The Eighteenth Century, Part II: The Hands' *Theatre Research International*, 3 (1977):1; Idem, 'The Performance Practice of Acting: The Eighteenth Century, Part III: The Arms' *Theatre Research International*, 3 (1978):2; Idem, 'The Performance Practice of Acting: The Eighteenth Century, Part IV: The Eyes, the Face and the Head' *Theatre Research International*, 5 (1979):1 and Idem, 'The Performance Practice of Acting: The Eighteenth Century, Part V: Posture and Attitudes' *Theatre Research International*, 6 (1980):1. These articles paved the way for his seminal work: Idem, *The Art of Gesture: The practices and principles of 18th century acting* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, Universitätsverlag, 1987). The breadth of Barnett's research, which brought to light many obscure sources, together with his credentials as a practitioner, made his work the most notable study on the subject. *The Art of Gesture* has served as a textbook for many directors working on historical acting and has shaped their ideas about reconstruction.

art also concludes that *Chironomia* ‘deserves to be taken seriously as a source for historical acting techniques’.⁸ The treatise includes a chapter discussing acting for the stage in particular,⁹ the larger part of which is devoted to opera, calling for the opera singer, in addition to possessing the necessary musical and vocal skills, to be ‘the most perfect tragic actor’.¹⁰ The special consideration Austin gives to opera evidences the compatibility of the acting techniques he proposes with this genre.

Austin’s notation is more intuitive than appears at first sight, and offers a good degree of flexibility for notating an enormous number of gestures, with scope for easy expansion by the individual practitioner. It works by using combinations of letters and numbers, placed above and below the text, to indicate gestures of the eyes, head, hands, arms, and feet. Figure 11 shows a number of notated examples of gestures performed by the celebrated actor Sarah Siddons (1755–1831) in six of her roles. Below the text, Austin notates the position of the feet as they move from one contrapposto stance to another. In example 117, *aR2* indicates that on the word ‘vindicate’ Siddons stepped forward with her right foot and stood in a contrapposto stance in which all her weight was on the front foot, as shown in the accompanying image. In this case, the *a* stands for ‘advance’, the *R* stands for ‘right foot forward’, and the number *2* for ‘weight on the front foot’. All other gestures are notated above the text. In example 118, the capital *U* indicates that Siddons looked up after the word ‘husband’, and in example 122 the capital *D* indicates that she looked down for ‘pity’ and up (*U*) again for ‘forgiveness’. Hand gestures most commonly require a combination of three to five letters to be notated: of these, the first indicates the disposition of the hands, the second their elevation, the third their position in the horizontal plane, and the fourth and fifth

⁸Jed Wentz, ‘Mechanical Rules Versus Abnormis Gratia: Revaluing Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia* (1806) as a Source for Historical Acting Techniques’ in: Bruno Forment and Christel Stalpaert, editors, *Theatrical Heritage: Challenges & Opportunities* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), p.56.

⁹Chapter VIII, p.239.

¹⁰Austin, *op. cit.*, p.243.



- U iz sp—xdx
 117. This arm shall vindicate a father's cause. *Grecian Daughter*, A. 1. sc. last.
 aR.2
- U B cl.eb.
 118. A widow cries, Be husband to me, heav'n. *King John*, A. 3. sc. 2.
 R.1
- B c F—cdx
 119. Scorn'd by the women, pity'd by the men
 Oh! insupportable!
 L.1.x *Fair Penitent*, A. 2. sc. 1.
- S iz sp—pdx
 120. Wert thou the son of Jupiter.
 a,R.2 *Imogen*, A. 2. sc. 3.
- scb—shf
 121. Jehovah's arm snatch'd from the waves and brings to me my son.
 L.1 *Douglas*, A. 3. sc. 2.
- D Bel ef U heq bn—hdx
 122. Pity and forgiveness. *Venice Preserved*, A. 5. sc. 1.

FIGURE 11. Six examples from Austin's *Chironomia*, both sketched and notated, recording a collection of gestures used by the celebrated actor Sarah Siddons in her roles in six different plays.

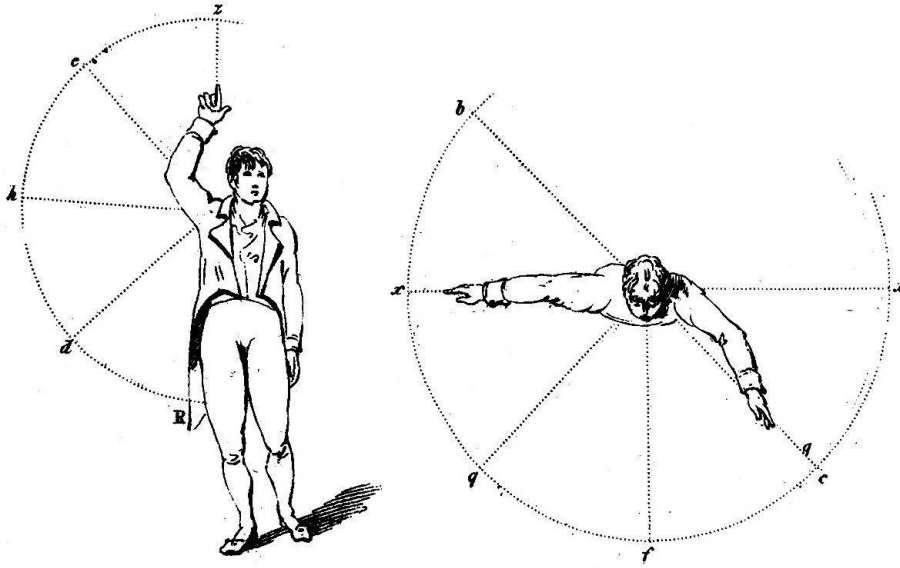


FIGURE 12. The hand positions in the vertical and horizontal planes and the letters with which to notate them according to Austin's gestural notation.

the manner or quality of the motion.¹¹ The gesture of the right hand is notated first and the left second, after a hyphen. In example 121, *seb—shf* shows the right hand supine (*s*), elevated (*e*) and backwards (*b*), and the left hand supine (*s*), horizontal (*h*) and forwards (*f*). On the word 'Jupiter' in example 120, Siddons is depicted performing the *iZ sp—pdx* gesture, where the right hand springs (*sp*) upwards, pointing with the index finger (*i*) to the sky (*Z* for zenith), while the left hand is prone (*p*), downwards (*d*) and extended (*x*). The gesture notated as *c F—cdx* in example 119 requires the right hand to clench (*c*) the forehead (*F*), and the left, clenched into a fist (*c*), to move downward (*d*) and extend (*x*).

The notated examples included in *Chironomia* allow us to get a sense of the different types of gestures and the way they were used by performers of the time, and from a pedagogical perspective, they can be used in teaching as worked examples.¹² A worked example is a problem accompanied by a worked-out solution—a

¹¹When notating a hand gesture, the second and third letters operate as a system of coordinates, which, combined, indicate the position of the hand in the three-dimensional space. For example in the vertical plane *d* stands for downwards and *e* stands for elevated, and on the horizontal plane *x* stands for extended and *f* for forwards. See the letters and their positions in Figure 12.

¹²In addition to a large number of short notated examples in his treatise, Austin includes four long examples: *Miser and Plutus* by John Gay, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* by

case study—and it is one of the most effective devices for managing the learners’ cognitive load and facilitating schema acquisition, especially when introducing novices to complex topics. In the previous chapter we saw that historical acting operates within an expansive domain framed by a number of often clashing aesthetic, philosophical and practical concepts. A dramatic text accompanied by the problem statement ‘what gestures conforming to the three principles of historical acting would you use to perform this?’ would pose a daunting task even for a student who has a good grasp of the theoretical framework (declarative knowledge) but no knowledge of the steps they need to follow to achieve the task’s desideratum (procedural knowledge). The size of the domain and the countless possibilities for performing this task create an unmanageably large problem space, which according to cognitive load theory, even though a means-end approach that relies exclusively on declarative knowledge could produce an acceptable solution, will rarely yield schema acquisition and effective learning.¹³ Worked examples radically reduce the problem space, easing the demands on the student’s working memory and increasing the formation of new schemata for processing and storing new procedural knowledge in the long-term memory.¹⁴ The worked-example effect applies only to inexperienced learners, and can even have negative results when teaching experts.¹⁵ In the context of the new teaching method, which is designed

Thomas Gray, Brutus’ speech from Act III, Scene 2, of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, and a long section from Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts*. In addition to the notation, *Miser and Plutus* is illustrated by thirty drawings, depicting all the notated gestures.

¹³John Sweller, ‘Cognitive Load During Problem Solving: Effects on Learning’ *Cognitive Science*, 12 (1988), pp.262, 284 The problem space represents the gap between the current situation and the desired goal. It includes task-related knowledge structures, the operators or strategies for solving the task, and a goal state for successfully completing the task. The problem space is a key concept in educational design and instructional strategies, as it helps educators create appropriate learning materials and activities to support student learning by understanding what students already know and what they need to learn. See Chapter 3 in Allen Newell and Herbert A. Simon, *Human Problem Solving* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

¹⁴Paul A. Kirschner, John Sweller and Richard E. Clark, ‘Why Minimal Guidance During Instruction Does Not Work: An Analysis of the Failure of Constructivist, Discovery, Problem-Based, Experiential, and Inquiry-Based Teaching’ *Educational Psychologist*, 41 (2006):2, p.80.

¹⁵Slava Kalyuga et al., ‘The Expertise Reversal Effect’ *Educational Psychologist*, 38 (2003):1, p.26. For example, expert singers with no knowledge of historical acting but long experience in performing opera possess a larger collection of related schemata that can be utilised to produce

for singers with relatively limited acting experience, Austin's notation and case studies become the basis for the teaching of gestures.¹⁶

Although the notation is one of the most salient aspects of *Chironomia*, the treatise also includes extensive discussions of ancient and contemporaneous sources, different styles of performance, and performance particulars for voice and gesture, complemented by around 150 drawings to illustrate the descriptions, as well as a detailed classification system for gestures. Classification plays an important role in teaching, as it facilitates comprehension, analysis and the building of conceptual and procedural knowledge. As we saw in the previous chapter, knowledge structures affect not only learning but perception itself, as the schemata a person possesses shape how they see and understand the world.¹⁷ Having considered taxonomies of emotions and personality typology, the next topic to be considered is the classification of gesture. There are many systems of gesture classification, each of which focuses on aspects that are most relevant to the context of the study for which the system has been developed. Austin's treatise includes one specifically focused on the gesture of actors and public speakers, with many of its concepts and definitions derived from ancient writers, especially Quintilian, and eighteenth-century works by Sheridan, Walker and Engel.¹⁸ Given its detailed and analytical nature and its relevance to acting for opera, Austin's classification will be used as a conceptual cornerstone for creating a classification system specifically designed for the purposes of the new teaching method proposed in this thesis. The system takes Austin's arrangement as a starting point, but expands certain elements and simplifies others, and is supplemented by definitions and examples from a large number of historical acting treatises.

a solution without cognitive overload, which leads to more effective learning; more than worked examples that can even hinder assimilation, creating what is called the expertise reversal effect. See Appendix II, p.335 on how the expertise effect was used as part of the Empirical Inquiry.

¹⁶See relevant exercise in Chapter 4, p.281.

¹⁷See discussion on page 52.

¹⁸Elements of gesture classification are discussed across *Chironomia*, but the bulk of the discussion is located in three of the 23 chapters: XVIII (p.385), XX (p.449) and XXI (p.467).

Gesture Classification

Austin considers gesture from four general perspectives: *instrument of performance*, *signification*, *style of delivery* and *quality*.¹⁹ The last two perspectives, style of delivery and quality, are examined in the next section (p. 121); the first two, instrument of performance (called here agent, for brevity) and significance—referring respectively to the body part effecting the gesture and the gesture’s meaning—are examined first, and constitute the new gesture classification system. This is an outline of the system, followed by explanations and examples:

I. Agent

- (1) Eyes
- (2) Face
- (3) Head
- (4) Hands
 - (a) Principal
 - (b) Subordinate
- (5) Arms
- (6) Body
- (7) Legs

II. Signification

- (1) Significant
 - (a) Natural
 - (i) Physiological
 - (ii) Simple
 - (iii) Complex
 - (b) Instituted
- (2) Non-significant

¹⁹Austin, *op. cit.*, p.386.

- (a) Indicative
- (b) Emphatical
- (c) Preparatory

I. AGENT

The *agent* (I) refers to the part of the body that effects a gesture, and can be one or more of them used together. Although Austin only considers hands and arms in his classification system,²⁰ here seven body parts are taken into consideration and presented in the order which these parts naturally react to an external or internal stimulus.²¹

Although the *eyes* (I.1) are part of the face, owing to their unique ability to communicate emotions, attributed to them by many historical authors, they are examined as a distinct agent of gesture. Gildon wrote that the ‘Soul is most visible in the Eyes, as being, according to one, the perfect Images of the Mind’,²² and Burgh, similarly, wrote that above all ‘the *eye* shews the very *spirit* in a *visible* form’.²³ Sheridan wrote that ‘from all the organs, the eye, rightly called the window to the breast, contains the greatest variety, as well as distinction and force of characters’,²⁴ and Engel concurred by saying that ‘the face, and, above all, the eyes, have this incontestible advantage in the expression of all which passes in the interior of the soul’.²⁵ According to Cicero, ‘every action starts from the soul, and the image of the soul is the face, with the eyes as its index’, which means that

²⁰Ibid.

²¹See discussion of the order of actions in the following section (p.142).

²²Gildon, *op. cit.*, p.44.

²³J. Burgh, *op. cit.*, p.14. Burgh continues on the same page by giving some examples of eye gestures: ‘In every different state of the mind, [the eye] assumes a different appearance. *Joy brightens* and *opens* it. *Grief half-closes*, and *drowns* it in *tears*. *Hatred*, and *anger*, *flash* from it like lightning. *Love*, darts from it in *glances*, like the orient beam. *Jealousy*, and *squinting envy*, dart their contagious *blasts* at the *eye*. And *devotion raises* it to the skies, as if the *soul* of the holy man were going to take its flight to heaven’.

²⁴Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*, *op. cit.*, p.114. Sheridan offers some examples: ‘In rage [the eye] is inflamed, in fear it sickens; it sparkles in joy, in distress it is clouded. Nature has indeed annexed to the passion of grief, a more forcible character than any other, that of tears; of all parts of language, the most expressive’.

²⁵Engel and Siddons, *op. cit.*, p.23.

the face might give a large amount of information about the passion a person is feeling, but it is with the help of the eyes that we can most accurately interpret it.²⁶ Modern research confirms the special power of the eyes perceived by the ancient and historical authors, as through a simple shift of their gaze ‘humans can deduce the motivation, desires and preferences of their interaction partners and redirect their attention accordingly’, which probably explains the unique morphology of the human eye in comparison with all other primates, where ‘the high contrast between the white sclera and dark iris’ make it a very effective agent for communication.²⁷ In his gestural notation system Austin assigned codes for specific eye gestures, such as looking forwards, downwards, upwards, and around, and for eyes averted or in vacancy.²⁸

The unequalled ability of the gestures of the *face* (I.2), or facial expressions, to convey emotions was briefly touched upon in the previous chapter as part of examining the work by Le Brun (p. 61). Antoine Fouquelin (d. 1561) called the face ‘a messenger and medium of the mind’ which expresses ‘all the affections, cogitations and thoughts’.²⁹ Giovanni Bonifacio (1547–1635) identified the forehead in particular as ‘the theatre of all mankind’, where ‘clear signs of all our affections

²⁶Animi est enim omnis actio, & imago animi vultus est, indices oculi’. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore ad Q. Fratrem. Ex MSS. recensuit Tho. Cockman è Coll. Univ. A. B.* 2nd edition. (Oxonii: Theatro Sheldoniano, Impensis Jo. Stephens; & prostant venales apud Ja. Knapton ad Insigne Coronæ in Cœmeterio D. Pauli Lond., 1706), p.290.

²⁷Alexander Geiger et al., ‘Eyes versus hands: How perceived stimuli influence motor actions’ *PLoS One* 12 (2017):7, p.2.

²⁸Austin, *op. cit.*, p.352.

²⁹Au visage pareillement sont plusieurs choses, laquelle peut exprimer toutes les affections, cogitations & pensees d’iceluy: le visage montre que nous sommes suppliantz, impetueus, dous, rudes, remis, nous regardons seullement et le visage, c ome messenger & truchement de l’esprit, au seul regard duquel, souuent nous aymons ceus cy, & hayssons ceus là’. Antoine Fouquelin, *La Rhetorique Française d’Antoine Foclin de Chauny en Vermandois, a tresillustré princesse madame Marie Royne d’Ecosse* (Paris: De l’imprimerie d’André Wechel, 1555), p.129.

appear and passions of our souls are manifested',³⁰ while others gave special importance to the movement and position of the eyebrows as the 'most effective clue to inner feeling'.³¹ The face has more than forty muscles, all of which contribute to the expression of passions and emotional states reflected in its different parts, such as the forehead, eyebrows, nose, mouth, teeth and jaws. For example, the passion of jealousy 'is expressed by the Forehead wrinkled, the Eye-brow quite depressed and knit; [...] the Nostrils pale, extended more than ordinary and drawn backwards, which causes wrinkles in the Cheeks: the Mouth may be shut so as to denote that the Teeth are so too; the Under-Lip pouts out beyond the Upper one, and the corners of the Mouth are drawn back and hanging down; whilst the muscles of the Jaws appear sunk and dejected'.³²

³⁰Fu ragioneuolmente la fronte humana chiamata il Theatro di tutto l'huomo; poi che in essa compariscono chiari segni de gli affetti nostri; e le passioni de' nostri animi uisi manifestano'. He supports his argument by quoting Petrarch speaking of 'gracious disdain bitter and severe, which drags every hidden thought to the middle of my forehead where others see it':

Vn leggiadro disdegno aspro, e seuero,
Ch'ogn'occulto pensiero
Tira in mezo la fronte, ou'altri il uede.

Giovanni Bonifacio, *L'arte de' cenni con la qualle formandosi favella visibile, sitratta della mta eloquenza, che non è altro che vn facondo silentio. Divisa in due parti. Nella prima si tratta dei cenni, che da noi con le membra del nostro corpo sono fatti, scoprendo la loro significatione, e quella con l'autorità di famosi Autori confirmando. Nella seconda si dimostra come di questa cognitione tutte l'arti liberali, e mecaniche si preuagliano. Materia nuoua à tutti gli huomini pertinente, e massimamente à Prencipi, che per loro dignità, più con cenni, che con parole si fanno intendere* (Vicenza: Francesco Grossi, 1616), p.91.

³¹Jelgerhuis, 'Lessons', *op.cit.*, p.342. Le Brun offers several examples of the position of the eyebrows and its correspondence to specific passions: 'the Gland in the middle of the Brain, is the place where the Soul receives the Images of the Passions; so the Eye-brow is the part of the face where the Passions are best distinguished [...] as the Passions change their Nature, the motion of the Eye-Brow changes its Form [...] the Eye-Brow is raised in the middle, [...] expresses pleasant Motions [...] the Eye-brow is drawn down in the middle, it shews Bodily Pain [...] In Laughter, [...] the Eye-Brows being drawn down towards the middle of the Forehead [...] In Weeping, [...] the ends of the Eye-brows next the Nose will be drawn down [...] when the Heart is dejected, all parts of the Face will be cast down'. Le Brun, *The Conference of Monsieur Le Brun*, *op.cit.*, pp.13, 15-16.

³²Idem, *A Method*, *op.cit.*, p.38. The omission was a reference to the gesture of the eye, which Le Brun treats together with the face: 'the Eye flashing fire; the Pupil hid under the Brows and turned towards the object that inspires the Passion, looking awry upon it, distorted from the situation of the Face, and appearing restless and fiery, as well as the White of the Eye and Eye-lids'. *Ibid.*

Gestures of the *head* (I.3) can be used for assenting, denying and directing attention, but also for portraying character, passions and emotional states. For example, Austin wrote that hanging the head down ‘denotes shame or grief’, while ‘holding it up, pride or courage’,³³ and the passion of irony is described by the historiographer and rhetorician René Bary (d. 1680) as ‘requiring us to turn our head to the left, and speak in an exclamatory and rallying tone’.³⁴ Burgh gives examples of the range of the gestures of the head, which ‘sometimes shews by a *nod*, a particular person, or object; gives *assent*, or *denial*, by different motions; *threatens* by one sort of movement, *approves* by another, and expresses *suspicion* by a third’.³⁵ As with the eyes, the head is assigned its own codes in Austin’s notational system, for gestures such as inclined, erect, assenting, denying, shaking, tossing and aside.³⁶

Although the gestures of the eyes and face were considered the most powerful means for expressing emotion, the gestures of the *hands* (I.4) were praised for their ability to speak.³⁷ Quintilian wrote about the importance of hand gestures in delivery:

As for the hands, without which all action would be crippled and enfeebled, it is scarcely possible to describe the variety of their motions, since they are almost as expressive as words. For other portions of the body merely help the speaker, whereas the hands may almost be said to speak. [...] Do we not use them to demand, promise, summon, dismiss, threaten, supplicate, express aversion or fear, question

³³Austin, *op. cit.*, p.482.

³⁴L’Ironie veut qu’on tourne la teste du costé gauche, & qu’on parle d’un ton exclamatif & ralleur’. René Bary, *Méthode pour bien prononcer un discours et pour le bien animer. Ouvrage très-utile à tous ceux qui parlent en public, & particulièrement aux Prédicateurs, & aux Advocats* (Paris: Denys Thierry, rue S. Jacques, à l’enseigne de la Ville de Paris, 1679), p.85.

³⁵J. Burgh, *op. cit.*, p.13.

³⁶Austin, *op. cit.*, p.352.

³⁷For, the *Hand* being the *Substitute* and *Vicegerent* of the *Tongue*, in a full, and majestic way of expression, presents the *signifying faculties* of the *soule*, and the inward discourse of Reason: and as *another Tongue*, which we may justly call the *Spokesman* of the *Body*, it *speakes* for all the members thereof’. Bulwer, *Chirologia*, p.2.

or deny? [...] In fact, though the peoples and nations of the earth speak a multitude of tongues, they share in common the universal language of the hands.³⁸

The magistrate, linguist and drama theorist François de La Mothe le Vayer (1588–1672) suggested that the power of hand gestures becomes apparent when we consider their ability to express an affinity of sentiments in paintings, which are devoid of movement.³⁹ Hand gestures receive the most attention in Austin’s treatise, and they not only take on the largest part of his gestural notation but also give his treatise its title.⁴⁰ This is for a good reason, as the hands ‘are the chief Instruments of *Action*, and they can *vary* it as many ways too as there are *Things*, which they are capable of signifying’.⁴¹ As discussed in Chapter 1 (p. 25), geometric symmetry is to be avoided in the presentation of the body in historical acting and the contrapposto stance makes a great contribution towards breaking the natural mirror symmetry of the human body. The use of the hands affords additional variety, with one of them taking the lead in making the gestures and always presenting in a higher elevation. The more elevated hand which initiates the gesture is called the principal hand (also main, advanced or superior) and its gestures *principal* (I.4.a). The other hand, which is called subordinate (also accompanying, retired or inferior) is not immovable but provides assistance to the principal by making smaller

³⁸Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, Volume 3, trans. by Harold Edgeworth Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), pp.289–291. Some specific examples of hand gestures and their meaning: ‘The raising of our hands conjoined towards heaven expresses Devotion: wringing the hands, Grief: throwing them towards heaven, Admiration: fainting and defected hands, Amazement and Despair: folding the hands, Idleness: holding the fingers indented, Musing: holding forth the hands together, Yielding and Submission: lifting up the hands and eyes to heaven, a Solemn Appeal: waving the hands from us, Prohibition: extending the right hand to any one, Pity Peace and Safety: scratching the head, Thoughtfulness and Care: laying the hand on the heart, Solemn affirmation: holding up the thumb, Approbation: laying the fore-finger on the mouth, Bidding Silence’. *The Theatrical Speaker*, *op.cit.*, pp.2–3.

³⁹‘Et nous trouuerôs moins estrange le pouuoir de ces mesmes mains, & leur artifice, si nous cōsiderons que les Gestes inanimez d’vne Peinture, ou d’vne statuë, nouns expriment beaucoup de choses, & nous sont connoistre vne infinité de differens sentimens’. François de La Mothe le Vayer, *La Rhetorique du Prince* (Paris: Augustin Courbé, au Palais, dans la Gallerie des Merciers, à la Palme, 1651), p.106.

⁴⁰The word *chironomia* being a Latinisation of the Greek χειρονομία, meaning hand gesture.

⁴¹le Faucheur, *An Essay upon the Action of an Orator*, *op.cit.*, p.194.

gestures in a lower elevation, supplementing and framing the general action. These accompanying gestures of the other hand are called *subordinate* (I.4.b). Austin compares the gestures of the subordinate hand with musical accompaniment, writing that it is ‘seldom inactive, sometimes imitates exactly and with considerable spirit, but in general performs an under part supporting and adorning, but by no means moving in the same manner as the superior hand’.⁴² On the Baroque stage, right and left carried an added significance: right being associated with all things good and, conversely, left with all things evil. Jelgerhuis wrote that when ‘the right hand makes a gesture toward the right side, it indicates that which is great, good and noble’ while when ‘the left hand makes a gesture toward the left side, it indicates that which is despicable and mean’, summarising the rule by writing that ‘arm movements toward the right indicate greatness, beauty and nobility, and those toward the left disapproval, contempt, repudiation, envy, hate, etc.’.⁴³ For this reason, principal gestures were in most cases performed with the right hand. Fraunce wrote that there should be ‘no gesture of the left hand alone, but the left hand ioyned with the right’,⁴⁴ and, similarly, le Faucheur advised the orator: ‘You must make all your *Gestures* with the *right Hand*; and if you ever use the *left*, let it only be to accompany the *other*, and never lift it up so *high* as the *right*’.⁴⁵ He continued that ‘to use an *Action* with the *left Hand* alone, is a thing you must avoid for its *indecenty*’.⁴⁶ Perucci wrote that the left hand should never be used alone or often, ‘but should rest on one’s hip or chest, or it should be kept still by holding a handkerchief, a staff of authority, a walking stick, a pair of gloves, or, according to modern custom, a snuffbox’.⁴⁷ Bulwer expresses

⁴²Austin, *op. cit.*, p.421.

⁴³Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, pp.303–304, 307.

⁴⁴Fraunce, *op. cit.*, Second Booke, Cap. 5. ‘Of the gesture of the arme’, hand, fingers, &c., no pagination.

⁴⁵le Faucheur, *The Art of Speaking in Publick*, *op. cit.*, pp.196–197.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p.197.

⁴⁷Andrea Perrucci, *A treatise on acting, from memory and by improvisation*, trans. by Francesco Cotticelli, Anne Goodrich Heck and Thomas F. Heck (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008), p.60.

an even stronger opinion against the use of the left hand: ‘Let that muck-worme the *Left Hand* earth it selfe in avarice, and keepe silence by an uncharitable retention, which doth not love to scatter, but to snatch away; not to bestow, but a long time to retaine’.⁴⁸ There are instances, however, where the left becomes the principal hand and the right the subordinate. For example, when speaking of hell or wicked people, the left can make the principal gesture, with the right taking a subordinate role; and when pointing to things or people on the left side of the stage, the left hand can also take the lead. Perucci wrote that the left becomes the principal hand ‘to express detestation and disdain for something one loathes, as well as when repulsing one’s opponents, or turning from one side to the other when asking for or granting a favor’.⁴⁹ Austin illustrated the use of the left as the principal hand in one of his notated examples, in a stanza where the text describes an owl talking to the moon, an image often associated with evil and witchcraft.⁵⁰ In ensemble scenes, the right/left convention was also applied to the performers’ arrangement in front of the proscenium arch. The characters of the highest status (mostly in terms of social rank, but when this was not applicable, in terms of virtue) stood on stage right, with stage left reserved for the ones with the lowest status,⁵¹ creating a social or moral ‘pecking order’.⁵² When two characters of equal social status but different gender were on stage at the same time, the female

⁴⁸Bulwer, *Chirologia*, p.65.

⁴⁹Perucci, *A treatise on acting, op. cit.*, p.60.

⁵⁰Of the seventeen stanzas of Thomas Gray’s *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* that Austin notated with gestures in his treatise (*Chironomia*, p.524), the right hand is used as the principal in all of them but the third, where the left takes on the principal gestures and the right assumes a subordinate role:

III.

Save that from yonder ivy mantl’d tow’r,
 The moping owl does to the moon complain
 Of such, as wand’ring near her secret bow’r,
 Molest her ancient solitary reign.

⁵¹Jocelyn Powell, *Restoration Theatre Production* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p.101.

⁵²Drew Minter, ‘Not Just a Song at Twilight: Drew Minter on the Etiquette of Staging Handel Opera’ *The Musical Times*, 135 (June, 1994):1816, p.350.

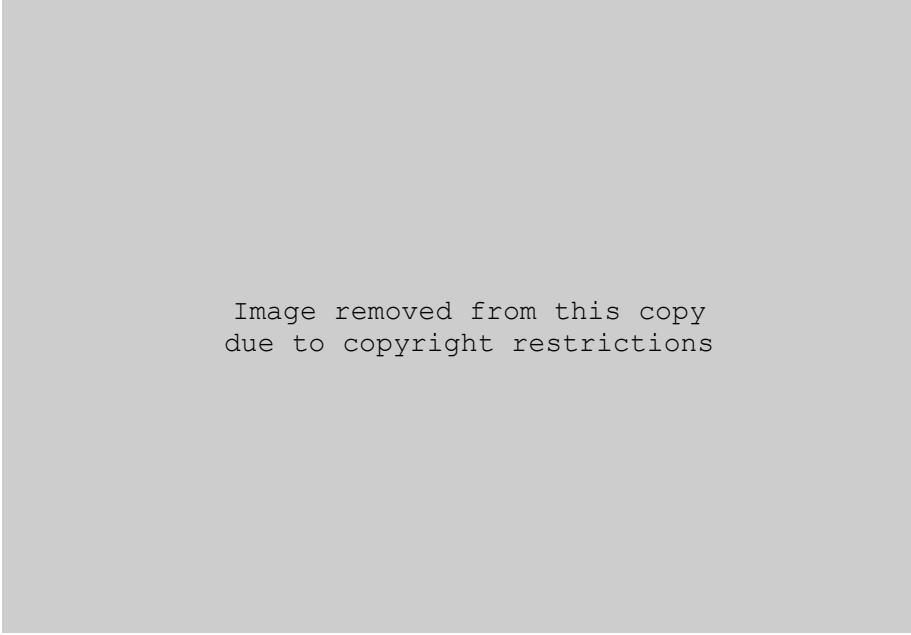


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FIGURE 13. Caricature of Berenstadt, Cuzzoni, and Senesino performing in Handel's *Flavio*. Etching probably by John Vanderbank (c. 1723).

stood on the right, with the only exception being a king who will not relinquish the most powerful position to his queen. For example, in a caricature that depicts a scene from Handel's *Flavio* (1723),⁵³ which can be seen in Figure 13, the stage-right position is taken by castrato Gaetano Berenstadt (1687–1734), stage left by Francesco Bernardi (1686–1758),⁵⁴ and in the middle we see the soprano Francesca Cuzzoni (1696–1778). Although Handel's singers were operating within a culture of celebrity, with a strong power structure in place within the company, on stage it was the characters they played that decided their positions. Berenstadt, although outranked in real life by Bernardi, who was a more celebrated singer and of higher seniority in Handel's company, sings the role of Flavio, the king, and therefore his social position is the highest, reflected in his position on the stage. Bernardi and Cuzzoni play the characters of Guido and Emilia, both offsprings of characters of

⁵³Harry R. Beard, 'An Etched Caricature of a Handelian Opera' *The Burlington Magazine*, 92 (September 1950):570, p.266.

⁵⁴A discussion about Bernardi, who was better known with his stage name, Senesino, will take place in the next chapter (p.160).

equal rank (Ugone and Lotario respectively), which brings them to equal social standing, and so Cuzzoni, as a woman, stands on the right of Senesino. Her page-boy stands on her left. Extending the right/left convention to the arrangement of the performers on stage increased the possibilities for propriety in the use of the right and left hand in terms of gender and social standing: for example, Guido would most naturally address Emilia, on his right, with his right hand, showing thus greater respect; likewise, it would be difficult for princess Emilia to use her left hand as the principal for addressing her superior, the king, who is standing on her right. However, as a perfect pecking order could not always be achieved at all times, beauty and naturalness should always prevail, in ensemble scenes the left hand could have been used as principal without some underlying significance: for example, Goethe argued that on stage beauty is more important than the right-hand-as-principal rule, and actors should adapt their actions according to the side of the stage they are on, using as principal the hand on the side of the character they address to avoid covering their chest.⁵⁵

Although the eyes, face, head and hands are the most overt conveyors of sentiment, the arms, body and legs are also powerful agents that can contribute an astonishing amount, because, as Burgh explained, ‘[e]very part of the human frame *contributes* to express the passions and emotions of the *mind*, and to *shew*, in general, its present state’.⁵⁶ The *arms* are almost invariably involved during hand gestures but there are instances where it is the movement of the arms which has the most striking effect. For example, one arm ‘projected forward’ denotes authority, in admiration we see both arms ‘spread extended’, when pleading for help they are ‘held forward’, and they ‘fall suddenly’ to express disappointment.⁵⁷ These we can call arm gestures (I.5). Similarly, a *body* gesture (I.6) is a movement or change of posture that can itself sufficiently convey an emotion or communicate

⁵⁵Goethe, *op. cit.*, p.160.

⁵⁶J. Burgh, *op. cit.*, p.13.

⁵⁷Austin, *op. cit.*, p.483.

an idea. For instance, a ‘body held erect indicates steadiness and courage’, and throwing oneself to the ground is a body gesture which shows ‘the utmost humility or abasement’.⁵⁸ The *legs* and feet can also perform gestures (I.7) that impart information and enhance the understanding of the audience. The introduction to one of the first operas, Cavalieri’s *Rappresentatione di anima e di corpo* (1600), mentions that the words should be accompanied by gestures and motions not only of the hands, but also of the feet, which help immensely by effectively moving the affections.⁵⁹ Burgh offers some examples of such gestures: ‘the *legs advance*, or *retreat*, to express *desire*, or *aversion*, *love*, or *hatred*, *courage*, or *fear*, and produce *exultation*, or leaping in sudden *joy*; and the stamping of the *foot* expresses *earnestness*, *anger*, and *threatening*’.⁶⁰

II. SIGNIFICATION

The second perspective from which gestures are considered is their *signification* (II), which refers to the meaning they communicate. *Significant* gestures (II.1) are the gestures which express a particular emotion, idea, or state of mind by themselves and independently from the words sung, while *non-significant* (II.2) are gestures that when performed in isolation are meaningless, but assume their meaning from the context they are performed within and when they accompany the text, clarifying it and emphasising it.

Significant gestures are divided into natural and instituted. *Natural* gestures (II.1.a) are gestures whose meaning can still be instinctively approximated by the spectator, even when performed without text or outside a particular context. These gestures might be refined by art to a certain extent (the ‘nature dressed

⁵⁸Ibid., p.484.

⁵⁹[...] & in particolare, che esprima bene le parole, che siano intese, & le accompagni con gesti, & moti non solamente di mani, ma di passi ancora, che sono aiuti molto efficaci à muouere l’affetto’. Emilio dei Cavalieri, *Rappresentatione di anima, e di corpo. Nuovamente posta in Musica dal Sig. Emilio del Caualliere, per recitar Cantando. Data in luce da Alessandro Guidotti Bolognese* (Roma: Appresso Nicolò Mutij, 1600), A’ Lettori, no pagination.

⁶⁰J. Burgh, *op.cit.*, p.13. All these are significant gestures of the legs and feet. An example of a non-significant gesture of the legs is discussed on page 118.

to advantage' concept examined in the previous chapter) but they should directly connect with their natural origin and the emotions and ideas they communicate should be understood by everyone, regardless of education or cultural background. *Instituted* gestures (II.1.b) on the other hand are gestures created to communicate a specific notion or passion and they are not universal but relate to a particular culture. For example, Bulwer described an instituted oratorical gesture that means amplitude which is done with the '*Vice-hand*, or *Thumb*, extended out with the *Eare-Finger*, the other *Fingers* drawn in',⁶¹ and the treatise by Andrea de Jorio (1769–1851) contains an enormous collection of instituted gestures used in Naples continuously since antiquity.⁶² It is not impossible to imagine some of these Neapolitan gestures being used on stage by some of Handel's Italian singers, such as the castrato Caffarelli (1710–1783) who studied for six years with Nicola Porpora (1686–1768) in Naples. However, the bulk of significant gestures in historical acting and the ones relevant to the context of the new teaching method are those instituted by nature.

Natural gestures are divided into physiological, simple and complex. *Physiological* gestures (II.1.a.i) are what Austin calls 'involuntary indications of the mind',⁶³ such as laughing, flushing, paleness, tearing up and hair-raising. Austin terms these gestures 'involuntary', though, for our classification, Engel's term 'physiological' is preferred, as the word 'involuntary' indicates a lack of control and purpose. On the theatrical stage every gesture, even the seemingly involuntary and instinctive, should be under the performer's volition and control as

⁶¹Bulwer, *Chironomia*, pp.76–77.

⁶²Andrea de Jorio, *La mimica degli antichi investigata nel gestire Napoletano* (Napoli: Stamperia e cartiera del Fibreno, Largo S. Domenico Maggiore No. 3, 1832).

⁶³Austin, *op. cit.*, p.480.

means of conveying meaning, emotion or character.⁶⁴ For example, Garrick famously used a special ‘fright wig’ that made Hamlet’s hair rise on the sight of the ghost of his father, while his skin appeared to get ‘progressively pale’.⁶⁵ a testament to an elaborate and conscious use of physiological gestures for effect. The playwright Leone de’ Sommi (152–1592) was impressed by an actor who appeared to turn pale when the character he portrayed received some bad news,⁶⁶ and Engel exalted any actor who could manage to produce tears on stage, ‘for experience proves that a *single tear*, discovered on the countenance of the speaker, often pleads more forcibly than fifty lines of complaining declamation’.⁶⁷ Jelgerhuis described in detail the series of physiological gestures an actor could emulate to realistically portray on stage a character dying after taking poison:

This description can aid the actor who must portray a person dying of poison, which we can imagine as writhing pain in the bowel. If we assume that this pain is accompanied by choking, the outbreak of perspiration, clamminess and chills, the audience will accept the imitation. The actor can enhance the portrayal by previously preparing a handkerchief in which powdered chalk is concealed, and carrying this cloth on stage with him. At the propitious moment he wipes his face with his handkerchief, thus becoming gradually paler with each wipe as an indication of the increase of pain and approaching death. Also,

⁶⁴Kendon wrote that although smiling, crying, laughing, or actions such as ‘hair-pattings, self-groomings, clothing adjustments and the repetitive manipulation of rings or necklaces’ are in real-life situations instances of an involuntary expression of feelings, temperament, or state of mind, on stage they can all be described as voluntary, because they could all contribute towards the communication of emotion or character. Kendon, *op. cit.*, p.8.

⁶⁵Alan R. Young, *Hamlet and the Visual Arts, 1709-1900* (London: Associated University Press, 2002), p.149.

⁶⁶Io mi ricordo averne veduti di quelli che, ad una mala nova, si sono impalliditi nel viso, come se qualche gran sinistro veramente gli fosse accaduto’. Leone de’ Sommi; Ferruccio Marotti, editor, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche* [c. 1568] (Milano: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1968), p.42. De’ Sommi’s manuscript treatise in dramaturgy and acting *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche* (Four Dialogues on Matters of Stage Representations) was written around 1568 and survives in an eighteenth-century manuscript copy in Biblioteca Palatina, in Parma, Italy.

⁶⁷Engel and Siddons, *op. cit.*, p.47.

before going on stage he should make up his eyebrows with a permanent pigment drawn in a painful expression over his own eyebrows. He will thereby succeed in rendering the effect of pain and death most vividly. Previously also he should slip a small cake of India ink into his mouth. When he pretends to drink from the poisoned goblet, he can bite on the bit of ink. The result will have quite an effect on the nearby spectators, as his lips and tongue become black in color.⁶⁸

Simple significant gestures (II.1.a.ii) are any gestures that convey meaning and are performed by a single agent, such as all the examples given during the discussion of the seven agents above. *Complex* significant gestures (II.1.a.iii), also called attitudes, convey meaning too, but involve the collaboration of several agents together. They were used to portray strong passions in key moments of the drama, serving as ‘snapshots, in a camera-less age, of a noble soul transported with emotion’.⁶⁹ For example, a complex gesture which displays grief is made when the performer ‘covers the eyes with one hand, advances forwards and throws back the other hand’.⁷⁰ For complex gestures of joy, ‘when moderate, opens the countenance with smiles, and throws, as it were, a sunshine of delectation over the whole frame: when it is sudden and violent, it expresses itself by clapping the hands, raising the eyes towards heaven, and giving such a spring to the body as to make it attempt to mount up as if it could fly: when joy is extreme, and extacy, it

⁶⁸Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, pp.373–374. Jelgerhuis continues by explaining how theatrical make-up could be used, where a pale face, blue shading under the eyes and blue on the lips are ‘evidences of dying which we can use to advantage when making up for a stage performance as a dying person’. *Ibid.*, p.376. In Handel’s *Tamerlano*, Bajazet does not take the poison (which we have seen at the beginning of the third act that he carries on his person) on stage, but exits, takes the poison off stage and promptly returns for the death scene at the end of the opera. In the production of *Tamerlano* which formed part of Implementation B some of these physiological elements were used: the singer playing Bajazet upon exiting was met by two make-up artists who quickly made his face pale, drew blue shades under his eyes, darkened his lips and dropped black die into his mouth which slowly slipped out during the death scene.

⁶⁹Jed Wentz, ‘The passions dissected *or* on the dangers of boiling down Alexander the Great’ *Early Music*, 37 (2009):1, p.102.

⁷⁰Austin, *op. cit.*, p.489.

has a wildness of look and gesture, that borders on folly, madness, and sorrow'.⁷¹ Gildon gives an example of a complex emphatical gesture for the text '*Save me, and hover o'er me with your Wings, You Heavenly Guards!*', which the actor is to speak 'with Arms and Hands extended, and expressing his Concern, as well as his Eyes, and whole Face',⁷² and an example of a complex significant gesture that engages almost all agents is that of extreme and unanticipated fear as described by Walker:

Fear violent and sudden, opens wide the eyes and mouth, shortens the nose, gives the countenance an air of wildness, covers it with deadly paleness, draws back the elbows parallel with the sides, lifts up the open hands with the fingers spread, to the height of the breast, at some distance before it, so as to shield it from the dreadful object. One foot is drawn back behind the other, so that the body seems shrinking from the danger, and putting itself in a posture of flight. The heart beats violently, the breath is fetched quick and short, and the whole body is thrown into a general tremor.⁷³

Historical acting treatises contain an abundance of such examples, often supplemented by drawings. However, complex gestures like these were not to be used routinely, but were reserved for important moments of the scene in order to create a striking effect. Nonetheless, a great number of commentaries indicate that performers used complex significant gestures frequently to impress the audience, and it is very common for theatrical portraits to depict actors striking one of these memorable poses. The author of the acting treatise *The Theatrical Speaker* denounced this practice, admitting 'that attitude is much abused on the stage;

⁷¹John Walker, *Elements of Elocution. Being the Substance of a Course of Lectures on the Art of Reading; Delivered at several Colleges in the University of Oxford*, Volume II (London: Printed for the Author; And Sold by T. Cadell, in the Strand; T. Becket, Corner of the Adelphi; G. Robinson, Paternoster-Row; and J. Dodsley, Pall-Mall, 1781), pp.298–299.

⁷²Gildon, *op. cit.*, p.74.

⁷³John Walker, *Elements of Elocution. Being the Substance of a Course of Lectures on the Art of Reading; Delivered at several Colleges in the University of Oxford. In Two Volumes* (London: Printed for the Author; And Sold by T. Cadell, in the Strand; T. Becket, Corner of the Adelphi; G. Robinson, Paternoster-Row; and J. Dodsley, Pall-Mall, 1781), p.329.

and always will be so, while there are injudicious spectators, who, incapable of a relish for the nicer touches of art, bestow the thunder of their applause only on the extravagant grotesque',⁷⁴ and Austin reminded his readers that the 'significant gestures however numerous and correct which a great actor makes in the representation of an entire dramatic character, bear no proportion to the greater number of his gestures which are not significant, and which are no less necessary, though not so splendid nor imposing'.⁷⁵

Non-significant gestures have no meaning of their own, and their meaning can be construed by the context within which they are performed, or by the text they accompany. For Austin, 'the perfection of gesture in a tragedian' comes through the 'skilful management' of these 'less shewy', 'less prominent gestures', rather than 'the exhibition of the finest attitudes'.⁷⁶ For the purpose of this thesis, non-significant gestures will be divided into three general categories: indicative, emphatical, and preparatory. *Indicative* gestures (II.2.a), also known as *deictics*,⁷⁷ are the most basic gestures of pointing and showing. These are the very first gestures humans perform spontaneously in infancy, they are universal, and hold an inherent ability to help us make sense of our world. Likewise, indicative gestures on the stage help the audience to be brought into the world of the opera and make sense of it. In the following example from Handel's *Orlando* we see the first entrance of the character Dorinda at the start of a new scene. Although at that point the set would have changed to show a grove with shepherds' huts, as described in the libretto, Dorinda's recitativo adds more detail, and her indicative gestures could help place these details on the three-dimensional plane and more effectively transport the audience into the scene:

⁷⁴*The Theatrical Speaker, op. cit.*, p.2.

⁷⁵Austin, *op. cit.*, p.497.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷*Deictics*, from the Greek δεικτικός, which comes from the verb δείκνυμι meaning to show, or to point out, and the suffix -τικός which refers to the capacity for doing something. *Deictic* gestures, therefore, are gestures that have the capacity to indicate and direct attention.

What pleasure had I *in these woods*, watching again and again the innocent play of *the goats*, and of *the deer*? In the meandering of *the clear streams*, *the flowers* shine, and *the plants* sway; the chirping of *the birds*, the blowing of *Zephyr's* breaths. Oh, blissful days of the past! But now, *for me*, there's only sorrow.⁷⁸

When she sings 'in these woods', some kind of indicative gesture, perhaps with the right hand supine swiping from left to right, following her eyes, would allow her to show that the woods she speaks about are all around her. When she mentions the animals, she could make a hand gesture to her right for the goats and left for the deer, placing them in the space and creating a more vivid and varied image. The clear streams could be indicated as being somewhere far ahead, with the flowers on one of the riverbanks and the plants on the other. The birds could be singing from the trees above her, shown to us by the lifting of her eyes and head, and then her head could turn towards the right side of the audience, with her right arm slightly extended to where the summer breeze comes from. And when she sings 'for me', her hand could be gently placed on her breast, to indicate that she is the person feeling the sorrow. In all these examples the gestures are indicative. All agents we examined can perform indicative gestures: the eyes and head can be turned as a means of pointing, with an expression in the face further clarifying the reference; the hands have infinite ways to show people, things, places, and

⁷⁸Translated libretto from Dorinda's *accompagnato recitativo* in Handel's *Orlando*, Act I, Scene 4, with emphasis (mine) on the words that could be accompanied by indicative gestures. Original text in verse:

Quanto diletto avea tra questi boschi
a rimirar quegli innocenti scherzi
e di capri, e di cervi?
Nel serpeggiar dei limpidi ruscelli
brillar i fior, ed ondeggiar le piante;
nel garrir degli augelli,
nello spirar di zeffiretto i fiati.
Oh giorni allor beati!
Ora per me funesti.

directions; and even a turn of the body or a shift of the body weight from one foot to the other can indicate someone or something.

Emphatical gestures (II.2.b) are gestures used to accompany the sung text, helping to clarify it by underlining the most important words and by bringing out some of the words' qualities. La Mothe le Vayer wrote that 'a turning of the head or just the eyes, a tapping of the foot or of the hand, to say nothing of the many other movements of the body, make us understand what a very long speech would perhaps not explain to us so well'.⁷⁹ In the previous example of Dorinda's recitativo, a winding hand gesture could be used on the word 'meandering' to manifest the serpentine shape of the stream. Emphatical gestures can also help to bring out words key for the understanding of a sentence, for example, the coordinating conjunctions (but, for, and, or, nor, so and yet) which are powerful rhetorical constructs that express logical relations and are in many cases instrumental in moving the drama forward. Another example from the same opera can suggest how a gesture of the feet could emphasise the coordinating conjunction 'but' at a critical point of the plot. Early in the drama, the opera's title character, Orlando, has been coaxed by Zoroastro to abandon the pursuit of love for that of martial glory. Orlando initially embraces this suggestion only suddenly to regret it. His change of heart, initiated by the word 'but', will eventually lead to his madness and is a key dramaturgical moment for the development of the plot:

Yes, I am leaving, and running to raise with valour new trophies: I
give you, oh beautiful glory, all my affection. *But* what am I saying
and I do not die? And I will abandon my dear beloved?⁸⁰

⁷⁹Vn tournement de la teste ou des yeux seulemēt, vn frappement du pied ou de la main, pour ne rien dire de beaucoup d'autres mouuemens du corps, fontentendre ce qu'vn fort long discours ne nous expliqueroit peut-estre pas si bien'. de La Mothe le Vayer, *op. cit.*, pp.104–105.

⁸⁰Translated libretto from Orlando's accompagnato recitativo in Handel's *Orlando*, Act I, Scene 3, with the coordinating conjunction in italics, emphasis mine. Original text in verse:

Sì, già vi fuggo, e corro
A innalzar col valor novi trofei:
Ti rendo o bella gloria gli affetti miei.
Ma che parlo? E non moro?

The contrapposto stance and the change of weight from the front to the back can be used as part of the bodily rhetoric, and together with the facial expressions and gestures, underline the important elements of the text, helping the audience to better understand it and be moved by it. For example, the singer could sing ‘Yes, I am leaving...all my affection’ while standing in contrapposto with the right foot forward with the weight on it, and as they sing ‘But what am I saying?’ they can move the weight back onto the left foot. Although this change of weight is a seemingly small movement, it is a very effective emphatical gesture that helps the audience to subconsciously ‘underline’ this salient moment in the text and take stock of the significance of the phrase just sung. When this weight change is then also combined with appropriate significant gestures—for example, a joyous expression of confident excitement with a triumphant gesture for ‘Yes, I am leaving...all my affection’, and a compound expression of dread and fear on the face with a gesture of surprise for ‘But what am I saying?’—the meaning could become yet clearer.

Emphatical gestures are similar to the ones people use when they speak in everyday life, with the added qualities of magnificence and boldness making them fit for the stage. As long as they follow the general aesthetic framework of historical acting and are connected with the emotion and the words sung, there are no rules about these gestures, and they can be something very personal to the performer. For example, Figure 14 shows two different gestures for the phrase ‘Aye, there’s the rub!’ from the famous soliloquy in Act III, Scene 1 of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Engel, explaining the first gesture, writes that ‘when Hamlet discovers why suicide is such a dubious step he calls out: “Aye, there’s the rub!” and at the same time he moves his finger in front of him as if he had found outside with his eyes what he indeed found internally with astuteness’.⁸¹ The second gesture comes

E lascerò quell’idolo che adoro!

⁸¹‘Wenn Hamlet die Ursache entdeckt hat, warum der Selbstmord ein so bedenklicher Schritt sey? so ruft er aus: “Ach da liegt der Knoten!” und in demselbigen Augenblicke bewegt er den Finger



FIGURE 14. The gesture of apprehension for Hamlet's phrase 'Aye, there's the rub!' as shown in Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (left) and Siddons' *Practical Illustrations* (right).

from Siddons' translation of Engel's treatise, and although the interpretation is identical with the original, the description omits the phrase 'moves the finger in front of him', which is mirrored in the design of the plate, with the hand presented vertical next to the head.⁸² This example demonstrates the personal element in interpreting and creating non-significant emphatical gestures.

The final category of gestures in this classification is the *Preparatory* gestures (II.2.c). Preparatory gestures precede the main gestures and place the agent in the right place so that the main gesture has the maximum effect. For example, to portray sorrow a singer could choose a complex significant gesture mentioned above, where the right hand lifts up to cover the face and the head falls down to meet the palm, while the left arm extends backwards. This is the main gesture. In order to create a more powerful effect and give extra force to the main gesture, a preparatory gesture could be used, where sorrow is drawn on the face, both arms

vor sich hin, als ob er äußerlich mit dem Auge gefunden hätte, was er doch innerlich mit dem Scharfsinne fand'. Johann Jacob Engel, *Ideen zu einer Mimik. Mit erläuternden Kupfertafeln*, Volume 1 (Berlin: Auf Kosten des Verfassers und in Commission bey August Mylius, 1785), pp.130–131.

⁸²Siddons' description says: 'When the unhappy Prince has discovered the reasons which make self destruction so criminal a step—he exclaims "aye, there's the rub," and at the same moment should give the *exterior* sign of that which his *interior* penetration alone has enabled him to discover'. Siddons, *Practical Illustrations*, p.61.

elevate, hands with palms opening forwards (as in the gesture of surprise, but in this instance the same gesture would be classed as preparatory), and the head slightly lifts up, before moving to the main gesture, with the arm already in the correct elevation, the right palm rotating to cover the face, the head falling on the palm, and the left arm swinging backwards before extending, thus travelling a longer distance. The main gesture is dramatic enough, but it is the preparatory gesture that adds energy, intensity and style to it, and also makes it appear more natural.

Following this analysis of the new classification system, the next section examines the remaining two perspectives from which Austin considers gesture: style of delivery and quality.

Qualities of Gesture

Austin divides the style of delivery into *epic*, *rhetorical* and *colloquial*; epic comprises the gestures used for the performance of ‘tragedy, epic poetry, lyric odes, and sublime description’; rhetorical are the gestures used for oratory, for example, for public speaking in parliament, in the courtroom, in the pulpit, and on other similar occasions; and the colloquial style includes gestures for speaking ‘in the higher scenes of polite life’.⁸³ For each of these styles of delivery, he prescribes a certain combination from a selection of eight qualities of gesture: magnificence, boldness, variety, precision, energy, propriety, simplicity and grace. The epic style, which is the closest equivalent to the style we have defined as our focus in this thesis,⁸⁴ requires the use of ‘all these qualities in perfection’.⁸⁵

Magnificence is achieved by broad, flowing, and unconstrained gestures of the hands and arms, with added ornaments and transitions, free movements of the head and body, and large decisive steps that take on the stage.⁸⁶ *Boldness*

⁸³Austin, *op. cit.*, p.458.

⁸⁴See definition of historical acting in the Introduction, p.8.

⁸⁵Austin, *op. cit.*, pp.457–458

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p.453.

requires striking, extravagant gestures done for effect with great confidence and a willingness to take risks.⁸⁷ *Variety* requires avoiding the repetition of a set of staple gestures, but using new and modified ones to express unfolding passions, because ‘[n]othing is so injurious or disgusts so soon as bareness of manner’.⁸⁸ Variety applies also to the degrees of boldness and magnificence: in the less exciting, narrative parts of the plot, ‘the gesture, if any be used, is tame and simple; but, in the more impassioned parts’, the gesture should be as ‘exerted’ as the voice, becoming ‘more bold and frequent’.⁸⁹ The qualities of magnificence, boldness and variety indicates the adaptation of the natural depictions of the passions, magnifying and beautifying them to make them fit for the stage.

The definitions of precision, energy, propriety, and simplicity overlap to some extent, and they should be considered together: *Precision* (also called correctness) derives from good judgement on elements such as preparation of gesture, timing, and strength, so that gestures fit the character and passions portrayed and do not create confusion or unnecessary distraction.⁹⁰ *Energy* refers to the firmness and decisiveness of the action and incorporates the quality of precision which further adds to its vehemence and vigour.⁹¹ *Propriety* requires gestures to appear natural and also integrates an element of precision, where gestures should be received as genuine illustrations of the depicted passions, avoiding contradictions and confusion.⁹² *Simplicity* refers to gestures that possess the quality of propriety (look natural to the passion and set of circumstances portrayed) and have the right degree of boldness by achieving a good balance between too much (affectation) and too little (‘meanness or false shame’).⁹³

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 454. The quality of boldness is crucial to a theatrical performance. Gildon advised his readers to ‘allow a more strong, vivid and violent Gesture’ for the stage than what they would have used for the bar or the pulpit. Gildon, *op. cit.*, p.57.

⁸⁸Austin, *op. cit.*, n. 3, pp.454–455.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 379.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 456–457.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 454.

⁹²Ibid., p. 457.

⁹³Ibid., p. 455.

The last and pivotal quality of *grace* incorporates elements of all the other seven qualities, and Austin devotes a whole chapter to it.⁹⁴ Grace serves as the finishing touch that brings all the other qualities together, from a graceful stance of the body to a sense of ease, naturalness, variety, and simplicity.⁹⁵ A gesture must be done at exactly the right time, and be congruent to the passion and character portrayed, as ‘the most flowing and beautiful motions, the grandest preparations, and the finest transitions of gesture ill applied and out of time, lose their natural character of grace, and become indecorous, ridiculous, or offensive’.⁹⁶ Unless it fits the dramatic character and the emotion portrayed, too refined and over-the-top gestures can be dismissed as artificial and pretentious.⁹⁷ The guiding principle is ‘simplicity and truth of manner’, and grand elaborate postures, although allowed to actors, are to be used only with moderation and on rare occasions such as ‘the extremes of passion’, for instance when being ‘petrified with horror’.⁹⁸

Although the eight qualities of gesture as defined by Austin were very beneficial in my investigative process in helping me construe in more practical terms some of the more abstruse theoretical elements examined in the previous chapter, they proved less advantageous in a teaching setting. They were the element trialled that was deemed the least applicable across the three implementations of the Empirical Inquiry, with the clearest reasoning given by Participant A in Implementation A, who found that there was too much overlap between the definitions of the various qualities, rendering them impracticable from a technical point of view and difficult to remember. In our first workshop, Participant A asked me to produce simpler, more memorable terms whose meaning is readily demarcated. I invited him to work on this with me. We began by breaking each quality down to its most

⁹⁴Chapter XXII, p.505.

⁹⁵Ibid., pp.509–510.

⁹⁶Ibid., p.515.

⁹⁷‘The more shewy and fine the gestures are, unless they belong indispensably to the subject, to the affection of the mind, and to the character of the speaker, the more do they offend the judicious by their manifest affectation’. Ibid., pp.514–515.

⁹⁸Ibid., p.514.

basic elements and then regrouped them and experimented with new words that would collectively convey the main elements from Austin's model but with more delimited definitions. In putting different versions of the new model into practice, as a device for both analysing and shaping performance, it also became apparent that the terms were more effective presented as adjectives rather than nouns. So, as with the gesture classification, Austin's qualities became a conceptual springboard for proposing a new streamlined set of six qualities of gesture specifically developed for the new teaching method: *congruous, varied, amplified, moderated, timely* and *unaffected*.

1. CONGRUOUS

The first quality a gesture should have is to be congruous, namely, to be suitable and appropriate to the dramatic context and circumstances it serves. This quality relates directly to naturalness, the third main principle of historical acting (outlined in the previous chapter, p. 48). Speaking of rhetorical action, Austin wrote that it

derives its grace not only from the actual motions of the speaker, but also very much from the congruity of his motions with the sentiments which he delivers. They must accord with them in every character, and vary according to all the different situations as well as sentiments, not only of the same person, but of different persons. The dignity and sobriety of deportment, which is becoming grace in a judge, would be quaint affectation in a young barrister. And the graceful, but colloquial familiarity of action, even of the court, would be highly indecorous in the pulpit.⁹⁹

⁹⁹Ibid., pp.515–516.

The power of tragedy also relies on stage action appearing truthful,¹⁰⁰ and actors were asked to follow the poets' endeavour for truthfulness by adapting their action to the dramatic occasion, dramatic character and emotional state the character is in.¹⁰¹ Gestures should be fitting not only to the meaning of the words they accompany but to the passion they convey.¹⁰² Although words, sentences or dramatic situations can be clearly connected to certain passions, the connection might become more ambiguous when examined in relation to character, as we saw that not only the outward expression of each passion differs in quality and degree according to temperament, but also certain circumstances can push characters of different temperaments to divergent emotions.¹⁰³ To that end Goethe considered understanding the dramatic character and plot as the first step of the

¹⁰⁰Burke wrote 'I imagine we shall be much mistaken if we attribute any considerable part of our satisfaction in tragedy to a consideration that tragedy is a deceit, and its representations no realities. The nearer it approaches the reality, and the further it removes us from all idea of fiction, the more perfect is its power'. Burke, *op. cit.*, p.26. Similarly, John Hill argued that 'All dramatic fictions please us the more, the more like they are to real adventures and occurrences. The perfection which we are most of all desirous of seeing arriv'd at in the representation of these pieces, is what the judges of theatrical performances express by the word *Truth*. They mean, by that term, the concourse of all those appearances which may assist in deceiving the audience into an imagination, that 'tis a scene of real life they are attending to'. J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.156.

¹⁰¹'si come il poeta con il soggetto verisimile et artificioso et con le parole scelte, piene di spirito e ben concatenate, ha da tener gl'uditori attenti, così il recitante, con varii atti appropriati a i casi, li ha da tener'—'che bisogna sempre che egli s'ingegni di variar gl'atti secondo la varietà delle occasioni, et imitare non solamente il personaggio che egli rappresenta, ma anco lo stato in che quel tale si mostra di essere in quell'ora'—'chi intende ben la sua parte, et che abbia ingegno, trova anco movimenti et gesti assai apropiati da farla comparire come cosa vera'. de' Sommi, *op. cit.*, pp.46, 41, 46. Hiffenan wrote that truly sublime tragic acting 'consists in the performers appearing to be the very characters they represent; uttering their dialogue, whether calm or impassioned, with a voice judiciously varied into tones (with sometimes happy dissonances) and accents so suitable, as to be exclusive of all others on that occasion; accompanied too with looks, as well as gestures peculiarly adapted'. Hiffenan, *op. cit.*, p.99.

¹⁰²Le Faucheur wrote that gesture 'must be well adjusted to the *Things* you speak of as well as agreeable to your *Thought* and *Design*: besides that it is always to resemble the *Passion* you have a Mind either to *express* or to *excite*'. le Faucheur, *An Essay upon the Action of an Orator*, *op. cit.*, pp.173–174.

¹⁰³John Hill wrote that 'Love in a young man ought to burst forth in transports and impetuosity; in an old fellow it is to shew itself by degrees, and with a deal of art and circumspection. A person of a superior quality, throws into his very sorrow, into his complaints, and into his threats a sort of decent greatness, and has ever less violence, even in his anger, than a person who has had no education. The affliction conceived for the loss of a sum of money, paints itself in very different colours in the face of an old miser, and in that of a young extravagant; and the coxcomb does not blush at a reproof in the same manner as the man of merit and modesty'. J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.158.

actor's preparation,¹⁰⁴ and Pier Maria Cecchini (1563–1645) urged actors to learn the differences between various personalities and the way each might respond to dramatic incidents, so as to portray on stage what we would expect to see in the real world.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, for a gesture to be congruous it needs to fit the word and passion it conveys and be agreeable to the temperament of the represented dramatic character.

2. VARIED

Variety relates to historical acting's principle of beauty. As outlined in the previous chapter (p. 29), variety and the law of contrast were guiding aesthetic precepts. Standing in contrapposto, for example, and keeping the principal hand always in a higher elevation, added variety, making the overall image more aesthetically pleasing. The quality of variety, however, is not limited to deportment but extends to execution. Samuel Derrick (1727–1769) wrote that variety is the quality that distinguishes the 'the Actor of genius from the mechanical performer', as 'a Player to shew his genius must be perpetually varying his attitudes'.¹⁰⁶ Hill argued that gestures that are not varied but 'continue the same throughout several scenes' can end up looking 'as the habits of the man who acts, not as the effects of impressions given him in the different situations and circumstances of the character he is representing'.¹⁰⁷ For singers, variety of gesture applied also to the repetition of phrases and sections. Hermann Heimark Cludius (fl. 1786–1815) wrote in 1810 that it is important for a singer 'when a passage of a song is being elaborated musically

¹⁰⁴Dabei muß aber vorausgesetzt werden, daß der Schauspieler vorher den Charakter und die ganze Lage des Vorzustellenden sich völlig eigen mache, und daß seine Einbildungskraft den Stoff recht verarbeite; denn ohne diese Vorbereitung wird er weder richtig zu declamiren noch zu handeln im Stande sein'. Goethe, *op. cit.*, p.162.

¹⁰⁵Conoschino adunque la differenza de gl'huomini, & anche la natura de' casi che maneggiano, che al sicuro comprenderanno non esser tutt'vno il trattar con diuerso, che la loro qualità non sia tutt'vna, secondo gl'accidenti, che succedono debbono caminar la Scena con l'istesso ordine, che scórrono il Mondo'. Pier Maria Cecchini, *Frotti delle moderne comedie, et avisi a chi le recita* (Padova: Appresso Guaresco Guareschi Pozzo dipinto, 1628), p.19.

¹⁰⁶Samuel Derrick, *A General View of the Stage. By Mr. Wilkes* (London: Printed for J. Coote, in Pater-noster Row; And W. Whetstone, in Skinner Row, Dublin, 1759), p.152.

¹⁰⁷J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.178.

or repeated often, to ensure [...] that the same postures and movements are not repeated, but to remain lively and fresh in the gesticulation, as the song briskly continues',¹⁰⁸ and Robert Toft quoted commentaries from 1825 criticising singers 'for the poverty of invention they showed in second and third repetitions'.¹⁰⁹ In the next chapter we will see the castrato Senesino being praised by Roger Pickering for his varied deportment and expression in the same performance but also across several performances.¹¹⁰

3. AMPLIFIED

In the previous chapter, we saw that in tragic acting the element of beauty incorporated an element of majesty, requiring gestures that were dignified, decent and elevated. This third quality of gesture conveys the aspect of elevation. Garrick wrote that tragedy 'fixes her Empire on the *Passions*, and the more exalted *Contractions* and *Dilations* of the Heart',¹¹¹ but the amplification of expression is not pertinent only to the tragic genre: it provides a technical adjustment that produces more natural-looking results on stage. Giraldi argued that in both tragedy and comedy, although the former imitates the illustrious and royal and the latter the common and civil, action must still be conducted in its entirety with due grandeur because there is no beauty in things which are not appropriately fitted to their spatiality,¹¹² and Riccoboni explained that 'pure simple Nature would be

¹⁰⁸Cludius writing in *Abriß der Vortragskunst* (1810), quoted translated in: Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, *op.cit.*, p.37.

¹⁰⁹Robert Toft, *Tune thy Musicke to thy Hart: The Art of Eloquent Singing in England, 1597-1622* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p.176.

¹¹⁰See discussion on page 161.

¹¹¹David Garrick, *An Essay on Acting: In which will be consider'd The Mimical Behaviour of a Certain fashionable faulty Actor, and the Laudableness of such unmannerly, as well as inhumane Proceedings. To which will be added, A short Criticism On His acting Macbeth* (London: Printed for W. Bickerton, At the Gazette, in the Temple Exchange, near the Inner Temple Gate, Fleet-Street, 1744), p.5.

¹¹²Hanno dunque tra lor commune la Comedia & la Tragedia, l'imitare una attione: ma sono differèti, che quella imita la illustre & reale, & questa la popolaesca & ciuile: [...] che l'una & l'atra attione deue eßer perfetta, & con debita grandezza condotta al fine: & dißi con debita grandezza, perche se sono piu picciole del giusto, non possono eßer belle: che non è bellezza nelle cose, che son minori di quel che conuiene nella spetie loro'. Giraldi, *op.cit.*, pp.202-203.

cold upon the Stage' arguing that 'the Action should be heightned a little'.¹¹³ Expanding on that idea, Hill made a distinction between what constitutes natural for the stage and what would look as natural in the real world, writing that 'to understand the term *natural*, when apply'd to playing, in a larger sense, and to express by it an exact imitation of nature, as it appears in common in the world, we shall not scruple to affirm, that there are many cases in which a player would appear lifeless, spiritless, and insipid, by playing naturally'.¹¹⁴ Giving an example of how facial expressions should be amplified he wrote:

That the changes of the actor's countenance may appear just, and sufficiently expressive to an audience, it is not enough that the passion which he is to describe to them barely discover itself in his eyes; it must be seen there with an uncommon force and vivacity. The face that can mark a passion but weakly on the stage, is to be rank'd with those which cannot mark it at all: That very degree of expression in the countenance, which is capable of affecting us elsewhere, is not enough to strike us in the player.¹¹⁵

If we look at opera, there is nothing 'natural' about the genre in a sense of the common and the everyday. This is not just because of the extremity of the dramatic incidences, the greatness of the characters and the high intensity of the passions conveyed in the libretto, which the music serves to further amplify; but also because the singers are acting for the audience, placed at a distance, arranged so they can always be seen, divulging out loud in solo arias and asides their most private thoughts: and yet something so highly artificial must carry a sense of validity and truthfulness and appear genuine and natural. The influential philosopher, essayist, playwright and critic Denis Diderot (1713–1784) observed that gestures designed for the stage would appear too large and excessive in a small

¹¹³Riccoboni, 'Reflections upon Declamation', *op. cit.*, pp.176–177.

¹¹⁴J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.236.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp.164–165.

room,¹¹⁶ as paintings publicly exhibited to a large audience looking at them from a distance ‘have a strength in the touches somewhat too bold for a near view’.¹¹⁷ Ancient Greek architects used a technique called *entasis* (ἐντασις), meaning tension, whereby columns were designed slightly swollen in the middle in order to make them appear straight, as without this optical correction they would be perceived from a distance as slightly concave. Similarly, gesture amplified for the stage is an artificial exaggeration of natural expression that helps the final result to appear more natural than it would otherwise. Jelgerhuis wrote that

The actor must persuade his audience by means of his art—notably through large and sustained movement—that he is experiencing an emotion when actually he is not. I say through large and sustained visible action, for an awful lot gets lost if movements are made too small.¹¹⁸

Giving an example of how a gesture can be amplified, Jelgerhuis drew two alternatives for the expression of the passion of hatred (see Figure 15). Four of the limbs show how hatred is expressed naturally, while the limbs marked with the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 show how hatred should be corrected for the stage: the left arm is presented higher, the right arm is bent, placing greater focus on the clenched fist by elevating it in front of the chest, and the contrapposto stance with the

¹¹⁶In private theatricals, in a drawing-room, where the spectator is almost on a level with the actor, the true dramatic impersonation would have struck you as being on an enormous, a gigantic scale, and at the end of the performance you would have said confidentially to a friend, “She will not succeed; she is too extravagant;” and her success on the stage would have astonished you. Let me repeat it, whether for good or ill, the actor says nothing and does nothing in private life in the same way as on the stage: it is a different world’. Denis Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting: Translated with Annotations from Diderot’s ‘Paradoxe sur le Comédien’*, trans. by Walter Herries Pollock (London: Chatto & Windus, 1883), p.81. Diderot argued, likewise, that a performance well-calculated for the drawing room would appear too weak for the stage: ‘You give a recitation in a drawing-room; your feelings are stirred; your voice fails you; you burst into tears. You have, as you say, felt, and felt deeply. Quite so; but had you made up your mind to that? Not at all. Yet you were carried away, you surprised and touched your hearers, you made a great hit. All this is true enough. But now transfer your easy tone, your simple expression, your every-day bearing, to the stage, and, I assure you, you will be paltry and weak. You may cry to your heart’s content, and the audience will only laugh’. Ibid. pp.18–19.

¹¹⁷John J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.165.

¹¹⁸Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, p.350.

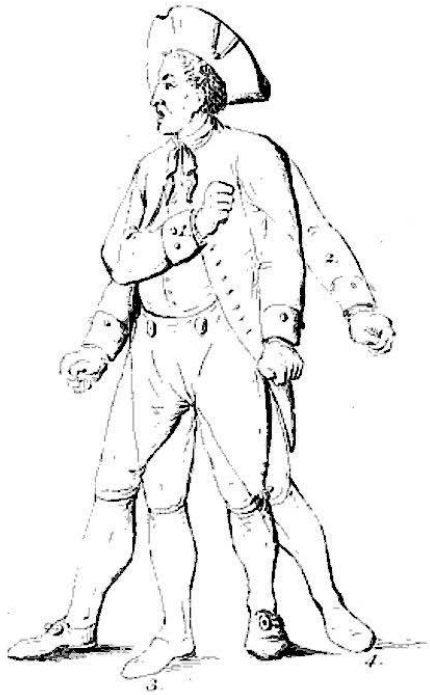


FIGURE 15. This figure from Jelgerhuis' *Theoretische Lessen*, illustrates the passion of hatred, as it is expressed naturally, and how it should be adjusted for the stage (numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4).

weight on the right foot amplifies the sense of direction.¹¹⁹ If gestures need to be amplified to be effective and look natural on stage, to what degree should they be amplified? Jelgerhuis' illustration offers a useful exemplar, but it is his following piece of advice that better answers the question and introduces the fourth quality of gesture, moderation: 'we should adopt the mid-course between extremes of behavior: the false method which stipulates that we should not exaggerate at all, and the equally false which requires that we exaggerate overly much'.¹²⁰

4. MODERATED

Speaking of oratorical gesture, Quintilian asserted that 'the safest route is down the middle, because both extremes are faults', writing that without moderation 'nothing is praiseworthy or beneficial' and when moderation is in control it leads to

¹¹⁹The contrapposto stance and the elevation and bending of the right arm also create greater contrast, contributing to the quality of variety.

¹²⁰Ibid., p.269.

‘greatness, not excess; sublimity, not hazardous extravagance; boldness, not rashness; severity, not grimness; gravity, not heaviness; abundance, not luxuriance; pleasure, not abandon; grandeur, not turgidity’.¹²¹ In the eighteenth century, Fordyce also duly urged preachers to always employ ‘Sense and Judgement’ and try to ‘hit the medium’, tempering the ‘transcendent and prevailing Flame’ in the expression of vehement passions, while at the same time making sure ‘*not be too tame neither*, nor sink into an enervated dullness, or flaccid dronishness of Gesture’ as anything that is ‘either *over done*, or *comes off heavily*, will probably be displeasing, will certainly be unnatural’.¹²² Writing on theatrical action, Hill identified the two extremes as ‘familiarity’ and ‘pomp’ or ‘false majesty’, calling the *via media* ‘finesse’.¹²³ The philosophical precept behind the quality of moderation lies in *the doctrine of the mean*, one of Aristotle’s most celebrated ideas introduced in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹²⁴ The virtue of the mean (μέσον) is defined as the midpoint between excess (ὑπερβολή) and deficiency (ἐλλειψις), and unlike the arithmetic equivalent which is a definite point equidistant to two extremes, this mean does not remain the same to each case but it is relative.¹²⁵ The relative nature of the doctrine of the mean makes it particularly pertinent in the context of this thesis, as different elements of the theatrical gesture need to be moderated according to a variety of factors, such as the dramatic character, the performer’s tendencies and aptitudes, the performance space, etc.

Austin’s word of caution is a nod to the relative nature of the mean in the context of the beautification of gesture: although he agrees with Hogarth in that ‘[t]rue elegance of gesture follows the graceful mean’,¹²⁶ he explains that ‘[t]here is

¹²¹Quintilian; Donald A. Russell, editor, *The Orator’s Education, Books 11–12*, trans. by Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.325.

¹²²Fordyce, *op. cit.*, pp.64–65.

¹²³J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.251.

¹²⁴Howard J. Curzer, *Aristotle and the Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.49.

¹²⁵Aristotle, *Ἠθικὰ Νικομάχεια*, 1106a.

¹²⁶Austin makes many references to Hogarth’s treatise *The Analysis of Beauty* and his concept of the serpentine line of beauty which was examined briefly in the previous chapter (p.27). Discussing the idea of a graceful mean he wrote: ‘The grace of movement consists as we have

in gesture a latitude allowable, which when occasion requires overpasses the forms of grace, the one hand enters within the confines of the grand and magnificent, and on the other, with great propriety, and with equal grace, the circumstances being considered, retrenches from its flowing, and brings it nearer to the unaffected simplicity of truth and common life'.¹²⁷ Beauty and grace, therefore, yield to congruity, and the moderation of gesture's amplitude does not abide by a universal rule but is relative to the circumstances of each particular case and context. Aristotle gives the example of a trainer considering the nutrition of his athletes: if ten pounds of food is too much and two pounds of food is too little, this does not make the arithmetic mean (six pounds) the right amount of food for everyone—for the legendary Milo of Croton six pounds would be too little and for a beginner athlete too much.¹²⁸ Many of the exercises of the new teaching method utilise this model by making use of a system of numbers from zero to ten, representing the two extreme values, guiding the singers to first identify what the two extremes are before attempting to discover the most appropriate mean. For example, when trying to find the right elevation for a character, the student would first explore what no elevation (zero) and extreme elevation (ten) looks and feels like, with ten being an over-the-top, almost caricaturish amplification of gestures. By running through all the numbers of the scale several times, the real midpoint (five) is set, before other considerations move this higher or lower until the mean is established. If the character portrayed is choleric, then a higher elevation would be sought: for instance, six. The actual number would relate to the particularities of the character to ensure congruity, the relationship with the other characters

seen according to Hogarth in the inflexion of the lines in which it moves. And these lines must not be either too much or too little bended; the line of beauty will be transgressed by either extreme. Indentations too deep, and flourishes too much extended, fall into quaintness, or run out into bombast and wild extravagance, whilst the want of a certain degree of deflexion from the direct line, degenerates into stiff and cold formality'. Austin, *op. cit.*, p.451.

¹²⁷Ibid., pp.451–452.

¹²⁸Aristotle, *Ἠθικὰ Νικομάχεια*, 1106b. Aristotle does not use pounds but *mnæ*, an ancient unit of weight. A *mnæ* (μνᾶ) weighed almost as much as a modern pound, so pounds are used here for clarity.

in the plot to ensure variety, and what looks and feels sustainable, appropriate and natural for the teacher and student. Then, the teacher could correct for the performer's tendencies: for instance, if they tend generally to drop their elevation, it might be safer for a higher number to be assigned (say, seven) to correct for that, or vice versa (say, five) if when they act their part they tend generally to amplify their gestures more. Adjusting for individual propensities was a core part of the doctrine of the mean, and Aristotle compared it with bent wood which is straightened by first being bent in the opposite direction.¹²⁹ Suppose that a value of seven for amplification has been established to be the most appropriate mean for a specific singer performing a certain role as part of a particular production on a large operatic stage. If the same singer wanted to perform an aria from this role in a small chamber setting, amplifying their facial expressions and elevating their gestures to a seven, which in the previous context looked apt and natural, might appear enormous, gigantic and extravagant, spoiling the performance.¹³⁰ By running the same exercise in the new space and moderating the elevation for the new conditions a new mean could be established (say, five), which would have the same overall effect as the mean established for the stage. This process of moderation can be repeated for a large number of different elements until the result looks and feels 'just right' in each given context. Aristotle wrote that every art that serves its role well should look at the mean as the guiding principle of its works, and this is the reason that for excellent works of art people say that there is nothing that could be added or removed because either excess or deficiency would harm what is good, and good craftspeople work towards retaining the medial state.¹³¹

¹²⁹σκοπεῖν δὲ δεῖ πρὸς ἃ καὶ αὐτοὶ εὐκατάφοροί ἐσμεν· ἄλλοι γὰρ πρὸς ἄλλα πεφύκαμεν· [...] εἰς τοῦναντίον δ' ἑαυτοὺς ἀφέλκειν δεῖ· [...] ὅπερ οἱ τὰ διεστραμμένα τῶν ξύλων ὀρθοῦντες ποιοῦσιν. Ibid., 1109b.

¹³⁰See Diderot's quotation in n. 116 (p.129).

¹³¹εἰ δὴ πᾶσα ἐπιστήμη οὕτω τὸ ἔργον εὖ ἐπιτελεῖ, πρὸς τὸ μέσον βλέπουσα καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἄγουσα τὰ ἔργα (ὅθεν εἰώθασιν ἐπιλέγειν τοῖς εὖ ἔχουσιν ἔργοις ὅτι οὐτ' ἀφελεῖν ἔστιν οὔτε προσθεῖναι, ὡς τῆς μὲν ὑπερβολῆς καὶ τῆς ἐλλείψεως φθειρούσης τὸ εὖ, τῆς δὲ μεσότητος σφζούσης, οἱ δ' ἀγαθοὶ τεχνῖται, ὡς λέγομεν, πρὸς τοῦτο βλέποντες ἐργάζονται). Aristotle, *Ἠθικὰ Νικομάχεια*, 1106b.

Moderation should be applied in every facet of acting, and affects the first three qualities. We have already examined the moderation of the amplification of gesture, so let us examine briefly how it affects the first two qualities. Although singers should aim at varied and contrasting gestures and postures, Jelgerhuis warned those ‘striving for the effect of contrast’ to ‘never be excessively or overtly twisted’.¹³² Likewise, if almost every word is accompanied by otherwise congruous gestures, the performance might be spoiled by their sheer number. For example, Jelgerhuis wrote that gestures must ‘not follow too close in succession to each other, lest too much be presented too quickly to the spectator’.¹³³ Of all the rules that he gives about acting, he identifies one

which is superior to all because all are contained within it: Not too much movement! The great masters of rhetoric have made clear that overmuch bodily activity does not enhance the power of speech. All the more reason, therefore, for us to be careful in this regard while we are speaking.¹³⁴

Similarly, Riccoboni wrote that ‘a Speaker, who is too lavish of his Gestures, finds so much Work for the Eyes of his Auditors that they are quite fatigued, and their Thoughts wandering and confused’,¹³⁵ and the anonymous author of *The Theatrical Speaker* exclaimed:

How ravishing are the attitudes, when graceful and introduced with propriety, and sparingly! how disgustful, when awkward and crowded!¹³⁶

Conversely, too few gestures could also be problematic. A meta-analysis of fifty-four studies on non-verbal leakage during deception has shown that when people lie, the number of gestures they use decreases (in particular head nodding, hand

¹³²Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, p.294.

¹³³*Ibid.*, p.377.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, p.304.

¹³⁵Riccoboni, ‘Reflections upon Declamation’, *op. cit.*, p.22.

¹³⁶*The Theatrical Speaker*, *op. cit.*, p.1.

movements, and foot and leg movements).¹³⁷ Although behavioural patterns vary between people of different ages and personalities—and this should be taken into account when considering the appropriate amount of gestures to be used for a certain passage—a performance where hand movement is received as being inhibited has more chances to appear false, and therefore be less persuasive. Persuasion lies in moderation. Le Faucher argued that it would be equally bad to either move continuously like ‘a Man at Sea in a *Cock-boat*’ or stand ‘immoveable as a *May-pole*’,¹³⁸ and according to Hiffernan, the movement of the performer’s head, ‘even when not speaking, is neither to be immoveable, like that of a statue, nor veering about to every blast like a weather cock; no, it is to enjoy an easy uprightness between motion and rest without particularly marking either’.¹³⁹

To moderate the number of gestures first the two extremes should be established—say, no gestures at all (zero) and a gesture for almost every word (ten)—and then through experimentation the number of gestures that would seem most appropriate and natural for each particular case can be identified. For example, a properly moderated amount of movement for an old phlegmatic character would be very different from that for a young sanguine character (say, three for the first and seven for the latter). The middle point (five) would be inappropriate for both characters: excessive for the first and deficient for the latter, either of which would spoil the endeavour to convey clear characterisation through movement. If the role of the older phlegmatic character is shared by two singers, performing on different nights, the mean amount of movement might need to be different in each case. For example, the first singer might naturally have a general tendency to move and gesture a lot when performing and the second might feel more comfortable performing relatively still: in this case, if the character’s mean is defined as three, the first singer’s most appropriate mean might be one and the second singer’s

¹³⁷Siegfried L. Sporer and Barbara Schwandt, ‘Moderators of Nonverbal Indicators of Deception: A Meta-Analytic Synthesis’ *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 13 (2007):1.

¹³⁸le Faucheur, *An Essay upon the Action of an Orator*, *op.cit.*, pp.178–179.

¹³⁹Hiffernan, *op.cit.*, p.79.

mean might be five. Although each of the two singers would aim at retaining a different medial state, the resulting performance of the character should look and feel consistent across every night, conveying a clear characterisation to the audience and best serving the plot. Moderating the number of gestures also forces singers to make choices, which could increase the ratio of more effective gestures and consequently the rhetorical power of the performance.

The above examples illustrating the process only touch on a couple of dimensions in which gestures can be moderated. Gestures can be moderated in many ways, some of which would apply to almost every case and some of which would be relevant to a specific student or a particular pedagogical context. Core ideas of the doctrine of the mean are incorporated in many of the exercises comprising the new teaching method, and the Empirical Inquiry showed that tools from this practical branch of philosophy could give students a more confident grasp of elements that might otherwise be considered esoteric and nuanced.

5. TIMELY

Writing on the art of acting in 1608, Cecchini advised that ‘the head, arms, feet and eyes must be moved at the right time, in the right way, in the right order and in the right measure’,¹⁴⁰ which aptly introduces the fifth quality of gesture, relating to aspects associated with the timing of gestures, viz. when movement should start and finish, its duration (which affects the speed) and its accent.¹⁴¹ In improvised speech, gestures accompany the prosody, marking out important words and adding extra layers of meaning and emotional expression. Important words coincide in most cases with boundary tones, especially high-pitch accents which act as the centre of gravity for each intonational phrase. In singing, the emphatical words of the libretto are most commonly identified by speaking out

¹⁴⁰‘il capo, le braccia, i piedi, gl’ occhi si deono muovere a tempo, con modo, con ordine è con misura’. Pier Maria Cecchini, ‘Discorso sopra l’arte comica con il modo di ben recitare [1608]’ in: Ferruccio Marotti and Giovanna Romei, editors, *La commedia dell’arte e la società barocca: La professione del teatro*, Volume 2 (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1994), p.71.

¹⁴¹This quality combines to some degree Austin’s qualities of precision and energy.

the text to discern natural intonational patterns and also looking at rhythmic and musical clues that reveal the composer's choices. After the important words are identified, the performer must make sure that the gesture is executed in the right place and with an appropriate accentuation.

A gesture unit¹⁴² is comprised of four main phases: preparation, stroke, hold and retraction.¹⁴³ The *stroke* is (in most cases¹⁴⁴) the point where the gesture falls on the word it is meant to mark. Walker wrote that 'we must be careful to let the stroke of the hand which marks force, or emphasis, keep exact time with the force of pronunciation; that is, the hand must go down upon the emphatical word, and no other',¹⁴⁵ and Austin added that the stroke should fall specifically 'on the accented syllable of the emphatical word; so that the emphatical force of the voice and the stroke of the gesture co-operate in order to present the idea in the most lively and distinguished manner, as well to the eye as to the ear of the hearer'.¹⁴⁶ A gesture can be small or large, and its stroke soft or firm, according to the word it accompanies and the emotional state of the character,¹⁴⁷ but the nature of the stroke relies on the gesture's preparation. The movement taking place during the *preparation* phase was defined above (p. 120) as a preparatory gesture. Preparatory gestures remain in the new classification as a distinct category in order to mark their importance in the element of performance.¹⁴⁸ Preparation can vary from simply lifting the hands from rest, ready to start singing, to more elaborate

¹⁴²Kendon defines a gesture unit as 'the entire movement excursion, which commences the moment the gesturing limb or limbs begin to leave their position of rest or relaxation, and which finishes only when the limbs are once again relaxed'. Kendon, *op. cit.*, p.124.

¹⁴³This is the most common division of the gesture unit by scientists studying gestural expression, and the terms are introduced as complementary to their historical counterparts to facilitate the following discussion. The hold phase is also called the post-stroke hold, to differentiate it from the pre-stroke hold which we will not examine here. The terminology is extensive, with further subdivisions of the gesture unit and phases, but these lie beyond our scope.

¹⁴⁴For some types of gestures the stroke phase could last longer and extend over several words.

¹⁴⁵Walker, *Elements of Elocution, op. cit.*, p.168.

¹⁴⁶Austin, *op. cit.*, p.377.

¹⁴⁷'The stroke of the gesture is to the eye, what the emphasis and inflexions of the voice are to the ear, and it is capable of equal force and variety'. Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Because the preparation phase is allowed to occupy a category of gesture of its own, the gesture that effects the stroke, hold and retraction phases we can call the main gesture. Main

movement. When observing people speaking in real life, their instinctive hand gestures are prepared before they strike, with the mind almost revealing momentarily what the tongue is about to utter. When the tones of a conversation are high, the movement becomes more pronounced, and speakers tend to exhibit preparatory gestures in higher elevation, which in turn would effect stronger strokes.¹⁴⁹ Preparatory gestures could be compared to the breath that comes before singing a note, or the conductor's lifting of the hand, which prepares the orchestra for the stroke of the downbeat: gesturing without preparation is like trying to sing without taking a breath, or expecting an orchestra to come in together on the first note of the bar without a clear upbeat.¹⁵⁰ Of course, there are instances where preparation needs to be short or non-existent, for example in surprise or terror, when the circumstances force the reaction to be rapid and long and elaborate preparatory gestures in these cases would appear highly unnatural or confusing.¹⁵¹ The *hold* phase follows the initial accent of the stroke and is the extent of time a gesture is held relatively still or floats suspended in position before the start of the *retraction* phase, which is the fading away of the main gesture, returning the agent to its position of rest or relaxation.

To summarise the four main phases of a gesture in an improvised speech: a gesture begins as the mind notionally conceives the upcoming emphatic word by putting the agent(s) in motion that has a quality (size, speed, etc.) germane to the emotional or semantic content of the word (preparation, or preparatory gesture);

gestures can be simple or complex natural significant gestures, indicative or emphatical non-significant gestures, or instituted gestures. Physiological gestures as defined in this chapter do not have a clear onset and will not be considered in the context of a gesture unit.

¹⁴⁹An example of such preparatory gesture was given on page 120.

¹⁵⁰Siddons was critical of actors who 'jump from one extreme to the other, without any apparent cause or motive; as the thunder which we have heard in feeble murmurs at a distance, will sometimes, when we least expect it, roll over our heads in all its noise and fury. Doubtless, these strokes are louder, but, instead of making an impression, they only serve to *stun* us, whilst preparatory ones, and following each other in just gradations, impress the soul with fear—the mind with terror'. Engel and Siddons, *op. cit.*, pp.330–331.

¹⁵¹Austin wrote that preparatory gestures can be used as the principal 'in terror, where the arms are retracted violently, and in surprise, where they are elevated forcibly'. Austin, *op. cit.*, p.534.

the gesture proper is then presented on the accented syllable of the emphatic word, with an accentuation, stress or weight apropos to the movement quality of the preparatory gesture (stroke); then the gesture is held still until the end of the emphatic word, or shortly after it (hold); before it dissipates and the agents relax (retraction). In the case of gestures that convey motion, direction, shape, size or other visual or spatial information, the onset of the stroke still falls on the accented syllable of the emphatic word but the gesture might then keep developing until the end of the word or even several subsequent words, before the hold and retraction phase: for example, a speaker saying the phrase ‘...and in they brought this *enooooormous* piece of furniture that filled the whole room while I looked at them in disbelief...’, could start lifting their hands in front of their chest on the word ‘in’ in preparation for the stroke of the main gesture which will accompany the emphatic word ‘enormous’ (preparation); then in the accented syllable of ‘enormous’ (which might also be prosodically elongated to further amplify the semantic content) the hands could start extending sideways until the end ‘furniture’ which marks the end of the adjectival phrase (stroke); the extended hands might then be suspended in relative stillness until the word ‘I’, in a sense keeping the notional room filled with the piece of furniture (hold); until the next verb ushers in a new sentence and the hands could drop by the speaker’s sides as the words ‘looked at them’ are spoken (retraction).¹⁵²

In singing, timing and speed are dictated to a great extent by the music, making the delivery of natural-looking gestures less straightforward. Comparing actors with singers, Riccoboni wrote that ‘Players by their Art sometimes imitate Nature so perfectly, that they persuade the Spectator that all they see is real; but it is a much harder Task for the Musician to attain to this, it being much more difficult for them to accommodate their Notes to the Passions of Anger,

¹⁵²The complete gesture unit as described would be: ‘in...this en-’, preparation phase; ‘ormous piece of furniture’, stroke phase; ‘which...while I’, hold phase; ‘looked at them’, retraction.

Grief, Sorrow, and even to Death itself'.¹⁵³ Likewise, Jean-Léonor de Grimarest (1659–1713) argued that 'any passion subjected to the intervals and to the meter of music loses its force' because 'one cannot give syllables the quantity which has been determined for them: one cannot vary one's accents according to the passions or the figures; one cannot give to their gestures the vivacity and delicacy which they should have; in a word, passion cannot be metered'.¹⁵⁴ Although the majority of Grimarest's ensuing discussion pertains to vocal expression, at the end of the treatise he identified gesture as 'the most difficult element to manage when singing, because the movements are opposed to the pulse of the music, and it takes a great amount of taste to make them last with grace during the time between the beats, so that the spectator does not perceive any contrast, or a very unpleasant static composure'.¹⁵⁵ The particularities, therefore, of vocal music mean that the onus of making gestures appear timely and natural is in most cases greater for singers than it is for actors, and although gestures need to be compressed or stretched accordingly to fit the musical phrasing, this has to be done with great skill and taste to keep their definition and direction intact. However, beautiful congruous and perfectly varied and moderated a gesture might be, wrong timing and velocity could make it appear unnatural and make it less effective. Indeed, Austin warned

¹⁵³Riccoboni, 'Reflections upon Declamation', *op. cit.*, p. 77.

¹⁵⁴Donc toute passion assujettie aux intervalles, & aux mesures de la Musique, perd de sa force. En effet on ne peut donner aux silabes la quantité qui leur a été déterminée: on ne sauroit varier ses accens suivant les passions, ou les figures; on ne peut donner à ses gestes la vivacité, & la délicatesse qu'ils doivent avoir; en un mot la passion ne sauroit être mesurée. Ce que j'espere prouver dans la suite. Si la Musique vocale cause communément du plaisir, c'est qu'on est dédommagé du tort que les intervalles font aux paroles, par la voix agréable, & par l'artifice de l'Acteur, qui quand il a le sentiment juste, s'écarte des mesures de la Musique pour aprocher le plus qu'il peut de la maniere dont la passion doit être exprimée'. Jean-Léonor de Grimarest, *Traité du récitatif: Dans la Lecture, Dans l'Action Publique, Dans la Declamation, Et dans le Chant. Avec un Traité des Accens, de la Quantité, & de la Ponctuation* (Paris: Jaque le Fevre, dans le grand' Salle du Palais, au Soleil d'or, Et Pierre Ribou, proche les Augustins, à l'Image Saint Louis, 1707), p.197.

¹⁵⁵C'est un avantage pour celui qui chante, dans des endroits où l'on ne peut mettre le geste [...] c'est le plus difficile à ménager dans l'action du chant; parceque les mouvemens en sont oposés à la mesure de la Musique; & il faut un grand goût pour les faire durer avec grace pendant l'intervale de cette mesure; de maniere que le Spectateur n'aperçoive point de contraste, ou une contenance immobile tres-desagréable'. *Ibid.*, pp.224–225.

that '[e]ven graceful motions, as they may sometimes be seen, particularly among singers on the stage, unmarked by the precision of the stroke of gesture, lose much of their force and effect; and their soft flowing quickly ceases to afford pleasure'.¹⁵⁶

The speed of delivery is also heavily pre-determined by the composer, setting across several bars emphatical words that if spoken might have required a short stroke phase. The composer Marco da Gagliano (1582–1643) in the introduction to his opera *La Dafne* (1608) wrote that singers should allow the music and rhythm to shape their gestures, making sure 'that every gesture and step is in keeping with the measure of the sound and the song',¹⁵⁷ and a century later *Le Mercure de France* calls for the singer, like the dancer, to 'always regulate his gestures and his steps to the music' in order not to 'betray the art'.¹⁵⁸ For this reason, the gestures of singers would be in most cases slower and larger than those of actors, and the author of the anonymous manuscript treatise *Il Chorago* recognised this marked difference in delivery between genres, arguing that as words are delivered slower in singing than in speech, so the gesture should also be slower and broader to accommodate the phrases.¹⁵⁹ Owing to the overall slower gestural expression, the

¹⁵⁶Austin, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

¹⁵⁷'[...] auuertendo però ch'ogni gesto, e ogni passo caschi sù la misura del suono e del cãto' Marco da Gagliano, *La Dafne di Marco da Gagliano nell'accademia de gl'elevati l'affannato rappresentata in Mantova* (Firenze: Appresso Cristofano Marescotti, 1608), Ai Lettori, no pagination.

¹⁵⁸*Le Mercure de France*, April 1778, quoted translated in: Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 11.

¹⁵⁹'Come che il recitar cantando va più adagio che il recitar parlando, è forza che anche il gestire vada più tardo sì che la mano non finisca prima della voce al che sarà di vuopo di muoverla dal bel principio molto tardo et il gesto deverà esser largo'. Text from an edited version of the treatise, with modernised spelling, in: Paolo Fabbri and Angelo Pompilio, editors, *Il Corago, o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche* [c. 1630] (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1983), p. 90. The manuscript of *Il Chorago* (the stager), written around 1630, is currently held in Biblioteca Estense in Modena: *Il Chorago, ò vero alcune osservationi per metter bene in scena le Compositioni Drammatiche* (Modena, Biblioteca Estense, F. 6. 11., c. 1630). Fabbri and Pompilio's critical edition of the text has modernised all spelling, including the title to 'Il Corago', and so all of the secondary bibliography discussing this treatise uses modern spelling. I examined the manuscript in Modena in 2016, and the only version of the spelling found across the whole text is 'Il Chorago', so this is the spelling used here. There is a detailed description of the duties of the *chorago* in the first chapter of the treatise ('Capotilo Primo: Del nome, et officio del Chorago nel modo che qui si prende'), from which one could say

quality of timeliness acquires greater importance. While in spoken acting slight timing discrepancies might go largely unnoticed, in singing they are elongated, becoming more pronounced. And the timing concerns not only the precision and propriety of every phase of each gestural unit in accordance with the music and text, but also the order in which each agent responds to an internal or external stimulus.

Bulwer called the eyes ‘the most cleere Interpretors of the affections of the mind’ because ‘they are most swiftly moved according to the inward motions of the mind’.¹⁶⁰ Bulwer’s observation is true: because the prime role of the eyes is to provide the visual information required for the facilitation of action, the gaze system engages before the motor system, and so in an unconditional human reflexive response the eye movement precedes the onset of hand movement.¹⁶¹ For example, if one asks a person on the street about the direction to the nearest postbox, their response ‘That way!’ would be most likely accompanied by a pointing deictic gesture with the stroke on the demonstrative ‘that’, where the prosodic emphasis lies. Closer examination of this reaction might reveal that after the person is asked the question, they first shift their gaze (eyes and head) towards the postbox (even if the postbox is not visible, but they know it is in that direction); when they locate it in the distance (or they are satisfied that this is indeed the direction to a postbox which is out of sight), they start taking a breath in preparation for speaking, their hand starts forming a point, their arm starts being lifted in preparation for gesturing, and their body turns half-way opening towards the direction of the forthcoming gesture; while still breathing their gaze turns back to their interlocutor and they start speaking with the stroke of the pointing gesture on

that its modern equivalent would be a mixture of the roles of a promoter, director, designer and stage manager.

¹⁶⁰Bulwer, *Pathomyotomia*, *op.cit.*, p.166.

¹⁶¹Jolande Fooker and Miriam Spering, ‘Eye movements as a readout of sensorimotor decision processes’ *Sensory Processing*, 123 (2020):4; Michael F. Land, ‘Vision, eye movements, and natural behavior’ *Visual Neuroscience*, 26 (2009):1; and Alexander Geiger et al., ‘Eyes versus hands: How perceived stimuli influence motor actions’ *PLoS One* 12 (2017):7, *op.cit.*.

‘this’, held there until the end of ‘way’, before the arm dropping by their side. So, broken down in slow motion, the natural actuation of the seemingly simple deictic gesture of this example reveals a rapid sequence of many different actions. If this scenario was to be performed on stage, the closer the actor emulated the natural sequencing of different parts of this action the more spontaneous—and therefore natural—it would make it appear. Different scenarios and more complex gestures would require adherence to more elaborate concatenations of actions and almost imperceptible micro-expressions. Historical acting treatises contain many examples of the sequence of action: Riccoboni wrote that the expression should start with the eye, Cecchini called for the gesture to precede the speech, Goethe spelt out the order of the movement of the upper limbs (first the hand, then the elbow and then the rest of the arm), and so on.¹⁶² Jelgerhuis was sceptical of such minute regulation:

What pretentious nonsense is evident in such instruction! Will not following this information make marionettes of actors? Indeed, I have seen this type of gesticulation with my own eyes. LaVigne, the noted opera singer, formed his gesticulation by following this kind of prescription when he played on stage, and his performance was utterly ridiculous. Away with such picayune regulation! Let us move freely and naturally following the rules of art and not be slaves to prescription which have no standing whatsoever. Let us combine graceful and truthful deportment when we act a role on stage, and be sufficiently flexible to shape that performance according to accepted models of artistic taste, so that in time that taste may be fixed in our mind.¹⁶³

¹⁶²Riccoboni, ‘Reflections upon Declamation’, *op. cit.*, pp.14–15; Pier Maria Cecchini, *Trattato sopra l’arte comica, cavato dall’opere di S. Tomaso, e da altri santi. Aggiuntovi il modo di ben recitare* (Lyon: Appresso Iacomo Roussin, 1601), p.15; Goethe, *op. cit.*, pp.157–158.

¹⁶³Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, pp.306–307.

Jelgerhuis' argument is not unwarranted. Although the prescriptions of the sequence of movement of the different agents are based on close observation of nature (and in most cases reflect modern scientific observations), separate movements come in very close succession, often fractions of a second. If an actor was to follow each of these sequences consciously and step by step for each and every gesture, the succession of movements would inevitably be much slower, and it might make their movement appear false or puppet-like. It would be, however, regrettable to dismiss this tool completely, as it could be particularly useful in improving performance not through prescription but by facilitating analysis, as we will examine presently.

Through teaching acting to both actors and singers I observed that one of the core differences between the two groups lies in the awareness and perception of timing. Actors performing a scripted play have greater rhythmic freedom to shape their delivery than singers, who are much more bound to the rhythmic blueprint of the musical score. Singers might have as much rhythmic freedom as the actors when singing *secco recitativo*, or almost equal in French tragic opera and other vocal repertoires, but because in the majority of the canonic classical repertoire (mostly late-eighteenth and nineteenth century) the rhythm notated in the score is generally expected to be meticulously followed, there is a greater tendency for singers to habitually stick close to the prescribed rhythmic structure even when more freedom is allowed. Actors' training involves a considerable amount of improvisation, and the almost complete control they have over timing, even when performing prepared text, gives them greater scope for approaching their movement and gesture in an improvisatory manner and tapping more liberally into their instinctual responses, as per Jelgerhuis' suggestion. Singers have in comparison minimal instruction in improvisation, while rhythmic training is part of their core musical education, and because the timing of delivery in singing is generally slower and during the performance they can better anticipate the exact timing of everything that lies ahead, they are able to be more exact with their actions and

they have less need to rely on impulse. Whereas, when people improvise speech, preparatory gestures form an integral part of their thinking process, serving not only communicative but cognitive functions.¹⁶⁴ Preparatory gestures not only help us convey our meaning more clearly but actively help us put together the upcoming words in a sentence, so part of their utility is redundant when we perform prepared text. Indeed, it has been experimentally demonstrated that people who have constructed a clearly articulated mental model of a piece of text they are asked to speak, use markedly less preparation of their gestures in comparison with speakers who have built a less articulated mental model.¹⁶⁵ So, if the previous example of a person offering directions to the nearest postbox was to be performed by students on stage, it is likely that many of the preparatory sequences would be either abridged or merged. These differences, although consciously almost imperceptible, would give the spectators a feeling that the scene is not improvised but prepared and ‘acted out’. Now, if this mundane scene somehow found its way into an opera libretto, the singer offering directions would have an even more clearly articulated model in their minds, and they would not only anticipate the question and know their response, but they would be aware of the exact timing and rhythm in which this interaction is going to play out. This, in turn, has the potential to further shorten the preparation and simplify the natural chain of actions, making the gesture, despite being congruous, appear ‘wooden’ or affected.

In my work as a singer, I often witnessed the frustration of colleagues doing exactly what the director had asked them to do only to be told that ‘it doesn’t look right’, without much advice on what to do about it, apart from asking them to keep repeating the offending action, which at times made it worse as it served to further crystallise the mental model. This is where I found the advice of historical treatises

¹⁶⁴Sotaro Kita, Martha W. Alibali and Mingyuan Chu, ‘How Do Gestures Influence Thinking and Speaking? The Gesture-for-Conceptualization Hypothesis’ *Psychological Review*, 124 (2017):3.

¹⁶⁵Francesco Iani, Ilaria Cutica and Monica Bucciarelli, ‘Timing of Gestures: Gestures Anticipating or Simultaneous With Speech as Indexes of Text Comprehension in Children and Adults’ *Cognitive Science*, 41 (2017):6.

on the sequence and timing of actions particularly beneficial: not as a tool for creating performance, which comes with the pitfalls outlined by Jelgerhuis, but as a tool for analysis. Relevant material from historical treatises was compiled before discrepancies were discarded by consulting results of recent scientific research, and then teaching and directing allowed me to further streamline the general model by keeping only the elements which had the greater impact and removing others that tended to create confusion. The result was this:

- (1) Move eyes (and head)
- (2) Express emotion with the face
- (3) Start moving the hands (or/and arms)
- (4) Start moving feet (or shift weight between feet)
- (5) Start singing or start singing the emphatic word
- (6) Finish moving the feet
- (7) Strike hand gesture on the accented syllable of the emphatic word.

This sequence often spans a mere second or so, with actions one to four outlining the preparation phase, which at the beginning of phrases coincides with the breath. Not all of the steps of the sequence take place in every gesture and it is not used to dictate performance but as a tool for dissecting problematic corners. In both teaching and directing, every time the acting of a certain phrase seems stilted or unnatural, despite gestures being congruous and following all the other qualities, I invite the singer to look at this list and try to identify what elements of the order might be curtailed, missing or misplaced. The majority of the time, they discover that it is caused by a translocation of this order, and by just being mindful of this fact, they are, in most cases, able to quickly correct it in an instinctive manner. The recent pandemic created the necessity for a lot of the teaching to take place online, which obliged singers to create video recordings of their performances in advance of coaching sessions, a practice seldom used before. These videos have been a very useful tool in acting coaching because they allow singers to witness their movements and gestures and use this model to analyse

their performance in more minute detail. Although in-person teaching has now been restored, singers are acclimatised to recording and sharing with teachers videos of their performances, which could make the order of actions an important element of the teacher's toolbox.

In summary, a gesture is timely when it begins, occurs and dissipates at the right time in consideration of the text's syntactic structure and the score's rhythmic form, and in accordance with the emotional and semantic content conveyed by the words and music; to which the duration and speed of the movement of the gesture should also harmoniously pertain. In addition, the constituent parts of each motion should conform to an order which is consistent with the unconditional human reflexive response. Timeliness is a more important and challenging consideration for singers than for actors because their rhythmic freedom is comparatively more restricted, but even in a highly regulated genre such as opera, a congruous, varied, amplified and moderated gesture which is also timely would appear beautiful, persuasive and natural.

6. UNAFFECTED

The last yet most valued quality a gesture must have in order to appear beautiful, persuasive and natural is to look unaffected. This relates to the *ars est celare artem* notion examined in the previous chapter (p. 82), where the art that goes into shaping gesture as congruous, varied, amplified, moderated and timely in accordance with the principles of beauty, rhetoric and naturalness, has to be actively concealed, leaving behind a performance which, though deliberately and attentively designed to possess a high degree of beauty and power, appears natural, unstudied and spontaneous. Edmund Curll (1675–1747) summarised this notion, writing that '[t]he Design of *Art* is to assist *Action*, especially *that* of the *Stage*, as much as possible in the Representation of Nature; for the Appearance of Reality is that which moves us in all Representations, and these have always

the greater Force, the nearer they approach to Nature, and the less they shew of Imitation'.¹⁶⁶

This quality is singled out as especially important for the craft of both orators and actors. Walker wrote that 'the chief care' of the orator should be that his action 'may not seem affected; but forced from his passion',¹⁶⁷ and Riccoboni explained that making a speech seem improvised and as if it is spoken 'from the Heart' is a crucial part of oratory—the art of persuasion—because 'that which seems to be as it were poured forth Extempore, carries with it an Air of *Truth* and *Sincerity*, which prepossesses the Audience in favour of every thing that is said'.¹⁶⁸ Fordyce called this quality 'the grand Maxim', arguing that 'the Appearance of *Study* or *Design*' in deportment 'would absolutely spoil the whole', and that carriage 'which looks not easy and unaffected, loses all its grace'.¹⁶⁹ Speaking to actors, De' Sommi asked them to ensure their delivery 'does not seem any other way than familial and improvised speech',¹⁷⁰ giving special praise to a performer whose acting 'made the audience believe that they are not seeing a prepared or fictional performance, but rather that they are witnessing something real and improvised, with gestures, voice and colours changing in accordance to the various dramatic occurrences, admirably moving spectators to wonder and delight'.¹⁷¹ John Hill wrote that 'the gestures of a performer [...] should seem

¹⁶⁶Edmund Curll, 'An Essay on the *Action* of the STAGE; Particularly That of Mr. Wilks' in: *The Life of That Eminent Comedian Robert Wilks, Esq* (London: Printed for E. Curll, in Burghley-Street, in the Strand, 1733), p.44.

¹⁶⁷Obadiah Walker, *Some Instructions concerning the Art of Oratory. Collected for the use of a Friend a Young Student* (London: Printed by J.G. for Richard Royston, at the Angel in Ivy-lane, 1659), p.128.

¹⁶⁸Riccoboni, 'Reflections upon Declamation', *op. cit.*, p.27.

¹⁶⁹Fordyce, *op. cit.*, p.69.

¹⁷⁰'che non paia altro che un familiar ragionamento che improvvisamente occorra'. de' Sommi, *op. cit.*, p.48.

¹⁷¹'perché infatti ella è tale su per la scena, che non par già a gli uditori di veder rappresentare cosa concertata né finta, ma si bene di veder succedere cosa vera et improvvisamente occorsa, talmente cangia ella i gesti, le voci et i colori, conforme a le varietà delle occorenze, che commove mirabilmente chiunque l'ascolta non meno a maraviglia che a diletto grandissimo'. *Ibid.*, pp.44–45.

easy and natural, not study'd, elaborate, and practis'd',¹⁷² and George Grant asserted 'action must appear purely natural, as a genuine offspring of the things you express, and the passion that moves you to speak in that manner'.¹⁷³ Similarly, John Hill wrote that concealing the art should be the last, yet most important and most formidable step in the creating process:

The reason why we sometimes discover the study'd action of the player, is not because he has been at the pains of studying it beforehand, but because he has not study'd it enough: the last touches of his application in this kind, should be those employ'd to conceal that there ever was any labour bestow'd at all upon what he is doing; and the rest, without this, always hurts instead of pleasing us.

Among the several manners of playing with truth and justice, that which is most of all divested of the pomp and ceremony of playing is frequently what has most of all been labour'd by the performers: 'tis in this as in poetry, those pieces which seem to the reader the easiest and most familiar of all, are frequently those which have cost the author the most trouble.¹⁷⁴

These directives, and those presented in the previous chapter, offer extensive insights on how unaffected acting should look and feel, but they offer little by way of technical advice on how to achieve it. Some historical authors say little about how to do it, and others present it as a certain *je ne sais quoi* bequeathed by nature on rare occasions to extraordinary individuals. From a pedagogical point of view, unaffected acting is acting's holy grail, and the forthcoming chapters aim to chart a path towards it.

¹⁷²J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.178.

¹⁷³George Grant, *An Essay on the Science of Acting. By a Veteran Stager* (London: Cowie and Strange, 1828), p.140.

¹⁷⁴J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.233.

Breaking the Rules

Historical acting was regulated by a series of principles, rules and conventions, many of which were examined above, and some of which are explored in the following chapters. Before concluding the discussion of the technical groundwork facilitated by this chapter, it is important to address the concept that rules can (and often should) be broken. For example, one of the rules relating to the principles of classical beauty dictated that the middle and ring fingers should touch, separating slightly from the other three, which should rest in a gentle bend.¹⁷⁵ This disposition of the fingers could be observed in some statues of ancient antiquity, most famously *Venus de' Medici*, and became a prevailing characteristic of humanism in the visual arts. Jelgerhuis drew several examples illustrating this rule (Figure 16), and Austin provided a detailed description:

The hand, when unconstrained in its natural and relaxed state, either hanging down at rest or raised moderately up, has all the fingers a little bended inwards towards the palm; the middle and third fingers lightly touch, the point of the middle finger resting partly on the nail of the third. The fore finger is separated from the middle finger, and less bended, and the little finger separated from the third, and more bended. The extremity of the thumb bends a little outwards, and in its general length and disposition, is nearly parallel with the fore finger.¹⁷⁶

However, this rule applies when ‘the speaker is calm and unmoved’, as the fingers’ extension and position ‘depends much upon the mood of the speaker’.¹⁷⁷ Jelgerhuis wrote that fear should be expressed with a gaping mouth, hands ‘outstretched in amazement’, and fingers, legs and feet tensed and extended, therefore breaking

¹⁷⁵‘Die zwei mittlern Finger sollen immer zusammenbleiben, der Daumen, Zeige- und kleine Finger etwas gebogen hängen. Auf diese Art ist die Hand in ihrer gehörigen Haltung und zu allen Bewegungen in ihrer richtigen Form’. Goethe, *op. cit.*, p.157.

¹⁷⁶Austin, *op. cit.*, p.336.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p.334.

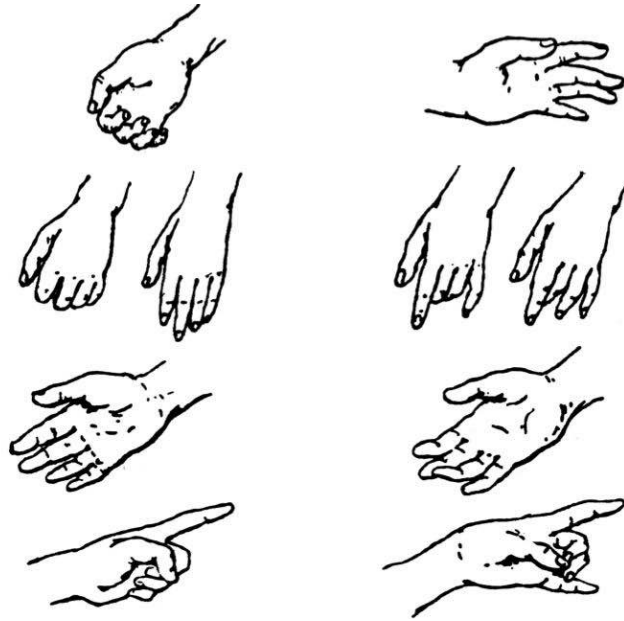


FIGURE 16. Examples from Jelgerhuis' *Theoretische Lessen* showing the incorrect (left) and correct (right) disposition of the fingers.

the general rule of the disposition of the fingers for emotional effect.¹⁷⁸ As a consequence, in a moment of fright the fingers should be presented extended and separated from each other,¹⁷⁹ as drawn by Hogarth in a portrayal of Garrick in the role of Richard III (Figure 17). In the depicted scene the character is woken up from a terrible nightmare (where he encountered the ghosts of eleven people he murdered), and Garrick is seen displaying with his eyes, face, hands and body in a significant complex gesture of fear mixed with perturbation, in which the fingers of his right hand are stretched out. Breaking the convention allows Garrick to heighten the passion of the scene. Similarly, although as a general rule actors were advised against 'raising the hands higher than the head',¹⁸⁰ raging fury against

¹⁷⁸Jelgerhuis, 'Lessons', *op. cit.*, p.361. He does add, however, that the quality of variety should still be observed ('for the sake of decorum, elevate one arm higher than the other') and includes a drawing of 'that amazing start of fright created by that master actor, Andries Snoek, when playing Hamlet', we saw in Figure 10 in the previous chapter (p.67).

¹⁷⁹In Austin's notation this would be marked as *x* for 'extended', denoting fingers 'separated from each other with energy in proportion to the excitation of the speaker'. Austin, *op. cit.*, p.335.

¹⁸⁰Porter les mains plus haut que la teste [...] sont tous gestes vicieux, qui ne seroient pas soufferts sur la scene tragique'. Poisson, 'Quelques Reflexions sur l'Art de parler en public', *op. cit.*, p.264.

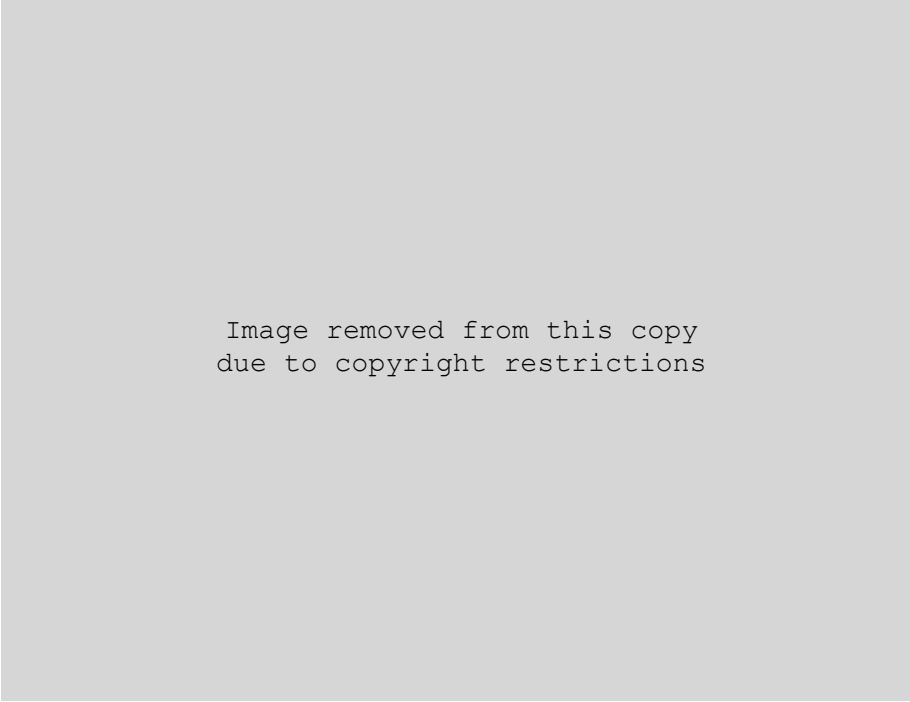


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FIGURE 17. A detail from a painting portraying David Garrick as Richard III by William Hogarth (1745).

the gods could warrant a striking gesture towards the heavens, as used by Siddons in Figure 11 (p. 97).¹⁸¹

Pedagogically, the idea that rules can and should be broken for effect has proved a key juncture on many occasions throughout the empirical part of the development of the new teaching method because it significantly helped quell students' innate resistance to the introduction of a profusion of rules which appear to threaten the loss of autonomy and creative control. Rules do not restrict expressive ability but facilitate the establishment of a baseline of expression, any deviation from which could further contribute to the drama. Aesthetics, hence, are conscripted to the service of rhetoric, expanding the performer's methodological toolbox and the ability for emotional expression. In the classroom, allowing students to break the rules, as long as it is for a reason and with a clear purpose in mind, hands the power back to them, increasing the chance of embracing many

¹⁸¹In the plate numbered 117 on that figure, the right hand is presented in the highest elevation, written as *Z* for zenith (the antipode of *R* for rest). Austin, *op. cit.*, p.495.

of the new tools by minimising the fear of making a mistake even when exploring concepts that are outside their comfort zone. This makes rule-breaking a core element of the new teaching method's technical groundwork.



Expanding on the theoretical discussion of the first chapter, this chapter focused on building a technical basis for the development of the new teaching method. Gesture was defined as any voluntary movement of one or more parts of the body on stage which serves as an expression of meaning, feelings, temperament or mental state, and which follows the classical rules of beauty while appearing natural and unaffected. After surveying the system of gestural notation developed by Austin in his treatise *Chironomia* (1806), gestures were examined from two perspectives, the agent that effects them and their signification, with a detailed classification system for gesture outlined. Then six qualities of gesture for operatic performance were introduced, according to which a gesture needs to be congruous, varied, amplified, moderated, timely and unaffected. The material of this chapter concluded with the introduction of the concept that rules could be broken for effect, which is not only a significant part of historical acting but has proven to be a pedagogically advantageous concept.

The next chapter continues the theoretical and technical discussion of the first two chapters by sharpening the focus of the contextual investigation to the first half of the eighteenth century, looking at elements of period acting training and important staging conventions, and introducing a useful paradigm for resolving the strife for domination between nature and artifice at the heart of historical acting.

CHAPTER 3

Contextual Investigation

When researching the creation of *ballet d'action*, Edward Nye recognised that in the absence of an abundance of precise marks that lay down a clear method of performance, the best way to acquire a more thorough understanding of artistic practice would be to consider ‘an approach more common to the study of the history of ideas, comparing and contrasting available sources of different kinds and different provenances in order to identify the underlying concepts’.¹ Like dance, the visual elements of acting are transient and difficult to document, so a closer look at a broader range of sources relating to practical elements from a specific period might afford us some valuable insights not possible by some of the more philosophical discourses included in the historical treatises. The investigation of the previous two chapters retained a wide scope to distil the general principles of historical acting and identify its core theoretical and practical boundaries. This chapter narrows the focus to several singers and actors who performed in London during the first half of the eighteenth century, taking elements of their practice as the starting point for discussions pertaining to training and preparation.

The chapter begins by exploring the influence Nicolini exerted in the development of acting technique in London, starting a discussion which prepared the ground for the more radical changes to come at the end of the century, before analysing elements of practice from the descriptions of the performances by the

¹Edward Nye, *Mime, Music and Drama on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: The Ballet D'Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.6.

castrati Senesino and Farinelli, who shared the same stage in 1734. The following section outlines facets of the theatrical education eighteenth-century singers received, and the chapter concludes by examining some additional aspects of dramatic training and preparation through the practice of the influential actors Booth, Wilks and Garrick, exploring then the relationship between nature and artifice, setting the stage for the introduction of the new teaching method in the following chapter.

Singers

Writing in 1710, Gildon argued that ‘it is impossible that the Stage should flourish and advance in Perfection’ when young actors who ‘have not been admitted above a Month or two into the Company, though their Education and formal Business were ever so Foreign to *Acting*, [...] think themselves Masters before they understand any one Point of their Art, and not give themselves Leisure and Time to study the *Graces of ACTION and UTTERANCE*’.² In 1717 we still find Theobald acknowledging the lack of formal training as a major impediment to the development of actors, deriding the fact they start their career ‘without the least Knowledge either of *Action* or *Utterance*; and are so far from being acquainted with *Oratory*, that ’tis not easie to make them keep within the Bounds of *Grammar*’.³ This call for formal training of actors persists, with Hill writing in 1735 that stage experience cannot replace formal acting training, maintaining that ‘the Longest Life, spent in PROFESSION of an Actor’s Art, may contribute *Less* to his Accomplishment and Perfection, than a few short Months, applied with Diligence, to the STUDY of *its actual Duties*’.⁴ It is possible that the discrepancy between

²Gildon, *op. cit.*, pp.29–30.

³Lewis Theobald, ‘Saturday, May 11’ *The Censor*, 1 (1717):87, p.180.

⁴Aaron Hill and William Popple, ‘Friday, June 13’ *The Prompter* (1735):62. Aaron Hill was serving as manager of the Drury Lane theatre when the first Italian operas arrived in London, and he was later appointed Master of the Haymarket Opera House, where he collaborated with Giacomo Rossi on creating the plot for Handel’s first London opera, *Rinaldo* (1711). Hill’s work with this celebrated singer in the productions of *Rinaldo* and *Amadigi di Gaula* (1715) may

the training of actors and singers may have been one of the reasons why the arrival of Italian singers in London at the beginning of the eighteenth century served as a catalyst, accelerating the discussion on the art of acting and preparing the ground for a stylistic revolution that began in the 1740s.

NICOLINI

One of the first notable Italian opera singers who influenced acting in London was the castrato Nicolò Grimaldi (1673–1732), known as Nicolino or Nicolini.⁵ Nicolini arrived in the English capital in 1708 and performed in several operas, including Handel's first London opera, *Rinaldo* (1711). The playwright Richard Steele (bap. 1672–1729), who watched Nicolini in his London debut performance in Alessandro Scarlatti's *Pyrrhus and Demetrius* (1708), declared himself to be

fully satisfied with the Sight of an Actor, who, by the Grace and Propriety of his Action and Gesture, does Honour to an human Figure [...] Every one will easily imagine I mean Signior *Nicolini*, who sets off the Character he bears in an Opera by his Action, as much as he does the Words of it by his Voice. Every Limb, and every Finger, contributes to the Part he acts, insomuch that a deaf Man might go along with him in the Sense of it. There is scarce a beautiful Posture in an old Statue which he does not plant himself in, as the different Circumstances of the Story give Occasion for it. He performs the most ordinary Action in a Manner suitable to the Greatness of his

well have been a contributory factor to Hill's strong interest in acting technique and his fervent advocacy for the reformation of the training of actors in England.

⁵According to theatre historian Joseph Roach, despite Nicolini's relatively short stay in London, his acting exerted a profound impact on the theatrical sphere that 'influenced the theory and practice of English acting in the eighteenth century'. Joseph R. Roach, 'Cavaliere Nicolini: London's First Opera Star' *Educational Theatre Journal*, 28 (1976):2, p.189. It should be noted that Hume has been highly critical of Roach's liberal use of Thomas Kuhn's concept of 'paradigm shift', through which he examines eighteenth-century acting in his seminal book *The Player's Passion* (1985), but this discussion lies outside the scope of this thesis and will not be pursued further here. See Hume, *op. cit.*, pp.166–170.

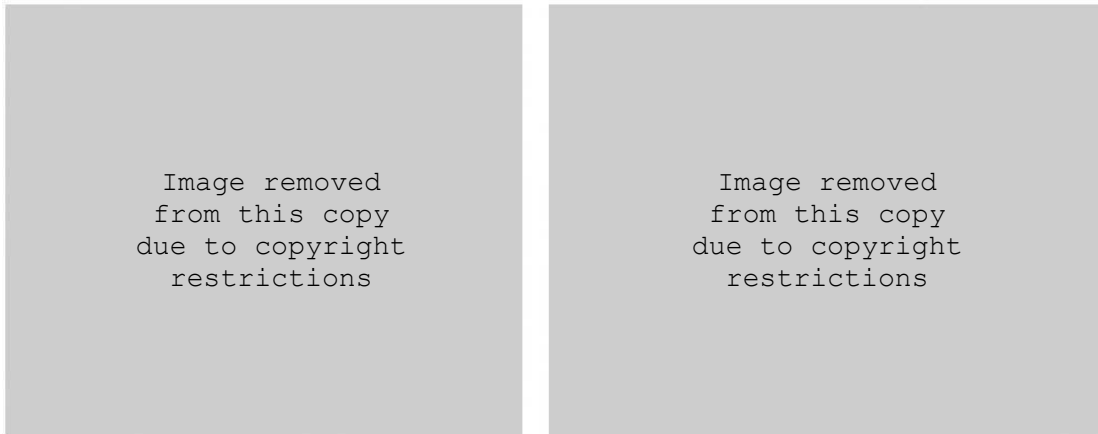


FIGURE 18. Nicolini rehearsing in London, in two paintings by Marco Ricci (c. 1709).

Character, and shows the Prince even in the giving of a Letter or the dispatching of a Message.⁶

It is telling that Steele called Nicolini an actor rather than a singer. He describes a graceful, varied and congruent stage presence which conforms to many of the principles of historical acting outlined in the previous chapters: for example, gestures that were effective and communicative but beautified and amplified for the stage, and bodily eloquence aptly contributing to characterisation, creating a convincing depiction of King Pyrrhus of Epirus; and the reference to many statuesque poses suggests variety in action and the use of *contrapposto*.

Two oil paintings by Marco Ricci (1676–1730) may offer clues to Nicolini’s approach (Figure 18). Nicolini is depicted rehearsing in London, and although these are musical rehearsals taking place in a drawing room, in both paintings he appears to be using striking gestures, and in the one where his legs are visible, he stands in an elegant *contrapposto*. We cannot, of course, take paintings at face value, but as it was common for a select audience to be invited to music rehearsals of new compositions, it is not impossible to imagine that Ricci could have indeed attended a music rehearsal by Nicolini and that these pictures represent the essence of the Nicolini’s conduct. If this is the case, Ricci’s paintings may indicate that

⁶Richard Steele, ‘Tuesday, January 3’ *The Tatler*, 2 (1710):115.

Nicolini approached singing and acting as one unified craft; movement and gesture were not mere supplements of the vocal performance necessary for the stage, but inextricably linked.

The acclaim of this ‘great singer, and still greater actor’ was international and enduring.⁷ The French diplomat Charles Ancillon (1659–1715), in his otherwise disparaging book about castrati, recognised that Nicolini’s ‘chief Excellency consisted in fine Action, and it may be, is the best Eunuch Actor in the World’.⁸ The castrato and singing teacher Giambattista Mancini (1714–1800) paid homage to Nicolini in his singing treatise, writing that his acting was so perfect that it alone made him an extraordinary artist, regardless of the fact that his voice was not particularly beautiful.⁹ Although Nicolini’s unequalled acting ability leaves no doubt that he had a special propensity for movement and gesture, a reason for the coherence between singing and acting may also have been the nature of the singers’ training. Roach wrote that the ‘musical and theatrical education available to singers of promise in seventeenth-century Naples was superb’, and that Nicolini received ‘rigorous conservatory training’, where he was able to build his acting skills ‘upon technique’.¹⁰

Graceful movement and decorous gestures became part of the identity of *opera seria* in London.¹¹ In a 1710 satirical article purportedly written by actor, singer

⁷Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* Volume 4, (London: Printed for the Author: And sold by Payne and Son, at the Mews-Gate; Robson and Clark, Bond-Street; and G. G. J. and J. Robinson, Paternoster-Row, 1789), p.207.

⁸Charles Ancillon, *Eunuchism Display’d* (London: Printed for E. Curll at the Dial and Bible over against St Dunstan’s Church in Fleetsteet, 1718), p.30.

⁹‘Siane testimonio Niccola *Grimaldi*, detto il Cavalier Niccolino; possedè questo artista con tanta perfezione la Comica, che con questa sola, ancorchè povero d’altro talento, e non fornito di bella voce, nella professione si acquistò nulladimeno un merito sì singolare’. Giambattista Mancini, *Riflessioni pratiche sul canto figurato*, Third Edition (Milan: Giuseppe Galeazzi, 1777), pp.223–233.

¹⁰Roach, ‘Cavaliere Nicolini’, *op. cit.*, pp.190, 200.

¹¹While one reason could have been the more formalised acting training of singers, another could be the selection process of the Italian singers coming to England. Music historian Melania Bucciarelli has found evidence in the correspondence of the directors of the Royal Academy of Music (the eighteenth-century London opera company) that acting ability influenced casting decisions: they ‘took into consideration the dramatic qualities of the candidates alongside the quality of the voice and their singing prowess’, and at times they rejected performers solely due

and theatre manager William Penkethman (d. 1725), the author claimed to have built a machine that could reproduce a puppetry performance of opera to perfection: this fictional machine (which even included a miniature Nicolini bemoaning ‘the cruelty of his stars and mistress’) was ‘capable of representing at once a hundred curious figures, with all the proper movements and gestures that are necessary to make an impression on the imagination’, and these figures were purported to be able to surpass in perfection the real singers as they used ‘their arms and legs with more dignity and decorum, and set one foot before another with such exactness as can only be excelled by nature itself’.¹² Although this was a humorous article, because caricatures tend to accentuate the most salient characteristics, it can serve as an indication that for the eyes of the early-eighteenth-century London audiences the style of acting employed by the Italian opera singers was noticeably distinctive, and in the case of Nicolini, in particular, it combined a polished sense of beauty and decorum with propriety and naturalness. Aspden argued that ‘Nicolini evidently influenced his contemporaries in London’ because of the apparent ‘reciprocity of technique between the best singing actors and those in the spoken theatre’,¹³ and his influence may have been exerted through performance but by actively assuming the role of an instructor: Bucciarelli cites evidence that Nicolini was ‘overseeing rehearsals and coaching performers on acting and declamation’.¹⁴

SENESINO

Nicolini left London in 1717, and he was soon succeeded by another influential Italian singer, the celebrated castrato Senesino. Like Nicolini, Senesino was acclaimed

to the visual elements of their performance. Melania Bucciarelli, ‘From Rinaldo to Orlando, or Senesino’s path to madness’ in: Damien Colas and Alessandro Di Profio, editors, *D’une scène à l’autre: L’Opéra Italien en Europe*, Volume 1, (Wavre: Éditions Mardaga, 2009), p.147.

¹²Article quoted in: George Hogarth, *Memoirs of the Musical Drama*, Volume I (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1838), pp.260–261.

¹³Suzanne Aspden, *The Rival Sirens: Performance and Identity on Handel’s Operatic Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.16.

¹⁴Melania Bucciarelli, ‘Senesino’s Negotiations with the Royal Academy of Music: Further Insight into the Riva–Bernardi Correspondence and the Role of Singers in the Practice of Eighteenth-Century Opera’ *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 27 (2015):3, p.198.

for being a great actor-singer, described by Riccoboni as an ‘excellent Musician’ who ‘joined to the Charms of his Voice, the Merit of *Action*’.¹⁵ Senesino improved his acting skills during his time in Dresden, before his arrival to London, ‘through close observation of French actors’,¹⁶ and the composer and flautist Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773) who saw him there in 1719 commented that his ‘countenance was well calculated for the stage, and his action was natural and noble’, complemented by ‘a figure that was truly majestic’.¹⁷ The painting in Figure 19 shows him standing in a graceful and easy contrapposto, and even in the caricature we saw in the previous chapter (Figure 13, p. 109) Senesino appears in an elegant, heroic and statuesque pose. Roger Pickering saw Senesino in 1734 in London playing the title role in the opera *pasticcio* of *Artaserse*:

shone forth in full Excellence of *Theatrical Expression*, the *graceful*, the *correct*, the *varied* Deportment of SENESINO. [...] Thrice, in a short Interval of Time, I have seen this masterly Actor, in the Opera of ARTAXERXES: And eighteen Years have not obliterated the full Remembrance of that great but natural Manner of his Deportment in a Scene, which called for the Exertion of almost *every Passion*. [...] Confin’d, as he was, to the Measures of *Recitative* and *Song*, *Senesino* went thro’ the Struggles of Nature agitated to excess, with surprising *Execution*; and, (which I hope will save me from the Charge of impertinent Digression) a *Variety* of Expression, each of the three Nights I saw him in that Character.¹⁸

¹⁵Riccoboni, ‘Reflections upon Declamation’, *op. cit.*, p.80.

¹⁶Bucciarelli, ‘Cambridge Opera Journal 27 [2015]’, *op. cit.*, p.191.

¹⁷Quantz’s account reported by Charles Burney in: Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, The Netherlands, and United Provinces. Or, The Journal of a Tour through those Countries, undertaken to collect Materials for A General History of Music*, Volume 2 (London: Printed for T. Becket, Strand; J. Robson, New Bond-Street; and G. Robinson, Paternoster-Row, 1775), p.176.

¹⁸Pickering, *op. cit.*, pp.64–66.




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FIGURE 19. Senesino in a statuesque pose and dressed in ‘Hungarian habit’ in the role of Bertarido, during a performance of Handel’s *Rodelinda* (1725) at the King’s Theatre. Oil portrait by John Vanderbank.

Pickering’s description indicates that Senesino’s performance conformed with five of the six essential qualities identified in Chapter 2: congruous (‘correct deportment’), varied (‘varied deportment’ and ‘variety of expression’), amplified (‘struggles of nature agitated to excess’), timely (‘surprising execution’ despite being ‘confined to the measures of recitative and song’) and unaffected (‘natural manner of deportment’). The quality of variety seems to have been very important to Pickering, as he refers to it twice: both in terms of Senesino’s deportment in the course of the performance, and in terms of the variety of expression between different performances. We have already seen in the previous chapters that singers were expected to modify the range and quality of their gestures when they portrayed an array of different passions as the plot of the opera progressed. Variety of gesture applied in the course of a single aria too, with singers expected to avoid repeating the exact same set of actions (despite the multiple repetitions of phrases

and sections) by inventing different gestures and emphasising different words or part of phrases every time.

The second reference Pickering made to variety introduces a new methodological insight which connects to Quintilian's observation that the truly greatest fruit of the study of oratory, one which is acquired through long hard work, is the ability to improvise.¹⁹ Senesino's variety of action across three performances of the same opera indicates that the gestures he used were not fully prepared in advance but were improvised during each performance to some degree. Indeed, the relatively short rehearsal period that eighteenth-century singers had available between the writing of a new opera and its performance would have made it very difficult to decide and practise every single gesture across their whole role in advance. Although several complex significant gestures in ensemble scenes might have been arranged and fixed during rehearsals, most of the insignificant emphatical gestures would have had to be extemporised. To do that, singers relied on their fluent knowledge of the Italian language and its poetic symbolisms, as well as their grasp of history and mythology, which also formed part of their training, giving them an intimate understanding of the text, dramaturgy and character (discussed below). They also relied on an embodied understanding of historical acting techniques. The rules of Baroque gesture were not only taught during their training, but they were naturally assimilated as the singers looked at statues and paintings or watched theatrical and operatic performances as they were growing up; in addition to that, elements of Baroque gesture, such as the *contrapposto* and refined emphatical gestures, were part of the everyday social intercourse, especially amongst the gentry and many of the social circles within which singers operated. As the understanding of emotions and temperaments was the same for the librettist, composer and spectators, they could all operate within a shared code of expression, which facilitated a more organic communication. All these elements gave singers a deep

¹⁹'Maximus vero studiorum fructus est et velut proventus amplissimus longi laboris ex tempore dicendi facultas'. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, X:7.1.

understanding of the style, making it second nature. This was especially true for singers like Senesino, with a propensity for acting, who could stay in the moment and react to what was happening on stage, therefore keeping their performance fresh every night.²⁰

Senesino and Nicolini are not the only examples of good actor-singers.²¹ Quantz wrote that the soprano Faustina Bordoni (1697–1781) ‘was passionate and full of expression, as an actress’,²² and Anthony Ashley Cooper (1711–1771) wrote that the castrato Domenico Annibali (1705–1779), who created three Handel roles, enters ‘thoroughly into what he is about both as to action as well as the song’ and

²⁰Two anecdotes show Senesino’s deep involvement in the scene. The first is narrated by the art historian and politician Horace Walpole (1717–1797), who remembers seeing how ‘the great Senesino, representing Alexander at the siege of Oxydracæ, so far forgot himself in the heat of conquest, as to stick his sword into one of the pasteboard stones of the wall of the town, and bore it in triumph before him as he entered the breach’. Horace Walpole, *The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford* (London: Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, Paternoster-Row, and J. Edwards, Pall-Mall, 1798), p.147. The second anecdote is recounted by the music historian Charles Burney (1726–1814): in the *pasticcio* of *Artaserse* in which Senesino shared the stage with the celebrated castrato Farinelli, ‘Senesino had the part of a furious tyrant, and Farinelli that of an unfortunate hero in chains; but, in the course of the first air, the captive so softened the heart of the tyrant, that Senesino, forgetting his stage-character, ran to Farinelli and embraced him in his own’. Charles Burney quoted in: George Hogarth, *Memoirs of the Opera in Italy, France, Germany, and England*, Volume I (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1851), p.313. Although both these stories, if true, describe absurdities and lack of congruent action, they reveal Senesino’s approach as an active participant on the stage. In the first we see him focusing too intensely on the drama to notice that he was carrying off a piece of scenery on his sword, and in the second we see him being so in tune with what was happening on stage that reacted to it naturally, although in that case undermining the portrayal of his dramatic character.

²¹Although most period commentaries paint Senesino as a good actor, there are instances of criticism. However, these need to be looked at through the prism of historical social context. For example, while Bucciarelli refers to a letter by Count Francesco Maria Zambeccari in which he condemns Senesino’s acting as ‘static and flawed’, she also identifies other letters that reveal a personal animosity towards Senesino, mainly due to his character off stage. Senesino’s arrogance and difficult personality are well documented and led to many clashes with Handel, the public, associates and patrons. Bucciarelli points out that in the eighteenth century ‘off-stage behaviour affected the audience’s perception of stage performance’, and so Zambeccari’s ‘antipathy for the singer’s behaviour off stage had disposed him poorly towards the singer on stage, sharpening significantly his critical stance’. Melania Bucciarelli, ‘Farò il possibile per vencer l’animo di M.r Handel’: Senesino’s Arrival in London and Arsace’s Rhetoric of Passions’ *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 14 (2017):1, pp.55–56.

²²Sutherland Edwards, *History of the Opera, from its Origin in Italy to the present Time. With Anecdotes of the Most Celebrated Composers and Vocalists of Europe*, Volume I (London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 13, Waterloo Place, 1862), p.152.

that his ‘action indeed is incomparable’.²³ But although there are many examples of singers who were commended for their great acting, they seem to be the exception and not the rule.

FARINELLI

As we saw in the opening quote of the Introduction of this thesis, in the eighteenth century, not unlike today, the particularities of the operatic genre placed greater weight on the voice, making it the only non-negotiable prerequisite for entering the procession. Bordoni’s rival, Francesca Cuzzoni (1696–1778), was described by Walpole as ‘not a good actress’, ‘rather cold in her action’ and ‘silly and fantastical’.²⁴ When describing the deportment of soprano Anna Maria Strada (fl. 1719–1741), who sang in more than twenty Handel operas, historian and art critic Jean-Bernard Le Blanc (1707–1781) wrote that her ‘grimaces and contortions’ were ‘insupportable’ and that ‘whenever she sung, she had the air of a Pythoness, and it was absolutely necessary not to see her, if you were desirous of hearing her with pleasure’.²⁵ Le Blanc expressed his disapproval of the acting of many singers on the London stage, writing that it was painful to watch Italian operas being ‘performed by actors, whose voices indeed are always just, often fine, and sometimes even admirable; but who have neither action, grace, nor countenance;

²³Anthony Ashley Cooper, 4th Earl of Shaftesbury, letter to James Harris (1709–1780), 18 January 1737, reproduced in: Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, editors, *Music and Theatre in Handel’s World: The Family Papers of James Harris 1732–1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.22.

²⁴Walpole describing Cuzzoni in the title role in Handel’s *Rodelinda* (1725), quoted in: Allatson Burgh, *Anecdotes of Music, Historical and Biographical; in a Series of Letters from a Gentleman to his Daughter*. (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, Paternoster Row, 1814), p.51.

²⁵Jean Bernard Le Blanc, *Letters on the English and French Nations: Containing Curious and useful Observations on their Constitutions natural and political; Nervous and humorous Descriptions of the Virtues, Vices, Ridicules and Foibles of the Inhabitants: Critical Remarks on their Writers; Together with Moral Reflections interspersed throughout the Work*, Volume II (London: Printed for J. Brindley in New-Bondstreet; R. Francklin in Russel-street, Covent-Garden; C. Davies in Holbourn; and J. Hodges, London-Bridge, 1747), pp.193–194.

who by their restrained gestures and shocking attitudes, make the eyes often pay dear for the pleasure of the ears'.²⁶

Even though Italian singers went through rigorous conservatoire training which included learning the rules associated with graceful gestures and bodily decorum,²⁷ it did not guarantee that everyone would use them in the most effective or appropriate way. An elegant contrapposto and a beautiful gesture might be aesthetically pleasing, but it might fail to move the audience if it looked affected and there was no congruity with the character and the drama. For example, commenting on the celebrated castrato Carlo Broschi (1705–1782), known as Farinelli, Le Blanc wrote that he 'was a tolerable good figure' but that he 'never saw a man have less nobleness and grace in his manner than he'.²⁸ Some elements of Farinelli's action are captured in this vivid description by Pickering:

What a Pipe! What Modulation! What Extasy to the Ear! But, Heavens! What Clumsiness! What Stupidity! What Offence to the Eye! [...] thou must have observed in the *Park*, with what Ease and Agility a Cow, heavy with Calf, has rose up at the Command of the Milk-woman's Foot: Thus from the mossy Bank sprung up the DIVINE FARINELLI.

Then with long strides advancing a few Paces, his left Hand settled upon his Hip, in a beautiful Bend, like that of a *Handle* of an *old fashion'd Caudle-Cup*, his Right remained immoveable across his manly Breast, 'till Numbness called its Partner to supply the Place; when, it relieved itself in the Position of the other *Handle* to the *Caudle-Cup*.²⁹

Although Pickering recognised the brilliance of Farinelli's voice, which gave 'this *tuneful Exotic*' his lasting worldwide fame, he observed that the majority of the

²⁶Ibid., p.193.

²⁷Roach, 'Cavaliere Nicolini', *op. cit.*, pp.190–203.

²⁸Le Blanc, *op. cit.*, p.193.

²⁹Pickering, *op. cit.*, pp.63–64.

audience was ‘ready to extinguish one Sense to gratify another’.³⁰ Although the disposition of his arms was graceful (‘beautiful Bend’) and he initially seemed to be following the rule of contrast by confining his left hand on his hip and elevating his right, his gestures did not respond to the words: a right hand on the chest might have been a congruent gesture for a particular word or phrase, but in this case, Farinelli kept it fixed there, with its eventual move being interpreted by Pickering as an adjustment for the purposes of comfort because there was no apparent connection to the dramatic context. Pickering’s juxtaposition of Senesino’s graceful, correct and varied deportment with the ‘*see-saw Clumsiness*’ of Farinelli,³¹ both of whom he witnessed sharing the same stage in London in 1734, serves to underline that acting ability is benefited by a performer’s natural predisposition, a recurring theme in many of the treatises and referred to as ‘genius’. Pickering listed genius as the first of the four core requirements for good acting, the others being education, reading and experience.³² Genius alone would not be enough unless the other three requirements were there to guide and develop it. Cooke argued that to reach perfection in acting, ‘natural genius’ needs to be shaped by ‘theatrical education’,³³ and Derrick offered an apt analogy: as a diamond which ‘however intrinsically valuable, requires the utmost skill and labour of the artist to unveil its lustre to the curious eye; so neither does genius form a complete Actor, nor yet can the character be attained without one: ’tis study and practice must improve that genius to such an accuracy and perfection as will stand the examination of the most judicious critic and impartial judge’.³⁴ Therefore, the next part of this contextual investigation focuses on singers’ theatrical education.

³⁰Ibid., p.64.

³¹Ibid.

³²‘No Man can be Master of *Theatrical Expression*, unless he can *perceive*, and that *accurately*, how *Nature* draws over the several *human Passions*. This requires *Genius, Education, Reading, Experience*’. Ibid., p.11.

³³Cooke, *op. cit.*, p.182.

³⁴Derrick, *op. cit.*, p.91.

Theatrical Education

Of all the historical treatises studied as part of this research project, most of which are aimed at actors or public speakers, the ones written by Tosi and Mancini stand out because they were written for singers by singers of *opera seria*, and even though they mainly focus on singing, they still offer a glimpse into the theatrical education eighteenth-century singers received. For Mancini, the singers' acting had to appear natural, unstudied and well-moderated: qualities that could be achieved through the study of how action can be adapted to fit the words and characterisation without appearing affected.³⁵ This study included both theoretical and practical elements. For example, Mancini urged singers to learn history and languages (Latin and Italian),³⁶ and to acquire theoretical principles of acting through books and by working with a master.³⁷ Looking at a regular day of the training of castrato Caffarelli,³⁸ Roach observed that from the six hours of total daily tuition, two hours went towards studying 'letters' (literature—which, 'in addition to general grounding in poetry, consisted of stage elocution and projection') and one hour went towards 'singing exercises in front of a mirror, to practice deportment and gesture, and to guard against ugly grimaces while singing'.³⁹

Asking students to attend to visual elements of their performance had been an established teaching practice since the previous century, with students of the

³⁵Si vuol dire, ed è verissimo, che l' azione dev' esser naturale, e non studiata, ma sopra tutto non mai troppo caricata; disetto, che pur troppo in qualcheduno succede: ma questo non significa, che non si debba studiare la vera maniera di agire, ma solo, che non si debba rendere affettata l'azione, anzi adattarla ed uniformarla alle parole che si dicono, ed al carattere che si rappresenta: e questo ben adattare, ed uniformare è appunto ciò, che chiamiamo naturalezza, la quale devesi precisamente apprendere dallo studio'. Mancini, *Riflessioni pratiche sul canto figurato*, *op.cit.*, p.242.

³⁶Compiti ed assoluti con profitto gli studj delle lingue, Latina e Italiana, e della Storia, studj necessaj per ben recitare, siccome ho detto, potrà lo scolare con coraggio imprendere lo studio dell'arte Comica'. *Ibid.*, p.227.

³⁷Le generali sono anche teoretiche, e si possono quindi imparare e dai maestri e dai libri'. *Ibid.*, p.243.

³⁸Caffarelli was the stage name of the singer Gaetano Majorano, who, as stated above (p.112), studied for six years under Porpora in Naples. In 1738, Caffarelli created the title roles in two operas by Handel, *Faramondo* and *Serse*.

³⁹Roach, 'Cavaliere Nicolini', *op.cit.*, p.190.

singing school of Virgilio Mazzocchi (bapt. 1597–1646) in Rome being asked to practise in front of a mirror for the regulation of facial expression.⁴⁰ In the eighteenth century, we see Tosi also advising young singers practising at home to use a mirror to ‘avoid those convulsive Motions of the Body, or of the Face’.⁴¹ The singers’ training also included fencing and horse riding, which Mancini explained could not only prove useful in equestrian or fighting scenes but also serve as training for increasing the singers’ general physical strength, agility and fitness.⁴² Another contributor to fitness was dancing, which helped singers ‘tread the boards with noble naturalness’ by granting grace in the movement of their feet, arms, head and body.⁴³ The theatrical education of singers extended beyond the confines of the singing school. The composer and singing teacher Johann Friedrich Agricola (1720–1774) urged singers, apart from studying acting treatises, to ‘diligently and carefully observe the acting of the good actors, particularly the tragic actors’.⁴⁴ Attending performances allowed singers to internalise stage conventions and expand the repertoire of gestures through observation and imitation.⁴⁵

⁴⁰Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, *Bodily Charm* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p.119.

⁴¹Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, *op.cit.*, pp.88–89.

⁴²‘Giovano pure assaissimo le scuole di scherma, e del cavalcare, specialmente per quei casi, nei quali l’ attore deve fare alcuna di queste azioni: oltrechè tutte rendono il corpo robusto, agile e sciolto’. Mancini, *Riflessioni pratiche sul canto figurato*, *op.cit.*, pp.243–244.

⁴³[...] una fra le principali è quella di uscire in Teatro con grazia, e di saper passeggiarne le tavole con gentile naturalezza. Tutto questo non si può apprender meglio che dalla scuola di ballo. Questa insegna il portar con grazia i piedi, il maneggiare le braccia, il girare la testa, ed il muovere con garbo il corpo tutto’. *Ibid.*, p.243.

⁴⁴Johann Friedrich Agricola, *Introduction to the Art of Singing*, trans. by Julianne C. Baird (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.220–221. Agricola’s treatise is a German translation of Tosi’s 1723 singing tutor, with additional notes and some of his own advice. It was originally published in 1757: *Idem, Anleitung zur Singkunst. Aus dem Italiänischen des Herrn Peter Franz Tosi, Mitglieds der philharmonischen Akademie mit Erläuterungen und Zusätzen* (Berlin: George Ludewig Winter, 1757).

⁴⁵Jelgerhuis identified this practice as an invaluable habit for performers. He said to his students: ‘I do hope that when you are not busy acting in a play you will constantly attend other performances, for this is a true means of instruction for the actor. You should impress these ideas deeply in your mind so that the quality of your work will be genuinely professional. You should cultivate the habit of constant observation so that the information thereby gained will affect your behavior and your behavior in turn increase your powers observation. This interaction can be most fruitful and eventually can be worth all the difficulties involved in becoming an actor’. Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op.cit.*, p.297.

The singers' theatrical education was meant to equip them with the basic theoretical and practical skills that would enable them to further develop their acting abilities on their own as they progressed on their journey of mastering their craft. Although young singers would initially copy their teachers until they had a firm grasp of the style, they were then expected to imitate them but not slavishly replicate them. Instead, they were asked to be imaginative and make their own decisions as to how to interpret and act their parts. Tosi wrote that 'to copy is the part of a Scholar, that of a Master is to invent', and that the 'most admired Graces of a Professor ought only to be imitated, and not copied; on Condition also, that it does not bear not even so much as a Shadow of a Resemblance of the Original; otherwise, instead of a beautiful Imitation, it will become a despicable Copy'.⁴⁶ The path to grace passed through knowledge and application,⁴⁷ as well as being attuned to one's own nature, since even copying a great singer would make someone 'appear so ridiculous on the Stage for their Affectation'.⁴⁸

Actors

This section examines some additional aspects of acting training and dramatic preparation valuable to the development of the new teaching method, by focusing on elements of practice employed by a selection of influential actors who flourished in London in the first half of the eighteenth century.

BARTON BOOTH

The celebrated actor Barton Booth (1682–1733) was renowned for his decorous movement and gestures but also for appearing to inhabit the characters he represented.⁴⁹ Downes described him as a 'Gentleman of liberal Education, of form

⁴⁶Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, *op. cit.*, pp.152, 155.

⁴⁷'knowledge with Study makes one a good Singer'. *Ibid.*, p.153.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Mr. Booth's general Deportment was Majestic, yet he used no more of that Stateliness than became the Character'. Theophilus Cibber, *The Life and Character of that Excellent Actor Barton Booth, Esq; Sometime One of the Patentees and Directors of His Majesty's Company of Comedians* (London: Printed for R. Griffiths, 1753), p.52.

Venust [beautiful, elegant, graceful]; of Mellifluent Pronuntiation, having proper Gesticulations, which are Graceful Attendants of true Elocution; of his time a most Compleat Tragedian'.⁵⁰ Booth had aristocratic parentage, and his father, The Honourable and Venerable Robert Booth (1662–1730) who was then the Archdeacon of Durham and 'a very worthy Gentleman of a competent Fortune', took 'particular care' to educate his son 'in the politer Languages, and train him up every way suitable to his Birth and Family'.⁵¹ As a Westminster School pupil Booth became 'well acquainted with the Classics', showed 'a very great Affection for Poetry' and acted in Latin plays, and was described as a 'good Scholar' and 'a Boy of a forward Genius' who became the headmaster's favourite.⁵² He entered Trinity College, Cambridge, 'in order to take on him his Degrees; for his Parents (to whom he was always the Favourite) design'd him for the Pulpit'; however, soon after his arrival there he was spellbound by the performances of 'a strolling Company of Players' and abandoned his studies for acting, to the dismay of his parents.⁵³ Early in his acting career, Booth was taken under the wing of the celebrated Restoration actor and theatre manager Thomas Betterton (1635–1710).⁵⁴

⁵⁰Downes, *op. cit.*, p.52.

⁵¹*The Life of that Excellent Tragedian Barton Booth Esq; Late one of the Managers at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane. His Birth, and Education under Dr. Busby, in Westminster School; where he first perform'd a Part in one of Seneca's Tragedies: His being sent to the University of Cambridge, where he commenced Stroler, and became the Hero of their Company: His playing in Bartholomew-Fair, under Mrs. Myyns: His getting into Drury-Lane Play-House: His Amour with Miss Mountfort: The Occasion of his being made a Patentee, and Manager of the Theatre, &c. To which is added, A Poem to his Memory. By the Author of A Pastoral Elegy on the Death of Calista* (London: Printed for John Cooper, without Temple-Bar; and sold at the Pamphlet Shops of London and Westminster, 1733), pp.1–2.

⁵²Michel Maittaire in Benjamin Victor, *Memoirs of the Life of Barton Booth, Esq; with his Character to which are added Several Poetical Pieces, written by Himself, viz. Translations from Horace, Songs, Odes, &c. To whihc is likewise annex'd, The Case of Mr. Booth's last illness, and what was observ'd (particularly with regard to the Quick-Silver found in his Intestines) upon Opening of his Body, in the Presence of Sir Hans Sloan, by Mr. Alexander Small, Surgeon. Publish'd by an Intimate Acquaintance of Mr. Booth, by Consent of his Widow* (London: Printed for John Watts at the Printing-Office in Wild-Court, near Lincoln's-Inn Fields, 1733), p.4. The theatre manager and poet Benjamin Victor (1704–1778), who published Booth's memoirs, discussed with the classics scholar Michel Maittaire (1668–1747) who worked at Westminster School in 1693 when Booth was a student there.

⁵³*The Life of that Excellent Tragedian Barton Booth, op. cit.*, pp.2–3.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p.8.

Betterton, who was often compared with the celebrated Roman actor Roscius for the gracefulness of his appearance and power of his acting,⁵⁵ was also an actor who strove to keep learning and improving his craft. When Betterton died, the playwright Charles Johnson (1679–1748) wrote of him:

Roscius indeed is no more, and Tragedy mourns with real Tears his Loss; that mighty Genius (let me call him so) for to become so perfect an Actor, a Man must have almost all the Qualifications of the greatest Author; he must have the most Exalted Soul, the Deepest Judgment, and the most lively Fancy; and Nature too must be liberal in her outward Endowments, She must adorn him with a Graceful Person, and an easy Utterance; to all these Accomplishments the utmost Art and Industry must be join'd: Nature had indeed been very bountiful to Mr. *Betterton*, and yet Art and Labour had improv'd him wonderfully, and he confessed but very lately, He was yet learning to be an Actor.⁵⁶

Perhaps Betterton saw in Booth a kindred spirit, as not long after he took him on in his company he demoted himself to playing second parts by relinquishing all the principal characters to Booth, saying that ‘the Stage would never feel a want whilst Mr. *Booth* lived’.⁵⁷ Booth’s early education and his exceptional zeal for learning chime with the methodical nature of his preparation for a role. His process included a careful analysis of his part to gain a perfect understanding of the plot and dramatic character, before deducing which elements in the script had a strong coherence with the character archetype he selected and which less so, crafting his performance so that it energetically emphasised the former and

⁵⁵Richard Steele in *The Tatler*, 4 May 1710, republished in: Richard Steele, *The Tatler; or, Lubrications of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.* (London: Printed for Harrison and Co., No 18, Paternoster Row, 1785), p.413.

⁵⁶Charles Johnson, ‘The Preface’ in: *The Force of Friendship. A Tragedy. As it is Acted at The Queen’s Theatre in the Hay-Market. By Her Majesty’s Servants. To which is Added, a Farce call’d Love in a Chest* (London: Printed for Egbert Sanger at the Post-House at the Middle Temple-Gate in Fleet-Street, 1710).

⁵⁷*The Life of that Excellent Tragedian Barton Booth, op.cit.*, pp.8, 10.

elegantly minimised over the latter, thus portraying stronger and more natural-looking characters.⁵⁸ During his analysis he aimed to identify all the passions contained in the text, even the underlying ones, ensuring that there is absolute congruity between the sense conveyed by his words and gestures by artfully yet accurately imitating the passions as expressed in nature, and by avoiding a common temptation of using striking action to impress the audience if it was not suitable to the character and dramatic circumstances.⁵⁹

Booth's expression of the passions was not only congruous but also amplified so that it was clearly intelligible at the back of the auditorium, while at the same time judiciously moderated to still look pleasing from the front row.⁶⁰ His preparation also included the study of statues and paintings, imitating postures and gestures which he then introduced into his acting with propriety, timeliness and naturalness.⁶¹ The actor and playwright Theophilus Cibber (1703–1758) wrote

⁵⁸He had *learning*, to understand perfectly whatever it was his part to speak; and *judgement* to know, how far it agreed, or disagreed, with the character. Hence, arose a peculiar *grace*, which was visible to every *spectator*, tho' few were at the pains of examining into the *cause* of their pleasure: he could soften, and slide over, with a kind of elegant negligence, the *improprieties*, in a part he acted, while of the contrary, he would dwell, with energy, upon the *beauties*, as if he exerted a latent spirit, which had been kept back for such an occasion, that he might alarm, awaken, and transport, in those places only, where the *dignity* of his own *good-sense* could be *supported*, by that of his *author*. Aaron Hill, 'Original Letters' in: *The Works of the late Aaron Hill, Esq; in Four Volumes. Consisting of Letters on Various Subjects, and of Original Poems, Moral and Facetious. With an Essay of the Art of Acting*, Volume II (London: Printed for the Benefit of the Family, 1753), pp.115–116.

⁵⁹He had a talent at discovering the *passions*, where they lay *hid*, in some celebrated parts; having been buried under a prescription of *rantings* and *monotony*, by the practice of other actors: When he had *discover'd* them, he soon grew able to *express* 'em. And his secret, by which he attain'd this great lesson of the Theatre, was an association, or adaption of his *look* to his *voice*; by which artful imitation of *nature*, the variations, in the sound of his words, gave propriety to every change in his countenance. So that, among *Players*, in whom it is common to hear *pity* pronounc'd with a *frown* upon the forehead, *sorrow* express'd, by a *grin* upon the eye, and *anger* thunder'd out, with a look of unnatural *serenity*, it was Mr. *Booth's* peculiar felicity, to be *heard*, and *seen* the same; whether as the *pleas'd*, the *griev'd*, the *pitying*, the *reproachful* or the *angry*: one would almost be tempted, to borrow the aid of a very bold figure, and to express this excellence the more significantly, beg permission to affirm, that the *blind* might have *seen* him, in his *voice*, and the *deaf* have *heard* him, in his *visage*'. *Ibid.*, pp.117–118.

⁶⁰he could mark every Passion with a Strength to reach the Eye of the most distant Spectator, without losing that Comeliness which charmed those who sat near him'. T. Cibber, *op. cit.*, p.45.

⁶¹Mr. *Booth's* Attitudes were all picturesque.—He had a good Taste for Statuary and Painting, and where he could not come at original Pictures, he spared no Pains or Expence to get the best Drawings and Prints: These he frequently studied, and sometimes borrowed Attitudes from,

that Booth's scholarly approach did not mean that 'all his Actions were studied, though Study improved him in many'; even off stage Booth's movement was 'naturally graceful' while on stage it was 'at once the Result of Nature, warmed by Passion, heightened by Grace, and improved by Taste'.⁶² His diligent study and methodical preparation, therefore, improved his acting ability without restricting his improvisatory freedom.

ROBERT WILKS

Robert Wilks (1665–1732)⁶³ was renowned for his 'irresistible Force of proper Action',⁶⁴ and, like Booth, for inhabiting his parts.⁶⁵ His action on stage was easy, natural and devoid of affectation,⁶⁶ while remaining always decorous, a critic's comments (resembling Steele's review of Nicolini, p. 157) reading: 'whatever he did on the stage, let it be ever so trifling, whether it consisted in putting on his gloves, or taking out his watch, lolling on his cane, or taking snuff, every movement

which so judiciously introduced, so finely executed, and fell into them with so easy a Transition, that these Masterpieces of his Art seemed but the Effect of Nature'. *Ibid.*, p.51.

⁶²*Ibid.*, pp.51–52.

⁶³Wilks, together with Booth and Colley Cibber (1671–1757) formed the so-called 'Drury Lane triumvirate'. Henry Barton Baker, *Our Old Actors*, Volume 1, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1878), p.115. In 1743 the journalist, poet and playwright James Ralph (1705–1762) singled out Booth, Cibber and Wilks as paradigms of accomplished actors, mentioning their 'long Experience and indefatigable Attention'. James Ralph, *The Case of our Present Theatrical Disputes, Fairly Stated. In which Contained a Succinct Account of The Rise, Progress and Declension of the Ancient Stage; a comprehensive View of the Management of the Italian, Spanish, French and Dutch Theatres, with some free Remarks upon our own. Calculated Entirely for the use of the Public, and wherein, the only Method is Suggested, that can prevent all future Debate* (London: Printed for Jacob Robinson, at the Golden-Lyon, in Ludgate-Street, 1743), p.7.

⁶⁴Joseph Addison quoted from *The Tatler*, No. 14. Vol. 1. in: Chetwood, *op.cit.*, p.238.

⁶⁵That [Mr. Wilks] entered *thoroughly* into the Parts, which he *studied* after those *who had gone before him*, and *made* the Parts, which were *wrote originally for Him*, is universally allowed'. Edmund Curll, *The Life of That Eminent Comedian Robert Wilks, Esq* (London: Printed for E. Curll, in Burghley-Street, in the Strand, 1733), pp.37–38.

⁶⁶G. G., 'Elegy on the Death of Mr. Robert Wilks, &c.' in: Daniel O'Bryan, editor, *Authentic Memoirs or, the Life and Character of that most celebrated Comedian, Mr. Robert Wilks; Who died on Wednesday the 27th of September 1732, in his grand climacterical Year. To which is added an Elegy on his Death*, Second Edition (London: Printed for S. Slow, and sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster, 1732), p.[31]. The relevant section of the *Elegy* reads:

While this great Wonder of the present Age,
Devoid of Affectation trod the Stage,
Easy his Gesture was, and free his Air,
For *Nature's-Laws* he made his daily Care.

was marked with such an ease of breeding and manner, every thing told so strongly the involuntary motion of a gentleman, that it was impossible to consider the character he represented in any other light than that of reality'.⁶⁷ Wilks did not have Booth's level of education, and so lacked the tools to conduct his own deep analysis of the script to discover all the passions and characterisation, but he had an equal desire to gain a good understanding of every part he played. When he was to speak a prologue by Aaron Hill for a play by David Mallet (1705–1765), Wilks refrained from starting to learn his part until he was able to discuss it with the dramatist.⁶⁸ Hill was a strong believer that instruction could facilitate an actor's research process and improve their acting, writing that even an actor without 'so much *Learning*, or *Philosophy*, as to find out, and distinguish, the *Passions* where they *lie hid*, in his *Part*' can still become an 'Excellent Player' these things are pointed out to him.⁶⁹ While the detail of Wilks' method may have differed from Booth's, rigorous study was also part of his process, building the characters he played on 'information, understanding, and a strong comprehension of the passions and their motives'.⁷⁰ Downes wrote that Wilks was 'of Graceful Port, Mein and

⁶⁷From a 1729 review by an 'eminent critic speaking of Wilks', quoted in: John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage: From the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*, Volume III (Bath: Printed by H. E. Carrington. Sold by Thomas Rodd, Great Newport Street London, 1832), p.337. The critic continues saying that it 'was still more surprising, that the person who could thus delight an audience from the gaiety and sprightliness of his manner, I met the next day in the street hobbling to a hackney coach, seemingly so enfeebled by age and infirmities, that I could scarcely believe him to be the same man'. This is another indication that Wilks' performance was a product of deliberation and technical skill.

⁶⁸Mr Wilks was charmed with your last letter, and will not undertake to study the prologue till he has the advantage of your instructions'. Manuscript letter by Mallet, writing to Hill in February 1731 about his play *Eurydice*, for which Hill had written a prologue for Wilks: David Mallet, *Letters to Aaron Hill* (The Houghton Library, Harvard Theatrical Collection, MS Thr 31, 1731–1750).

⁶⁹Hill and Popple, 'The Prompter 1735', *op. cit.* When Susannah Arne (1714–1766)—the singer for whom Handel wrote roles for a number of his oratorios, and was trained by Colley Cibber to become a leading Drury Lane actor alongside Garrick—was to play the title role in Hill's tragedy *Zara* (1736), Hill prepared for her 'an interlined part in which every accent and inflection, every look and gesture was marked, and he worked tirelessly to make her performance perfect down to the last detail'. Richard Hindry Barker, *Mr Cibber of Drury Lane* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p.181.

⁷⁰Charles Dibdin, *A Complete History of the Stage*. Volume IV, (London: Printed for the Author and Sold by Him at his Warehouse, Leicester Place, Leicester Square, 1800), p.418.

Air; void of Affectation’, and ‘indeed the finisht Copy of his Famous Predecessor, Mr. *Charles Hart*’,⁷¹ continuing a line of succession of great actors harking back to Burbage.⁷² Curll stretched the succession line further back, writing that ‘the most celebrated Comedian *Roscius*, was the last among the *Romans*, and it is greatly to be feared Mr. *Wilks* will be the last among the *Britons*’.⁷³ Curll’s fears did not materialise; a rightful heir was about to make his appearance.

DAVID GARRICK

The actor to take on the title of ‘Albion’s fam’d *Roscius*’ was Garrick, who made his debut on the London stage in 1741.⁷⁴ Chetwood wrote that although Garrick was originally destined by his father to read law, his ‘Genius led him early to study Nature’, spending three years working behind the scenes in Drury Lane theatre ‘where his excellent Understanding could profit by the Faults of others, mend them, and improve the Beauties’.⁷⁵ Like Betterton and Booth, Garrick made his study his business, arriving ‘to this degree of perfection’, according to Hiffernan, ‘by adding to all the advantages with which nature has copiously gifted him, an indefatigable application to reading, practicing, and conversing with many learned and ingenious persons of this and other nations; as well as with the most eminent artists in their several departments, whom he could derive any hint or instruction from’.⁷⁶

Examining Garrick’s process, Grant wrote that ‘Mr. Garrick, to ascertain a true judgment, how far his face and limbs moved and kept to the rules of just and natural action, always acted his characters before a large looking glass, sufficient to

⁷¹Downes, *op. cit.*, p.51.

⁷²See Chapter 1, p.38.

⁷³Curll, *The Life of That Eminent Comedian Robert Wilks, Esq, op. cit.*, p.2.

⁷⁴In a Latin Latin poem written in March 1769 when Garrick was recovering from illness, Hiffernan called him ‘*Roscius Anglorum*’, which in the ‘English imitative paraphrase, for the accommodation of those who might not understand the original’ he translated as ‘Albion’s fam’d *Roscius*’. Hiffernan, *op. cit.*, pp.102–103.

⁷⁵Chetwood, *op. cit.*, p.158.

⁷⁶Hiffernan, *op. cit.*, pp.100–101. Hiffernan makes a point of the importance of methodical study and practice, adding that ‘The unstudious, the idle, or the dissipated will never be conspicuous in the profession of acting’.

represent the entire body at one view, to direct him in distinguishing betwixt right and wrong'.⁷⁷ The mirror was established as a useful tool for imbuing action with beauty and grace since antiquity, Demosthenes famously practising his gestures in front of a large looking glass.⁷⁸ Cooke advised the actor to practise soliloquies 'before a large mirror where he can see his whole figure; as was the custom of several of the ancient orators',⁷⁹ and Jelgerhuis wrote that if the great painter Gerard Lairesse (1641–1711) urged 'the young painter of the need to choose beautiful attitudes through the device of a mirror which can reflect his own posture' then 'how much more important it is for the young actor to study his image in a looking glass while practicing how to produce beautiful postures'.⁸⁰ In order to achieve correct gestures and be in a position to assess them properly, Goethe instructed actors to keep in mind the following rules:

Stand in front of a mirror and speak what you have to declaim only softly or not at all; just think of the words. This will ensure that you are not carried away by the declamation, but you can easily notice every wrong movement that does not express what is being thought, or expresses it too faintly, as well as selecting the beautiful and correct gestures, and marking the gestures with a movement that is consistent with the sense of the words as the artistic character of the piece.⁸¹

⁷⁷Grant, *op. cit.*, p.141. Grant continues by suggesting to the budding actors reading his book that 'a glass may prove very advantageous, since in it you have a faithful representation, not only of the face in all its variations of the countenance, but of the whole body likewise, in all its postures and motions, and the harmony of one to the other so that you may easily discover any habit of action that wants grace, which can be corrected by attention and assiduity'.

⁷⁸'decor quoque a gestu atque motu venit; ideoque Demosthenes grande quoddam intuens speculum componere actionem solebat'. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, XI:iii.67–68.

⁷⁹Cooke, *op. cit.*, p.197.

⁸⁰Jelgerhuis, 'Lessons', *op. cit.*, p.281.

⁸¹'Um zu einem richtigen Gebärdenspiel zu kommen und solches gleich richtig beurtheilen zu können, merke man sich folgende Regeln: Man stelle sich vor einen Spiegel und spreche dasjenige, was man zu declamiren hat, nur leise oder vielmehr gar nicht, sondern denke sich nur die Worte. Dadurch wird gewonnen, daß man von der Declamation nicht hingerissen wird, sondern jede falsche Bewegung, welche das Gedachte oder leise Gesagte nicht ausdrückt, leicht bemerken, so wie auch die schönen und richtigen Gebärden auswählen und dem ganzen Gebärdenspiel eine analoge Bewegung mit dem Sinne der Wörter als Gepräge der Kunst aufdrücken kann'. Goethe, *op. cit.*, p.160.

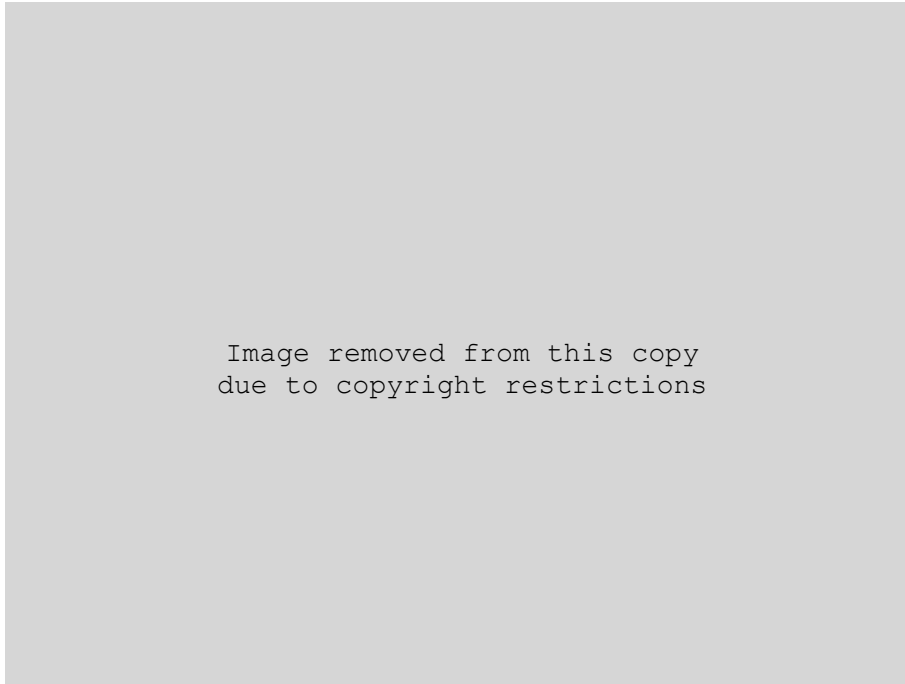


FIGURE 20. David Garrick as King Lear, painted by Benjamin Wilson in 1761.

Practising in front of the mirror may have been one of the reasons Garrick achieved a high degree of proprioception and movement control, as well as the ability to combine grace with naturalness.⁸² His detailed attention to the visual elements of his performance and the aesthetic principles under which he was operating can be glimpsed in some of the many theatrical portraits he commissioned, which depict him in graceful gestures in line with classical decorum.⁸³ Holding a very strong grip over the way he was portrayed, he ‘actively suggested scenes, poses, props and narratives to his image-takers’, and he repeatedly requested corrections and alterations to the paintings.⁸⁴

Garrick’s conduct on stage seems also to have been ‘the result of careful calculation’, and although for the audience he created the impression of totally inhabiting the part, feeling all the passions and reacting naturally to what was happening

⁸²Roberts wrote that Garrick had ‘his body under perfect control at all times, moved with great agility and grace, and displayed amazing versatility and vitality’. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.279.

⁸³See Figure 20 and above, Figure 17, p.152.

⁸⁴Muriel Zagha, ‘A rare devil of a character’ *The Times Literary Supplement*, (24 October 2003):5247, p.20.

on stage, under the ardent façade he was calm and in complete control, whereby in ‘offstage moments during even the most trying of roles he could attend to bits of theatrical business with perfect ease and judgement’.⁸⁵ The mechanical wig that Garrick ingeniously devised to create the effect of the natural physiological gesture of the hair being raised from fear, is a testament to his keen observation of nature and his desire to portray it faithfully.⁸⁶ Garrick’s performance was well thought through, stylised and highly technical, but he was able to make it appear straightforward, natural and intimate, despite the fact that he was performing in relatively large auditoria.⁸⁷ Although Garrick’s manner of acting became associated with naturalism, he made rigorous and meticulous use of historical acting conventions, following and breaking the rules for effect, while keeping his action congruous and well-moderated, which gave it a sense of spontaneity.

Garrick’s acting appeared especially natural, almost realistic, when it was presented in direct juxtaposition to the acting of James Quin (1693–1766). Quin and Garrick first shared the same stage in 1746 for a production of Nicholas Rowe’s *The Fair Penitent* (1703), followed by a number of other plays which saw a war of the manner of acting played out.⁸⁸ Garrick played Lothario and Quin took the role of Horatio, originally created by Betterton in 1702. The dramatist Richard Cumberland (1731–1811) vividly remembered the performance:

⁸⁵Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.279.

⁸⁶See Chapter 2, p.113.

⁸⁷Under Garrick’s management the Drury Lane theatre had a capacity of two thousand people. Moira Goff et al., *Georgians Revealed: Life, Style and the Making of Modern Britain* (London: British Library, 2013), p.80. In an auditorium of this size, which hardly ever remained completely silent, it would have been impossible to be heard without the support of a well-developed vocal technique or be seen without amplified gestures and facial expressions.

⁸⁸Because of the participation and opposition of Garrick and Quin, the 1746 production of *The Fair Penitent* became ‘the greatest theatrical event that had occurred for years’. John Doran, *‘Their Majesties’ Servants’*. *Annals of The English Stage, from Thomas Betterton to Edmund Kean. Actors–Authors–Audiences*, Volume I (London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 13, Waterloo Place, 1864), p.498.

Quin presented himself upon the rising of the curtain in a green velvet coat embroidered down the seams, an enormous full bottomed periwig, rolled stockings and high-heeled square-toed shoes: with very little variation of cadence, and in a deep full tone, accompanied by a sawing kind of action, which had more of the senate than of the stage in it, he rolled out his heroics with an air of dignified indifference, that seemed to disdain the plaudits, that were bestowed upon him. [...] but when after long and eager expectation I first beheld little Garrick, then young and light and alive in every muscle and in every feature, come bounding on the stage, and pointing at the wittol Altamont and heavy-paced Horatio—heavens, what a transition!—it seemed as if a whole century had been stept over in the transition of a single scene; old things were done away, and a new order at once brought forward, bright and luminous, and clearly destined to dispel the barbarisms and bigotry of a tasteless age, too long attached to the prejudices of custom, and superstitiously devoted to the illusions of imposing declamation. This heaven-born actor was then struggling to emancipate his audience from the slavery they were resigned to, and though at times he succeeded in throwing in some gleams of new born light upon them, yet in general they seemed to *love darkness better than light*, and in the dialogue of altercation between Horatio and Lothario bestowed far the greater *show of hands* upon the master of the old school than upon the founder of the new. I thank my stars, my feelings in those moments led me right; they were those of nature, and therefore could not err.⁸⁹

⁸⁹Richard Cumberland, *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland. Written by Himself. Containing an Account of his Life and Writings, interspersed with Adecdotes and Characters of several of the most distinguished persons of his time with whom he has had intercourse and connexion* (London: Printed for Lackington, Allen, & Co., Temple of the Muses, Finsbury-Square, 1806), p.59.

Commenting on the same performance, the actor and playwright Samuel Foote (1720–1777) wrote that ‘G[arrick]’s Action is various, but sometimes extravagant; Q[uin]’s the same in all Circumstances and Passions [...] and where the Passions are to be expressed, Mr Q[uin] appears to me, besides the Absence of some natural Powers, to want one Requisite, without which no Performer will ever please me; that is, Feeling’.⁹⁰ Although both actors were performing within the same aesthetic conventions, their approach was received as radically different. Quin’s dignified, nonchalant and imposing oratorical action was aptly amplified and decorous but seemed to lack variety, and the degree to which he expressed the various passions was limited, appearing unable ‘to give Love or Pity, Grief or Remorse their proper Tone and Variation of Features’.⁹¹ Garrick’s action, on the other hand, had greater variety and energy, and he was able to better express the passions conveyed in the text, albeit sometimes with an amplitude that exceeded what was customarily expected. Pickering illustrated the deep understanding of human nature Garrick displayed in his performance by closely examining his delivery of two lines from the tent scene in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*,⁹² where the king, ‘this Monster in Blood and excessive Villainy’, is seen waking up ‘in all the Terrors of an Imagination distracted by conscious Guilt’:

Rich. Give me a Horse—bind up my Wounds!

Have Mercy, Heav’n!

What *masterly Expression* has the great SHAKESPEARE shewn in these eleven Words! The rapid Incoherence of the first Line, presents strongly to us the guilty Confusion of RICHARD’s Senses, scarce yet

⁹⁰Samuel Foote, *A Treatise on the Passions, So far as they regard the Stage; With a critical Enquiry into the Theatrical Merit of Mr. G–K, Mr. Q–N, and Mr. B–Y. The first considered in the Part of Lear, the two last opposed in Othello* (London: Printed for C. Corbet, against St. Dunstons-Church, Fleet Street, 1747), pp.25, 40.

⁹¹*An Apology For the Life of Mr. T– C–, Comedian. Being a Proper Sequel to the Apology For the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian. With An Historical View of the Stage to the Present Year. Supposed to be written by Himself. In the Stile and Manner of the Poet Laureat* (London: Printed for J. Mechell at the King’s-Arms in Fleet-Street, 1740), pp.138–139.

⁹²This exact moment was famously immortalised by Hogarth (see above, Figure 17, p.17).

awake, at the Eve of a Battle, which might bring him a full Punishment for his enormous Crimes; and, for the first Time, forces him to address that HEAVEN which, he believed, he had offended beyond *Forgiveness*.

A Man, awaken'd in *Surprize*, requires *Time* to recover himself for coherent Speech: One, awaken'd in *Terror*, more; because *Terror* retards the Motion of the Blood, and the Flow of Animal Spirits is check'd, in Proportion. Were it for no other Reasons, a PAUSE at the End of the first Line is *necessary*, according to the *usual* Affection of Nature upon *such* Occasions.

But, to bring a remorseless Wretch to *Feeling*, and from *Feeling* to *Pray*, requires a PAUSE *indeed*. Exquisitely just and beautiful is SH[A]KESPEARE's *Expression*; exquisitely just and beautiful is GARRICK's *Action*, in so small a *Compass!*⁹³

Garrick did not declaim the two lines as written in quick succession but added a long pause between them to underline and properly convey a critical moment in characterisation, when we are allowed momentarily to see the human inside the monster by penetrating a hidden part of Richard III's subconscious before the mask of invincibility is replaced. By pausing and creating silence in which the audience witnessed Richard's terror turning into remorse, Garrick not only uncovered the passions within the text but manifested sensitive awareness of the workings of the human psyche and the technical ability to imitate them. Even John Hill, who was critical of Garrick's tragic heroes for mirroring human nature too closely and praised Quin's acting for its weight and the air of greatness it bestowed on elevated characters (albeit at the expense of engagement),⁹⁴ admitted that

⁹³Pickering, *op. cit.*, pp.50–51.

⁹⁴Hill compared the acting of Garrick and Quin in the same role, that of Pierre in *Venice Preserv'd* by Thomas Otway (1652–1685): 'Tis the business of this heroe to communicate to his friend the plot he had engag'd in to bring about a revolution in the state of Venice: The manner in which these two players deliver this account is extremely different; the one does it with fire and spirit, the other with weight, but without any sign of pride in the being engag'd in it. When we hear Mr. *Garrick* tell *Jaffier* of the execution and consequences of the deed, [...] we allow,

aspiring players should endeavour to join in their acting ‘the dignity of Mr. *Quin*’ with ‘the life, spirit, and vivacity of Mr. *Garrick*’.⁹⁵ Hill gave special importance to the element of dignity in tragedy, which he defined as ‘the graces of delivery and action’, adding it as the last but not least of the five qualities of good acting: (1) justness, (2) truth, (3) naturalness, (4) variety and (5) dignity.⁹⁶ However, he warned that the finesse of giving an air of true greatness and dignity to a character should never come at the expense of truth, as ‘when there is no adding the finesse without injuring the propriety and appearance of reality in the scene, it is always better to play with naked truth, than with all the embellishments of a false decoration’.⁹⁷ Both *Quin*’s and *Garrick*’s performances worked within the framework of historical acting as we defined it in the previous chapters, but *Garrick*’s acting seemed to manage to strike a better balance between beauty and naturalness by placing greater weight than did his contemporaries on the latter.⁹⁸

The rare union of beauty and naturalness that *Garrick* demonstrated with his acting felt so fundamentally novel that his fans considered themselves to

from his manner of speaking it, that he plays the part of a bold daring man, and one who is proud of being so; but the greatness of the character is kept up at an infinitely higher rate by the composure with which Mr. *Quin* delivers that speech, and those which precede it. [...] Every one will allow that the person who makes too much noise about the approach of danger, gives room to suspect that he is not well prepar’d against it, and that our disdain of death appears most eminent when we are able to meet it with the greatest tranquility’. J. Hill, *op. cit.*, pp.262–264.
⁹⁵*Ibid.*, p.172.

⁹⁶Is an actor sensible that his playing is perfectly just and true? Is it natural? In fine, is it properly varied? An audience will always admire and esteem him in this case; but there will still want something more in order to their being charm’d with him whenever he appears; and he will see others of much less merit please infinitely more, unless he finds the way of joining to these advantages, the graces of delivery, and those of action. When we declare that every thing ought to be conducted with *Dignity* in tragedy, we say all that concerns the player in regard to it; we include in that single word all the graces that belong to this species of playing’. *Ibid.*, p.280.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁸Hill admitted that, despite his criticisms, *Garrick* was the only actor that had the ability to achieve this balance: ‘There are but very few men upon the present stage who have the happy talent of uniting, as is necessary to the finesse of tragedy, all the majesty of the king, or heroine, to all the address and artifice of the player. We have had occasion, in the course of this work, sometimes to mention the very justly celebrated Mr. *Garrick* as inferior to the heroe of another stage; but we must do him the justice to observe, that when he is upon his guard, no man ever made this difficult combination with so much success’.

have been ‘seduced into tenets of dramatic heresy’.⁹⁹ Soon after Garrick’s debut Quin famously dismissed him as another George Whitefield preaching a new religion, which would be nothing but a short-lived fashion before ‘all come to church again’—to which Garrick responded:

Pope *Quin*, who damns all churches but his own,
Complains that heresy corrupts the town;
That Whitefield *Garrick* has misled the age,
‘Schism’ he cries, ‘has turned the nation’s brain,
But eyes will open, and to church again!’
Thou great Infallible, forbear to roar,
Thy bulls and errors are rever’d no more;
When doctrines meet with general approbation,
It is not heresy, but reformation.¹⁰⁰

The heresy analogy is fitting. Like a heretic who finds a new approach by reinterpreting the same religious texts, Garrick broke away from the established rituals and looked into the historical acting doctrine with fresh eyes, embracing a new approach that brings the art of theatrical expression closer to its roots, design and purpose. This heresiarch’s outlook was not initially accepted universally, his reviews varying widely, but as more disciples joined and demonstrated the merits of his new approach, converts accrued and the school of performers that favoured beauty and grace to the detriment of naturalness lost its hitherto unquestioned lustre, succumbing to a reformation. Garrick’s schism professed a technique that still worked within the aesthetic framework of classical beauty (with contrast, variety, decorum and majesty at its core) but managed to successfully realise the

⁹⁹Hiffernan, *op. cit.*, p.101.

¹⁰⁰*The Life of Mr. James Quin, Comedian, with the History of the Stage from his Commencing Actor to his Retreat to Bath. Illustrated with Many Curious and Interesting Anecdotes of Several Persons of Distinction, Literature, and Gallantry. To which is Added a Genuine and Authentic Copy of his Last Will and Testament* (London: Printed for S. Bladon, in Paternoster Row, 1766), pp.86–87.

elusive principle of naturalness, which (as detailed above) a large number of treatises recommended and even described, but without clearly outlining a method of attainment. For this reason, in the context of this thesis endeavour, it would be worth examining some elements of Garrick's technique in greater depth.

The Garrick Paradox

After meeting Garrick, who had visited Paris in 1764, Diderot recounted

a thing I have actually seen. Garrick will put his head between two folding-doors, and in the course of five or six seconds his expression will change successively from wild delight to temperate pleasure, from this to tranquillity, from tranquillity to surprise, from surprise to blank astonishment, from that to sorrow, from sorrow to the air of one overwhelmed, from that to fright, from fright to horror, from horror to despair, and thence he will go up again to the point from which he started. Can his soul have experienced all these feelings, and played this kind of scale in concert with his face? I don't believe it; nor do you.¹⁰¹

The point of the story lies in the fact that Garrick was hailed at the time as the English father of naturalistic acting, having built his image and reputation as the harbinger of a new acting approach in which actors ought to experience real feelings and portray real passions on stage.¹⁰² Although Garrick was considered to be one of the best actors in the world due to his exceptional ability to create powerful and natural-looking performances that seemed to come from the heart, Diderot's anecdote attempts to uncover elements of Garrick's real process. If Garrick's acting indeed relied on him experiencing real feelings, how could he have steered his soul to experience this torrent of contrasting passions within mere seconds? It was clear to Diderot that Garrick had practised and memorised this sequence of

¹⁰¹Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*, *op.cit.*, p.38.

¹⁰²Daniel Hertz, 'From Garrick to Gluck: The Reform of Theatre and Opera in the Mid-Eighteenth Century' *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 94 (1967), pp.111–112.

different facial expressions, which Jelgerhuis attributes to Le Brun's drawings,¹⁰³ and was able to perform them distinctly and on-demand while his soul remained cool and disengaged. Garrick was an apt case study for supporting Diderot's main thesis: that an actor must not feel the passions onstage but only represent them, aiming to affect the audience while internally remaining completely unaffected.

This brings us back to the concept of the paradoxical coexistence of nature and artifice within the heart of historical acting, first postulated in the Introduction and revisited in previous chapters. We saw that eighteenth-century performers had to tread a fine line between nature and artifice, conforming to an extensive set of aesthetic and rhetorical rules, aiming to make their acting beautiful and powerful while at the same time making it appear natural and extempore. In an attempt to move the discussion away from a purely theoretical model of this elusive balance between artifice and nature in the context of stage presentation, the remainder of this chapter will borrow Diderot's concrete case and begin the construction of the new teaching method by exploring this hypothesis: that Garrick was an example of a performer who succeeded in capturing a perfect balance between artifice and nature.

Diderot started writing his essay *Paradoxe sur le comédien* in 1769,¹⁰⁴ and the themes he explored in it were part of a wider conversation about acting technique that started in the 1730s and accelerated in the following decades, with Garrick's emergence serving as a catalyst for change.¹⁰⁵ During that time, two opposing camps of thought started emerging, which I will call the emotionalists

¹⁰³Jelgerhuis refers to Garrick's party trick as narrated by actor Henri-Louis Cain (1728–1778), known as Lekain, writing that 'Garrick presented to Lekain the passions of LeBrun while peering through an open door with a towel draped over the English actor's head'. Jelgerhuis, 'Lessons', *op. cit.*, p.345.

¹⁰⁴Greg Dening, *Performances* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.121. The essay survived in manuscript notes and was published posthumously in 1830: Denis Diderot, *Paradoxe sur Le Comédien. Ouvrage Posthume* (Paris: A. Sautelet et Cie, Libraires, Rue Richelieu, No 14, 1830).

¹⁰⁵Elaine Aston and George Sanova, *Theatre as Sign-System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.118.

and antiemotionalists, borrowing the terms of Claudio Vicentini.¹⁰⁶ Emotionalism expected the actor to become one with the role, while antiemotionalism required the actor and the role to remain as two separate entities mediated solely by technique. Diderot identified two celebrated French actors as exemplars of these camps: Mademoiselle Dumesnil (1713–1803) for emotionalism and Mademoiselle Clairon (1723–1803) for antiemotionalism. Diderot adopted an extreme antiemotionalist position, bringing into the discussion some elements of methodology that until then had remained the secrets of the actor’s trade.¹⁰⁷ The emotionalist/antiemotionalist discourse can be particularly pertinent as the division persists in modern acting techniques, with each pitching its unique methodological identity somewhere along the continuum of emotionalism.

An example of an acting technique that ranks high on the scale of emotionalism is known as ‘method acting’ or ‘the Method’. The Method was developed by Lee Strasberg (1901–1982) as an expansion of some of the ideas of Stanislavski’s system and has been widely used by many celebrated Hollywood actors since the second half of the twentieth century, such as Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Robert de Niro, Meryl Streep, Christian Bale, Adrien Brody and Hilary Swank. Although method acting has gained particular traction in recent decades—especially in the context of acting for film—exponents of this technique credit the ancient Greek actor Polus as being ‘the first Method actor on record’.¹⁰⁸ Polus’ story was first recounted in the commonplace book *Noctes Atticae* by Aulus Gellius (c. 123–170 CE):

THERE was in the land of Greece an actor of wide reputation, who excelled all others in his clear delivery and graceful action. They say that his name was Polus, and he often acted in the tragedies of famous poets with intelligence and dignity. This Polus lost by death a son

¹⁰⁶Claudio Vicentini, *Theory of Acting: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* trans. by R. Bates and A. Weston (Napoli: Marsilio & Acting Archives, 2012), p.199.

¹⁰⁷Joseph R. Roach, ‘Diderot and the Actor’s Machine’ *Theatre Survey*, 22 (1981):1, p.66.

¹⁰⁸Leofranc Holford-Strevens, ‘Polus and his Urn: A Case Study in the Theory of Acting, c.300 B.C.–c.A.D. 2000’ *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 11 (2005):4, pp.518–520.

whom he dearly loved. After he felt that he had indulged his grief sufficiently, he returned to the practice of his profession.

At that time he was to act the *Electra* of Sophocles at Athens, and it was his part to carry an urn which was supposed to contain the ashes of Orestes. The plot of the play requires that Electra, who is represented as carrying her brother's remains, should lament and bewail the fate that she believed had overtaken him. Accordingly, Polus, clad in the mourning garb of Electra, took from the tomb the ashes and urn of his son, embraced them as if they were those of Orestes, and filled the whole place, not with the appearance and imitation of sorrow, but with genuine grief and unfeigned lamentation. Therefore, while it seemed that a play was being acted, it was in fact real grief that was enacted.¹⁰⁹

Adams argued that Polus was using an approach that Strasberg would call 'emotional recall' (or 'affective memory'), where actors identify in their own lives past events that elicited similar emotions to those experienced by the dramatic character they want to portray, and then use this memory (through a technique called 'sense memory') to bring themselves to the same emotional state during performance.¹¹⁰ One way of recalling affective memories and unlocking the associated emotions in method acting is the use of what Strasberg called a 'personal object', which can be an item of sentimental value that is connected to the target memory.¹¹¹ Polus' story was used as an example by le Faucheur, who described how by replacing the stage prop with the real urn and ashes of his recently deceased son, Polus 'broke out into loud Exclamations and unfeigned Tears' which 'led the whole

¹⁰⁹Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Volume II: Books 6–13, trans. by J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), VI:5, pp.35, 37.

¹¹⁰Cindy Adams, *Lee Strasberg: the Imperfect Genius of the Actors Studio* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1980), p.81.

¹¹¹Ringer argued that 'Polus' ghastly prop must rank among the most extraordinary uses of a "personal object" in the history of acting'. Mark Ringer, *Electra and the Empty Urn: Metatheatre and Role Playing in Sophocles* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p.2.

Theatre with Affliction, Lamentation and Weeping'.¹¹² Authentic explosive grief like that is undoubtedly an incredibly powerful thing for an audience to witness, but Diderot questioned such emotionalist ploys as a sound strategy in theatre, where actors have to repeat their performances several times:

If the actor were full, really full, of feeling, how could he play the same part twice running with the same spirit and success? Full of fire at the first performance, he would be worn out and cold as a marble at the third.¹¹³

Indeed, ancient Greek tragedies 'were written for a one-off performance', so in the case of *Electra*, Polus' strategy might have been so effective because he only had to perform his feat once.¹¹⁴ Ancient oratorical treatises abound with similar ploys successfully used by rhetoricians in court pleadings, where the 'performance' was also given only once. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that le Faucheur's treatise on oratory uses Polus' example in a positive light, and it is probably one of the reasons that method acting is particularly favoured by film and television actors who are expected to repeat their performance only a handful of times, only one of which would feature in the final cut. Emotionalism requires actors to react naturally to the drama as it unfolds, experiencing an assortment of strong passions. Diderot argued that the lack of self-control and reliance on the feeling of the moment made for inconsistent acting ('alternately strong and feeble, fiery and cold, dull and sublime') without congruity or overall integrity across the duration of a single performance and between different performances.¹¹⁵ Although acting from the heart can indeed at times produce glimpses of excellence, even sublimity, its inconsistency and unpredictability can make it a problematic strategy for repeat performances. Referring to Polus' story, Walker wrote that although using 'such

¹¹²le Faucheur, *An Essay upon the Action of an Orator*, *op.cit.*, pp.186–187.

¹¹³Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*, *op.cit.*, p.8.

¹¹⁴David Wiles, *Greek Theatre Performance: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.5.

¹¹⁵Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*, *op.cit.*, pp.8–9.

passages of our own life as are similar to those we read or speak of, will, if I am not mistaken, considerably assist us in gaining that fervor and warmth of expression', the reality is that 'our natural feelings are not always to be commanded; and when they are, stand in need of the regulation and embellishments of art'.¹¹⁶ The exhaustive study by Holford-Strevens, which traced the use of Polus' story in acting discourse from the Renaissance to the twentieth century, identified the approval and disapprobation with which emotionalist strategies were presented by various authors, exemplified here by le Faucher and Walker.¹¹⁷

In the operatic context, the expression of the same real emotions which led Polus to unfeigned tears and lamentation would be calamitous, as live and uncontrollable sentiment felt on stage would not only impede the singers' vocal production but significantly limit their capacity for the conscious awareness demanded by the great number of technical elements comprising a complex and collaborative performative genre such as opera. With the pacing of their performance guided almost entirely by the music and having (unlike actors) restricted control over pauses, if singers actually move themselves to tears during a sad aria, they would find it almost impossible to continue their singing while struggling to control the involuntary contractions of their diaphragm. The amount of focus taken over by this struggle would also force them to pay less attention to the text, music, ornaments, dynamics, movement, blocking and coordination with the orchestra. Moreover, even if a performer is endowed with a special quality that allows them to remain one with the role for the duration of the performance and respond instinctively to various passions while remaining technically uncurbed, what looks natural in real life might not necessarily look natural on stage. Diderot wondered

How should Nature without Art make a great actor when nothing happens on the stage exactly as it happens in nature, and when dramatic poems are all composed after a fixed system of principles? And

¹¹⁶Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, *op.cit.*, p.276.

¹¹⁷Holford-Strevens, 'Polus and his Urn', *op. cit.*

how can a part be played in the same way by two different actors when, even with the clearest, the most precise, the most forceful of writers, words are no more, and never can be more, than symbols, indicating a thought, a feeling, or an idea; symbols which need action, gesture, intonation, expression, and a whole context of circumstance, to give them their full significance?¹¹⁸

Stanislavski, who ran his own opera studio in the last years of his life, said that music ‘makes up for the triviality of the poem, yet if you listen carefully you will sense all its thinness, so it requires more effort on the part of a singer to make something out of the verse and endow it with some worthwhile meaning’.¹¹⁹ Austin acknowledged the challenge posed to opera singers by the ‘narrow limits to which the dialogue is restricted on account of the necessary prolongation of the music’, writing that

the sentiments of the interlocutors are necessary curtailed, and do not admit of that variety of expression and of imagery which brings them with such vivacity to the feelings and understanding in tragedy: but for all this they principally depend on the vague and doubtful expression of the music. They are abridged in the expression of language, which is comprehensive and applicable to every complicated feeling of the passions, and they are dilated in the expression of the music, which is limited to the obscure and dubious representation of few sensations.¹²⁰

The vagueness of music and the brevity of the literary text requires the opera singer not only to ‘equal the tragic actor in his art’,¹²¹ but to approach acting technique in a more systematic and formalised manner in order to accomplish a

¹¹⁸Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*, *op. cit.*, p.5.

¹¹⁹Constantin Stanislavski and Pavel Rumyantsev, *Stanislavski on Opera* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p.18.

¹²⁰Austin, *op. cit.*, pp.243–244.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, p.244.

performance which under these challenging conditions still appears natural and beautiful. With the narrative abridged, the development of dramatic characters compressed and the passions distilled, every word of the libretto and every salient moment of the music gain greater significance. Also, the mundane action of everyday life—regardless of how authentically it is connected to the feelings of the performer—is unable adequately to represent the larger-than-life stories, characters and passions that most operas treat. So, while emotionalism in theatre or film is viable and could indeed occasionally result in a sublime moment that no art could ever produce, the nature of the operatic genre and performance makes acting techniques close to the emotionalist end of the spectrum less applicable. Although singers are still expected externally to represent vivid, natural-looking passions, they have to do it in a way that would allow them internally to remain unaffected and in complete control: the hallmark of antiemotionalism.

Although the prefix *anti-* places emotionalism and antiemotionalism in complete opposition, the polarity applies to the element of performance but not the preparation. While, when on stage, performers joining the antiemotionalist camp would be expected to portray strong passions without actually experiencing them, during their training and preparation, they are expected to do exactly that. Diderot encouraged actors to explore their own real emotions during the preparation and rehearsal of a role, memorising the way each of them is visually manifested on their face and body by the use of a mirror.¹²² This approach was not only meant to produce natural-looking results consistently on stage, but also allowed actors to keep getting better over time, as the schema created for each passion becomes continuously more comprehensive by the incorporation of new observations.¹²³ Hence, antiemotionalism does not shut the door to real emotion: it just requires a separation between the rehearsal room and the stage. In the rehearsal room real passions can be experienced before their corporal manifestations

¹²²Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*, *op. cit.*, p.16.

¹²³*Ibid.*, pp.16, 8.

are dissected, studied and memorised; on the stage the performer reproduces the memorised natural-looking semblance of these passions without actually experiencing them.¹²⁴ In practice, however, this separation might come with its own set of drawbacks. When the expression of a passion on stage becomes a purely mechanical imitation of the real passion studied during preparation, the connection to the strong idea conceived by the imagination that produced the original might be lost, taking with it some of its power and grace.¹²⁵ Pure imitation of the external signs of a passion might allow performers to stay in total control of their action, and their gestures could very well possess most of the desired classical aesthetic qualities, but the memory of that initial fire that imbued form with life would have faded, breaking the innate connection between idea (imagination) and action (body).¹²⁶ Beautiful decorous gestures, when emotionally disconnected, could appear lifeless and feigned, losing the persuasive power that could be granted by the semblance of spontaneity and improvisation. In our search for possible solutions, we will usefully return to the hypothesis of Garrick as a performer who managed to solve the paradox of acting by aptly balancing historical acting's thin line between artifice and nature.



The aim of this chapter was to complement the previous theoretical and practical investigation by concentrating the focus on London in the first half of the eighteenth century and examining several elements of training and performance

¹²⁴One should seek to acquire 'such tones and gestures as nature gives to the passions' and then find a way 'to produce the semblance of them when he is not actually impassioned'. Walker, *op. cit.*, p.276.

¹²⁵Hill described performers who 'have form'd tedious, and laborious, Schemes of adjusting their *Gesture* at *Looking-Glasses*: but, for Want of conceiving the above-disclos'd Dependance of the *Action* on the *Idea*, Their imaginary Graces *forsook* 'em: and, in the very Instant of their *wanting* them, were vanish'd quite out of their Memory'. Hill and Popple, 'The Prompter 1735', *op. cit.*, p.2.

¹²⁶Hill's Galenic conception of emotional expression and the connection he describes between idea and action is outlined in Chapter 1, p.57.

practice which would be valuable to the next chapter's discussion. The chapter first explored elements of the performance practice of Nicolini, an actor-singer who approached singing and acting as a unified craft. Although the conservatoire training of Italian singers gave them a head start in the acting domain and made graceful and decorous movement one of the trademark elements of *opera seria*, it did not guarantee that all singers were good actors, Senesino and Farinelli providing valuable illustrations of the two extremes. An important point brought out by these descriptions was that the element of variety extended across different performances of the same role, suggesting an improvisatory approach to realising the historical acting rules. This relied on a solid understanding of the theoretical foundations of the craft, which was part of the broader theatrical education singers received. The next part of this chapter examined the craft of Booth and Wilks, which was based on continuous learning and improvement, rigorous study, and methodical preparation of roles through to careful analysis of the plots and characters. Garrick was an actor who also made his study his business, with a habit of continuous learning and exceptional attention to detail. A comparison between his approach and that of Quin suggests that Garrick's acting, while operating within the classical aesthetic framework outlined in the previous chapters, possessed a greater degree of life, spirit and vivacity, achieving a better equilibrium between beauty and naturalness. The final section of this chapter returned to the complex relationship between nature and artifice within historical acting, further expanding on the case of Garrick as an example of a performer that attained a harmonious balance between these opposing elements, which was used as the basis for a discussion on emotionalism which will act as a launchpad for the development of the new teaching method.

The next chapter takes Garrick's approach as the starting point of a methodological discussion that consolidates the material of the previous chapters and identifies technical strands which, through the construction of hybrid techniques, become core elements of the new teaching method.

CHAPTER 4

Building the New Teaching Method

In the previous chapter we saw that Garrick's performance exhibited the spontaneity and truthfulness of emotional expression that would have been expected from an emotionalist, but it was built on methodical training, careful preparation and full control over technical elements that would have been expected from an antiemotionalist. An indication that there is scope for constructing an approach whereby emotionalist and antiemotionalist elements could coexist emerges in Quintilian's work. As already noted (p. 163), Quintilian considered the ability to improvise to be the greatest fruit of the study of oratory, but he clarified that it was a skill that could only be acquired through long and hard work. Holcomb identified 'two brands of improvisation' made implicitly distinct in Quintilian's work, which he called *artless* and *artful*.¹

Artless improvisation was used by oratory students with a talent for extemporising speech who spent little or no time studying and practising, relying on 'supposedly innate traits at the expense of rhetorical doctrine'.² Quintilian warned against the 'untutored excesses' of artless improvisation, which could lead to 'conceited bearing' and 'the habit of speaking in the worst style and actually practising their faults', and believed that 'improvisational efforts grounded solely on raw talent are positively detrimental to the educational growth and maturity of the

¹Chris Holcomb, "'The crown of all our study': Improvisation in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 31 (2001):3, p.56.

²Ibid., p.57.

aspiring orator'.³ On the other hand, artful improvisation was the result of combining natural talent with study and method. In that, talented students directed their effort 'toward studying the rudiments of oratory', building up a repertoire of 'an abundant supply of words and subject matter (*copia verborum ac rerum*) to be stored and drawn upon as the occasion demands'.⁴ Holcomb argued that 'one of the principal aims and strategic payoffs of artful improvisation is the creation of the impression that the orator's extemporizations issue from his natural ability'.⁵

Artful and artless improvisations are equally truthful and spontaneous, but artful improvisations are more effective because they are based on a treasury of eloquence (*thesaurus eloquentiae*): a repository of examples, principles, sayings and actions which serve as the source of the building blocks for the extemporised speeches.⁶ Could an approach akin to artful improvisation offer a solution to the acting paradox and present a methodological path between emotionalism and antiemotionalism? The following sections explore this idea through the discussion of key junctures of the research and development process for the new teaching method, which took place within the context of four experimental student productions (2014–2016) and the Empirical Inquiry which included work undertaken as part of a professional production of Handel's *Tamerlano* (2022).⁷

The aim of the tools and techniques of the new teaching method is to help singers build a *thesaurus histrioniae*: a depository of acting-related conceptual and procedural knowledge such as general principles, gestures, movements, routines and mnemonics, which would serve as building blocks for an approach to

³Ibid., pp.56–57.

⁴Ibid., pp.57–61.

⁵Ibid., p.60 Disassembling the work that went towards producing a certain result by creating the impression that it is a product of natural ability relates closely to the concept of art concealment examined in Chapter 1, p.82.

⁶'exemplorum, legum, responsorum, dictorum denique factorumque uelut quasdam copias, quibus abundare quasque in promptu semper habere debet orator, eadem illa uis praesentat: neque inmerito thesaurus hic eloquentiae dicitur'. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, XI:2.1.

⁷For more information about the experimental productions and Empirical Inquiry see Appendix II, p.333.

acting that feels spontaneous and natural in application from the point of view of the performer, but as with artful improvisation in rhetoric, may also be effective in producing a result that feels natural and spontaneous from the point of view of the audience, while making use of many of the aesthetic and rhetorical conventions, improving its overall beauty and power. Although the development of these techniques is based on elements of historical acting as outlined in the previous three chapters, in order to serve the dramatic training of modern singers best, it is also informed and shaped by twentieth- and twenty-first-century understanding and theatrical practices. The new teaching method incorporates only the techniques that fulfil these four criteria:

- (1) Contribute directly or indirectly to at least one of the three central principles of historical acting (beauty, rhetoric and nature). Every technical and theoretical element was assessed on its effectiveness to help singers conform the disposition of their body to the classical ideals of beauty, offer a rhetorical approach to movement, and increase the degree of the perceived naturalness of their performance.
- (2) Be relevant to classical singers. Although many of the historical acting techniques can be used by singers, actors and orators alike, the selection includes only those that apply to singers in particular. For example, the art of acting in spoken theatre encompasses to an equal degree both gesture and voice, and the largest part of most historical acting treatises focuses on declamation. As mentioned in the Introduction, an actor has complete control of vocal elements such as pacing, pitch, dynamics, pauses, emphasis, etc. In opera, however, most of these elements are dictated by the composer. Others, such as tone, projection, articulation, pronunciation, etc., already form an extensive part of the training of classical singers and have been the focus of voluminous work by researchers and practitioners. The new teaching method, therefore, focuses exclusively on movement and gesture, and only ideas and techniques that deal

with these have been considered. Furthermore, priority has been given to tools that can be easily incorporated into the singers' current practice and are compatible with other elements of their training, taking advantage of existing instructional scaffolding and working harmoniously within the context of the canonic training curriculum of singers without creating friction or battling against elements of it.

- (3) Be realisable (either straightforwardly or in a hybrid form with the assistance of modern understanding and theatrical practices) and level-appropriate (suitable to singers training at an undergraduate level). Although historical sources include a wide range of ideas and techniques, some require performers to have an advanced level of technical and theoretical insight in order to grasp and incorporate them. All significant ideas and techniques uncovered by reviewing the primary literature have been used and assessed in the context of several operatic productions and teaching settings. Some yielded immediate results, some required more experimentation and refinement, and others needed the assistance of modern techniques to be materialised. Guided by cognitive science research on adult learning, techniques were recast many times over in accordance with a variety of instructional design models. Anything that despite all experimentation could not be realised in the rehearsal room or classroom, or only yielded meaningful results to performers with many years of professional experience, falls outside the compass of this thesis and has not been included.
- (4) Be applicable within a relatively short timeframe, no more than one academic year. The aim of this training method is to equip singers with strong theoretical and practical foundations of historical acting; to give them tools that they can apply quickly, but also the conceptual understanding that would allow them to further expand and refine those tools

on their own. Although several years of practice and refinement would improve the learning outcome of any idea or technique, this training method includes only elements that have been successfully assimilated by (at least some) students in the span of one academic year. This is because the bulk of singers' dramatic training typically takes place during the last two years of their four-year conservatoire studies, with the penultimate being the most formative, as students' focus is not then claimed by final exams or auditions for postgraduate studies, so it is more likely that they would be willing to experiment with fundamental elements of their practice. Furthermore, because the training of classical singers is remarkably varied and intense, with a curriculum that encompasses a great range of subjects beyond pure vocal technique, students are more willing to make space in their practice for tools that yield (at least some) results apace. Therefore, the selection includes a combination of ideas and techniques that can be applied straight away, and some that, with appropriate guidance and diligent application, can take up to a year to positively impact performance.

This chapter outlines the new teaching method, discussing the most important points of its development, and providing details and examples of the various exercises. The discussion and techniques are divided thematically into three broad areas dealing with passions, characterisation and gestures.

Passions

Taking my cue from Diderot's anecdote in the previous chapter (p. 185), I aimed to explore the extent to which performers could spontaneously access memorised emotion-associated muscular patterns stored in their *thesaurus histrioniae*. My first attempt was part of an experimental student production of the comic intermezzo *Livietta e Tracollo* (1734) by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–1736),

which I directed and, to attain a more comprehensive perspective, I also participated as a performer in the silent role of Faccenda.⁸ I chose a short piece, as I deemed it more manageable to stage while allowing time for experimentation than a full-scale opera, and, being a comedy, more able to afford liberty to singers in an early stage of development to explore the portrayal of highly elevated passions and gestures without inhibition or the self-consciousness often induced when representing 'serious' characters.

Only two weeks were available for production rehearsals. The first was taken up by general training in the core elements of historical acting, with particular focus on facial expressions. The singers were given copies of the plates and descriptions of fifteen basic passions from Le Brun's treatise, which they were asked to analyse, imitate and memorise.⁹ During the first rehearsal, they found it very difficult to replicate some of the highly elevated passions, such as terror, jealousy, anger and rage. As a result, when the singers began to stretch and contort their facial muscles to portray a range of extreme expressions, they found that their faces ached from the strain. After the three days of painstaking work in front of the mirror started to bear fruit, the singers could imitate Le Brun's passions accurately and on demand. By the end of the first week of rehearsals, they had memorised most of these facial expressions. Concurrently their work entailed analysis of the drama, which gave the singers a good understanding of the story, the characters they were to represent and the evolution of their emotional state in each scene.

During the second week of rehearsals, we began to focus specifically on the intermezzo proper. In my role as stage director, I provided suggestions for hand gestures and blocking, but intentionally left facial gestures to the performers: I asked only for certainty and clarity in terms of the emotions their characters were

⁸For more information about this production see Appendix II, p.336.

⁹The passions were admiration, esteem, scorn, horror, terror, desire, hope, fear, love, jealousy, hatred, sorrow, joy, anger and rage.



FIGURE 21. The passion of rage from Le Brun's *Conference* (left), and the same represented by Jenny Ashworth in the role of Livietta (right). Photograph by Johannes Hjorth.

meant to be feeling at any given moment, while encouraging them to fully embrace their roles and 'act from the heart'. What started becoming clear from the rehearsals was that the intensive training in imitating Le Brun's facial expressions had a transformative influence on how the singers used their faces. During the performance, although from the point of view of the performers, they were 'acting from the heart', without consciously constructing any facial expressions, the thorough understanding of the drama and character in combination with the physical training significantly moulded their expressions, leading to heightened facial gestures. Le Brun's faces are legitimate (albeit amplified) representations of passions as observed in real life, and this innate connection between artifice and nature made building a strong association between the two an almost instinctive process.¹⁰ Practice in front of the mirror trained the facial muscles to acquire the strength needed to easily replicate extreme facial gestures, while at the same time

¹⁰For a discussion on Le Brun's work see Chapter 1, pp.61–66, p.80.

leaving a strong imprint of each myogenic combination on the muscle memory. The performers clearly understood the passions their characters were meant to be feeling at any moment,¹¹ so during the performance, these memorised muscular patterns were accessed automatically.

The production still in Figure 21, taken during a dress rehearsal with invited audience, shows the singer in the role of Livietta displaying the passion of rage whilst singing a recitative censuring Tracollo, who is threatening the life of her friend Fulvia. When the photograph was shared with the singer, she expressed disbelief and surprise to see herself using an expression of such force, as during the performance she made no conscious effort to achieve it, which suggests that this might be an instance of spontaneous access to muscular patterns stored in a *thesaurus histrioniae* through repetition and practice. From the performer's point of view, her acting was not planned or meticulously rehearsed, and her expression of the passions felt spontaneous and improvised. This, however, was an artful improvisation: she was at every point connected with what her character was meant to be experiencing, but she did not have to personally experience extreme anger (which would have negatively influenced her singing by shortening her breath and adding undue tension to her body) in order to portray it on her face faithfully. Her approach was neither emotionalist nor antiemotionalist, but borrowed elements of both, providing an example of an effective combination of technical elements fitting to operatic performance practice. This became the basis for subsequent experiments.

FACE GYM EXERCISE

Almost every professional athlete complements their practice by training in the gym particular groups of muscles that would improve their performance in their respective sport. The classical singers' practice already includes many elements of physical training that are meant to increase the flexibility, strength and control

¹¹The *intermezzo* was translated into English to ensure a direct connection with the text.

of parts of the vocal apparatus (such as the diaphragm and soft palate), and improve general health, lung capacity, balance and endurance. However, although the enormous communicative power vested in the human face makes it a core contributor to singers' performance,¹² the canonic training of singers pays little attention to improving the flexibility, strength and control of the facial muscles responsible for the conveyance of emotions and meaning.

Although some people are naturally more expressive than others, working with Le Brun's plates during the *Livietta e Tracollo* experiment offered a strong indication that the expressive ability of the face can be improved and developed. This prompted me to carry the work forward in the rehearsals of the experimental production of *The Doctor In Spite of Himself* (2015).¹³ The work was chosen because, as a short play, it gave us more freedom to devote time to experimentation, and, as with *Livietta e Tracollo* (2014), being a comedy allowed the performers to explore highly elevated passions and gestures with less self-consciousness and inhibition, which would have been extremely counterproductive. While directing this play, I employed a mixture of modern and historical acting techniques, aiming to create a performance centred on physicality and movement, with a fast-moving rhythm of vocal delivery that helped keep the action alive. The rehearsal period was double that of *Livietta e Tracollo*, and working with actors, who are disposed to engage with the visual elements of their performance more thoroughly than singers, allowed me to take experimentation to greater depth. More facial expressions were included (twenty-five instead of the original fifteen), with less intense facial expressions, such as 'love', 'esteem' and 'desire', removed and stronger ones added, such as 'bodily pain' and 'violent movement'. The exercise's dual purpose—storing muscular patterns in the *thesaurus histrioniae* while at the same time improving the strength and control of the muscles of the face—required the expansion of the

¹²See discussion on gestures of the face (p.103) in Chapter 2.

¹³For more information about this production see Appendix II, p.337.

teaching into facial anatomy, and after continual refinement through experimentation in educational settings following this production, it took its final form and the name *face gym exercise*.

Le Brun's drawings and descriptions are excellent models for expressing passions because they are based on close observation of nature. Although we can read the emotions depicted, imitating them is not always straightforward. When I first ask performers to copy Le Brun's passions with their faces, they tend to start their attempt with confidence but soon find themselves at a loss on how to approach the task. Many of them cannot identify the source of their struggle, though ensuing discussion reveals almost always the same two main difficulties. Firstly, they cannot discern with conviction which details in some of the drawings represent essential features that make up the unique signature of the expression, or which might be features of that particular person's face or stylistic elements of the artist. Secondly, even when they recognise that a specific line is a core part of the expression, they are not sure which part of their face should move, how much, and precisely in what direction to replicate it correctly. Everyone's face is different, and so is their internal muscular structure, so the same facial expression will not look identical in different people, even though it contains all the key elements that make this expression legible.

A helpful analogy that seems to resonate with most students is handwriting. Handwriting can vary widely between different people. Five people copying the same paragraph word for word, in a language they know, could produce five texts which, although to a reader who also understands the language will be identical in terms of the meaning they communicate, are visually strikingly different. Now, suppose a person is asked to copy a paragraph of text written in Chinese characters, but with no knowledge of Chinese or any other language that uses logograms. They might find themselves asking questions similar to those which my students tend to ask when tasked with imitating a Le Brun face. Which strokes are essential features of each character, and which might be stylistic ornaments or idiosyncrasies

of the particular typeface or handwriting? And even if a specific stroke looks crucial, how exactly should it be reproduced to work in combination with the rest: in what direction, angle or proportion? Without an answer to these questions, the only way a person can approach the task would be to copy the characters as if they were a drawing. However, having no understanding of the key characteristics that give each logogram its meaning, they might miss a stroke or copy it in a way that looks close enough to them but completely changes the meaning of the logogram, or they might accentuate as an important stroke a line that was meant to be mere ornament particular to the typeface or handwriting of the original, which might also change or obscure the meaning. The final result, read by a person that understands the language, might include characters ranging from entirely intelligible to characters that they would understand, but they would be able to tell that they have been drawn by someone that does not know the language. Most people have an innate understanding of facial expressions, but not everyone can make this tacit knowledge explicit. Singers, actors and other artists whose work involves the exhibition of emotion need to be part of that specialist group.

Writing on the art of painting, the surgeon and anatomist Charles Bell (1774–1842) argued that ‘the painter must study, as a necessary part of his profession, the traits of human expression’ as the ‘noblest aim of painting unquestionably is to reach the mind, which can be accomplished only by the representation of sentiment and passion; of the emotions of the mind, as indicated by the figure, and in the countenance’.¹⁴ Aware of the danger facing artists ‘of renouncing, in pursuit of ideal beauty, the truth of expression and of character’, Bell warned the trainee painter against making ‘the imitation of the antique the beginning and

¹⁴Charles Bell, *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting* (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, Paternoster-Row, 1806), p.7. Jelgerhuis wrote that ‘although the procedure for rendering the passions is different for the painter than for the actor, there is general agreement, nevertheless, that the process can be more readily effected when the artist knows which parts of the body must move to create an emotional effect. The actor is required to know this just as much as the painter, since he too does not represent reality but only its appearance’. Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op.cit.*, p.350.

the end of his studies', suggesting that it should be adopted only 'as a corrective of his taste, after having laid a sure ground-work in the study of anatomy and a close observation of nature and after having attained a correct and powerful execution'.¹⁵ Bell argued that 'anatomy is the true basis of the arts of design; and it will, infallibly, lead to perfection those who, blessed with true genius, can combine correctness and simplicity with the higher graces and charms of the art'.¹⁶ This is because anatomy 'bestows on the painter a minuteness of observation, which he cannot otherwise attain' and 'while it will enable him to give vigour to the whole form, it will, also, teach him to represent certain niceties of expression, which, otherwise, are altogether beyond his reach'.¹⁷

Unlike painters, singers are not only expected to replicate the expression of sentiments, passions and emotions as they are naturally expressed by the human body, but their whole means of executing their art—their brush and canvas—is also the human body itself. Acquiring, therefore, a knowledge of anatomy could serve a dual purpose: accurately uncovering the physical processes that produce the manifestation of different emotions (as observed either in nature or in works of art), and then reversing the process, using the same mechanisms to reproduce the same emotion. This approach modifies the core task in the learning process: the student's aim is not to accurately recreate a specific image with their face, as if they are attempting to make a faithful copy of a painting, but to analyse the original, deduce the emotion through the method of production, and then apply that method to produce the same emotion. The imitated expression might be visually slightly different from the original, but the emotion conveyed would be the same.¹⁸ The expression of the emotion added to the *thesaurus histrioniae* is

¹⁵Bell, *op. cit.*, p.3.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Although there is a universally understood collection of prototypical signs that together signify the expression of each different emotion, the way the same emotion appears in different faces will be slightly different because of morphological factors of each individual (the shape of the face, the position of features, the size of the facial muscles, the thickness and elasticity of the skin,

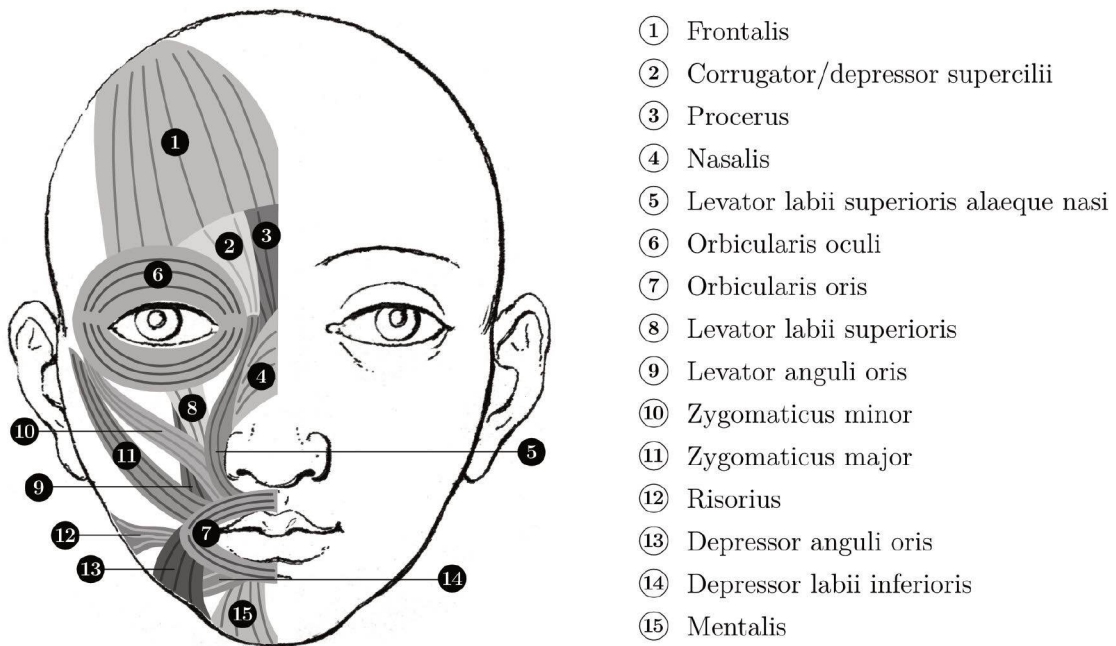


FIGURE 22. Diagram of the main facial muscles involved in facial expression (mimetic muscles) drawn on Le Brun's emotionally-neutral face ('tranquillity'). Order follows warm-up massage sequence for the face gym exercise.

then idiosyncratic enough to be instinctively replicated during a performance with minimum cognitive effort. In summary, the face gym exercise aims to improve the ability of singers to express emotions with their faces by: (i) introducing them to basic anatomical knowledge that enables them to analyse and replicate facial expressions more effectively, (ii) improving the strength and control of their facial muscles, and (iii) building a large vocabulary of facial myogenic combinations in their *thesaurus histrioniae* for spontaneous use during performance.

Singers are not strangers to anatomy. Their body being their musical instrument, most have an intimate knowledge of the anatomy of the vocal apparatus and can use an impressive amount of medical terminology to speak about it. However, when asked about facial muscles, they draw a blank—apart perhaps from the occasional mention of the *masseter* and *temporalis* muscles which control the jaw but are involved little in facial expression. When the face gym exercise is

etc.) and idiosyncratic variation in expression (each individual expresses the same emotions in a unique way).

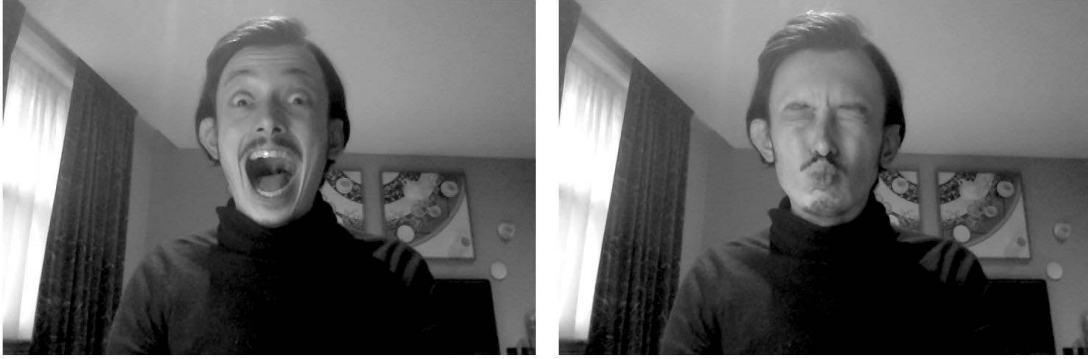


FIGURE 23. Participant A trying out the ‘big face/small face’ routine during the face gym warm-up. Empirical Inquiry, Implementation A.

introduced to students, I begin by inviting them to massage one by one the facial muscles which are involved in emotional expression (also called mimetic muscles). I take them through each of the muscles in order (twenty-eight of them, two singles and thirteen pairs), indicating their location and action, and asking them to use the tips of their fingers to rub them gently, increasing the blood flow and passively warming up their face. The diagram in Figure 22 shows the muscles’ location and the order in which they are massaged during the warm-up. Although I provide the students with the formal names for each muscle, I do not expect them to memorise how they are called: for the purposes of this exercise, it is enough for them to know where each muscle is and what it does.¹⁹ The passive warm-up is followed by actively stretching all the muscles outwards as far as possible (‘big face’), holding it for a while and then pulling all the muscles inwards (‘small face’), as can be seen in Figure 23. After repeating ‘big face/small face’ several times, a quick massage of the whole face completes the warm-up and we can move on.

¹⁹The muscular nomenclature was not standardised until the nineteenth century, so most seventeenth- and eighteenth-century treatises use different names to refer to the same muscles. In the material provided to students, I use standardised Latin terminology to facilitate their research. A wealth of digital tools is currently available for dynamic three-dimensional visualisation of the muscles and their effects, created predominately for trainee medics, but potentially very helpful to performers.

After the first introduction of the exercise, students receive a handout with the diagram and web links to online resources (see Handout 1, p.311).

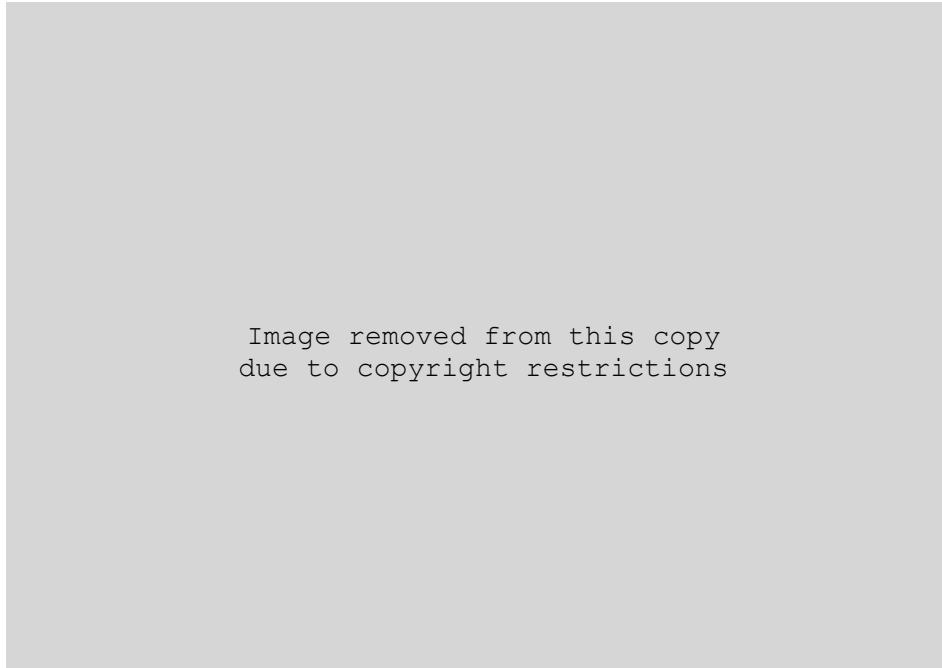


FIGURE 24. A collage by Participant A for the passion of fear. Empirical Inquiry, Implementation A.

The second part of the exercise involves the imitation of twenty-five facial expressions by Le Brun arranged in an order that provides a gradual successive engagement of different muscle groupings and aids memorisation:

tranquillity → admiration → astonishment → astonishment mixed with fear → fright → horror → fear → anger mixed with fear → anger → rage → violent movement → jealousy → contempt → contempt to hatred → hatred → extreme despair → acute pain → acute pain of body and spirit → extreme bodily pain → weeping → sadness and heartache → sadness → dejection → laughter → joy

Although Le Brun's drawings are excellent, to ensure that the students achieve a deeper understanding of facial expressions, I encourage them to look for more examples of how passions can be manifested, as although some key elements appear almost always the same, there can be significant variation. A technique that has worked well is to assign one passion to each student of the group and ask them to 'become experts' on it by researching as much as possible about it, and by creating a collage of images that convey it, such as the one reproduced in Figure 24. They



FIGURE 25. Two pairs of students (sitting) practising ‘surprise mixed with fear’, with the teacher (standing) helping the first pair. Empirical Inquiry, Implementation C.

then present their work in class, followed by a discussion which allows everyone to gain more insight into these passions, further strengthening their schemata.

The first time the exercise is introduced, each facial expression is discussed and analysed before the students attempt to recreate it in front of the mirror, while the teacher circulates helping each student. When there is no mirror in the classroom, students can be grouped in pairs and use each other as a mirror (see Figure 25), receiving feedback from the colleague opposite after each attempt.

Figure 26 shows the first four facial expressions of the face gym exercise. The first is the emotionally neutral ‘tranquillity’, with all the facial muscles relaxed and the upper eyelid slightly lower, due to the complete relaxation of the *levator palpebrae superioris* and *orbicularis oculi* muscles.²⁰ In the second expression, ‘admiration’, the eyebrows are slightly lifted by the *frontalis* muscles, the upper

²⁰The *levator palpebrae superioris* muscles control the opening of upper eyelids. They are not included on the diagram in Figure 22 (p.207) because their action is very specific and can be controlled easily, and because they cannot be part of the passive warm-up. Both upper and lower eyelids are closed by the inner section of the *orbicularis oculi*, the round sphincter muscles included on the diagram in Figure 22.

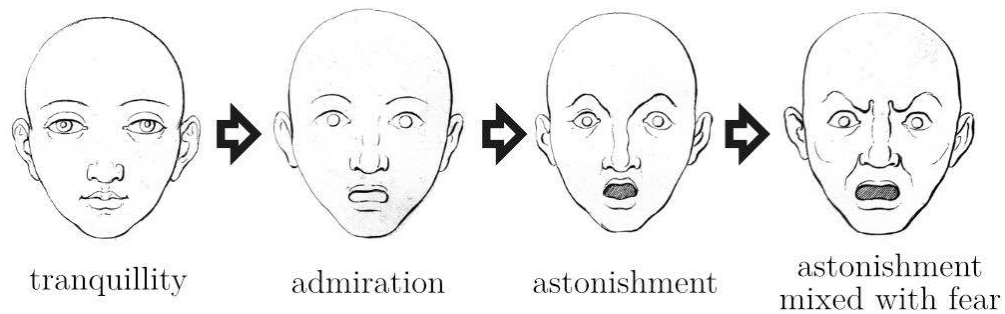


FIGURE 26. The first four expressions from the face gym exercise.

eyelid slightly more opened than ‘tranquillity’, and the mouth slightly opened by the dropping of the lower jaw and the relaxation of all the muscles around the mouth.²¹ When students attempt each facial gesture, they are encouraged to engage their imagination and breathe in, breathe out, or make a sound relevant to the emotion they are trying to portray (inhalation/exhalation/phonation): this way, they stimulate their automatic reflexes, which assists them in expressing the emotion and creates a stronger cognitive connection between the emotion and the myogenic combination in the *thesaurus histrioniae*. For example, when trying out ‘admiration’, many students found it helpful also to take a long inaudible inhale of breath from their mouth while imagining a sight that would evoke admiration. When each expression is achieved, the students are asked to hold it for some seconds to feel the respective muscles working more clearly.

The third expression, ‘astonishment’ or ‘wonder’, involves the same muscles as ‘admiration’, but this time their action is stronger. The eyes are wider, and the eyebrows are almost fully raised (*musculi frontalis*), creating horizontal wrinkles on the forehead (which are not seen in the simplified drawing by Le Brun but would appear in most people). The jaw is slightly more dropped, but the mouth is opened more widely, which is the effect of the actions of more muscles coming into play. The lips are drawn more bowed, which indicates that they are slightly

²¹The muscles *masseter*, *temporalis* and *medial pterygoid* that close the lower jaw, and the *lateral pterygoid* and *digastric* muscles which open it are not included on the diagram in Figure 22 because most singers have good explicit knowledge and ability to control them, and many already have routines for warming up and relaxing them.

protruded by the *orbicularis oris* muscle. The top of the mouth is raised by two of the three mouth-lifting (*levator*) muscles, the *levator labii superioris* muscles (which in the process create the lines Le Brun drew under the eyes) and the *levator labii superioris alaeque nasi* muscles (which also slightly raise the wing of the nose, creating the two lines Le Brun drew next to the nostrils). The bow created in the bottom lip indicates that the mouth is opened by the oblique *depressor anguli oris* muscles. When students attempt this facial gesture, they accompany the action with a quick inhale of breath while imagining a situation that would elicit the emotion of astonishment.

The fourth expression is ‘astonishment mixed with fear’. As for ‘astonishment’, the eyes are open, but the upper eyelids are even more drawn back. The eyebrows are raised (*m. frontalis*), but the middle of the eyebrows is depressed by the glabellar²² region muscles: the muscle *procerus* creates a fold on the glabella (inferred by the swelling around the glabella in the simplified drawing by Le Brun), and the *depressor supercilii* muscles push the middle of the eyebrows down (with *m. corrugator supercilii* normally also wrinkling the depressed part of the eyebrows, which is not seen in the simplified drawing). In the expression of ‘astonishment’ the eyebrows bow in the middle, but because the *m. procerus*, *m. depressor supercilii* and *m. corrugator supercilii* act antagonistically to *m. frontalis*, in ‘astonishment mixed with fear’, the bowing moves to the outer ends of eyebrows, with the steeper angle drawn indicating that the *frontalis* muscle in this expression contracts harder than it does in ‘astonishment’. The *nasalis* muscle is at work to flare the nostrils, making the nose tip appear thicker. In ‘astonishment mixed with fear’, the top of the lips is not as bowed as in ‘astonishment’, which indicates that they are retracted by the contraction of the inner ring of *m. orbicularis oris*. The top of the mouth is opened by *m. levator labii superioris* (creating the lines drawn under the eyes), *m. levator labii superioris alaeque nasi* (creating the lines next to the

²²Glabella is the area right above the nose between the two eyebrows.

nostrils), and the *zygomaticus* muscles, *m. zygomaticus major* and *m. zygomaticus minor* (creating the diagonal folds over the mouth and raise the cheeks, which Le Brun has duly accentuated). The mouth is also opened sideways by the *risorius* muscles, forming the vertical ending to the diagonal lines produced by the *zygomaticus* muscles, and the bottom of the mouth is opened by *m. depressor anguli oris*. Le Brun also drew the chin slightly flatter, which might indicate that the *mentalis* muscles are also engaged, pulling the chin up.

Most students find it difficult to achieve ‘astonishment mixed with fear’ in one movement on the first attempt, as it involves a combination of many muscles. In such complex expressions, students find it helpful initially to focus on individual parts of the face. When they attempt this facial expression, for example, they can start by focusing on the area around the forehead and eyebrows. A frown comes first, depressing the middle of the eyebrow.²³ When *m. procerus*, *m. depressor supercillii* and *m. corrugator supercillii* are engaged in pushing the eyebrows downwards and together, they can remain contracted while they also contract *m. frontalis* which pull the eyebrows upwards, bowing their outer sides (and depending on the person, most likely also creating horizontal wrinkles on the forehead). When the students are able to do that, they can repeat this process until they can contract *m. procerus*, *m. depressor supercillii*, *m. corrugator supercillii*, *m. frontalis* simultaneously. When this is also achieved, they can move to another part of the face and repeat this process until they are able to imitate the facial expression simultaneously in its entirety. As always, to benefit from automatic reflexes, the student can take a sharp audible in-breath at the stroke of the facial gesture while imagining a sight that would cause them fearful astonishment.

²³At any point in the exercise, if a student struggles to move a muscle at will, a very effective technique is manual manipulation: I ask them to use their fingers to pull their face to the place they want it to go, and then try to do the same while engaging the muscles that effect that movement, repeating the process until they do not have to use their fingers anymore and the muscles do the whole work by themselves.

The engagement of the imagination is a key element of the face gym exercise. Hill was wary of actors who solely rely on ‘the *Painters* to their Assistance’ and attempt to produce natural-looking expressions ‘by Observation of certain *Linear*, and *expressive*, Distinctions, of the *Passions*, as they vary on the *Visage*’, because they would ‘attain but the Art of *making Mouths*, and *distorting* their *Faces*, into a *Scholastic*, and *Technical* Confusion, between the *Ridiculous*, and the *Horrible*’.²⁴ Although the face gym exercise uses the careful technical work and making of mouths derided by Hill, this process is not created as means of performance but of storing myogenic combinations in the *thesaurus histrioniae*. Imagination provides a bridge that links the purely mechanical aspects of the face gym exercise with the recall of stored expressions, thus increasing the chance for the performance to appear unaffected.²⁵ Quintilian argued that to make an imitated emotion appear natural, one needs to engage with it and conceive an image of the scene, acting as if it was real.²⁶ For Quintilian a spontaneous response to the fire of the soul, which is incomparably more powerful than any deliberate effort, is the unremitting impetus of well-imagined sentiments and fresh images of events.²⁷ Riccoboni called that connection to the sentiments of the soul ‘enthusiasm’,²⁸ urging speakers to

take Care to distinguish the Difference betwixt an Alteration of the Features, in order to express the Sentiments of the Soul, and the Grimaces that attend a *Play of the Muscles*. The first makes a *Speaker valuable*; the other makes a *Scaramouch diverting*. If a Man enters strongly into a proper Enthusiasm, and speaks in the Accents of the

²⁴Hill and Popple, ‘The Prompter 1735’, *op. cit.*, p.2.

²⁵See Chapter 2, p.147.

²⁶‘ideoque in iis primum est bene adfici et concipere imagines rerum et tamquam veris moveri’. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, XI:3.62.

²⁷‘si calor ac spiritus tulit, frequenter accidit ut successum extemporalem consequi cura non possit. Deum tunc adfuisse cum id evenisset veteres oratores, ut Cicero dicit, aiebant, sed ratiomanifesta est. Nam bene concepti adfectus et recentes rerum imagines continuo impetu feruntur’. *Ibid.*, X:7.14.

²⁸Riccoboni, ‘Reflections upon Declamation’, *op. cit.*, pp.12–13. The term ‘enthusiasm’ in the English translation is a direct rendering of the word *enthousiasme* used in the original.

Soul, his Features will naturally form themselves into an Agreement with his Subject by the Alteration both of his Colour and Muscles.²⁹

Imagination not only makes the expression of passions easier and more effective: some emotions cannot be expressed without its assistance. When students first become acquainted with the reproduction of different facial expressions, the majority of their cognitive effort is devoted to the control of the muscles. However, not all muscles can be consciously controlled. Parts of *m. orbicularis oculi* that manages the expression of the eyes—which were considered the truest reflectors of the passions of the soul³⁰—are not under our direct voluntary control, but such control can be attained by entering strongly into that ‘proper enthusiasm’ described by Riccoboni through the combination of the tools of imagination and inhalation/exhalation/phonation.

For example, moderate joy is expressed with a smile by the action of the *zygomaticus* muscles which ‘draw both Lips upwards, and make a Pleasant Countenance’.³¹ When joy turns to mirth and laughter, more parts of the face are involved. Bulwer observed that although in the ‘Dance of the Muscles performed by excessive Laughter upon the Theatre of mirth, the Countenance, the Mouth seemes to lead the Chorus’, the eyes are also involved, with the eyelids ‘a mediocrity shut’ and the eye ‘somewhat recondit betweene its Orbites’.³² The physician James Parsons (1705–1770) argued that mirth appears real when there is ‘general Consent between the Mouth and Eyes’, with ‘a great deal of Difference between this and a fictitious Mirth put on to serve an Occassion, when the Mind consents

²⁹Ibid., pp.19–20.

³⁰See discussion in Chapter 2, p. 102.

³¹William Cowper, *Myotopia Reformata: Or, A New Administration of all the Muscles of Humane Bodies; wherein the true Uses of the Muscles are Explained, the Errors of former Anatomists concerning Them Confuted, and several Muscles not hitherto taken notice of Described; To which are subjoin'd, A Graphical Description of the Bones; And other Anatomical Observations. Illustrated with Figures after Life* (London: Printed for Sam. Smith and Ben. Walford at the Prince's-Arms in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1694), p.60.

³²Bulwer, *Pathomyotomia, op.cit.*, pp.106, 108.

not to it'.³³ Although we can have conscious control over the inner section (or superior part) of the sphincter muscle *orbicularis oculi*, which is responsible for closing the eyes, as Parsons rightly observed, the subconscious mind needs to consent to move the outer section (or inferior part), on which we have no conscious control. The neurologist Guillaume-Benjamin Duchenne (1806–1875), whose comprehensive exploration of electrophysiological techniques for analysing the expression of emotions on the face established him as one of the most celebrated pioneers of this area, recognised the central role which the appearance of the eye plays in the expression of genuine mirth, laughter and joy.³⁴ Comparing a broad smile induced by electrical stimulation of *m. zygomaticus major* and a spontaneous broad smile (Figure 27), he wrote that the

emotion of frank joy is expressed on the face by the combined contraction of *m. zygomaticus major* and the inferior part of *m. orbicularis oculi*. The first obeys the will but the second (the muscle of kindness, of love, and of agreeable impressions) is only put in play by the sweet emotions of the soul [...] fake joy, the deceitful laugh, cannot provoke the contraction of this latter muscle.³⁵

In homage to Duchenne's work, modern psychologists refer to the genuine-looking smile that involves the action of the outer section of *m. orbicularis oculi* as 'Duchenne smile'. A smile that mainly involves the mouth and *m. orbicularis oculi* is not activated is called a 'non-Duchenne smile'. The signs for a Duchenne

³³James Parsons, *Human Physiognomy Explain'd: in the Crounian Lectures on Muscular Motion. For the Year MDCCXLV. Read before the Royal Society* (London: Printed for C. Davis, over against Gray's Inn Gate in Holbourn; Printer to the Royal Society, 1747), p.73. Parsons' treatise is divided into two parts: the first is a detailed study of the facial muscles, and the second an analysis of seven basic passions and their manifestation on the face. Although there are variations in terminology in reference to the names of the muscles, this is a valuable resource for students to study along with their face gym practice.

³⁴Duchenne's experiments took place during the years 1854–1856 and were published in 1862: Guillaume-Benjamin Duchenne, *Mécanisme de la physiognomie humaine ou analyse électro-physiologique de l'expression des passions applicable à la pratique des arts plastiques* (Paris: V^e Jules Renouard, 1862).

³⁵Idem, *The Mechanism of Human Facial Expression*, trans. by Robert Andrew Cuthbertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.126.

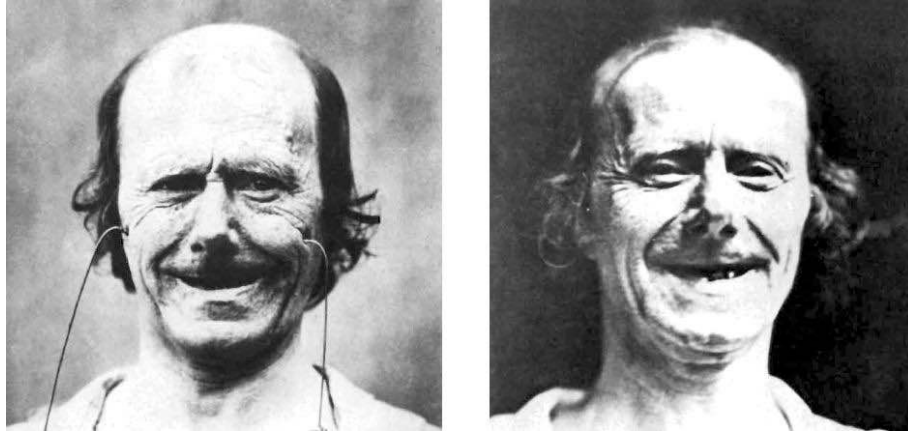


FIGURE 27. Two photographs from Duchenne's study, showing a broad smile induced by electrical stimulation of *m. zygomaticus major* (left), and a spontaneous broad smile. Duchenne, *Mécanisme de la physiognomie humaine* (1862).

smile are 'crow's feet around the eyes, slight pouching under the eyes, a slight droop in the eyelid and slight lowering of the outer eyebrow'.³⁶ Most people successfully identify Duchenne smiles as genuine in static displays, in studies in which they asked to evaluate photographs.³⁷

When the display of the smile is dynamic (when they are shown videos), people's ability to distinguish between a Duchenne and a non-Duchenne smile significantly improves.³⁸ This is a matter of great consequence in the case of operatic performance, where all emotional expression is dynamic: even if a facial gesture on its stroke³⁹ perfectly resembles a drawing by Le Brun, the ability for it to be perceived as genuine also depends on its onset—the preparatory stage leading to the stroke.⁴⁰ Therefore, although mechanically increasing the strength and control of facial muscles enhances a singer's means of expression, it does not directly contribute to improving the singer's expressive ability. This is why the use of inhalation/exhalation/phonation and imagination is a core part of the face

³⁶Sarah D. Gunnery and Mollie A. Ruben, 'Perceptions of Duchenne and non-Duchenne smiles: A meta-analysis' *Cognition and Emotion*, 30 (2016):3, p.501.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Eva G. Krumhuber and Antony S. R. Manstead, 'Can Duchenne Smiles Be Feigned? New Evidence on Felt and False Smiles' *Emotion*, 9 (2009):6, p.816.

³⁹The definition of the stroke can be found on p.137.

⁴⁰See also the discussion on the quality of timeliness in Chapter 2, p.136.

gym exercise, as it creates fertile ground for the automatic reflexes to activate the muscles over which we do not have complete voluntary control, and help the onset of each myogenic combination to appear genuine. A study by Sarah Gunnery, where participants were asked to role-play different scenarios, found that Duchenne smiles are more often induced spontaneously when the participants are directed to imagine themselves reacting to scenarios that would elicit very positive emotions.⁴¹ Considering the representation of mirth on the theatrical stage, Parsons said that fictitious mirth

is very conspicuous in some *Players* (acting their Parts in Comedies which require much Laughter), who do not always enter well into it, for want of the Mind's Influence; and then the Laughter put on appears dry and unmeaning; and altho' the Mouth puts on a Smile, it seems forced, because the Muscles of the Eyes are not in Consent; for, as the Mind is employed in recollecting the Part he is to speak, its natural Suggestions have not been applied to that Passion; and, consequently, are not free enough to mand Laughter. But if he is perfect in his Part, having nothing to study while he acts, he is then capable of taking to himself to Share in the Mirth, and of laughing in earnest.⁴²

Here Parsons emphasises the role imagination plays in producing genuine-looking passions. When actors do not know their part well, and recollection of their lines becomes the core task during the performance, there is little available mental bandwidth to be assigned to their imagination. When actors know their part well, they are able to assign more cognitive capacity to the imagination, connecting on an emotional level with the unfolding drama and producing more genuine-looking facial expressions.

⁴¹Sarah D. Gunnery, Judith A. Hall and Mollie A. Ruben, 'The Deliberate Duchenne Smile: Individual Differences in Expressive Control' *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 37 (2013).

⁴²Parsons, *op. cit.*, pp.73–74.

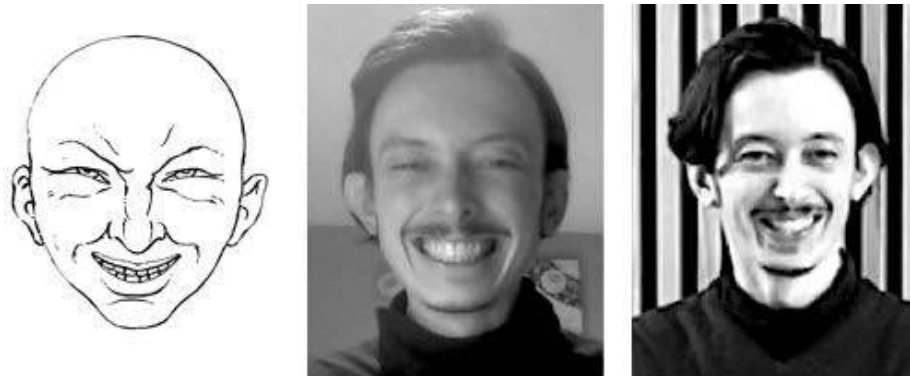


FIGURE 28. Facial expression of laughter by Le Brun (left); first attempt of Participant A to imitate this passion, without activation of *m. orbicularis oculi* (middle); imitating the same passion during the last workshop three months later, with *m. orbicularis oculi* activated (right). Empirical Inquiry, Implementation A.

When Participant A was first asked to imitate Le Brun's drawing for the passion of laughter, he mechanically produced a non-Duchenne smile (Figure 28). He correctly contracted the *zygomaticus* muscles to lift the sides of the mouth, but incorrectly contracted the inner section of the *m. orbicularis oculi*, which did narrow the eye-opening but did not bulge the skin under the eye, did not create the crow's feet, and did not slightly drop the eyebrows—all of which can be seen in Le Brun. In an attempt to create the pouching under the eye, he contracted the *m. levator labii superioris* and *m. levator labii superioris alaeque nasi* which did create lines under the eyes but did not bulge the skin; he also lifted the wing of the nose and the middle of the mouth, making the top lip almost a straight line: none of these side effects can be seen in Le Brun's model, where there is pouching under the eye, the top of the mouth is bowed, and the wing of the nose is not lifted (which can be inferred by the fact that the nostrils are not visible and the lines around the nose are not straight, as they are produced only by the action of the *zygomaticus* whose insertion is at the *modiolus* at the sides of the mouth). During the last workshop of Implementation A, which took place three months after the first introduction to the facial gym exercise, when Participant A attempted the imitation of the same passion while also using the help of imagination and phonation (in this case,

simulated laughter), a more natural-looking expression emerged that fulfils more of the criteria of a Duchenne smile.⁴³

In discussion with Participant A about the use of imagination and inhalation/exhalation/phonation as part of the face gym exercise, he said that the ‘combination of an imagined scene and a breath or sound with each emotion’ improved his ability to memorise and reproduce facial expressions, giving an example: ‘When I see “fright” and the face, thinking of the scary situation I linked with fright when I practised and shouting “aaah!” gets me in the right state quickly—I don’t need to think what my face does’.⁴⁴ When asked if he imagines different scenarios every time, he said that he tends to use the same image for every passion, although he ‘occasionally [tries] variations to improve [his] body’s response to it’.⁴⁵

When, over several training sessions, all twenty-five facial expressions have been introduced, discussed, imitated and linked with relevant imagined scenes and an appropriate inhalation/exhalation/phonation, the singers are given a sheet that contains all the Le Brun faces in the right order (see Handout 2, p. 312) and are instructed to incorporate the face gym exercise in their daily singing practice. The exercise should last no more than ten minutes:

- 5 minutes* Warm up the face passively (massage of mimetic muscles in the order they appear on the diagram in Figure 22) and actively (‘big face/small face’, as shown in Figure 23).
- 3 minutes* Imitate all twenty-five Le Brun faces (in the order they appear in Handout 2, p. 312). Accompany each one with its respective imagined scene inhalation/exhalation/phonation. Hold each facial expression still for five seconds before moving to the next one. When possible, do this in front of a mirror to improve facial proprioception.

⁴³Of course, a non-Duchenne smile could also be useful on stage. In his book, Duchenne gives an example of how an insincere smile that does not involve the *m. orbicularis oculi* can be effectively used by Lady Macbeth in Act I, Scene 4, of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Duchenne, *The Mechanism of Human Facial Expression*,, *op. cit.*, p.126.

⁴⁴Participant A, ‘Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation A’, post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 26 January 2022).

⁴⁵Ibid.

- 1 minute* Repeat the imitation of all Le Brun faces in front of a mirror as in the previous step, but this time hold each one for two seconds before moving to the next one.
- 1 minute* Imitate all twenty-five Le Brun faces in succession as fast as you can, making sure there is a clear stroke for each one.

Citing the advice by the painter Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy (1611–1668), Cooke argued that the actor ‘who would wish to go lengths in his profession, *should do something every day*’.⁴⁶ Writing in particular about the drawings of the passions by Le Brun, Jelgerhuis urged his students to ‘memorise these passions, repeating their appearance frequently so that [they] can perform them properly and unaffectedly’.⁴⁷ Merriënboer and Kirschner wrote that schema automation could be achieved through the creation of repetitive routines that focus on cultivating recurrent constituent skills (a category under which facial expressions can be classified in the context of acting training) that would be then used in a variety of contexts, ‘such as when children drill and practice multiplication tables or when musicians practice specific musical scales’.⁴⁸ Singers, like all musicians, are expected to practise singing every single day, normally starting with warm-ups and exercises that are designed to improve their technical skills before moving into learning repertoire. The face gym exercise has been designed to take advantage of this established routine. When it becomes regular, it takes less than ten minutes to complete, and the face warm-up it provides also benefits vocal production, so it is an exercise that best fits at the beginning of the daily practice. To save time, during the initial five-minute facial warm-up, the student can also start warming up their vocal apparatus by gently singing scales in a comfortable middle part of their vocal range without opening their mouth (i.e. on a voiced consonant ‘m’).

⁴⁶Cooke, *op. cit.*, p.194.

⁴⁷Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, p.362.

⁴⁸Jeroen J. G. van Merriënboer and Paul A. Kirschner, *Ten Steps to Complex Learning: A Systematic Approach to Four-Component Instructional Design*, Second Edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p.21.

PASSION EMBODIMENT EXERCISE

The face is a core conveyer of emotion, but emotions are naturally reflected in the whole body, so a genuine-looking expression should be also conveyed by the disposition of the entire human frame. Chapter 1 instanced Jelgerhuis taking Le Brun's drawing of the facial gesture of 'fright' (Figure 9, p. 66) and expanding it to the entire body, with the frightful expression on the face accompanied by the forward extension of the arms, the spreading of the fingers and the backward shift of the body weight (Figure 10, p. 67). The face gym exercise equips singers with an extensive repertoire of facial expressions, and although the engagement of the imagination and the inhalation/exhalation/phonation element naturally produces some reaction in the entire body, it is not comprehensive enough. Moreover, the passions selected and the order in which they are presented are designed to serve the specific aims of the face gym exercise, not intended as an exhaustive or coherently arranged catalogue of emotions for analysis and performance.

During work on the experimental production of *The Prophetess* (2015), it became clear that new tools were required for a visually apparent embodiment of emotional states.⁴⁹ This production made the need more urgent because we forfeited Betterton's play for which Purcell's musical episodes were originally composed, replacing it with a modern adaptation that required place and character to be invoked through physicality. The music and masques were bound by narration and dramatic episodes in which twelve singers worked as a close-knit ensemble, always present on stage, observing, reacting, commenting and transforming from soldiers to trees and monsters, stepping out from the ensemble to become different characters, such as Emperor Charinus or Princess Aurelia, before melding back again. As the ensemble never left the stage, their posture, facial expressions, gestures and quality of movement all served to convey the underlying mood of the

⁴⁹For more information about this production see Appendix II, p.337.

scene, amplifying the emotional state of interjecting characters through agreement or contrast.

The rehearsals began with a number of physical theatre techniques originating in the work of Jacques Lecoq (1921–1999), starting with the ensemble-building exercise known as ‘flocking’ or ‘school of fish’. Considering the movement of the group of actors that make up the chorus in tragedy, Lecoq wrote that a chorus

is not geometric but organic. In just the same way as a collective body, it has its centre of gravity, its extensions, its respiration. It is a kind of living cell, capable of taking on different forms according to the situation in which it finds itself. It may exhibit contradictions, its members may sometimes oppose one another in subgroups, or alternatively unite to address the public with one voice. I cannot imagine a tragedy without a chorus. But how are these people to be grouped? How can this collective body be brought to life? How can it be made to breathe and move like a living organism, avoiding both aestheticised choreography and militaristic geometry?⁵⁰

The flocking exercise offers a helpful first step in answering these questions by building ensemble cohesiveness and strengthening the singers’ attention and group awareness by improving the way they utilise their peripheral vision.⁵¹ It allows the performers to be more preceptive of every movement in their field of vision, reacting to variations in the acting of their colleagues. At the same time, by imitating each other, they further polish their movements and improve their overall and individual proprioception. To avoid one of the risks identified by Lecoq, of ‘ending up with a militarised chorus, over-disciplined, clean and neat, in which

⁵⁰Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre*, trans. by David Bradby (London: Methuen Drama, 2009), p.139.

⁵¹The flocking exercise is well-known and routinely used by drama teachers and theatre practitioners, so it is not described in detail. For a description see Jo Raphael, ‘Drama, diversity and equality: Working creatively together towards social inclusion’ in: Ása Helga Ragnarsdóttir and Hákon Sæberg Björnsson, editors, *Drama in Education: Exploring Key Research Concepts and Effective Strategies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), p.18.

everyone marches lifelessly together',⁵² from the first ensemble exercise, I emphasised the importance of variety.⁵³ Although in the regular flocking exercise the group imitates the movements and gestures of the person designated at any single time as the leader, I asked them to imitate the general feeling while ever so slightly varying it. The aim was a group movement that looked cohesive but at the same time varied, organic and alive, and its realisation contributed to the assimilation of variety as a core performance objective.

With a coherent group and the core technical skills required for ensemble work provided by the flocking exercise, we could move on to the *ten speeds exercise*. While in the flocking exercise every member of the group had to be always in physical contact with at least one other member of the group (but normally more), which allowed the 'flock' to move as a single organism, in the ten speeds exercise the singers were asked to spread around the rehearsal room ensuring that they 'balance the space'.⁵⁴ To balance the space, the singers had to distribute themselves equally in the two-dimensional space by using their peripheral vision to check no part of it was emptier or more densely occupied, and if it was, to adjust their position to correct it. When the space was balanced, I used the system of numbers zero to ten introduced in Chapter 2.⁵⁵ Zero was assigned to standing still, number ten to a fast run, and numbers in between represented progressively faster speeds.⁵⁶ I called out the numbers in sequence from one, where everyone started walking very slowly, gradually accelerating to a frantic run at ten, and then gradually returning to zero. I asked them to keep changing the direction of their movement (always making eye contact with everyone around them, so as not to bump into each other), to always keep the space balanced, and to use their peripheral vision

⁵²Lecoq, *op. cit.*, p.141.

⁵³See Chapter 2, p.126.

⁵⁴The concept of 'balanced space' or 'balanced stage' derives from Lecoq, underpinning much of his chorus work. Lecoq, *op. cit.*, p.141.

⁵⁵See relevant discussion on p.132.

⁵⁶For example, number five a walking pace, although explicit definitions were not provided during the exercise to allow the group to make their own decisions

to adjust their speed to ensure that the whole group was moving at precisely the same pace. The interpretation of what ‘four’ or ‘six’ meant was to be made collectively and not at the individual level.

After they got the hang of the exercise and collectively established clear speeds, I called out non-successive numbers, to which the group had to adapt quickly and in unison. When they could do this without mistakes, I asked them to slowly bring themselves to a halt, ensuring they all stopped simultaneously. For the next part of the exercise, they were also to move collectively at varying speeds, but I did not call out the numbers: the speed the group was moving in was to be decided collectively through careful observation. This had to be a seemingly democratic process, so no single individual could attempt quick accelerations or decelerations because it would have been visible to an external observer. The speed exercise (besides providing a very effective physical warm-up) helped instil the concept of collective decision-making through movement and the balancing of the space, and established the zero-ten scale, which was required for the earliest iteration of the *passion embodiment exercise*.

The passion embodiment exercise is based on Aaron Hill’s *Essay on the Art of Acting* (1753), which deals with the expression of passions on the stage. Hill identified ten principal dramatic passions that ‘can be distinguished by their outward marks, in action’: joy, grief, fear, anger, pity, scorn, hatred, jealousy, wonder and love.⁵⁷ He argued that all other passions are ‘relative to’ or represent ‘varied degrees of’ those ten, and for each of these ten passions he provided detailed definitions and practical advice, which we used as a starting point, together with descriptions and drawings by Le Brun.⁵⁸ For example, Hill explained that when expressing the passion of joy, an actor’s ‘forehead appears open, and rais’d, his eye smiling, and sparkling, his neck will be stretch’d and erect, without stiffness,

⁵⁷A. Hill, ‘An Essay on the Art of Acting’, *op. cit.*, p.357.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

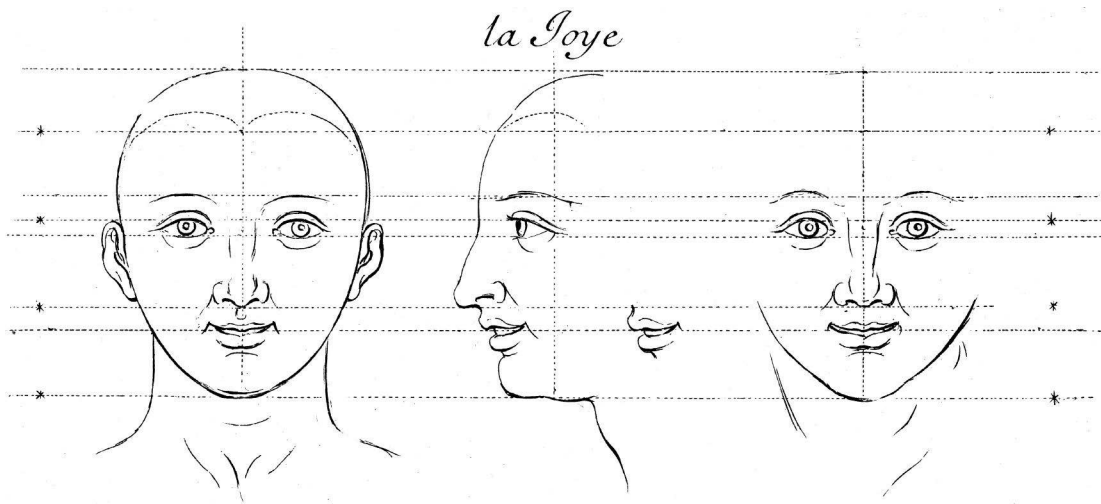


FIGURE 29. The passion of joy by Le Brun. Engraving by Sébastien Leclerc (1637–1714) from *Caractères des passions* (1692).

as if it would add new height to his stature; his breast will be inflated, and majestically backen'd; his back-bone erect, and all the joints of his arm, wrist, fingers, hip, knee, and ancle, will be high-strung, and brac'd boldly'.⁵⁹ Le Brun's drawing of the passion of joy (Figure 29) is accompanied by this description: 'in this Passion the Forehead is Serene, the Eyebrow without Motion, and raised in the middle; the Eye moderately open, and Smiling; the Eyeball brisk, and shining; the Nostrils a little open; the corners of the Mouth shall be a little raised; the Complexion Lively; and the Cheeks and Lips Ruddy'.⁶⁰

After reading Hill's description, the singers were asked to walk around the space and try to inhabit some of the external manifestations of the passion of joy. Having established the zero to ten scale in the previous exercise, I told them that number five represents the moderate joy they were currently all expressing, with zero being the emotionally neutral 'tranquillity' and ten being the most extreme degree of joy (for instance, 'rapture'). Jelgerhuis argued that the manner of walking on stage can reveal a lot about a dramatic character, including the character's feelings, so

⁵⁹Ibid., p.361.

⁶⁰Le Brun, *The Conference of Monsieur Le Brun*, *op.cit.*, p.(25).

the thoughtful person walks more slowly than does the messenger with news to tell [...] and moves otherwise than does an insistent person, or one under the influence of melancholy, despair, fear or rage. All of these states affect the way in which we walk without our realizing it.⁶¹

In this exercise, each gradation of each passion was to be marked not only by pace, but by its own appropriate combination of walking speed, posture, strength of facial expression, and elevation and quality of the movement of gesture. As with the ten speeds exercise, I asked the students to walk around, keep changing direction, balance the space and use their peripheral vision to ensure that each particular level of joy corresponded to the group's collective understanding. I then called out successive numbers, exploring all the degrees of that passion, and observing any salient elements arising. After a short break, we discussed what elements they felt were changing as the numbers increased: for joy, the group observed that speed slightly increased, as did the elevation and facial muscle contraction. Having now a more explicit understanding of the differences, we repeated the exercise once more before moving to the next passion, grief. With grief being the opposite of joy, the students observed that as the numbers increased, the facial muscle contraction also increased, but unlike joy, the speed and elevation decreased. We repeated the process for all ten passions. We reran this exercise on several rehearsals as part of the warm-up routine.

From a director's point of view, this exercise was beneficial not only because it helped me build a cohesive ensemble: relating to the function of the 'atmosphere exercise' introduced by Russian actor and theatre director Michael Chekhov (1891–1955), it addressed the practical decisions involved in creating a 'dominant tone or mood',⁶² while taking it a step further by offering a system with which complex

⁶¹Jelgerhuis, 'Lessons', *op. cit.*, p.269.

⁶²Chekhov's atmosphere exercise is a technique developed to help actors create and embody the mood and tone of a scene: an 'emotional atmosphere'. To perform the exercise, actors are called to identify the desired atmosphere and use their imaginations and bodies to bring it to

directions can be concisely yet comprehensively communicated. For example, ‘love level six’ or ‘disgust level two’ acted as shorthands that produced visible changes in the ensemble’s performed emotional state through coordinated shifts in posture, expression and quality of movement. Moreover, because the decision was always collective, the conception of expression for each emotion was never fixed, but evolved organically in tandem with other elements of the show. From the singers’ point of view, as with the face gym, this exercise helped them register in their *thesaurus histrioniae* key characteristics that contribute to the expression of each of the ten dramatic passions with their whole body, in ten different degrees, while at the same time honing their kinaesthetic understanding by becoming more acutely aware of the position and quality of movement of their body and its effect in conveying emotion.

The passion embodiment exercise was further developed during rehearsals for the experimental production of *The Fairy Queen* (2016).⁶³ The exercise was very effective in building a cohesive and well-coordinated ensemble for Titania’s entourage, and the ten passions—with all their ten numerical gradations—gave clarity and definition to the collective expression of emotional states. However, the simplicity of the ten passions and numerical gradations was received as restrictive when it came to the principal roles. Although it allowed the performers to gain clarity about the defining elements of each passion and gain practical insights into physicalising an overall emotional state through general posture and quality of movement, they found the numerical gradations lacking sufficient variety of colour and nuance.

One of the first tasks in rehearsals was to identify the passions conveyed by the literary and musical text, which was not always straightforward because they

life through experimentation and trial and error. The exercise aims to create a holistic and authentic performance grounded in the character’s inner life and the world of the play. Franc Chamberlain, ‘Michael Chekhov on the Technique of Acting: ‘Was Don Quixote true to life?’ in: Nadine Holdsworth and Geoff Willcocks, editors, *European Theatre Performance Practice, 1900 to the Present* (2014).

⁶³For more information about this production see Appendix II, p.338.

were often hidden under linguistic tropes and symbolisms. Even when passions were uncovered, labelling them distinctly was sometimes also a challenge. When discussing the text during the rehearsals, I noticed that the exercise conditioned some of the actors to use only Hill's ten principal passions to label their character's emotional journey. However, the differences between various degrees of passion are not only quantitative but qualitative. For example, joy can range from cheerfulness and gaiety to elation and exultation, each of which varies in both intensity and hue, opening up different avenues for expression. This prompted me to refine the exercise further.

My first step was to provide the cast with some alternatives by introducing them to a list of passions derived from *The Theatrical Speaker*:

Tranquility, Apathy, Cheerfulness, Mirth, Laughter, Raillery, Buffoonery, Delight, Pleasure, Gravity, Seriousness, Enquiry, Attention, Modesty, Perplexity, Anxiety, Vexation, Melancholy, Despair, Shame, Remorse, Courage, Boasting, Pride, Obstinacy, Authority, Commanding, Forbidding, Affirming, Denying, Differing, Agreeing, Exhorting, Judging, Reproving, Acquitting, Condemning, Teaching, Pardoning, Arguing, Dismissing, Refusing, Granting, Dependence, Modesty, Veneration, Respect, Hope, Desire, Giving, Admiration, Gratitude, Curiosity, Persuasion, Tempting, Promising, Affectation, Sloth, Intoxication, Rage, Peevishness, Malice, Spite, Envy, Revenge, Cruelty, Complaining, Fatigue, Aversion, Commendation, Approbation, Dotage, Folly, Distraction.⁶⁴

Whenever they identified a passion in the text, I encouraged them to look in this list for a word outside the ten principal passions, choosing a more distinct description that better resonated with the character's feeling, objective and action. When nothing in this list was deemed appropriate, they used their phones to consult a

⁶⁴A selection of some of the 'passions, humours, sentiments, and intentions, which are to be expressed by speech and action' included in: *The Theatrical Speaker*, *op. cit.*

thesaurus until they found something fitting. Replacing a generic passion with one that fitted the exact dramatic circumstances aided both understanding and spontaneous expression, creating a more nuanced emotional manifestation while still using elements from the physicalisation of the generic passions: for example, the expression of ‘vexation’ could borrow some of anger’s strongly braced muscles, fiery eyes, frown brows, clenching teeth, held/interrupted/restrained breath,⁶⁵ but to a much lesser degree than pure anger.

While expanding the vocabulary moved the experiment in the right direction, new problems arose: the unordered list of passions was unintuitive, making the process time-consuming, and the associated principal passion was not always evident. Also, during the cast’s discussions, there was sometimes disagreement on the exact quality or level of the emotion which some of the found words represented. For some, ‘vexation’ was akin to ‘annoyance’, and for others akin to ‘exasperation’. Passions appear to be such a natural and organic element of what it is to be human that it can be tempting to believe they are timeless and universal, but although humanity shares a number of core passions, how these are experienced and expressed can vary. And though, within a specific culture, over time, it is possible to discern a degree of continuity in the expression and performance of passions, there can still be marked variety. This consideration is significant because the largest portion of the repertoire most classical singers routinely perform was composed in previous centuries and in a number of different languages. As the new teaching method is aimed at modern singers, more advanced knowledge provided by emotional psychology could help fill some gaps by offering practical solutions for refining techniques inspired by historical thoughts and ideals.

The influential studies by psychologist Robert Plutchik (1927–2006) showed that there are eight universal basic human emotions—joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, anger and anticipation—and unique pairings of them produce

⁶⁵A. Hill, ‘An Essay on the Art of Acting’, *op. cit.*, pp.371–372.




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FIGURE 30. A two-dimensional deconstruction of Plutchik's structural model for representing emotions, known also as Plutchik's wheel of emotions. The eight basic human feelings are shown here bold and underlined, and the emotions they produce are marked in italics. The central circle represents the highest emotional intensity, and the edges, marked by dotted lines, represent a very low level of arousal.

a series of eight basic feelings—optimism, love, submission, awe, disapproval, remorse, contempt and aggression.⁶⁶ He represented these emotions in a cone-shaped three-dimensional structural model, in which the vertical dimension shows intensity: the eight basic emotions are placed in the middle, with the base marking the maximum intensity and the apex lowest. Figure 30 shows this structure laid

⁶⁶Robert Plutchik, *Emotion: A Psychoevolutionary Synthesis* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), p.157.

flat into a two-dimensional shape, where the centre represents the highest emotional intensity and the edges the lowest (which includes eight groupings of three twenty-four culturally-independent emotions). Using Plutchik's wheel as part of the rehearsal process simplified to a great extent the identification of passions in the text and their outward expression by providing a visual overview of the most important emotions, their different intensities, and the way they relate to each other.

The word 'emotion' was not used often in the eighteenth century, with the word 'passion' referring to both feelings and their visual manifestation.⁶⁷ When considering acting, the distinction between feeling and emotion is valuable: feelings need to be translated into emotions so they can, in turn, be translated into actions. Jelgerhuis seems to be making a similar distinction by identifying the passions of love, desire and hope to be 'internal responses to the subtle feelings of the heart or soul', which are 'more readily communicated through words than by external actions or motions of the body'.⁶⁸ For example, when describing the outward expression of the passion of love, Hill called for a 'high-brace'd and animated air' which needed to be softened by 'a Look of apprehensive tenderness' into a 'modest cloud of diffidence'.⁶⁹ Looking closer at Hill's description, the expression of love is not unique but combines elements of his descriptions for joy, fear and wonder—so, like Plutchik, who describes love as a feeling and not an emotion, Hill also calls for the assistance of emotions in order to represent feelings.⁷⁰ Although

⁶⁷In his *Dictionary of the English Language* Samuel Johnson defined emotion as a 'vehemence of passion', and etymologically the word implies this outward motion, or something coming out from the within, from the Latin *emovere* (via the French *émotion*) which is a composite of the prefix *e-* (a variant of *ex-*) meaning 'out', and *movere* which means 'move'. Johnson, *op.cit.*, Volume 1, lemma *emotion*.

⁶⁸Jelgerhuis, 'Lessons', *op.cit.*, p.362. He continues by writing that 'LeBrun himself tells us very little about the aforementioned passions. He only speaks of their facial coloring, but counsels that this information is less applicable to the actor's than to the painter's expression'. Ibid.

⁶⁹A. Hill, 'An Essay on the Art of Acting', *op.cit.*, p.388.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp.360, 365, 388. Hill also defines 'wonder' as 'inquisitive fear', borrowing many outward signs of the passion of fear for its expression. It is no surprise that Plutchik also defines 'awe' (which relates to 'wonder') as a feeling and not an emotion: one feels wonder or awe, but the feeling can only manifest itself via the outward signs of a combination of other emotions.

Hill's description of 'love' helped the ensemble in the *The Prophetess* to create a clear depiction of one version of 'love' which happened to be appropriate and fitting, for *The Fairy Queen* using that definition proved highly problematic. To ensure dramatic congruity, the love that Hermia shares with Lysander should be manifested through the outward expression of a combination of different emotions than the love of Helena for Demetrius; the love of Demetrius for Hermia; the love of Titania for the Changeling; the love of spellbound-Titania for Bottom; and so on. Although Hill made no distinction between feelings and emotions, he was aware that of his ten principal dramatic passions, only some have a uniquely defined expression, while others are defined and expressed as versions or combinations of others. He made this explicit by writing that love is 'a Passion, the true name whereof might be *Legion*; for it includes all the other, in all their degrees and varieties'.⁷¹

To correct the problems arising from passions that are feelings rather than emotions, I adjusted the exercise by removing any passions which Plutchik defined as feelings, and by keeping only the overlapping passions between Hill's and Plutchik's models.⁷² This left me with six passions: joy, grief (Plutchik: grief/sadness), fear, anger, hatred (loathing/disgust) and wonder (amazement/surprise). The six passions selected through this process coincide with the six basic emotions (as identified by Paul Ekman), whose expression is distinctive, universally consistent and universally understood: enjoyment, sadness, fear, anger, disgust and surprise.⁷³ Hill's well-thought order was retained: with the first two

⁷¹Ibid., p.388.

⁷²Love and scorn (Plutchik: contempt) were removed, being feelings, pity and jealousy were removed because they are not universal basic human emotions according to Plutchik.

⁷³Paul Ekman, 'An Argument for Basic Emotions' *Cognition and Emotion*, 6 (1992):3, p.170. These six emotions are the only ones that fulfil an exhaustive list of nine categories devised by Ekman to distinguish emotions both from one another and from other affective phenomena which cannot be classed as emotions: (1) distinctive universal signals, (2) presence in other primates, (3) distinctive physiology, (4) distinctive universals in antecedent events, (5) coherence among emotional response, (6) quick onset, (7) brief duration, (8) automatic appraisal and (9) unbidden occurrence. Ibid. p.175.

pairs of emotions defined as antithetical by Plutchik, examining them as pairs of opposites makes the differences more discernible and acutely felt by students.

Another modification was made to address the lack of nuance which a purely mechanical construction of the passions on the body can create. Fordyce wrote that the ‘*Action* of the *Body*, however decent, correct, or proper, is in itself but the mere *Mechanism* of the Art, the outward Form of Eloquent address’: it is the ‘*Action* of the *Soul*, the inward Glowing of that *celestial Fire*, that must give breath, motion, and vigour to all’.⁷⁴ This inward glowing of the celestial fire can be related to Quintilian’s reference to the body’s spontaneous response to the fire of the soul, which could arise through imagined sentiments and reflections,⁷⁵ and so, as in the face gym exercise, in the passion embodiment exercise it was deemed essential to enlist the aid of imagination. The face gym exercise differs from the passion embodiment exercise in that the first deals with transient displays of emotions as clearly defined strokes of facial gestures, while the second explores overarching emotional states manifested by the body over a more extended period of time. So the combination of imagination and inhalation/exhalation/phonation, which produces good momentary results and fits well with the face gym exercise, had to be replaced by an alternative allowing for a more sustained exploration of the passion. When discussing each passion, Hill provided the actor with a short passage from a play in which that passion is conveyed and which they can use in their practice. I adopted his model. For example, before running the exercise for the passion of joy I asked every performer to think of their part and choose a phrase that conveys this passion, such as Helena’s

I never was so happy when awake:

Nay, pray disturb me not; let me dream on⁷⁶

⁷⁴Fordyce, *op. cit.*, p.79.

⁷⁵See above, fn.27, p.214.

⁷⁶*The Fairy-Queen: An Opera. Represented at the Queen’s-Theatre By Their Majesties Servants* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, at the Judges-Head, in Chancery-Lane, 1692), p.45.

or Secresie's

One charming Night
Gives more delight,
Than a hundred lucky Days.⁷⁷

If their part contained nothing appropriate, they were offered Hill's representative sample.⁷⁸ In the case of 'joy', this is a line spoken by Torrismond in Dryden's *The Spanish Friar*:

Oh heaven! she pities me.
And pity, still, fore-runs approaching love;
As light'ning does the thunder.—Tune your harps,
Ye angels! to that found: And thou, my heart!
Make room—to entertain the flowing joy!⁷⁹

The performers were asked to walk around the rehearsal space repeating their lines while engaging their imagination, placing themselves in the circumstances of the character. As I called out different numbers in the scale of intensities, they experimented with the way each level affected how a passion is manifested by the body, and with the way they needed to adapt the delivery of their lines for their performance to remain congruent with the character's emotional state—which also

⁷⁷Ibid., p.17.

⁷⁸When I used this exercise in general training, and not in rehearsals of a production where each participant had their own part from which to choose a passage, to add variety and to avoid having the whole group using Hill's example, I used examples from two anthologies of passages from plays sorted according to the passion they epitomise: James Burgh, *The Art of Speaking. Containing I. An Essay; in which are given Rules for expressing properly the principal Passions and Humours, which occur in Reading, or public Speaking; and II. Lessons taken from the Antients and Moderns (with Additions and Alterations where thought useful) exhibiting a Variety of Matter for Practice; the emphatical Words printed in Italics; with Notes of Direction referring to the Essay. To which are added a Table of the Lessons; and an Index of the various Passions and Humours in the Essay and Lessons* (London: Printed for T. Longman, J. Buckland, and W. Fenner, in Pater-noster-row; J. Waugh, in Lombard-street; E. Dilly, in the Poultry; and T. Field, in Cheapside, 1761), *op.cit.* and John Walker, *Elements of Elocution. Being the Substance of a Course of Lectures on the Art of Reading; Delivered at several Colleges in the University of Oxford. In Two Volumes* (London: Printed for the Author; And Sold by T. Cadell, in the Strand; T. Becket, Corner of the Adelphi; G. Robinson, Paternoster-Row; and J. Dodsley, Pall-Mall, 1781), *op.cit.*.

⁷⁹A. Hill, 'An Essay on the Art of Acting', *op.cit.*, pp.358-359.

| | Joy | Grief | Fear | Anger | Hatred |
|----|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| 1 | Serenity | Pensiveness | Apprehension | Annoyance | Boredom |
| 2 | Gratitude | Disappointment | Perturbation | Vexation | Dislike |
| 3 | Cheerfulness | Discouragement | Nervousness | Frustration | Distaste |
| 4 | Relief | Resignation | Anxiety | Exasperation | Antipathy |
| 5 | Satisfaction | Sadness | Worry | Resentment | Aversion |
| 6 | Pride | Misery | Trepidation | Bitterness | Disgust |
| 7 | Delight | Hopelessness | Dread | Indignation | Repugnance |
| 8 | Mirth | Despair | Panic | Vengefulness | Revulsion |
| 9 | Excitement | Sorrow | Horror | Rage | Abhorrence |
| 10 | Ecstasy | Anguish | Terror | Fury | Loathing |

TABLE 3. Passion Embodiment Exercise. Five basic emotions and words suggested for each of their ten degrees.

helped them to establish the habit of always assessing their performance in terms of congruity.⁸⁰

Of the six emotions explored in this exercise, ‘wonder’ proved to be somewhat cumbersome because when we used dramatic texts, as above, that particular passion worked against the sustained nature of the exercise. Following *The Fairy Queen* production, this exercise was further refined by the removal of ‘wonder’, leaving the passions of joy, grief, fear, anger and hatred. Furthermore, to ensure that sufficient nuance and variety are embedded in the core exercise, the numbers are accompanied by specific words that convey each passion on each particular level. When I first introduce the exercise, I usually project Table 3 on the wall, where the principal passions are the titles of five columns, each of which contains gradations of that core passion from ‘one’ to ‘ten’, and students receive a handout with that table together with Hill’s descriptions of the five passions.⁸¹ I explain that the words are not fixed, and welcome students to suggest alternatives, or make their own table using words that best resonate with them.

Inspired by historical techniques and improved by contemporary understanding, the face gym and passion embodiment exercises aim to increase the singers’

⁸⁰See Chapter 2, p.124.

⁸¹See Handout 3, p.313.

perceptivity and awareness of the effect of human emotions on the countenance and human frame, providing them with a new set of schemata, mnemonics and techniques that allow them to create legible expressions of a large number of passions, both sudden and sustained. By combining key signature characteristics of the outward expression of emotions stored in *thesaurus histrioniae*, singers can moderate incidental passions connected to specific words to fit an overall emotional state, resulting in a greater variety of emotional expressions and more emotional congruity. For example, the libretto of a character in a depressed state at a certain point of the drama might include words that express sadness, anger and relief. All three of these passions are expressed through facial expression, hand gesture and a change in posture, but when the singer knows that the key characteristics of the emotional state of grief are the loose, unbraced muscles and languid, declined stance,⁸² sadness will be profound (taking the facial expression to the extreme and slacking the muscles), anger will be less fiery (facial muscles less contracted and less elevation in the gestures), and relief will be muted (with only a weak smile on the face and no activation of *m. orbicularis oculi*). If the same passion-related words are sung by a character in an overall happy emotional state,⁸³ sadness will not be so deep (facial features reflecting sadness, but muscles not contracted to the extreme), anger will be stronger but not harsh (face muscles not fully contracted, but chest puffed, neck straight and gestures elevated), and relief will be blazing (huge warm smile with activation of *m. orbicularis oculi*). With the same words sung in an angry state (quick tempo and angular melodic line),⁸⁴ sadness would barely register, anger would be fiery (face muscles fully contracted, and gesture elevated), and relief would be radiant (large smile on the mouth but with some tension in the glabellar region).⁸⁵ Although most singers instinctively moderate

⁸²A. Hill, 'An Essay on the Art of Acting', *op.cit.*, p.364.

⁸³See signs of joy above, p.225.

⁸⁴Signs of joy are braced muscles, fierce look, clenched jaw, restrained or held breath. A. Hill, 'An Essay on the Art of Acting', *op.cit.*, pp.371–372.

⁸⁵Hill wrote that joy and anger share elements of their resemblance, sharing the same energy and elevation, with frowning being the clearer distinguisher. *Ibid.*, p.372.

the expression of set passions when placed in different contexts, these exercises supply them with the explicit knowledge required to assess and improve their performance.

Characterisation

The moderation of expression to reflect the interplay between different passions and moods can contribute to higher congruity and more effective storytelling. Another important factor is characterisation. Mancini asserted that good acting rests on the ability to bring the character to life with fitting gestures and appropriate emotions, so that the audience might say ‘this is Ceasar’ or ‘this is Alexander’.⁸⁶ While there are passions which are universal, the sources of their genesis can vary from person to person. For example, everyone has the potential for extreme anger, but the specific triggers for it can vary depending on an individual’s psychological makeup and personality: a person who is particularly prone to anger might become enraged by a minor incident, while for the same occurrence, someone with a different personality might only feel mild annoyance—or even find the same situation amusing.

Method acting’s ‘emotional recall’ technique relies on the performer’s own personal emotional response for analysing, interpreting and performing the dramatic text.⁸⁷ Even though, being based on the genuine emotions of a real person, the performed emotions would coalesce harmoniously and collectively look realistic, they might clash with expectations based on the particularities of the dramatic character. John Hill offers an example in advice to actors preparing to play the wealthy and influential nobleman Sciolto in Rowe’s *The Fair Penitent*:

⁸⁶Recita bene un attore allorquando, investendosi forte del carattere di quel personaggio che rappresenta, lo spiega al naturale e con l’azione, e con la voce, e cogli affetti proprj, e con tanta chiarezza lo ravvita, che l’uditore dice, per ragion d’esempio, questo è *Cesare*: questo è *Alessandro*’. Mancini, *Riflessioni pratiche sul canto figurato*, *op.cit.*, p.218.

⁸⁷See discussion in Chapter 3, p.188.

Sciolto is a man of great rank and quality; the actor will therefore never be what we expect in the character, if he does not join to the gravity of the old man the deportment and air of nobility in every part: He is rejoiced at the supposed happiness of his family in the beginning of the play, and carries a mixture of an unconquerable grief and resentment, at the behaviour of his daughter in the latter part of it: The image which the player gives of him, is therefore not at all just, if we have not, in the first part, all the transport of a fond and indulgent parent express'd, and in the latter, all the rage and vengeance of a man of honour wounded in the tenderest point, and seeking the means of vengeance, tho' at the expence of life itself.

The actor who is to express to us a peculiar passion and its effects, if he wou'd play his character with Truth, is not only to assume the emotions, which that passion wou'd produce in the generality of mankind; but he is to give it that peculiar form under which it wou'd appear, when exerting itself in the breast of such a person, as he is giving us the portrait of.⁸⁸

Moderating the portrayal of the passions through the prism of the particular character as constructed to serve the dramaturgy of the text may not deliver psychological realism, but it can still achieve propriety and naturalness. This process may be even more valuable in the case of opera, where condensed narratives and compressed character development can mean that everyday actions and emotions do not effectively convey the grand characters, stories and passions narrated by the libretto and music.⁸⁹ The character development exercises which follow are specifically designed for opera singers.

In the production of *Tamerlano* (2022), a combination of tools and exercises from the new teaching method was used to shape the understanding and

⁸⁸J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.156.

⁸⁹See discussion in Chapter 3, p.191.

performance of character and emotions.⁹⁰ In the pre-production workshops performers were given a character development worksheet with exercises based on Stanislavski,⁹¹ which aimed to guide the singers' research and our dramaturgical discussions. However, as psychological realism was not the aim, we never engaged in deep psychological analysis of the characters as defined in the early years of Stanislavski's practice and used today by the proponents of psychological realism.⁹² Our scope was smaller, focusing only on the elements that contribute the most towards shaping the visual identity of a dramatic character.

Many historical acting treatises identify a small number of key factors that shape the physical embodiment of a character. For example, Ingegneri wrote that 'people distinguish themselves from each other by means of sex, age, condition, and profession',⁹³ and Pickering argued that '*no Man can be Master of THEATRICAL EXPRESSION, unless he can critically distinguish and preserve the specific Difference of Characters*', which he identified as '*Temper, Quality, Employment, Age, Country, and Religion*', writing that 'the Poet's *Sentiments, Manners and Diction, must be specifically accommodated to this very Person; and that, through the whole Character*'.⁹⁴ Similarly, Grant asserted that an actor should form 'not only his countenance, but his whole person, according to the age, station, and character of the person he represents',⁹⁵ and for Hill, the actor's performance 'in whatever scene or character, is only true, when we perceive in him everything that

⁹⁰For more information about *Tamerlano* (2022), which was part of Implementation B of the Empirical Inquiry, see Appendix II, p.334.

⁹¹Exercises 2, 3, 5 and 6 from Handout 4, p.314.

⁹²It is not uncommon for practitioners of the Stanislavski system to devote almost a year to round-the-table discussions on the drama, characters and emotions, which extend to minute elements of their thoughts and behaviours, down to mannerisms and daily rituals, which might directly relate or contribute towards the drama. The work towards Stanislavski's (and, by extension, the Method's) psychological realism can be extensive and time-consuming, with examples of theatre companies working with the Stanislavski system, who spend several years preparing each production. Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), p.21.

⁹³le persone si distinguono frà di esse mediante il sesso, l'età, la conditione, & la professione'. Ingegneri, *op. cit.*, p.71.

⁹⁴Pickering, *op. cit.*, p.13.

⁹⁵Grant, *op. cit.*, p.8.

agrees with the age, condition, and situation of the person he represents'.⁹⁶ In the new teaching method, the characterisation is based on three character-defining variables: (1) social status or profession, (2) age and (3) temperament.

De' Sommi considered it essential before the actors learn their roles to have them 'read out the whole play, so that even the children, who are to play parts in it, are instructed in its subject, or at least in what it concerns them, imprinting on their minds the quality of the character that they are to imitate'.⁹⁷ Following that advice for *Tamerlano*, months before rehearsals began we started with a read-through of the libretto, followed by a discussion in which we tried to identify the three variables for each of the dramatic characters. Without such underlying structures, the process would have lasted much longer as it would have been more difficult for the singers to know what to look for when reading the libretto and for a large amount of information to be filtered constructively. If anything could be potentially important, significant elements could be lost in the noise. By delimiting the problem space, the number of decisions involved in the analysis and physicalisation of the characters is also limited, making the process quicker, lasting no more than one hour.⁹⁸

Of the three variables, social status and age are usually straightforward to determine, in most cases simply by looking at the *dramatis personae* list. If we look at Handel's printed wordbook for the opera of *Tamerlano* (1724),⁹⁹ the descriptions in the English translation of the character list give a clear sense of social ranking (both before and during¹⁰⁰ the opera):

⁹⁶J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.156.

⁹⁷de' Sommi, *op. cit.*, p.39.

⁹⁸See Chapter 2 (p.99) for a definition of problem space, and an example of using the same pedagogical concept in another part of the new teaching method.

⁹⁹Nicola Francesco Haym, *Tamerlano: Drama. Da Rappresentarsi Nel Regio Teatro di Hay-Market, per La Reale Accademia di Musica* (London: Printed and Sold at the King's Theatre in the Hay-Market, 1724).

¹⁰⁰For example, although Bajazet as an emperor is of the same current standing as Tamerlano, because during the opera he is a captive, his social status is diminished. This might not affect proud Bajazet's deportment, who even in the prison cell could be moving with the decorum of an emperor, but it will affect his interrelationships with other characters. Similarly, although

Dramatis Personæ.

TAMERLANE, *Emperor of the Tartars.*

BAJAZET, *Emperor of the Turks a Prisoner to TAMERLANE.*

ANDRONICUS, *a Grecian Prince, Confederate with TAMERLANE.*

LEO, *Friend to ANDRONICUS.*

WOMEN.

ASTERIA, *Daughter to BAJAZET, in Love with ANDRONICUS.*

IRENE, *Princess of Trabison, promis'd in Marriage to TAMERLANE.*

ZAIDA, *Confident of ASTERIA.*

After determining a character's social status and age, performers are called to use those two variables to shape their performance by reflecting them in their movement and deportment.

STATUS EMBODIMENT EXERCISE

Although elements that communicate social ranking or profession are not universal and can vary significantly across cultures and societies, it is common to include diacritics such as clothing, grooming, accessories, insignia and other symbols. Apart from these elements (which, in the context of theatre, relate to design rather than acting), substantive information about their social status or profession can be conveyed by the way a person moves and carries themselves, as 'Patriot, a Prince, a Beggar, a Clown, &c. must each have their Propriety, and Distinction in Action as well as Words and Language'.¹⁰¹ Jelgerhuis wrote that 'stage posture should derive from the character of the person which the actor is portraying, whether that character is of high or low social rank',¹⁰² lamenting seeing 'tragic heroes walk the boards with hands and arms swinging as if they were running an errand on a public street, without regard to whom or what they were supposed to represent'

Irene, as a princess, is of the same standing as prince Andronico, because we are introduced to her as fiancée of the emperor Tamerlano, her status is raised above Andronico's.

¹⁰¹Gildon, *op. cit.*, p.34.

¹⁰²Jelgerhuis, 'Lessons', *op. cit.*, p.304.

or ‘peasants enacted with all the fine manners of the nobility’.¹⁰³ Foote, similarly, criticised Garrick for getting so involved in portraying King Lear’s madness that he breached the rules that defined the social rank of the character, showing the king picking up straw, pulling his clothes and lowering himself; forgetting that ‘every Motion, every Look, should express an Extravagance of State and Majesty’, and creating something that ‘might be a proper Representation of a mad Taylor’.¹⁰⁴ He should, instead, have ‘with great Solemnity, a contracted Brow, one Hand on *Edgar*’s Shoulder, his Finger on his Breast, or some Action that should denote Superiority, seem to consult him on a knotty Point, but no Sign of Equality, no Familiarity, no sitting down Cheek by Jowl’.¹⁰⁵ A king or an emperor’s posture, gestures, quality of movement and emotional expression would differ from a person of lower status in similar circumstances. John Hill argued that the ‘rage of *Bajazet* is very different from that of Mr. Alderman *Fondlewife*, tho’ both are rais’d from suspicions of the very same kind’,¹⁰⁶ and criticising the representation by Spranger Barry (1719–1777) of another imperial character, Mahomet, Aaron Hill wrote: ‘I was sorry to see *Mahomet* (in Mr. *B—y*) lose the influence of an attractive *figure*, and degrade the awfulness of an imperious *Sultan*, the impressive menace of a martial *conqueror*, and the beseeching *tenderness* of an amorous *solicitor*, by an unpointed *restlessness* of leaping *levity*, that neither carried *weight* to suit his *dignity*, nor struck out *purpose* to express his *passions*’.¹⁰⁷ For playing lower-status characters, Jelgerhuis suggests ‘fine attitudes and action’ be adapted by ‘retaining the form and merely diminishing the scale of the action’.¹⁰⁸ So the differentiators are speed, elevation and quality of movement.

¹⁰³Ibid., p.267.

¹⁰⁴Foote, *op. cit.*, p.21.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.156.

¹⁰⁷From Hill’s letter to David Mallet, 15 February 1749, printed in A. Hill, ‘Original Letters’, *op. cit.*, pp.355–356.

¹⁰⁸Jelgerhuis, ‘Lessons’, *op. cit.*, p.306.

To explore how social status can be reflected through movement and posture I devised the *status embodiment exercise*. The exercise relies on established schemata and skills from the ten speeds exercise (p. 224) and passion embodiment exercise (p. 225). The singers are asked to walk around balancing the space and keep changing direction. The scale zero to ten is introduced, with ‘zero’ being the lowest status and ‘ten’ the highest. What each end of the scale represents is decided in advance: for example, slave/monarch, mortal/god, worker/boss, apprentice/master, private/colonel, etc. If the exercise is used as part of a rehearsal process, the scale is calibrated to fit the subject and degrees available in the cast list. For example, for *Tamerlano*, ‘two’ represented the lowest social status, which was servant (supernumeraries played by actors), and ‘eight’ the highest, which was emperor (current or former, *Tamerlano* and *Bajazet*): this is done so the different degrees are relevant to our work, but allowing for some is space across either end to experiment with pushing above and below. After calling various numbers on the scale and allowing the performers to experiment, I ask them to try to identify how their comportment progressively changes in those three dimensions: speed, elevation and quality of movement. For example, in *Tamerlano*, the group found that the higher the number, the lower the speed, the higher the elevation and the softer the movement would be (servant/emperor: fast/slow, low elevation/high elevation, sharp direct movement/soft ornamented movement). When the group achieves coherence in how they interpret each different number, we decide which number fits their particular character. This establishes how the first of the three variables would contribute towards the physicalisation of character. A singer in *Tamerlano* commented that decreasing the speed and amount of gestures made her character ‘feel super high status, especially in a scene with somebody who was doing a lot more movement: I felt almost like “I’m in command”—you can just stand there, and you feel so high status; I felt like my energy was not being wasted

somehow, whereas for somebody who was darting about, it would feel like their energy was, kind of, “spilling out”’.¹⁰⁹

AGE EMBODIMENT EXERCISE

Deciding on the character’s age is one of the first elements of the performers’ research, and forms part of the character-building exercise in the Character Analysis Worksheet.¹¹⁰ The age of the characters can be inferred in most cases by the plot or the relationships between the characters. When this is not clear, knowledge of history or mythology could also provide some clues, but it is important to remember that the authority of the dramatic text is superior to that of any related myths or historical facts, because the story narrated should be the one in the pages of the play or opera, which might differ in critical ways. If none of this information is helpful for deciding the age of a particular character, the performer can use their imagination to make an informed guess. For example, in *Tamerlano*, the historical Timur the Lame was born in 1336 and invaded the Ottoman Empire in 1402, making Tamerlano in his late sixties at the time the story of the opera is taking place, while the Sultan Bayezid I, who was born in 1347, places the opera’s Bajazet in his mid-fifties. By convention, Andronico, as an unmarried prince, would be considerably younger than Bajazet or Tamerlano, perhaps in his twenties,¹¹¹ and Asteria and Irene would be slightly younger than him. The descriptions of the *dramatis personae* list or the libretto do not provide us with enough information to infer the age of the supporting characters of Leone and Zaida, so, our decision was that it would make sense if they were the same age as their close friends, Andronico and Asteria respectively.

¹⁰⁹Caroline Taylor, ‘Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation Bx’, post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 23 April 2022).

¹¹⁰See Handout 4, p. 314.

¹¹¹History here does not help: the historical Andronicus Palaeologus (son of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus, who was at the helm of the Byzantine Empire in 1402) was born in 1400 and therefore would have been only a toddler.

The *age embodiment exercise* is very similar to the status embodiment exercise, but the extremes of the zero to ten scale are calibrated to the extremes of the age of the characters in the cast. When the exercise is not performed as part of a particular production, the ages could be decided by the instructor: for example, ‘one’ could be a ten-year-old child and ‘ten’ a centenarian, with a decade representing every step of the scale. The performers are asked to walk around balancing the space, and observe how their comportment and movement progressively change in two dimensions: speed and elevation. The participants invariably observe that the older the character, both speed and elevation diminish (young/old: fast/slow, high elevation/low elevation). As with the previous exercise, once every member of the group has tried the movement of all different ages and has collectively reached a consensus on the interpretation of each number, they spend some time practising and becoming accustomed to the external signs of their own character. This exercise helps determine the role that the second of the three variables plays in the physical manifestation of the character. When the first two variables are taken into account in unison, they produce an average of their respective qualities, with some qualities potentially reinforcing each other and others potentially cancelling each other out.

TEMPERAMENT EMBODIMENT EXERCISE

The third characterisation variable is temperament. Chapter 1 examined the theory of humours and temperaments and suggested that humoral temperaments could be used as a shorthand for analysing and performing dramatic characters.¹¹² The typologies of humoral composition, originally forged in ancient antiquity, continued to develop over centuries and grew more comprehensive, and by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, included detailed descriptions of the mental,

¹¹²See Chapter 1, p.67.

emotional and physical constitution of people belonging to the sanguine, choleric, melancholic or phlegmatic temperaments.¹¹³

Inferring the temperament of the dramatic characters is not straightforward, and requires an analysis of the drama. Often dramatists built their characters around established archetypes, making identifying the temperament easy and clear-cut. In many cases, however, the tragic nature of the stories pushes the characters to extremes, which leads to the exhibition of traits that might not unequivocally fit with one temperament.¹¹⁴ The choice of temperament, therefore, relies on careful consideration of the information that can be gathered from the text and context and finally rests on the performer's personal interpretation.

For example, in Handel's *Tamerlano*, the pompous, hot-tempered, proud, stubborn and irritable Bajazet is a clear example of a choleric character, while Tamerlano's carefree, friendly, generous, ardent and high-spirited nature classes him as sanguine. There is also no doubt that Irene's bravado, determination and ambition, her high self-regard, impatience and perseverance, all point to a choleric temperament. Andronico's general propensity to inaction, hesitation and delay, his apparent cool-bloodedness and his high regard for rules and authority, which leads to a frustrating passivity and impotence, make him an unmistakably phlegmatic character, regardless of the fact that towards the end of the opera a series of intensely dramatic incidents finally push him outside his comfort zone, breaking his reticence and conjuring up fiery valour. Similarly, the Asteria conveyed by the libretto and Handel's music is a sorrowful deep thinker, apprehensive and suspicious, and although at times her boundless love for her father (and the influence

¹¹³See page 69 on Chapter 1 for examples of such descriptions for the choleric temperament. For descriptions of all the temperaments see Culpeper, *Galen's Art of Physic, op. cit.*, pp.52–67, and Kant, *Anthropology, op. cit.*, pp.186–190.

¹¹⁴The stage director Alex Clifton wrote that when dramatic characters are under extreme psychological strain, they can 'flip' to another humoural temperament, exhibiting contrasting traits. In such extreme circumstances (which in opera, a genre which deals with high passions, are commonplace), 'the quiet, withdrawn person is the one who, under pressure, suddenly becomes aggressive and impulsive; under pressure, the rigid, anxious person may become talkative and lively, and so on'. Alex Clifton, *The Actor's Workbook: A Practical Guide to Training, Rehearsing and Devising* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), p.190.

his strong choleric personality exerts on her) impels her to bold and valiant acts, in solo arias of introspection she reveals that she is, at her core, a quintessentially melancholic character. The libretto's particulars for Leone and Zaida are again too thin to allow us to infer a temperament, so this choice lies exclusively in the performer's inclination: in our case, we chose for both of them to be sanguine, so Leone offers contradistinction and balance between a phlegmatic Andronico and a choleric Irene, and Zaida contrasts with a melancholic Asteria.

Temperaments radically limit the problem space, because singers are only considering certain options rather than exploring all possibilities without any particular goal, plan or pattern. Understanding the theory of temperaments provides an underlying structure for students to approach their character research. They have a list of specific characteristics to look for, which helps them identify salient elements in the text. As they progress, they are able to focus more and more on the relevant aspects, eliminating possibilities and homing in on the most likely temperament. When they have determined the correct temperament, it becomes easier to contextualise and make sense of occasional contradictory characteristics. This deeper level of analysis allows for a more precise depiction of the character on stage: the models allow singers to remove any 'noise' during the character research process and ensure they do not add any 'noise' during their performance.

When teaching this technique, modelling in the analytical stage is crucial. Even with an understanding of the temperaments, students may still head in the wrong direction, so the teacher can help course-correct the students' analyses by providing guidance and demonstrating the technique until students become more aware of its nuances and potential pitfalls, strengthening their understanding of the framework. Derrick wrote that an actor's 'first care will be to study his subject and character universally, and enter into all the spirit and variety which it admits of and requires: but it is not enough that he should study and understand his own part perfectly well; he must also be intimately acquainted with all the

correspondent characters, else he cannot do justice to the part he assumes'.¹¹⁵ It is common for singers to focus so much on their own character that they miss the forest for the trees. Therefore, I find it helpful to ask students also to deduce the temperaments of the other characters in the opera, as interactions may provide clarity and sometimes cause them to reconsider their initial assumptions about their own characters. For example, a character may initially appear choleric, but compared to a genuinely choleric character, it may become evident that they are melancholic, and some choleric traits were only present due to external circumstances. If the analysis is conducted in the context of an opera production, discussing everyone's solutions with the group can provide different perspectives and approaches and ensure a consistent understanding from everyone involved.

In the first chapter we saw that each temperament had a series of other associations, which allowed the temperaments to be dynamic and further shape the character, with the time of day, age and even season adding their special colour.¹¹⁶ For example, the sanguine temperament is associated with the morning, the choleric with noon, melancholic with the evening, and phlegmatic with the night. This means that a phlegmatic character can be portrayed as slightly more warm and joyous in the morning, and more distanced and forbidding in the night. Likewise, young age is associated with a sanguine temperament, youth with choleric, maturity with melancholic, and old age with phlegmatic. A sanguine character, therefore, might be slightly more belligerent as a teenager, more pensive when he reaches middle age, and less active in his advanced years.¹¹⁷

In his *Anthropologie* (1798), Kant provided some of the most detailed and nuanced descriptions of the four temperaments, combining a wealth of information from ancient treatises while also attempting to eliminate overlapping elements,

¹¹⁵Derrick, *op. cit.*, p.91.

¹¹⁶See Table 2, p.69.

¹¹⁷Using qualities associated with temperaments as an alternative approach for the age embodiment exercise was tried out, but it was found to be less effective, owing to the numerous factors involved, and was subsequently abandoned. However, other practitioners may wish to consider it as a potential option.

creating clearer distinctions between the different temperaments,¹¹⁸ which is the reason Kant's descriptions (together with Galen's, through Culpeper) are given as a reference to students in the context of this exercise.¹¹⁹ Kant argued that temperamental classifications are categorical, with each person belonging to only one clearly defined temperament. Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), in his seminal treatise *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (1874),¹²⁰ used Kant's ideas and descriptions as a foundation for new models of personality types. Wundt argued that although there are indeed four distinct personality types corresponding to the four temperaments, the classification is not categorical as Kant asserted, but spectral: an argument confirmed by the influential psychologist Hans Jürgen Eysenck (1916–1997), whose experiments indicated that there is a strong case for temperaments to be approached as a continuum.¹²¹ Based on Wundt's graphical representation of the continuous or dimensional form of the four temperaments in a two-dimensional system of coordinates, Eysenck produced a diagram on which I have plotted the five main characters from Handel's *Tamerlano* (Figure 31). The positions of the characters derive from my own interpretation after analysis of the libretto, and although this is undoubtedly a subjective device, such an exercise can be highly advantageous to performers as it provides a clear visual representation of the personality of the character they are to portray. In this example, Bajazet and Irene are both choleric, but Bajazet exhibits clear choleric traits to an extreme degree, while Irene is placed nearer the centre (less intense), and closer to the sanguine temperament, as one of her arias and two episodes in the opera uncover a more tender facet of her personality. With the stage being 'the *Empire of the Passions*, where nothing, languid, unmark'd, or indifferent, ought to

¹¹⁸Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1798).

¹¹⁹See Handout 5, p.317.

¹²⁰Wilhelm Max Wundt, *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1874), p.817.

¹²¹Hans Jürgen Eysenck, *The Structure of Human Personality* (London: Methuen, 1960), p.18.




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FIGURE 31. A diagram from Eysenck's *The Structure of Human Personality* (1960) demonstrating the concept of a continuous or dimensional form of the temperaments, on which the main characters from Handel's *Tamerlano* have been plotted.

have Place',¹²² it is unlikely that any principal operatic character would be placed within the average person range. Selecting an appropriate position for a character might also be aided by Eysenck's diagram in Figure 32, which displays key characteristics of the temperaments that derive from Kant's descriptions, placed in a continuous sequence around a circle segmented by the changeable/unchangeable and emotional/non-emotional axes. This diagram proved a valuable resource for quick reference during the analysis part of the rehearsal process for *Tamerlano*. Another related tool deriving from the work of Wundt and Eysenck is Table 4, which is a summary display of the core elements of their theories, in regard to

¹²²Hill and Popple, 'The Prompter 1735', *op. cit.*




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FIGURE 32. A diagram from Eysenck's *The Biological Basis of Personality* (1967), showing the four temperaments and plotted in a two-dimensional system, as proposed by Wilhelm Max Wundt. The traits of each temperament (in italics) originate from descriptions by Immanuel Kant.

the rate of change and intensity of emotions for each of the four temperaments, which can be used as an analytical tool in conjunction with the two diagrams and Kant's descriptions, offering additional guidance for the appropriate choice of temperament for a character.

The theory of the four temperaments could be an invaluable tool for analysis and character research, but how could we use it as a tool for theatrical expression? Gildon wrote that an actor

must transform himself into every Person he represents, since he is to act all sorts of Actions and Passions. Sometimes he is to be a Lover, and know not only all the soft and tender Addresses of one, but what are proper to the Character, that is in Love, whether he be a Prince

| Temperament | Sanguine | Choleric | Melancholic | Phlegmatic |
|-------------|--|--|--|--|
| Wundt | Weak emotions with high rate of change | Strong emotions with high rate of change | Strong emotions with slow rate of change | Weak emotions with slow rate of change |
| Eysenck | Stable extrovert | Unstable extrovert | Unstable introvert | Stable introvert |

TABLE 4. Stability and intensity of emotions in the four temperaments, in the theories of Wundt and Eysenck.

or a Peasant, a hot or fiery Man or of more moderate and flegmatick Constitution, and even the Degrees of the Passion he is possessed with. Sometimes he is to represent a choleric, hot and jealous Man, and then he must be thoroughly acquainted with all the Motions and Sentiments productive of those Motions of the Feet, Hands and Looks of such a Person in such Circumstances.¹²³

The vocabulary used by several authors of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century treatises may suggest that they were thinking in terms of humoural temperaments, occasionally making explicit mention of them in the context of performance, as in the above quotation. However, I have not found a treatise giving specific advice on how the different temperaments can be manifested through movement—perhaps because, like a lot of other examples of tacit knowledge, it was a prevailing understanding that, as Gildon wrote, actors would have been ‘thoroughly acquainted’ with. In my attempt to create techniques that allowed performers to embody the temperaments with clear differentiation between the physicality of each one, I sought to bridge gaps in our tacit knowledge by combining historical understanding with modern theatrical practices.

¹²³Gildon, *op. cit.*, p.34.

| | Light | Heavy |
|------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Soft | Air (Sanguine) | Water (Phlegmatic) |
| Hard | Fire (Choleric) | Earth (Melancholic) |

TABLE 5. The heavy-light and hard-soft contrarities applied to the elements and temperaments.

My experimentation started with Galen’s elemental theory.¹²⁴ According to this theory, every humour, and by extension every temperament, is associated with one of the four elements: air, fire, earth and water. Galen assigned to each of these elements a unique combination of the qualities of temperature (hot or cold) and humidity (wet and dry), as we saw in Table 1 on page 55. Temperature and humidity might be helpful associations for the practice of a physician, but they do not directly contribute to any qualities of action, so in an attempt to find another pair of primary contrarities that can relate to movement, I looked at Aristotle’s more extensive elemental theory. From the seven contrarities Aristotle outlines (hot-cold, dry-moist, heavy-light, hard-soft, viscous-brittle, rough-smooth, coarse-fine), three can be used to describe movement: heavy-light, hard-soft and rough-smooth.¹²⁵ As in the context of movement quality the last two pairs can safely be equated, I arrived at a hypothetical new pair of primary contrarities: heavy-light and hard-soft. Hardness relates to dryness, softness to wetness,¹²⁶ while air and fire are hot and light, and water and earth are cold and heavy,¹²⁷ creating a working hypothesis which can be applied to elements and, by extension, to temperaments, as it can be seen in Table 5. This hypothesis opened up a new array of possibilities for practical experimentation, elements of which were incorporated into movement

¹²⁴See Chapter 1, 318.

¹²⁵Aristotle, *Aristotle’s De Generatione et Corruptione, Translated with Notes*, trans. by Christopher J. F. Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp.38–39.

¹²⁶Ibid., p.39.

¹²⁷Eduard Zeller, *The Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics*, trans. by Oswald J. Reichel (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), p.200.



FIGURE 33. Students exploring the elements of air (left) and earth (right), during the first part of the temperament embodiment exercise. Empirical Inquiry, Implementation C.

exercises in the *The Fairy Queen* (2016) production,¹²⁸ and led to the creation of the *temperament embodiment exercise*.

The first part of the temperament embodiment exercise relates to the Galenic elements defined through the Aristotelian contrarieties (Table 5). Performers are asked to walk around balancing the space, as in the previous exercises, while at the same time improvising gestures as a means for exploring the qualities of movement for each of the four elements in this order: air, earth, fire, water (starting from the element students find the easiest and working with contrasting pairs, following Hill's practice of exploring contrasting passions).¹²⁹ As with the passions embodiment exercise,¹³⁰ each element is explored separately, and the degree of the combination of the two qualities that define each element is represented by a number from zero to ten: zero for complete neutrality, ten for the absolute extreme (on the verge of caricature), with the other numbers somewhere in between. The exercise starts with all the performers walking in zero (neutral), before the instructor calls out a higher number, raising the intensity progressively

¹²⁸For more information about the production, see Appendix II, p.338.

¹²⁹Figure 33 shows students exploring the first contrasting pair, 'air' and 'earth'. Notice the differences in elevation, posture and weight.

¹³⁰See above, p.225.

from zero to ten, and then down to around five, approximately where the group normally finds a level of movement that would be just right for the stage—not imperceptible but also not outlandish. When I first tried this exercise for *The Fairy Queen*, as the numbers increased, for the sanguine temperament the performers' steps became soft and light, their gestures airy, elevated, fine and ornamented; for the melancholic temperament the steps became heavy, the movement angular and hard, their posture drooped, their arms scarcely raised; for the phlegmatic temperament the speed slowed down, the movement grew lethargic and the steps were soft, the room quietened down, their gestures smooth, deliberate and steady; the choleric temperament brought fire in the room, with their movement acquiring clear intention and direction, the steps becoming light, the gestures deliberate, firm and large. As with the other exercises, the performers were asked not to walk in a circle but to keep changing direction in order to be able to observe each other at all times. They were encouraged to push their exploration to the limits and to mirror their colleagues' energy, eventually leading to a consistent collective understanding of the various qualities and levels.

When they had explored all four temperaments and the different intensities, I gave them the opportunity to explore the quality of movement of their character. Given their character's temperament and its place on Eysenck's diagram, the distance from the centre indicated the appropriate intensity for each temperament/element, and the proximity to other temperaments fine-tuned the quality of their action, creating a unique mix for each of them. Although each gesture and each emotion has its own inherent quality, they could now be moderated in terms of temperament. For example, the same level of anger will not be expressed as largely and explosively by a phlegmatic character (water: soft-heavy) as it would by a choleric character (fire: hard-light). A singer in *Tamerlano* said about the first part of the exercise, where elements and intensities are explored:

Everyone measures things differently [...] so it's interesting to see how if you just say a five out of ten to someone you can cause an

array of reactions, and then you can have an open discussion: ‘Oh, that’s interesting’ ‘Why are you walking this way?’ ‘Why have you chosen to do that?’ ‘Why do you feel that this is more appropriate?’ It leaves a lot open to thought and a lot open to discussion, which is what you want in theatre. You don’t really want to be told how it should be, without engaging in discussion or even perhaps [being allowed] to contest an opinion or an ideal. [...] Apart from the element, which informs the quality of movement, each character’s medial state in terms of intensity is at a different number to everyone else’s: [Andronico’s] medial state might be between a four and a five, but Asteria’s medial state might be between a six and a seven, or even a bit higher. And then from there, you have the reactions [to emotions and situations] so everyone’s starting from a different level already, [and] bearing in mind the character that you’re playing and what their journey is through the opera, the exercise helps you clearly ‘grey out’ the area within which they tend to operate most frequently.¹³¹

This part of the exercise helped bring direction and definition to the performers’ movement, so after *The Fairy Queen*, I continued to look for more theoretical models and techniques that could help me further solidify and expand this training prototype. The first step was to incorporate two well known techniques that also utilise the idea of the four elements, by Lecoq and Michael Chekhov (1891–1955), which became the next two parts of the exercise.

The exercise always starts with the first part, the Galenic/Aristotelian elements (as in Table 5). When the students come at the end of that, I keep them working with ‘water’, the last element, but this time instead of calling out numbers, I ask them to use any intensity they want and keep changing it at will on an individual level. As they do this, I move to the second part of the exercise, by reading out Lecoq’s descriptions as we explore each element, and encourage them

¹³¹Thalie Knights, ‘Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation B’, post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 28 October 2021).

to observe any changes this brings to their interpretation. For example, Lecoq described water as

a moving, resisting force, which can only be experienced by struggling with it. It is only from the pelvis that this overall sensation can be transmitted to the whole of the body. We emphasise the involvement of the pelvis so as to avoid arm- or hand-gestures which would tend to ‘signify’ the sea without experiencing it.¹³²

The additional information conveyed by Lecoq’s descriptions seem to add definition, colour and texture to the clean but more generic movement the students discover as a group with the Galenic elements. I run the exercise in Lecoq’s order: water, fire, air, earth. When we go through all four elements, I keep the students working on ‘earth’ as I introduce them to the third part of the exercise, Chekhov’s qualities of movement. Influenced by occultist Rudolf Joseph Lorenz Steiner (1861–1925),¹³³ Chekhov incorporated the idea of the four elements into his work by defining four archetypal qualities of movement: moulding (earth), flowing (water), flying (air) and radiating (fire).¹³⁴ The students explore each of the four qualities in that order, at first by using expansive and broad movements until they get a feeling of the desired quality, and once they are satisfied with it, they start exploring natural gestures and everyday movements.¹³⁵

As the students walk about the space working on each element, I read them Chekhov’s descriptions for each quality. For example, for moulding (earth) I ask them to create

strong and definite forms. To be able to do this, think of the beginning and the end of each movement you make. Again say to yourself: ‘Now

¹³²Lecoq, *op.cit.*, p.87. Abridged versions of Chekhov’s descriptions for every element can also be found on Handout 5, p.317.

¹³³Jane Gilmer, *The Alchemical Actor* (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2021), p.74.

¹³⁴Lenard Petit, *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: For the Actor* (London: Routledge, 2009), p.122.

¹³⁵Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor: On the technique of acting* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp.6–7.

I begin my movement which creates a form,' and, after completing it: 'Now I finished it; the form is there.' Along with this, think and feel your body itself as a movable form. Repeat each movement several times until it becomes free and most enjoyable to fulfill. Your efforts will resemble the work of a designer who, again and again, draws the same line, striving for a better, clearer and more expressive form. But in order not to lose the molding quality of your movement imagine the air around you as a medium which resists you. Also try the same movements in different tempos.¹³⁶

When I first ran this exercise in my teaching at Guildhall, I found that some singers tried out movements and gestures for the piece they were working on to see how a particular quality would affect them, so I now specifically call for the singers to do that, creating a useful bridge between the exercise and the rehearsal. The exercise helps to add further definition to the conception of the movement for each element. Chekhov designed this exercise to help performers 'develop a taste for form' and be 'artistically dissatisfied with any movements that are vague and shapeless, or with amorphous gestures, speech, thoughts, feelings and will impulses', as 'vagueness and shapelessness have no place in art'.¹³⁷

A central element of the system developed by dancer, choreographer and theorist Rudolf Laban (1879–1958) is based around what he called the eight basic effort actions. These (and their derivatives in brackets) are: *thrusting* (shoving, punching, poking), *slashing* (beating, throwing, whipping), *dabbing* (patting, tapping, shaking), *flicking* (flipping, flapping, jerking), *pressing* (crushing, cutting, squeezing), *wringing* (pulling, plucking, stretching), *gliding* (smoothening, smearing, smudging), and *floating* (strewing, stirring, stroking).¹³⁸ Laban wrote that 'all practical actions are preceded by four phases of mental effort which become

¹³⁶Ibid., p.5. Abridged versions of the descriptions for every element can be found on Handout 5, p.317.

¹³⁷Ibid., p.7.

¹³⁸Rudolf Laban; Lisa Ullman, editor, *The Mastery of Movement*, Fourth Edition (Alton: Dance Books, 2011), p.69.

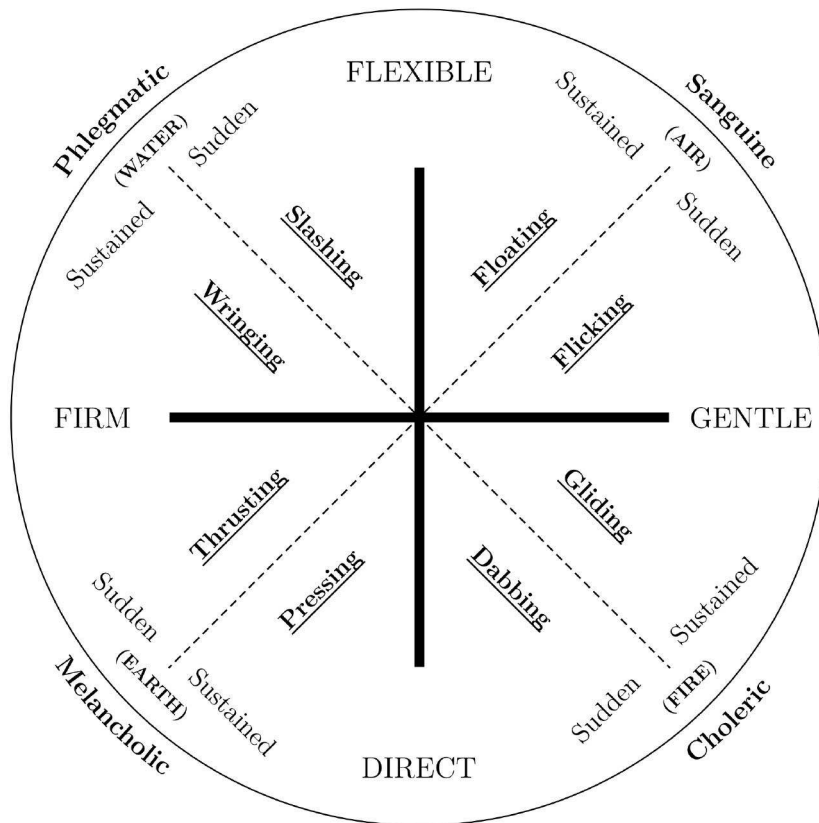


FIGURE 34. Circle of Temperaments. An experimental combination of Laban's model with elements and temperaments.

visible in small expressive bodily movements', and these are the action's attention, intention, decision and precision.¹³⁹ Each one of the first three phases represents a contrariety: attention can be flexible or direct, intention gentle or firm, and decision sudden or sustained.¹⁴⁰ The phase of precision is something analogous to our definition of preparatory gesture. It is the combination of the first three contrarities that results in the eight efforts.

I connected Laban's efforts with Aristotle's heavy-light and hard-soft contrarities, through the sympathy between flexible and soft, direct and hard, gentle and light, and firm and heavy, combining the two theoretical models in a diagram that the *Tamerlano* singers named 'circle of temperaments' (Figure 34). Each temperament contains two Laban efforts, one for each of the two decisions (sudden

¹³⁹Ibid., p.104.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

or sustained), which, together with their derivatives, can supply the performer with a very large toolkit. The exercise is now repeated, but as prompts I use Laban's action words. When I feel that the singers clearly understand the idea of the temperaments as a continuum, I give them the summary table in Handout 6 (p. 318) which includes all efforts and their derivatives. The use of the Laban technique by many hundreds of practitioners worldwide offers exciting possibilities for collaboration and the development of modern hybrids based on historical theories. Commenting on the temperament embodiment exercise, Caroline Taylor, who played Asteria in *Tamerlano* and had prior experience working with Laban efforts, said:

The circle of temperaments and assessing the temperament as a continuum was very interesting, and I found pairing the qualities of the four temperaments with Laban movement to be an extremely powerful tool to have for characterisation [...] Laban is great. You can be 'dabbing' or you can be 'pressing', but why are you doing that? The answer comes from the temperaments. [...] Asteria always felt 'heavy' in Laban terms, but there were also choleric elements. Bridging these with the melancholic elements was extremely helpful, and I think the circle of temperaments is something that definitely—if I'm not subconsciously using already—I very much envisage using for future projects, not just opera, but even *Lieder*. It's perhaps even more important in the performance of song, because without the staging, there needs to be even more security of dramatic intent. [...] Song repertoire is naked compared to a theatrical production in terms of sets and stage action, so it's important that the character and the text are integrated well, which would then produce the thoughts that lead to the right movement and gestures.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹Caroline Taylor, 'Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation B', post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 18 November 2021).

Five months after Taylor was introduced to the temperament embodiment exercise, she reported that she realised her intention to use the skills she gained from the exercise in the context of performing art song:

I've already used the temperaments in my non-operatic work and to great success for me. During our rehearsal period for *Tamerlano* I went over to do an audition for the Oxford Lieder Festival—this was a very last-minute decision, and the repertoire, although I knew it, wasn't particularly well 'in the body'. So, the work that we had done with the temperaments maybe saved me. I was able to adopt a character—a very different character—for each song instantly, which was exactly what my programme needed. So for example, when I was doing Quilter's 'Love's Philosophy' I went for a sanguine character and the element of air, and I was able to instantly change, then, to earth and melancholic for something like Debussy's 'Nuit d'étoiles'. I was able to use the stuff that we'd worked on to bring that feeling on the body and clearly show that everything was really done by a very different character.¹⁴²

Christopher Turner, the singer who sang Bajazet in *Tamerlano*, and also a pedagogue teaching singers at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, said that the concept of the temperaments was

completely new to me [and] the days of workshops really opened my eyes, because we pulled [historical ideas about] character into an organic performance, and I thought that was pretty extraordinary, I've got to say. It was only when I stood back and was watching other people that hung on to things from the workshops that initially felt maybe not natural, [but] actually, quite quickly, I saw elements of these characters starting to organically develop within the performance when I was on stage with them. [...] The best thing that those workshops

¹⁴²Idem, 'interview/discussion 23 April', *op. cit.*

did is that they really opened me up to the idea that, actually, all human beings [...] fit inside the four moulds in those diagrams you showed us, and I think that's the thing that can give young singers a really strong basis to run with, [resulting in] an organic character which an audience can identify with.¹⁴³

The temperament embodiment exercise comprises two parts, the analytical and the empirical, which both contribute to the expansion of the *thesaurus eloquentiae* with theoretical and practical tools that enhance the performance of character through physicality. The analytical part gives singers the personality-related schemata of the four temperaments, with detailed descriptions for each one and a two-dimensional diagrammatic representation of their interrelationships. Each of the four schemata can then be continuously enriched through not only the character analysis of every new role they play, but also by information assimilated through observation of nature, as now the personality of family members, friends and acquaintances can be categorised in terms of temperaments, consolidating and expanding the archetypal models. As these models become increasingly more comprehensive, the specific combination of core personality traits for each temperament becomes more apparent, aiding character analysis, and giving singers the ability to more easily identify the signature features that indicate the temperament of their character. The schemata also grant performers more details with which to build a more complete and coherent human character in a shorter timeframe than would Stanislavski analysis: rather than relying solely on their imagination to fill the holes of all the character's unknowns with often arbitrary information from an infinite amount of possibilities, they have a complete plug-and-play model they can employ, radically limiting the problem space and increasing the possibility for creating a believable character.¹⁴⁴ The empirical part of the exercise further

¹⁴³Christopher Turner, 'Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation Bx', post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 27 May 2022).

¹⁴⁴The archetypal models of the four temperaments have been built through centuries of observation of nature, so a combination of traits and attributes chosen from within a particular

supplements the four newly-minted schemata with practical tools for manifesting each temperament through movement in a distinct and discernible way, which, in combination with the tools stored in the status- and age-related schemata, can help singers temper the performed passions and portray convincing characters on stage without the years of preparation for each role that psychological realism requires.

MAGIC MIRROR EXERCISE

Another exercise many singers seem to find helpful as a follow-up to the temperament embodiment exercise is the *magic mirror exercise*. It is based on the two-person mirror exercises which most drama teachers use,¹⁴⁵ but this is a magic mirror in which the reflection is not identical but a translation of movement and gesture from one temperament to another.

The exercise begins in its basic form, with the students in pairs standing opposite each other, and taking turns in leading the moves and gestures. Once the students execute this part of the exercise smoothly, I transition to the leaderless form, in which both of them simultaneously lead and follow. When the result is smooth mutual movement, with an observer unable to distinguish who is leading, they are ready for the next stage of the exercise: a repeat of the basic form followed by the leaderless form, but this time every one of the students embodies a different temperament. Not only do they have to improvise movements and gestures that manifest their temperament, but when they copy gestures, they need to identify the core of the movement that their partner performs, and use their newly acquired knowledge to respond by spontaneously translating what they see and almost

temperament schema is statistically more likely to correspond to a combination of traits and attributes that can be observed in real life, making characterisation based on the four temperaments potentially more realistic, and therefore, more likely to be construed as believable.

¹⁴⁵The mirror exercise is very common, so a detailed description is not included here. You can find descriptions of the basic and leaderless forms of the exercise in: David Krasner, *An Actor's Craft: The Art and Technique of Acting* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), Chapter 1, Exercise 5; and Brigit Panet, *Essential Acting: A Practical Handbook for Actors, Teachers and Directors* (London: Routledge, 2009), Chapter 5, Simultaneous Mirrors.



FIGURE 35. Four stills from a magic mirror exercise practice during rehearsals of *Tamerlano*. V. Adler, as sanguine Zaida (left), and Caroline Taylor as melancholic Asteria (right). Empirical Inquiry, Implementation Bx.

synchronously present a modified version which fits their temperament. Figure 35 shows an instance of the magic mirror exercise used as part of the *Tamerlano* rehearsals by Taylor (Asteria) and V. Adler (Asteria's confidante, Zaida). Adler explained that this exercise helped her clarify

what characters we are and our relationship by the way we show our temperament: 'OK, she does this that way, which means I need to do it this way'. I think of it as 'cogs': developing a point of connection, understanding our differences and how we fit together. It was after this exercise that I really got the 'how' and 'why'.¹⁴⁶

Adler, who is an actor, recognised that this exercise takes dedication and repetition to perfect, and singers who unlike actors are rarely taught physical theatre

¹⁴⁶V. Adler, 'Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation Bx', post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 8 May 2022).

exercises, might struggle the first time, adding that ‘people who are not actors might find the exercise “cringe” and hard to do’, but given the result it had in the *Tamerlano* rehearsals, it became clear that ‘it can benefit everyone so much for understanding their own characters and building their relationships’.¹⁴⁷ Speaking from a singer’s perspective, Taylor said that

the work that we did with Zaida in the exercise of the magic mirror was invaluable, because it helped us build a connection, but it was so important in that it allowed us to also be very different in the ways we moved. That exercise was perfect. It meant that although we were doing the same movements and gestures, we moved in a way that was distinctive to a melancholic and a sanguine character.¹⁴⁸

This exercise comes with all the benefits of the regular mirror exercise, creating a strong connection between characters, but it also acts as a gauge for the teacher of the level of assimilation of the temperament embodiment skills: in the group exercises, students can follow the group, while for this one each student needs to have complete clarity about the different qualities of movement. Most students find the magic mirror exercise particularly useful because it helps them consolidate the knowledge of the previous exercise, while allowing them to learn from each other and expand their vocabulary of movement.

ANIMAL EXERCISE

Until the end of the eighteenth century, it was believed that temperaments were manifested not only by what people did but also by how they looked, such as their amount of hair, their complexion, their stature, as well as their facial appearance. This gave rise to the study of physiognomy (from the Greek *φυσιογνωμία*, literally meaning the judgment of the physical characteristics).¹⁴⁹ The influential treatise

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Taylor, ‘interview/discussion 23 April’, *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁹Aristotle was credited as the author of the first treatise on this subject, *Physiognomonics* (*Φυσιογνωμονικά*), which became the basis of scores of books published on the subject until the eighteenth century.

on physiognomy by the philosopher Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801) spans four large volumes and contains hundreds of drawings demonstrating physical manifestations of personality and character traits. The historian John Adolphus (1768–1845) wrote that the actor John Bannister (1760–1836) ‘exercised his talents in a display of the heads by which Lavater illustrated his system of physiognomy’, and by practising in front of a mirror ‘he went through a representation of many which the Swiss philosopher had delineated, various, heightening, and improving them as he proceeded’.¹⁵⁰ Lavater’s drawings can provide inspiration but in the context of this thesis they were not deemed as useful as, for instance, the drawings by Le Brun or Jelgerhuis, because they do not relate to expression but inbuilt and enduring elements of appearance that cannot be shaped through a performer’s action. This is the reason why human physiognomy was not examined as part of the theoretical foundations in Chapter 1. It is touched on briefly here as a means of introduction to another physiognomic postulation which became the basis of the next characterisation exercise.

Influenced by della Porta, Le Brun developed a divergent approach to physiognomy, in which animals are categorised according to their character traits before common parts of their physiology are identified and are used as a guide to human personality by comparing similarities and differences of these parts in animals and humans.¹⁵¹ Le Brun wrote that ‘the Affections of the Soul, do follow the Temperament of the Body’, and

the external Characters, are certain Signs of the Affections of the Soul;
so that by the form of every Creature, may be known its Humours
and Temper. The Lion, for Example, is robust and sinewy, he is

¹⁵⁰Adolphus, *op. cit.*, Ch. II, pp. 30-31. Bannister trained under Garrick and made his debut in 1778. Lavater’s treatise was published in English in 1789: Johann Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy; for the promotion of the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind. Written in the German Language by J. C. Lavater, and translated into English by Thomas Holcroft. Illustrated by Three Hundred and Sixty Engravings*, trans. by Thomas Holcroft (London: Printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, Paternoster-Row, 1789).

¹⁵¹The drawings in Della Porta’s influential sixteenth-century treatise on physiognomy (see two examples in Figure 36) leave no doubt as to the origin of Le Brun’s ideas.



FIGURE 36. Comparison between physiognomic studies (pig and ox) by Della Porta (left) and Le Brun (right).

also strong; the Leopard supple and delicate, and likewise cunning and treacherous; the Bear is savage, wild, and terrible, he is no less cruel.¹⁵²

For his lectures he produced a great number of comparative sketches that visualise the theoretical part of his work, engravings of many of which were published in 1806 by Louis Morel d'Arleux (1755–1827).¹⁵³ These representations are not realistic, like Lavater's: they aim to be evocative of each animal's essence but to create a different taxonomy for human personality. The strong communication of personality I experienced from Le Brun's images inspired me to incorporate an element of animal work into the new teaching method.

¹⁵²Le Brun, *The Conference of Monsieur Le Brun, op. cit.*, An Abridgement of a Conference of Monsier Le Breun, upon Physiognomy, pp.39–40.

¹⁵³Louis-Marie-Joseph Morel d'Arleux, *Dissertation sur un traité de Charles Le Brun, concernant le rapport de la physionomie humaine avec celle des animaux, ouvrage enrichi de la gravure des dessins tracés pour la démonstration de ce système* (Paris: A la calcographie du Musée Napoleon. De l'imprimerie de L. P. Dubray, imprimeur du Musée Napoleon, Rue Ventadour, 1806). Morel's publication includes engravings for twenty-one animals: eagle, donkey, ram, ox, camel, cat, owl, horse, goat, pig, crow, weasel, rabbit, lion, wolf, lynx, bear, parrot, fox, boar and monkey. The engravings for lion and bear are reproduced as Figure 38, p.272.

Fraunce wrote that the language of gesture and action is truly universal because it allows communication not only between people who do not speak the same language, but also with ‘beasts and senceles creatures, as the verie pictures which being dumme, yet speake by gesture and action’,¹⁵⁴ and this is one reason why animal exercises are routinely taught in almost every physical theatre class. Animals express their character, emotions and the things they want to communicate primarily through movement and gesture, offering a useful model which prompts the student to think exclusively in terms of physical expression. From childhood, we have been exposed to certain animals that are considered particularly archetypal or symbolic, observing them in real life or films, reading about them in stories, and so on. Without realising it, most people over time build up extensive cognitive schemas for a number of these animals, linking them to a wide range of valuable associations and meanings that can be tapped for use in performance. No wonder the title character in Shakespeare’s *Henry V* uses the tiger schema stored in his soldiers’ minds to encourage them to abandon the ‘stillness and humility’ of peacetime and face their enemy with their fiercest anger—and no wonder Cook recommends Shakespeare’s instruction for the ‘serious perusal of every actor’:

Now imitate the action of the tyger;
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Lend fierce and dreadful aspect to the eye;
Set the teeth close, and stretch the nostril wide,
Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit
To its full height.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴Fraunce, *op. cit.*, Second Booke, Cap. 3. ‘Of action or gesture of the whole bodie’, no pagination.

¹⁵⁵Edited excerpt from King Henry’s speech from *Henry V*, Act III, Scene 1, in Cooke, *op. cit.*, p.180.



FIGURE 37. Three students exploring the animals of lion, peacock and boar, in numbers zero (left) and six (right), with the teacher observing and offering feedback and guidance. Empirical Inquiry, Implementation C.

The *animal exercise* has not been created specifically for the new teaching method; it is a well-established exercise, so its basic form is not described in detail here.¹⁵⁶ Its distinguishing feature in the new teaching method here is that the zero-ten scale is incorporated again: zero representing the full animal (for example, all fours, mannerisms, grunts), ten representing the full human (neutral human being, without any physical essence of the animal) and everything between representing successive commixtures of the two, with six or seven being the stage version (a character that looks like a human, but borrows some elements of the quality of movement of the animal). Figure 37 shows three students practising the animal exercise in numbers zero and six. The students are asked to choose an animal whose archetypal characteristics fit the personality of their dramatic character. As the aim is to harness the students' existing schemata, the choice should rely on the student's idea of the animal, as different people assign different characteristics and make different associations. There is no right or wrong when choosing an animal,

¹⁵⁶Descriptions of the exercise could be found in: Nick O'Brien, *Stanislavski in Practice: Exercises for Students* (London: Routledge, 2017), Chapter 10, Exercise 77; Thomas de Mallet Burgess and Nicholas Skilbeck, *The Singing and Acting Handbook* (London: Routledge, 2000), Chapter 5, Exercise 99; and Lola Cohen and Matthew D. Rudikoff, *The Method Acting Exercises Handbook* (London: Routledge, 2016), Chapter 4, Animal Exercise.

so long as the student can explain their choice.¹⁵⁷ For example, in Shakespeare's example above we see a tiger associated mainly with ferociousness and anger, while in this example from Handel's *Alcina* we see a tiger familial, protective and loving:

The indignant tiger stands in her stony Hyrcanian lair, hovering uncertain whether she should flee or wait for the hunter. She wants to protect herself from the extended spear, but that would leave her offspring in peril. She trembles, and the overpowering desire for blood and pity for her young makes love prevail.¹⁵⁸

After the students choose and explore the animal in the manner of the exercise, what they find can be used in conjunction with the status, age and temperament variables: the animal becomes a fourth variable. Although the temperament embodiment exercise can produce very strong characterisation through movement, the animal exercise offers a more visceral connection and adds variety. For example, two choleric characters could share the stage, but if one is a choleric lion and the other is a choleric bear, there would be a noticeable variance. Lions are commonly associated with courage, strength, royalty, pride, domination, protectiveness, intelligence and dignity, they are carnivores, quick and agile, with graceful and fluid movement and upright posture. Bears are associated with ferocity, curiosity, playfulness, solitude, independence, persistence and resourcefulness, they are omnivores, great in size, heavy, lumbering and clumsy, with hunched heads and shoulders. With the animal variable, both characters on stage are still choleric, but the animal associations bring different choleric traits to the fore and affect the

¹⁵⁷See Exercise 7.2. in Handout 7, p.321.

¹⁵⁸Ruggiero's Act III, Scene 3 aria from Handel's *Alcina*. Original in verse:

Stà nell'*Ircana* pietrosa Tana
Tigre sdegnosa, e incerta pende,
Se parte, o attende il Cacciator.
Dal teso Strale guardar si vuole,
Ma poi la Prole lascia in periglio.
Freme, e l'assale desio di sangue,
Pietà del Figlio; poi vince amor.



FIGURE 38. Physiognomic studies juxtaposing the human face with a lion (left) and a bear (right). Drawn by Le Brun in 1671 and engraved by André Le Grand. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

balance, posture, movement and gait. Now imagine the variety a choleric peacock, a choleric snake, or a choleric eagle could provide. Laban's 'dabbling' and 'gliding' would look and feel very different done with a peacock or an eagle in mind: it will still be 'dabbling' and 'gliding', but the body, face and eyes would give it a different hue. Or imagine how different a choleric bear, a melancholic bear, a sanguine bear and a phlegmatic bear would be; or the differences between a choleric lion, a melancholic lion, a sanguine lion and a phlegmatic lion. Most students report that they create strong images for each of these combinations, which indicates the spontaneous and visceral connection most people develop with animal archetypes. If the choice of animal is carefully made to correspond closely with the character and drama, the animal variable can add extra definition and create a strong link with the imagination, with all the benefits previously identified.¹⁵⁹

Unlike the other exercises, the animal exercise does not aim to create new schemata: it aims to migrate existing schemata into the *thesaurus eloquentiae*, harnessing the detailed knowledge stored in them already and supplementing it

¹⁵⁹See discussion above, p.214.

with kinetic models that allow them to be physicalised and embodied. The combination of the temperament and animal variables could be particularly useful to singers, who, unlike actors, are often called to perform a succession of different songs and arias in public recitals, exams or auditions. While an actor or a singer performing a dramatic character as part of a complete production of a staged work can focus almost exclusively on one character for a considerable period of time, in a recital, a singer needs to switch continually between many (often radically different) characters and dramatic situations. In that case, the temperament/animal combination becomes a shorthand mnemonic aid which acts as a strategy activator,¹⁶⁰ bringing back all the key characteristics associated with the schemata in question, and allowing the singer to create a succession of distinct characters through posture, elevation and quality of movement, contributing to the qualities of congruity, moderation and variety in the performance as a whole.

Gestures

The work outlined above aims to equip students with a conceptual framework and a collection of strategies and techniques for the expression and embodiment of passions and characterisation, as well as to help them appropriately shape every movement and gesture to fit the personality and emotional state of the dramatic character. But, what gestures are they to make? When we improvise speech, most of us accompany our voice with spontaneous hand gestures and facial expressions, complementing, amplifying and clarifying the meaning of the words we utter. While different people have different styles of gesticulation, much of their gestural vocabulary is learned from a young age in tandem with spoken language. Steven Pinker argued that language is a human instinct: a natural yet complex, specialised skill which ‘develops in the child spontaneously, without conscious effort or formal instruction’ and ‘is deployed without awareness of its

¹⁶⁰Charles M. Reigeluth, ‘In Search of a Better Way to Organize Instruction: The Elaboration Theory’ *Journal of Instructional Development*, 2 (1979):3, p.361.

underlying logic'.¹⁶¹ As described in Chapter 1, the art of rhetoric shapes and structures this natural language, increasing its beauty and its effectiveness, while not impairing its naturalness, where a great deal of its persuasive power lies.¹⁶² Language at its most persuasive appears natural, spontaneous and improvised—as if words spring straight from the heart.¹⁶³ When nature meets art, however, the power of language to communicate, move and delight significantly increases.¹⁶⁴ The remainder of this chapter outlines the third part of the new teaching method, which aims to equip singers with an assortment of tools to refine their natural gestural language, increase their gestural vocabulary and improvise artfully.

In his discussions on rhetorical pedagogy, Quintilian argued that when children begin to learn to speak, they should first learn by memorising and repeating sentences and stories told by their teacher—which helps them slowly understand how the language works and how to use it properly—before being made to try to produce correct and accurate speeches extempore: ignorant vainglorious parents encouraging their children to extemporise speech too soon makes them lazy, instils in them bad speaking habits, and thwarts their progress, squandering their talents.¹⁶⁵ Reading, listening to and repeating the best examples allows students to amass a treasury of resources which can be used during improvisation: a *copia rerum ac verborum* ('hoard of ideas and words').¹⁶⁶ That process takes time, so

¹⁶¹Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994), p.18.

¹⁶²See discussion on rhetoric and beautified nature, pp.36, 76.

¹⁶³See discussion on concealing the art, p.82.

¹⁶⁴See discussion on artless and artful improvisation, p.195.

¹⁶⁵Nam ut primo, cum sermo instituitur, dicere quae audierint utile est pueris ad loquendi facultatem, ideoque et retro agere expositionem et a media in utramque partem discurrere sane merito cogantur, sed ad gremium praeceptoris, et dum aliud non possunt et dum res ac verba connectere incipiunt, ut protinus memoriam firment: ita cum iam formam rectae atque emendatae orationis accipient, extemporalis garrulitas nec exspectata cogitatio et vix surgendi mora circulatoriae vere iactationis est. Hinc parentium imperitorum inane gaudium, ipsis vero contemptus operis et invereconda frons et consuetudo pessime dicendi et malorum exercitatio et, quae magnos quoque profectus frequenter perdidit, arrogans de se persuasio innascitur'. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, II:4.15–16.

¹⁶⁶num ergo dubium est, quin ei velut opes sint quaedam parandae, quibus uti, ubicunque desideratum erit, possit? eae constant copia rerum ac verborum. [...] Nobis autem copia cum iudicio paranda est vim orandi non circulatoriam volubilitatem spectantibus. Id autem

teaching should be progressive, in small steps appropriate to level and ability, allowing students to understand the nature of what they are learning on their own terms.¹⁶⁷ In our case, before students are asked to improvise gestures for their songs or arias (running the risk of forming bad habits which might hinder their progress and potential), they need first to be taught good examples of gestures for storing progressively, through repetition, in what we might call *copia rerum ac gestorum* ('hoard of ideas and gestures'), from which they would be able—in due course and through incremental advancement—to draw elements during improvisation spontaneously.¹⁶⁸ Thanks to the invention of writing, today we have access to infinite amounts of literary material (such as poetry, novels, speeches, essays, plays, memoirs, etc.) from across millennia which can be used as models for enriching one's *copia rerum ac verborum*. Gestural expression is much more ephemeral, and although descriptions and images offer great insight, the technology to record moving image was only developed at the end of the nineteenth century. However, as noted in Chapter 2, Gilbert Austin developed a unique system of gestural notation, which he presented in his treatise *Chironomia* (1806).¹⁶⁹ Although the notation did not gain particular traction and was used little at the time of its creation, Austin's notated examples offer a remarkable vision of rhetorical action shaped by the principles of historical acting, making them ideal models to use for enriching our *copia rerum ac gestorum* with concepts and gestures.

consequemur optima legendo atque audiendo'. Ibid. X:1.5, 8. We saw earlier (p.196) that *copia rerum ac verborum* is another term Quintilian uses to refer to the concept of *thesaurus eloquentiae*.

¹⁶⁷Erit suum parandae facilitati tempus, nec a nobis negligenter locus iste transibitur. Interim satis est, si puer omni cura et summo, quantum illa aetas capit, labore aliquid probabile scripserit; in hoc assuescat, huius sibi rei naturam faciat. Ille demum in id, quod quaerimus, aut ei proximum poterit evadere, qui ante discet recte dicere quam cito'. Ibid., II:4.17.

¹⁶⁸See discussion on embodiment in Jed Wentz, "And the Wing'd *Muscles*, into Meanings Fly". Practice-Based Research into Historical Acting Through the Writings of Aaron Hill' in: Idem, editor, *European Drama and Performance Studies: Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2022).

¹⁶⁹See Chapter 2, p.94.

Looking for ways of incorporating Austin's gestural notation in my teaching, I was fortunate to spend five days in January 2016 working with the Amsterdam Historical Acting Collective, created and led by historical acting specialist Jed Wentz. There, performer-researchers realised notated examples from Austin's *Chironomia*, resulting in a variety of interpretations, followed by comparisons and analysis from the perspective of both the performer and observers and leading to thought-provoking discussions pertaining to both theory and praxis.¹⁷⁰ This inspiring experience demonstrated the usefulness of Austin's notation as a teaching tool. Not only do Austin's examples allow students to enrich their gestural glossary, but, as much as parsing a sentence written on the board can help us teach the grammatical underpinnings of spoken language, this notation provides a concrete way of visualising gesticulation, facilitating the analysis and understanding of the underlying gestural grammar. To answer the question facing singers preparing to perform a song or aria for the first time, 'what gestures should I make?', and taking a pedagogical view, the following techniques aim to equip students with the knowledge they need to answer it. If, for instance, the problem statement is 'what gestures should I use when performing the song "Music for a While" by Henry Purcell?' Austin's notated example of Gray's *Elegy* cannot provide a direct solution, as the solution (Austin's gestures and their placement) is an answer to the question: 'what gestures should I use when declaiming Gray's *Elegy*?' However, Austin's notation of Gray's poem *Elegy* can be used as a worked example, through which students can deduce the principles modelled by Austin and implement them to derive the solution to their own problem.¹⁷¹

After working with Amsterdam Historical Acting Collective, I began to experiment with using Austin's notation in teaching. Over the years from *The Fairy Queen* (2016) to the Empirical Inquiry (2022) and throughout my tenure at the

¹⁷⁰Wentz researches and teaches historical acting and declamation at Leiden University, and many of the Collective's members are also researchers and teachers of Baroque gesture.

¹⁷¹See definition of the term 'worked example' in Chapter 2, p.98.

Guildhall, I tried many different approaches, improving, discarding or adapting techniques until I defined a process which is the most effective for teaching gesture to singers across one academic year. The process builds upon the foundation laid by Quintilian adopted in *Institutio Oratoria*, incorporating four key elements of his approach: general oratorical principles are examined first, followed by practical advice on the writing of speeches, the creation of mental scores of speeches without any writing, and the improvisation of speeches. The instructional design is underpinned by techniques based on the Cognitive Load Theory, such as modelling and instructional fading, two of the most effective tools in guided instruction.¹⁷² The new process is divided into four general parts—(i) core principles, (ii) gestural notation, (iii) score of gestures and (iv) improvisation—each of which can be taught across several classes, in parallel with the exercises on the passions and characterisation outlined above.

I. CORE PRINCIPLES

According to Sweller, for students to achieve a deep understanding of a particular subject area and effectively solve problems within it, they must acquire a strong foundation of both declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge related to that subject.¹⁷³ The first part of the teaching of gesture focuses on developing the students' declarative knowledge of the historical acting domain, which will act as the foundation for further learning. Declarative knowledge is an essential component of a well-rounded education, but in such a specialised domain, it becomes a precondition for acquiring procedural knowledge, as problem-solving would be

¹⁷²See Kalyuga et al., *op. cit.*, p.27; van Merriënboer and Kirschner, *op. cit.*, p.17; Rob J. Nadolski, Paul A. Kirschner and Jeroen J. G. van Merriënboer, 'Optimizing the number of steps in learning tasks for complex skills' *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75 (2005), p.227; and A. Collins, J. S. Brown and A. Holum, 'Cognitive apprenticeship: Making thinking visible' *American Educator*, 15 (1991):3, p.6.

¹⁷³Sweller, *op. cit.*, p.284. Declarative knowledge is the knowledge of facts, concepts and principles that form the foundation of a particular subject or discipline, and includes the ability to use domain-specific terminology and communicate concepts, principles and theories related to that domain. Procedural knowledge is knowledge relating to the performance of specific tasks or procedures, and includes the ability to describe or perform procedures or tasks.

impossible without the ability to analyse and evaluate information according to historical acting principles. The teaching of this part (i. core principles) is delivered in the form of lectures, intermitted by short workshops, demonstrations and dialogue, until the students have a confident understanding of the core theoretical concepts underpinning our work.¹⁷⁴

The topics taught during this part encompass much of the material contained in Chapters 1 to 3. First, the three core principles of historical acting are introduced: classical beauty (Chapter 1, p. 23), rhetoric (Chapter 1, p. 36) and naturalness (Chapter 1, p. 76), with explanation of how they relate to each other, and extensive discussion of the concept of concealment of art (p. 82), which I have identified as a threshold concept for singers.¹⁷⁵ In respect of art concealment, singers take longer than actors to overcome liminality, with discussions in class suggesting that the difficulty is related to the ‘musician’ part of the singer’s identity, and the overwhelming focus on the deliberate demonstration of technical attainment among peers, which is at odds with dissimulation of technique.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴Regular class discussions where every student is encouraged to speak are a crucial part of assessing students’ understanding of the material through their ability to clearly articulate the ideas introduced. The teaching plan is adapted accordingly.

¹⁷⁵A threshold concept is an idea or understanding central to a particular domain and necessary for a student to acquire to progress in their learning. Threshold concepts are also called ‘troublesome knowledge’ because they tend to involve a significant shift in how students think about a subject. Once a student has mastered a threshold concept, they can progress into a post-liminal space, where that concept is an integral part of their understanding of the discipline and enables them to see connections and make links between previously unrelated ideas. Threshold concepts are tipping points in a student’s learning, beyond which they can make significant progress and achieve a deeper understanding of the subject. See Jan Meyer and Ray Land, ‘Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge: Linkages to Ways of Thinking and Practising within the Disciplines’ *Enhancing Teaching-Learning Environments in Undergraduate Courses Project Occasional Report 4* (2003) and Idem, Jan Meyer and Jan Smith, editors, *Threshold Concepts within the Disciplines* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008).

¹⁷⁶I start this discussion by sharing this strong statement by D’Angelo, which never fails to elicit an equally strong response, leading to a constructive debate: ‘Those who, in art, grow excited about the overcoming of difficulties, technical skills, or the ostentation of abilities—as happens with virtuosity, a phenomenon typical, though not exclusive, of musical performance—end up mistaking the artist for the tightrope walker. They would underappreciate form in their (always quite obtuse) admiration of the crafty ability of execution. This kind of wonder is hopelessly naïve, and pertains to simpletons and children, who [are] unable to appreciate art that conceals its sophistication behind an apparent simplicity, and are much more disposed to value what is patently complex, is duly executed, and manifests the exercise of skills’. D’Angelo, *op.cit.*, pp.3–4.

Other key elements examined include the law of contrast (Chapter 1, p. 25), which receives special attention being a core tenet pertaining to classical beauty; a detailed look at gesture classification (Chapter 2, p. 111); and the six qualities of gestures (Chapter 2, p. 121). Finally, we explore the notion that rules can be broken for effect (Chapter 2, p. 150), which I found to be another threshold concept for several singers in every cohort, as it clashes with a tendency for stricter adherence to clearly defined rules that canonic curricula encourage.

During this stage, the main practical skill singers acquire is the *contrapposto* stance: another troublesome threshold to be crossed. Teaching *contrapposto* without proper preparation can be problematic, as some singers may reject it outright because it clashes with their existing schema relating to singing posture. Many singers consider posture to be inextricably linked with vocal technique—the domain of their vocal teacher—and any change in posture is received as a potential risk to their vocal work. To allow *contrapposto* to be assimilated into the singing-posture schema, the singing-posture schema needs to be revised. Through trial and error, I developed a three-step process that facilitates this revision:

- (1) The ability to sing needs to be disconnected from posture. By tapping into the ‘opera’ and ‘stage director’ schemata, I remind students that as professional singers they need to develop the ability to sing in any position, as a stage director might ask them to sing lying down, kneeling, squatting, hanging upside down, etc. Most ensuing discussions conclude in a general agreement that it is a singer’s responsibility to have the technical ability to be able to sing well regardless of posture. If they have to stand in a certain way in order to sing, posture becomes a crutch, and therefore a technical problem. The voice should be free and open without the need for any crutches.
- (2) Next we discuss why vocal teachers might prefer a balanced stance, and examine the use of Alexander Technique lessons. Standing with the weight on both feet might be the best stance for the voice studio because it allows

the focus to be exclusively on the voice. The teacher can easily observe how the singer's vocal apparatus works, and what effect singing may be having on the body, such as involuntary movements. Contrapposto and a contrasting presentation of the arms can mask such technical issues from view, while an Alexander Technique stance would lay them bare for the teacher to see. What then would be the best posture for performance? At this point I introduce the concept of the rehearsal/performance dichotomy (Chapter 3, p. 192), where what is optimal during rehearsal or practice might be suboptimal for use during performance. This introduces the idea that there can be different postures for different contexts, and perhaps standing motionless with the weight on both feet is sub-optimal for performance, in comparison to the aesthetic and rhetorical benefits that contrapposto offers. By introducing the idea that there is more than one way of standing when singing, according to the context, the singing-posture schema is revised, enabling it to accommodate the new knowledge (standing in contrapposto for performance).

- (3) To show singers that contrapposto is a natural stance, I finish by instructing them to observe instances of contrapposto in the real world (i.e. people standing at a stop waiting for their bus, models on posters) examples which we discuss at our next meeting.

Using these three steps has proven effective in ushering most students across the liminal threshold and encouraging them to make contrapposto part of their singing practice. Besides using the stance in class, I give students a handout with a reminder of the basic exercise for practising contrapposto, as well as optional reading they can use to develop their understanding further.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷See Handout 8, p.323.

II. GESTURAL NOTATION

As previously discussed, Austin's gestural notation can have many benefits in the classroom, such as the facilitation of analysis and enrichment of students' gestural glossary. However, in a highly congested curriculum, where singers are already forced to make choices on where to place their focus,¹⁷⁸ asking them to invest time in learning a historical notational system for gestures is received by many as a very tall order. Although students find the notation interesting, and, when taught in class, Austin's system is intuitive enough for students to get the hang of the basics fairly quickly, from the hundreds of students I have taught notation to since 2016, only students specialising in early music spent enough time outside class to be able to read and write gestures without complete reliance on charts, and among these, I know of only four who have become genuinely proficient and continued using the notation after our teaching ended, and these because they have a specialised interest in historical acting. I found that even though most students in a general vocal course are willing to put the time into practice to acquire new skills, they seem to respond best to more hands-on and action-oriented processes geared towards direct application. After experimenting with various approaches, using student feedback and pedagogical knowledge to improve and evolve the techniques, I devised a process which is targeted at students in a general vocal course, making use of Austin's notation as a tool for analysis, but, in order to be inclusive and encompass and support multiple modes of learning, without requiring students to become adept (or even basic) users. Austin's notation is utilised only during this second part of the overall process (ii. gestural notation), acting as a winch to launch students to the next part (iii. score of gestures), where use of the notation is not required.

After the students have learned the theoretical foundations in the first part (i. core principles), they are introduced to the notation. I start with giving a

¹⁷⁸See Introduction, p.3.

brief outline of how the notation works,¹⁷⁹ then I invite students to copy me while I go through the gestures notated by Austin for the first four stanzas of Gray's *Elegy*. Walker advised the teacher, when demonstrating in class, to stand opposite the student and demonstrate with the opposite hands of the ones intended so the student can copy them directly as a mirror image.¹⁸⁰ So, for my demonstration I memorise the gestures in reverse, using the opposite hands of what Austin notated, so the students can copy me directly, which eases their cognitive load and frees mental bandwidth for processing more important elements related to movement.¹⁸¹

After we have gone through the four stanzas a couple of times and the students are becoming accustomed to the various gestures, I start again from the beginning, but this time I stop and link every gesture with its notation, to aid assimilation of the basics, and, more importantly, I initiate a discussion in which I invite students to attempt to reverse-engineer Austin's process. For example, for the phrase 'the lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea', the notation indicates that we are to first look forward (*F*), then on the word 'lowing' to move our weight onto the back foot (*rRI*), and on the word 'herd' to extend our right hand forward (*phf*) and move it slowly from the front rightwards to oblique (*q*) until it reaches the side (*x*) on the word 'lea'.¹⁸² Students are asked to use their knowledge of the theory to infer Austin's reasoning behind these gestures. Speculation can include, for instance, that the change of the gaze is an indicative gesture of the eyes (and face, as, although not notated, the performer should adopt a new facial expression that relates to the feelings elicited by what they see), designating to the spectator that this is a new thought and to draw their attention to wonder momentarily what the performer is seeing in the distance. The subsequent shift of weight to the back foot amplifies the sense of distance between the performer and the object that captured their attention, which we find out is a herd of cattle with the indicative

¹⁷⁹See Chapter 2, p.96.

¹⁸⁰Walker, *The Academic Speaker*, *op. cit.*, p.vii.

¹⁸¹Kalyuga et al., *op. cit.*, p.26.

¹⁸²Austin, *op. cit.*, p.524.

gesture on the word 'herd' (hand prone, horizontal and forward). Then the hand mirrors the description, slowly following the herd across the lea until it leaves the scene completely, with the hand ending in the extended position (x), pointing outside the field of vision (which is the sense the poem conveys, where by the end of the stanza the protagonist is left alone in darkness). By analysing Austin's notation as a worked example the students come to understand how gestures can be used rhetorically, and also revise theoretical elements and terminology learned in the first part (i. core principles). During this process I guide the discussion by asking questions and making suggestions (often intentionally wrong ones, using their responses to assess the students' understanding).

When the initial analysis is completed I invite them to go deeper, aiming to incorporate as many of the theoretical elements they learned as possible. For example, for the phrase 'the lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea' we see Austin following the order eyes-feet-hands. The placement of notation indicates the stroke of gesture, but when does the preparation for each gesture need to start? How could we realise this notation as written but increase the naturalness of our performance through the quality of timeliness? Students have already been taught the natural order of actions: (1) move eyes, (2) express emotion with face, (3) start moving the hands/arms (4) start moving feet, (5) start speaking (6) finish moving the feet, and (7) finish hand gesture.¹⁸³ Taking this into consideration, before the line is spoken, the performer should first move the eyes (1) forward, focusing on the imaginary herd in the distance, and then all these things need to happen in quick succession: as they start breathing in, the face (2) would change (for example, to a joyous expression); while still drawing the breath, the right hand (3) would start lifting (having finished the previous gesture on a downward position) and the weight of the feet (4) would start shifting backwards as the taking in of breath finishes. The phrase begins being spoken (5) while the upwards

¹⁸³See Chapter 2, p.146.

movement of the hand continues, as does the backwards shifting of the weight, but the weight shift is completed on the word 'lowing' (6) and the stroke of the hand gesture falls on the word 'herd' (7). Austin's notation only shows final positions, so such realisation sits in the intersection of what is notated and the theoretical model of the timely order of actions, bridging the gaps inherent in the notation with decisions that increase naturalness.

During the first session, when these two stages of analysis take place, the gestural notation serves as a basis for discussion. The students are not asked to actively use it, as I demonstrate and they copy me. I reassure the students that they do not have to take any notes, as they will be given all the basics of the notation, so they can focus their attention on practising each stance, gesture and new approach as we progress. As homework at the end of this class, I ask them to attempt to realise another piece notated by Austin that we have not worked on together. The piece they are assigned is Gay's *Miser and Plutus*, and the students are asked to learn as many gestures as possible (minimum five), and spend as much time as possible repeating the section they chose until they memorise it. This is an apt example for beginners because for the *Miser and Plutus*, in addition to the notation, Austin has provided drawings realising every notated gesture.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, the character of the Miser, who, as Hill argues, 'no man will ever play tolerably who does not boldly exaggerate upon all that he ever saw of reality, in the manner of his performing it', gives license to the students to be as expansive as they want and to experiment without the sense of self-consciousness which a serious character might elicit.¹⁸⁵ Although the drawings are helpful, the notation is still required for this exercise to be beneficial. However, because in the new teaching method learning the notation is not a prerequisite (see above), I developed an online resource that enables students to realise the homework independently without having to learn the notation (though it also

¹⁸⁴See Figure 39.

¹⁸⁵J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.243.

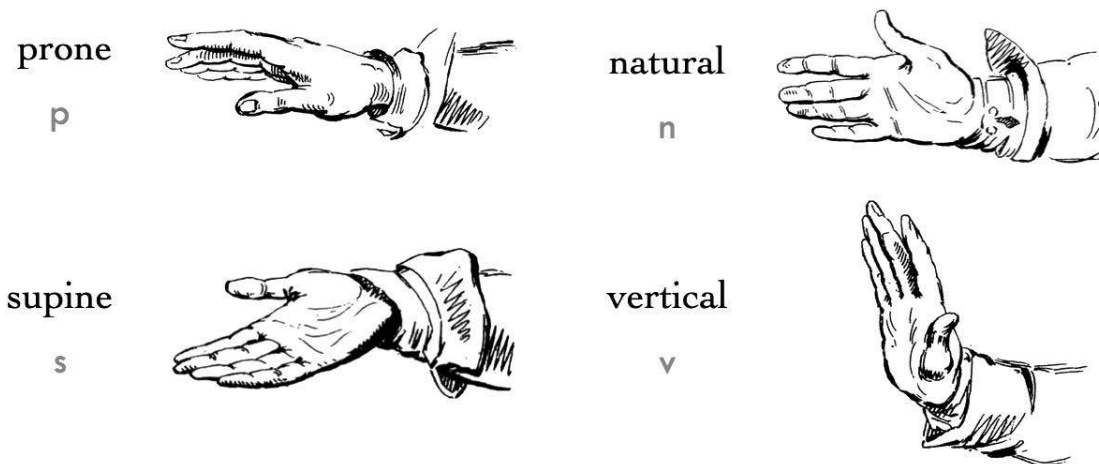


FIGURE 40. Four basic hand dispositions as they appear in Austin's Gestural Notation online resource. Notation letters in different colour and typeface from the rest of the text.

does contain all the basics of the notation for any students who might decide to go deeper).¹⁸⁶

The online resource has been created with beginners in mind, and to avoid overwhelming the student, the model is streamlined, with the focus placed only on a subset of the elements of the notation that relates only to the repertoire to be looked at in class. For example, drawings are offered only of the four most common dispositions of the hands: prone, supine, natural and vertical (Figure 40). In designing the online resource I took into consideration the split-attention effect, whereby novices benefit from a reduction of the cognitive load through 'textual explanations integrated into the diagrams' and 'explanatory material in an integrated format'.¹⁸⁷ For example, compare the drawings for the vertical and horizontal hand positions as they appear in Austin's *Chironomia* (Figure 12, p. 98) and in the online resource (Figure 41). A user of Austin's book would need to jump between two places many pages apart to see what each figure and letter

¹⁸⁶Dionysios Kyropoulos, 'Austin's Gestural Notation' *Online Learning Resources*, (URL: www.kyropoulos.com/austin). The printed handout offered to the students includes tables from Austin's book which detail all elements of the notation for anyone wanting to explore it in greater depth in the future, as well as the notated *Elegy*, followed by Austin's notes on the notation (see Handout 9, p.329).

¹⁸⁷Kalyuga et al., *op. cit.*, p.25.

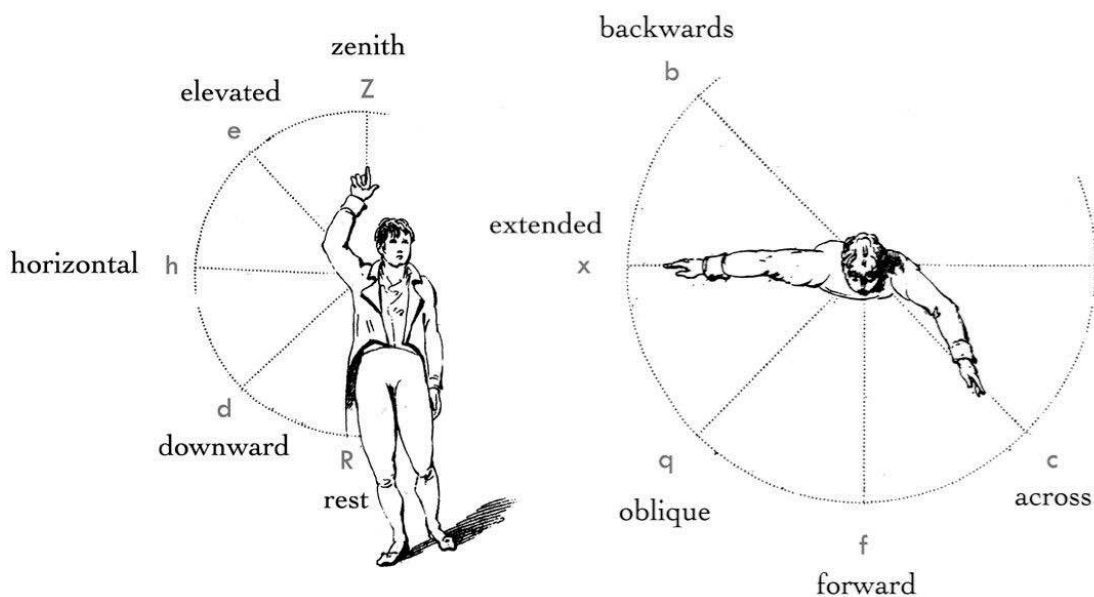


FIGURE 41. The hand positions in the vertical and horizontal planes as they appear in Austin's Gestural Notation online resource. Notation letters in different colour and typeface from the rest of the text.

on the drawing represents, while in the online resource, everything is integrated for easy reference. To further ease the mental effort and aid schema formation, the notation letters have been enlarged and marked with a different typeface and colour (red).¹⁸⁸ On the hand disposition figure (Figure 40), users of *Chironomia* would have to consult three different pages, one for the gesture description, a second for an arbitrary sequential reference number for the drawing, and the third for the page of drawings.

The online resource includes a notated example of Gay's poem *Miser and Plutus* with Austin's drawings, but several accommodations have again been made to reduce the split-attention effect (Figure 42).¹⁸⁹ In the online learning resource each line of the poem is presented next to the notation, a detailed explanation of

¹⁸⁸This thesis is optimised for black-and-white printing, so all figures are reproduced in high-contrast grayscale. For colour, see the original online learning resource (weblink cited above, fn.186).

¹⁸⁹Compare the example from the online learning resource in Figure 42 with Austin's illustrated notation guide for *Miser and Plutus* on p.285.



FIGURE 42. The first line of Gay’s *Miser and Plutus* as it appears in the online Austin’s Gestural Notation learning resource, with each element of the notation explained and the drawing flipped in mirror image to aid practice. Poetic text in large size, and notation letters in different colour and typeface.

each gesture and the respective drawing of the movement trail and finishing position, and as well as the accommodations already discussed (such as the notation presented in a different typeface, size and colour), the students’ mental effort is further lessened by formatting in italics the terms for elevation and position in the gesture descriptions, and by presenting Austin’s drawings flipped in mirror image (for the same reason I physically demonstrated gestures in mirror image in class—to be copied directly without burdening the overall cognitive load with another processing task). Additionally, to aid the memorisation of gestures through physical repetition, the poetic text is displayed in sufficiently large font to be easily read out from a distance by a standing student during practice in any setup.

In the next class, each student brings at least the first five lines of *Miser and Plutus* realised and memorised. We start by discussing the students’ experience of this first attempt to realise the notation independently, then we have performances of their realisations, with discussions and reflections after each. The discussions include elements of choices relating to performance, but also, as in the previous session, continue the worked-example analysis by considering Austin’s rationale behind each gesture. Even when clear reasoning for a gesture cannot be inferred, singers are asked to imagine something that would work, because there should always be a connection with imagination and no movement should be made purely

mechanical.¹⁹⁰ This work is meant to act as scaffolding for the desideratum of artful improvisation, so, although at this stage students are not yet improvising gestures, they should ensure a clear connection with the imagination at all times. To avoid bad habits creeping in, if students cannot find an idea that creates this link between imagination and action, they are encouraged to omit or amend the notated gestures.

Depending on the students' progress (as each cohort might differ widely), two or more sessions are devoted to working on *Miser and Plutus* until, through the discussions and performance, I feel confident that every student has achieved a good understanding of the most important theoretical elements and has found a way of working with gestures independently. We are then ready to put the notation aside and move to the third part of the process.

III. SCORE OF GESTURES

This part of the process is based on *cogitatio*, which Quintilian introduces and outlines in *Institutio Oratoria*, Book 10, Chapter 6. *Cogitatio* is a method of preparing for a speech which sits somewhere between writing it out in its entirety and improvising on the spot.¹⁹¹ After orators have learned to write and revise their speeches, they are asked to compose a mental score of the speech, without writing anything down, storing it in memory through practice and repetition. In *cogitatio* the speech is thoroughly planned, but because it is not written down, it never becomes wholly fixed. While a clear form emerges, the particulars are slightly revised and developed through each repetition, keeping the delivery alive and allowing a speaker to be both well-prepared and not tied to a specific script, which gives them the freedom to follow the inspiration of the moment, should they

¹⁹⁰See discussion on imagination above, p.214.

¹⁹¹'Proxima stilo cogitatio est, quae et ipsa vires ab hoc accipit, estque inter scribendi laborem extemporalemque fortunam media quaedam et nescio an usus frequentissimi'. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, X:6.1.

deem it useful, or appropriately respond to an unplanned event or an audience's reaction.

A gestural equivalent of Quintilian's *cogitatio* is called by theatre practitioners 'the score'. The score does not pertain to words or symbols; it is a mental script, a score of action: of all the physical manifestations of passions and characterisation, all the movements, expressions and gestures that accompany the dramatic text (which is fixed and written down). As with *cogitatio*, the score is thoroughly prepared but not written down on paper: it is stored in the performer's memory through physical and mental repetition, which allows it to acquire a clear form while remaining alive, evolving and changing. Diderot called such thorough preparation of the part a prerequisite for a great actor, who would have 'considered, combined, learnt and arranged the whole thing in his head', giving his passions 'a definite course' with 'a beginning, a middle, and an end'.¹⁹² As with *cogitatio*, the key lies in repetition, both corporeal and mental. Diderot gives an example of the antiemotionalist Mlle Clairon, who after building her characterisation and a score of actions, managed to internalise it to such a degree that as 'she lies careless and still on a sofa with folded arms and closed eyes she can, following her memory's dream, hear herself, see herself, judge herself, and judge also the effects she will produce'.¹⁹³ Roach argued that Diderot's 'prophetic insistence that mind and body are intertwined and jointly structured by habit' has strong parallels with some of the acting training concepts developed by Stanislavski.¹⁹⁴ He quotes Stanislavski saying that

¹⁹²Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*, *op.cit.*, p.9.

¹⁹³Ibid., p.11. Diderot's description pre-echoes a technique known in modern scholarship as mental rehearsal and visualisation, in which, through mental repetition of the score without movement, performers can more efficiently commit the score to memory, improve their focus and control over their sensibility, create a stronger connection between body and mind, and achieve a confident, consistent performance, with greater freedom for spontaneity. Christopher Connolly and Aaron Williamon, 'Mental Skills Training' in: Idem, editor, *Musical Excellence: Strategies and Techniques to Enhance Performance* (2004), pp.224-228.

¹⁹⁴Roach, 'Theatre Survey 22 [1981]', *op.cit.*, p.66.

With time and frequent repetition, in rehearsal and performance, this score becomes habitual. An actor becomes so accustomed to all his objectives and their sequence that he cannot conceive of approaching his role otherwise than along the line of the steps fixed in the score. Habit plays a great part in creativeness: it establishes in a firm way the accomplishments of creativeness. In the familiar words of Volkonski it makes what is difficult habitual, what is habitual easy, and what is easy beautiful. Habit creates second nature, which is a second reality.¹⁹⁵

Stanislavski's process allows the performer 'through repetition and gradual refinement' of the series of actions identified in the score to 'resolve anomalous effects generated through physical or mental work',¹⁹⁶ and 'reinforces the unbreakable bond' between gesture (physical action) and emotion (inner action).¹⁹⁷ Inspired by Stanislavski's work, the influential theatre director and theorist Jerzy Grotowski (1933–1999) introduced a technique called 'the score of physical actions'. Ryszard Cieślak (1937–1990), who worked with Grotowski as one of his leading actors for almost two decades, offers an insight into their practice:

We work in rehearsals to find an objective set of actions and relationships that, understood apart from anything we the performers might feel, communicate to the audience the images, actions, and meanings we want to communicate. [...]

Finally we construct a coherent score. This score, which grows minutely day by day, includes all the objective things a spectator sees from night to night. [...]

The score is like the glass inside which a candle is burning. The glass is solid, it is there, you can depend on it. It contains and guides

¹⁹⁵Constantin Stanislavski, *Creating a Role*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (London: Methuen Drama, 1981), p.62. Stanislavski quotes director, acting teacher, and critic Sergei Volkonski (1860–1937), with whom he collaborated in Moscow.

¹⁹⁶Zachary Dunbar, 'Stanislavski's system in musical theatre actor training: anomalies of acting song' *Stanislavski Studies: Practice, Legacy, and Contemporary Theater*, 4 (2016):1, p.68.

¹⁹⁷Stanislavski, *op.cit.*, p.228.

the flame. But it is not the flame. The flame is my inner process each night. [...] The flame is alive. Just as the flame in the candle-glass moves, flutters, rises, fall, almost goes out, suddenly glows brightly, responds to each breath of wind—so my inner life varies from night to night, from moment to moment.[...] I am ready to take what happens if I am secure in my score, knowing that, even if I feel a minimum, the glass will not break, the objective structure worked out over the months will help me through. But when a night comes that I can glow, shine, live, reveal—I am ready for it by not anticipating it. The score remains the same, but everything is different because I am different.¹⁹⁸

This technique, like Quintilian's *cogitatio*, involves a composition that is never written down, but relies on the development of a clear form through repetition, which offers both the safety of the premeditated structure and the affective power of spontaneous creation. The work of Grotowski strongly influenced the theatre director Peter Brook (1925–2022), and two years after they met and began working together, Brook attempted to distil the essence of theatre in this formula:

$$\textit{Théâtre} = \textit{Répétition} \times \textit{représentation} \times \textit{assistance}$$

The word *répétition* means rehearsal in French, but emphasises the 'mechanical side of the process', that of repetition, the 'dull action that leads to a good result'.¹⁹⁹ Repetition 'is a concept without warmth', but 'harnessed to an aim, driven by a will, repetition is creative', as it enables a masterly control over the body and mind which in turn can grant unmitigated freedom.²⁰⁰ Brook argued that repetition is 'a word with no glamour', but it is 'the only way certain actions

¹⁹⁸Ryszard Cieślak speaking to Richard Schechner, quoted in: Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.51–52.

¹⁹⁹Brook, *op. cit.*, p.154.

²⁰⁰Ibid. Brook wrote of the practice of the actor Laurence Olivier, who 'repeats lines of dialogue to himself again and again until he conditions his tongue muscles to a point of absolute obedience—and so gains total freedom'.

become possible, and anyone who refuses the challenge of repetition knows that certain regions of expression are automatically barred to him'.²⁰¹

Repetition is a tool already used in the previous part of the process (ii. gestural notation) when students were asked to deliver memorised realisations of Austin's gestural notation. Although this involved realising a fixed, written-down score of gestures, the ability to incorporate in performance the elements uncovered through deep analysis, such as the unwritten order of preparatory gestures (p. 283), represents a region of expression that can only be accessed through copious practice and repetition. Each time a student delivers a memorised excerpt, reflections from their practice, discussion of their performance in class and alternative interpretations presented by their peers result in a deep level of analysis for each line of *Miser and Plutus*. Students leave the class with a large number of ideas and suggestions that they could potentially incorporate until the next session by repeating and improving each detail. Austin's notation allows for a surprising degree of creative freedom, for example, in terms of gesture preparation, speed of delivery, as well as choices of emotion, emotional state and characterisation, which affect the quality of movement and elevation,²⁰² and which can make two accurate interpretations of the same passage look and feel substantially different.

The tools outlined earlier in the chapter, applied through repetition, could increase the appearance of spontaneity in a realisation of the gestures of a notated speech. However, the fixedness of the placement and type of gestures represent a fixed conception which cannot evolve, introducing some restrictions on creative freedom, and in combination with repetition (itself by nature mechanical), risks disrupting the connection between imagination and action, potentially leading to

²⁰¹Ibid.

²⁰²Elevation not in Austin's terms (rest, downward, horizontal, elevated and zenith) but as used in the first part of this chapter, in terms of amplification of gesture. The scale of this elevation can be conveyed by the degree of extension of the arms, because while the notation indicates that in the gesture *phf* the hand should be horizontal (*h*) and forward (*f*), it does not specify how extended the arm needs to be. So, in *phf* the hand could be six or sixty centimetres away from the breast, which can completely change the perception of gesture size and, consequently, characterisation.

what Brook described as mechanical performances devoid of life, where beautiful and decorous actions ‘have lost their meaning and lost their savour’.²⁰³ While repetition is indispensable for building a good performance, it is not enough in itself. This is why *représentation* is added in Brook’s formula.

The word *représentation* means performance in French, but etymologically it brings out the element of something old acquiring a new life and being presented anew in the here and now.²⁰⁴ For Brook, representation is not a slavish imitation of what happened yesterday; ‘it denies time’, and even though it might follow the same patterns, it is a new creation which ‘takes yesterday’s action and makes it live again in every one of its aspects’.²⁰⁵ The concept of representation ‘compels us to see what living action means, what constitutes a real gesture in the immediate present, what forms the fakes assume, what is partially alive, what is completely artificial—until slowly we can begin to define the actual factors that make the act of representation so difficult’.²⁰⁶

Using elements of Quintilian’s *cogitatio* could bring us closer to Brook’s idea of representation. A score of gestures that exists purely in memory and has acquired a clear form through repetition can deny time in that, despite comprising a combination of parts conceived at different points in the past (some may date from the initial attempt, others may have been added recently, replacing older ones), with every new repetition every part is reevaluated and is either kept, replaced or improved. Although many elements of the overall appearance from one repetition to the next might look very similar, and at times almost identical, the score is never fixed but is a process that remains alive and always evolving, however imperceptibly small this evolution might be in each successive repetition.

Solitary repetition of a mental score refines and perfects gestures, making them more habitual and keeping them alive and evolving, but outside input can

²⁰³Brook, *op.cit.*, p.154.

²⁰⁴Ibid., p.155.

²⁰⁵Ibid.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

act as a catalyst, accelerating the evolution process. This idea of external help is introduced in Brook's formula in the form of *assistance*. Brook explained that in French the phrase '*j'assiste à une pièce*' means 'to watch a play', perfectly capturing the importance of the assistive role an observer can play in the creative process.²⁰⁷ In his directions to preachers, the cleric, theologian and celebrated preacher John Wesley (1703–1791) asserted that although practising alone in front of the mirror is beneficial, it is better 'to have some excellent pattern as often as may be, before your eyes: and to desire some skilful and faithful friend to observe all your motions, and inform you which are proper, and which are not'.²⁰⁸ Asking students to perform the excerpts which they have prepared at home alone in front of their tutor and fellow students can be challenging, and many find it initially daunting because, unlike their singing, the skills they are asked to use are still in early development. Hence, the discussions with their peers and me that follow each repeated demonstration to the class are a core element of the teaching process, because they provide students the assistance that enables them not only to accelerate the evolution of their score of gestures, but, by requiring them to make their thinking process explicit, leads to greater assimilation of the theoretical and practical skills acquired.

After the previous part of the process (ii. gestural notation) is completed, students are asked to choose a passage from an aria, recitative or song they are currently working on (about one-minute long maximum), and this time their task is to invent gestures in the manner of Austin, using the knowledge acquired in class through reverse-engineering and analysing Austin's notation. They are not to write gestures down using notation, but they are to identify all the salient elements of the musical and literary text (such as words relating to emotions, punctuation, rhythmic changes, modulations etc.) or words and musical gestures that refer

²⁰⁷Ibid., p.156.

²⁰⁸John Wesley, *Directions Concerning Pronunciation and Gesture* (London: Printed by G. Paramore, North-Green, Worship Street; and sold by G. Whitfield, at the Chapel, City Road; and at the Methodist Preaching-Houses, in Town and Country, 1793), p.10.

specifically to actions, which have to be mirrored with equivalent gestures. These notes are used as a guide for creating gestures, which are then established through repetition until a mental score of the whole aria, recitative or song has been built. It is essential that the passage they have chosen is from a piece that they already know by heart, so their focus is exclusively on the gestures.

In class, each student introduces their piece and performs the excerpt they have prepared two or three times, each time followed by self-reflections and group discussion. The first time is always spoken and then (if an accompanist is available) they attempt it with music. To guide the discussion, the observers are asked to assess the gestures and their performance according to the six qualities of gesture, thinking about how congruous, varied, amplified, moderated, timely and unaffected they appear to be.²⁰⁹ At the end of each student's demonstration, we also discuss characterisation. By now the students have been introduced to the characterisation exercises, so as homework for the next class they are asked to complete a Character Analysis Worksheet (p. 314) and Animal and Temperament Worksheet (p. 321) and revise their score of actions by taking into consideration the four character-defining variables (status, age, temperament and animal).

In the next class, we follow the same process: each student performs their excerpt a number of times (spoken and sung), followed by a discussion, which extends to any new interpretative decisions or adjustments made to accommodate characterisation. With the element of characterisation added, discussions tend to become longer, so more than one class may be needed for all the students to perform and receive feedback.

When everyone performed their excerpt in class with characterisation embodiment, the students are asked to take a new aria, recitative or song that they already know by heart and attempt to invent gestures for its entirety and prepare it for performance. This gives them much less time than they had with the

²⁰⁹See Chapter 2, p. 121.

one-minute-long excerpt, pushing them to make quicker decisions and find ways to build a score of gestures more efficiently. Schema automation is a prerequisite for successful improvisation, the focus of the last part of this process (iv. improvisation). Each student performs their prepared piece in class, followed by feedback and discussion, with repetition and refinement of a selection of passages deemed to require more attention.

It is common for year-long modules to include an end-of-year performance project, such as opera scenes. Opera scenes tend to be more challenging than solos, not only because they are longer, but because they include interaction between characters. Although parts of the score could be constructed individually, the majority would be built through repetition in group rehearsals. In this case, to facilitate the students' preparation, they are given Handout 10 (p. 330) which includes some tools for developing their score more effectively. If scenes are to be performed, the teacher (as stage director) needs to assume a more active role in guiding the process, while ensuring that no element of the score is unduly fixed, so the constant evolvment is encouraged.²¹⁰ To return to Cieślak's analogy, repetition helps performers to build the score—that glass structure that shelters the candle's flame. The more work they put into repetition, the more elaborate, more beautiful, and more impressive the glass will be, lending to their performance structure, assertiveness and definition. The splendour of the glass, however, amounts to nothing if the candle's flame—the life of the performance—is extinguished. Regardless of how precise and technically accomplished a performance may be, if it loses its warmth, its immediacy and its soul, it risks losing its sense of naturalness. To keep the nascent creation of a score of gestures alive throughout the rehearsal period, the flame of the singers' inner process should

²¹⁰Some elements might have to be fixed owing to technical considerations, such as lighting or set. In all other cases, when possible, the establishment of patterns needs to be allowed to emerge organically rather than dictated by the teacher.

remain lit, constantly kindled by the director who watches and guides their analysis, practice, observation and imagination. Although the aim is for the score to become eventually fairly detailed and broadly consistent across every repetition, it should always allow space for the flame to breathe and move during the rehearsals and performances, permitting the flexibility of variety by imbuing the singer's performance with the element of new creation.

IV. IMPROVISATION

*Maximus vero studiorum fructus est
et velut proventus amplissimus longi laboris
ex tempore dicendi facultas.*²¹¹

For Quintilian, the ability to improvise speech (*ex tempore dicendi facultas*) was truly the greatest fruit of the oratorical studies (*maximus vero studiorum fructus est*).²¹² He does not, however, refer to everyday speech—most people acquire the ability to improvise every day speech effortlessly since they instinctively learn their first words as children—but to artful improvisation: speech which is created extempore but fulfils the three oratorical duties by being informative (*docere*), affecting (*movere*) and beautiful (*delectare*).²¹³ In artful improvisation, the orator comes up spontaneously with ideas and arguments (*inventio*) organised and presented logically and effectively (*dispositio*), using well-selected vocabulary and literary and rhetorical devices that enhance the persuasiveness of his message (*elocutio*), accompanied with relevant facts accurately recalled (*memoria*), and delivered with appropriate vocal tone, gestures and body language (*pronunciatio*). In writing a speech, the functions of *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio* are approached separately. During improvisation they merge and are replaced by *intentio* (intention),

²¹¹Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, X:7.1.

²¹²Quintilian's postulation about the importance of improvisation in the art of the orator has been discussed in the previous chapter, p.163 and p.4.

²¹³'Tria sunt item, quae praestare debeat orator, ut doceat, moveat, delectet'. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, I:5.2. See discussion on Rhetoric in Chapter 1, p.36.

which operates in the subconscious and is automatically one step ahead, scanning the *copia rerum ac verborum* for relevant ideas and words and placing them into the short-term memory (which acts as an intermediary), whence the orator collects and uses them during their speech.²¹⁴ Quintilian adds in his postulation that the ability to improvise artfully can only materialise through very prolonged work (*velut proventus amplissimus longi laboris*), because although the *intentio* can be strengthened through practice and experience, training the *intentio* before first building a rich *thesaurus eloquentiae* by reading and listening to the best examples and then composing speeches modelled on them (through writing them down and memorising them, or through *cogitatio*) can be detrimental.²¹⁵ This is why the new teaching method introduces improvisation exercises as the last part of a process that is designed to stretch across a whole academic year.

Of course, improvising a speech is not the same as improvising the delivery (*pronunciatio*: utterance and action) of a written out speech, but it is a process that uses similar mechanisms. For example, in the domain of utterance, voice actors and news anchors through training and experience are able, while reading aloud text that they have never previously seen, to use appropriate pace, rhythm, colour, stress, intonation and dynamics, varying all these elements across different words, sentences, paragraphs and sections, in order to make their delivery understandable, pleasing and convincing. Their *intentio* does not look in their *copia* for ideas and words to shape arguments, but follows the eyes, which always read ahead, identifying salient elements of the text (grammatical structures, punctuation, emotive words or phrasing, etc.), and brings up into the short-term memory relevant procedural knowledge related to vocal performance ready to be used through a conscious decision.²¹⁶ The success of the resulting delivery would

²¹⁴Sean Alexander Gurd, *Work in Progress: Literary Revision as Social Performance in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.45.

²¹⁵See earlier discussion, p.274.

²¹⁶For example, a sentence starting with ‘if’ would bring up the appropriate intonation, a small pause at the end of the ‘if’ clause separating it from the ‘then’ clause, which will also be intoned differently; the word ‘how’ with a question mark at the end of the sentence would bring up the

depend on the wealth of schemata related to vocal delivery in the *copia*, the level of training of the *intentio* to bring out the most appropriate schemata, and the wealth of declarative knowledge available, which would guide the conscious mind to make the most appropriate choice from the ones offered in the short-term memory.

Here, I applied the same model to the domain of gesture. The first two parts aimed to enrich the *copia rerum ac gestorum* with the required domain-specific knowledge, both declarative and procedural: the first part (i. core principles) aimed to offer the students the declarative knowledge they need to understand the domain and guide their choices; the second part (ii. gestural notation) used Austin's notation to keep expanding both the declarative and procedural knowledge through analysis and performance of worked examples. The third part (iii. score of gestures) aimed to train the *intentio* through repetition, encouraging 'a very high level of automaticity'.²¹⁷ As scaffolding is progressively removed, before the end of the academic year most students would have a good understanding of analysing the text and inventing gestures that conform to the three main principles (beauty, rhetoric, naturalness) and the six qualities (congruous, varied, amplified, moderated, timely, unaffected) and have expanded their gestural glossary. This is a good point at which to consider exposing singers to the following improvisation exercises.

Although the gestural improvisation exercises have been designed with singers in mind, they involve spoken text rather than singing. This is because most singers can sightread text but not everyone can fluently sightread music, but also because, even when working on songs in the previous exercises, the first step was always to perform gestures while speaking the libretto before trying it with music. In

question intonation, while 'how on earth' would also change the dynamic and add a colour of surprise, confusion or disbelief; the word 'death' might bring a sombre tone and slow down the pace; a word in italics would act as a warning either for emphasis or a foreign word, bringing up the relevant tone or pronunciation rules, etc.

²¹⁷van Merriënboer and Kirschner, *op. cit.*, p.13.

preparation for the improvisation exercises, I create several one-sided A4 printouts (at least three times the number of students in the group), each of which contains a unique excerpt from a poem that takes about thirty seconds to declaim (about eight to ten lines). The excerpts are selected from poems that evoke vivid imagery and are fairly easy to read and understand, such as

‘The Flea’ (1633) by John Donne

‘The Tyger’ (1794) by William Blake

‘The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere’ (1798) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

‘The Eve of St. Agnes’ (1820) by John Keats

‘The Lake Isle of Innisfree’ (1888) by William Butler Yeats

‘The Road Not Taken’ (1916) by Robert Frost

The printouts are designed with readability in mind, using large sans-serif font, large spacing and bright yellow paper, to ensure that the exercise is inclusive for students with dyslexia.²¹⁸ Before the start of the class, the printouts are placed face-down and spread out on a table near the door.

For the first exercise, one student is asked to pick three printouts at random and go to another room, where they have five minutes to choose one excerpt from the three they picked, and then prepare to read it in front of the class with movement and gestures in the manner they used when they were creating their scores of gestures in previous exercises.²¹⁹ After five minutes they return to the classroom, leave the two printouts they did not use on the table with the others, place the one they picked on a music stand, and perform the excerpt

²¹⁸Asking people with dyslexia to sightread text aloud in front of peers could be distressing, so students with special learning differences should be notified in advance about the content of the exercise, and either be offered accommodations (for example, more time or an excerpt in advance) or be given the option not to participate.

²¹⁹If there is the facility to book another room nearby, students are asked to use that room for their preparation; otherwise they are given the opportunity to leave the class and work outside the door. Ideally, they should do their five-minute preparation in private. It was considered important for beginner orators to work in ‘solitude, silence, and seclusion’, especially when dealing with gestures, because the presence of others can be an inhibiting factor. Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* 2nd edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.204.

with movement and gesture. When the first student comes in, a second goes out, takes three printouts and repeats the process. When the first student finishes their performance, they share reflections and receive feedback from the group, discussing for about four minutes until the second student returns, which prompts a third student to go out, and so on, until everyone in the group has had the opportunity to work alone for five minutes on an excerpt, perform it in front of the group, and spend around four minutes discussing it.

When everyone has had their turn, the students have a break, followed by a debrief in which the group reflects on the experience of the exercise. During the debrief the teacher needs to facilitate the discussion in a way that ensures all students participate equally, prompting them with questions such as what they learned during the exercise, what went well and what not, what specific action steps they could take to address the challenges they identified, etc. The debrief is an important part of the exercise because it allows students to reflect on their experiences and make connections, which deepens their learning, adds new elements to their *thesaurus histrioniae* and improves retention. It also promotes critical thinking and problem-solving because it encourages students to think critically about the challenges they encountered during the exercise and devise strategies they could use to overcome them.

The second exercise (which ideally should take place on a different day to allow more time for the insights of the first to be assimilated) is similar to the first one, but this time the students have the choice between two printouts instead of three, and they are not allowed to leave the room or practise any gestures physically: they have to do it mentally while sitting with the rest of the group. Internal silent practice is one of the exercises Quintilian suggests in his improvisation chapter, which can help orators build their skills anytime and anywhere.²²⁰ The silent preparation takes students one step closer to the full improvisation, by allowing

²²⁰Est illa exercitatio cogitandi totasque materias vel silentio (dum tamen quasi dicat intra se ipsum) persequendi, quae nullo non et tempore et loco'. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, X:7.25.

them the same five-minute timeframe as the previous exercise, within which they are called to identify salient moments in the text and think of possible ideas for gestures, but now they are not able to make a physical choice or practise any gesture prior to standing in front of the group and having to perform. Each demonstration is followed by feedback and reflections, and when everyone has performed an excerpt, there is a break, followed by a long debrief.

The third exercise requires the students to improvise with almost no time for preparation or choice of excerpt. Now, each student is asked to pick one printout, is given only thirty seconds to look at it silently while standing in front of the group, and is then required to perform it. The thirty seconds allocated for preparation is not enough to read, identify salient points and consider possible gestures for the whole text, which forces the student to extemporise a great deal of it at sight. Every demonstration is followed by reflections and feedback, but this time, in lieu of a final debrief, slightly longer time can be devoted to each student, going deeper into their thinking process. Depending on the size of the group and the scheduled duration of the class, this exercise might be spread across two meetings.

Unlike improv actors, lawyers, politicians, consultants, journalists, broadcasters, teachers and many other professionals who regularly deliver improvised speeches before an audience, improvisation is not a skill required for a career in classical singing. Although occasionally soloists find themselves having to sing pieces at sight, this is mainly the case in liturgical contexts where the use of gesture is anyway limited. If in most other contexts classical singers do not improvise, what is the purpose of these improvisation exercises? Although Quintilian recognised that practising in solitude is useful, he urged budding orators to hone their skills by taking every opportunity to speak often in front of a large audience whose judgement and opinion they respect and fear.²²¹ Inventing gestures on the

²²¹‘Hac uti sic optimum est, ut cotidie dicamus audientibus pluribus, maxime de quorum simus iudicio atque opinione solliciti; rarum est enim ut satis se quisque vereatur. Vel soli tamen dicamus potius quam omnino non dicamus’. Ibid., X:7.24–25.

spot before an audience comprising a teacher and peers, followed by discussion, enhances students' metacognitive knowledge, allowing them to better understand and be aware of their own cognitive processes and enabling them to effectively use strategies that involve declarative and procedural knowledge structures in order to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning progress.²²² This, in turn, acts as an accelerator for the assimilation of schemata and shortens the time needed for creating a score of gestures, as the process of inventing gestures becomes quicker and more effective, and the confidence the improvisatory skills give to the singers creates a safety net that allows them to focus their attention on developing in detail only some parts of the score of gestures, while allowing greater freedom for others, leading to more variety.

In summary, improvisation is not the end goal of the new teaching method, but one of the tools for improving the acting skills of singers. By the time the students complete the improvisation exercises, they should have also completed all the other exercises relating to the expression of passions and characterisation, so when tackling new repertoire all the skills learned can be used in combination.



This chapter outlined the new teaching method, with discussions of the theoretical underpinnings and key points of the timeline of creating each exercise. Taking historical techniques and ideas as a starting point and shaping them through modern understanding and theatrical practices, the exercises are tailored specifically to classical singers and each aims to develop a constituent skill. The uniqueness of each singer, each cohort and each institution requires the pedagogical process to remain dynamic, so a predetermined instructional design with detailed lesson plans for each day of a year-long course would not be effective. However, the new

²²²Gabriel D. Saenz, Lisa Geraci and Robert Tirso, 'Improving metacognition: A comparison of interventions' *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 33 (2019):5, p.362.

teaching method has been designed to be implemented by using a technique called interleaving, which takes advantage of the effective schema construction enabled by variability of practice.²²³ The best results can be attained by teaching the three thematic units in parallel, with the exercises in the order they are presented in this chapter. For example, if A1, A2, A3 and A4 are the exercises of the ‘passions’ unit, B1, B2, B3 and B4 are the exercises of the ‘characterisation’ unit, and C1, C2, C3 and C4 are the exercises of the ‘gestures’ unit, an ideal design would look like this: A1, B1, C1, A2, B2, C2, A3, B3, C3, A4, B4, C4. However, it is crucial that the students are given the time they need with each exercise, and only move to the next within the same unit when the teacher deems that the objectives of the exercise are achieved, so an actual arrangement might end up looking like this: A1, B1, C1, A1, B2, C2, A2, B3, C2, A3, B3, C3, A4, C3, B3, C4, B4, B4. Exercises of different units should always be interwoven to maximise schema construction, but each unit should have a linear development, dynamically arranged to reflect the students’ progress.

²²³van Merriënboer and Kirschner, *op. cit.*, p.19.

Conclusion

If I were a student, I personally would feel delighted to have this training, because acting is all too often an afterthought—especially in conservatoire, where it’s all about the voice. [...] It would be fantastic to have a year of this. If we were able to accomplish so much in *Tamerlano*, I can only imagine what a year in a conservatoire would bring, with students who often are more willing to trust and explore something new, unlike seasoned performers who can be more closed sometimes. I think the results would be amazing, and I’m sure that everyone would get a lot out of it.¹

Taylor’s statement neatly encapsulates both the problem that propelled me to pursue this research and the progress my work has made towards proposing a practicable solution. Although the training I delivered as part of the *Tamerlano* production included only a subset of the exercises comprising the new teaching method, spending more than one hundred hours working closely with a group of performers of diverse experience and specialisms, who shared their feedback and reflections for every part of the process, confirmed my understanding of the gaps in acting training inherent to vocal studies, and enabled me to access in depth how the techniques I created could help address some of them. In my work with Taylor, I found her insights particularly valuable because, as an early-career performer, she had a dual perspective: while she was not too far removed from her time in the conservatoire, her professional experience gave her a better understanding of

¹Taylor, ‘interview/discussion 23 April’, *op. cit.*

the industry than a conservatoire student and enabled her to articulate subtle and nuanced aspects of her practice more clearly. So her favourable evaluation encouraged me to think that the last eight years I have dedicated to developing the new teaching method have resulted in a useful contribution to informed pedagogy and future research.

As Taylor's statement attests, the current training of classical singers prioritises the vocal elements of performance while treating acting and movement as secondary or supplementary. Reformation of the canonic conservatoire curriculum could provide a better balance and equip the students with the more advanced acting skills singers starting their careers in the 2020s are expected to possess, but a rapid and radical redesign of how singers are taught is unlikely and too risky for an institution to implement. Many of the methods for developing singers' acting skills in current use, such as Stanislavski's system or Meisner's technique, were designed to work in different contexts and over longer time periods than are available in a vocal studies curriculum, so when they are imported unadapted and crammed into the confined space allocated for dramatic training, their effectiveness is substantially impaired. In search of solutions, I looked to historical acting as a source of techniques that could work harmoniously with singing and better fit the current curricular constraints, because after experimenting with them in my practice as an opera singer and stage director, I realised that some of the theoretical and technical elements of the 'high style' of acting (used for performing serious plays or operas in Europe from the early seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century) could be particularly effective. I sought to discover ways in which historical acting techniques and ideals could be used in conjunction with contemporary understanding and theatrical practices, to create a modern method for teaching acting to classical singers.

My work started with the study of a large corpus of treatises on acting, rhetoric, emotions, personality and aesthetics published across Europe between 1528 and 1832. The breadth of my scope enabled me to look beyond the topical

and temporal divergencies of each individual text and identify the key nodes of the conceptual framework that underpinned historical acting most broadly. From this process emerged three main theoretical principles: classical beauty, rhetoric and naturalness. To achieve the practical objectives of my research, I reviewed the literature for junctions where theory meets practice, outlining any methodological insights for each of the main principles (Chapter 1). The technical investigation was then expanded, with a focus on the element of gesture, which is central to the teaching of acting. By adapting, through experimentation, historical models to create a classification system for gestures tailored to the new teaching method, I established a list of six qualities of gesture which act as rubrics for guiding performance and assessing its proximity to the main principles (Chapter 2).

Historical acting is marked by a dialectical relationship between two of the three main principles, beauty and naturalness, where the forces of art and nature work paradoxically at once in tandem and in opposition: art increases beauty but the appearance of art reduces naturalness. Striking the right balance between the two becomes a technical conundrum which required me to seek further methodological insights, going beyond the treatises and into historical performance practice through commentaries, reviews, images and letters. This contextual investigation allowed me to expand my technical toolbox and integrate theory and practice to prepare the ground for building the new teaching method (Chapter 3). Every exercise created for the new method had to contribute directly or indirectly to at least one of the three central principles of historical acting, to be relevant to students studying classical singing at undergraduate level, and to be realisable and applicable within the course of one academic year. All exercises started as historical concepts and techniques, but they were adapted, modified and optimised through experimentation and the help of scientific knowledge and modern theatrical practices. The exercises comprising the new teaching method were presented in three thematic groups (passions, characterisation and gesture), with suggestions for the order of teaching (Chapter 4).

Being trained as an actor and opera singer and working for twelve years as a stage director and teacher of acting to singers has offered me an advantageous perspective and a beneficial collection of practical skills that allowed me to undertake a work so highly empirical in nature. The new teaching method is a collection of specialised hybrid techniques and constitutes my unique contribution to knowledge. The various exercises of the new teaching method are described in as thorough detail and yet as economically as possible, so as to provide experienced drama teachers with enough information to adapt the method for use. However, as this is a doctoral thesis and not a manual for teachers, the account of the exercises is principally conceptual. Encouraged by the educator and stage director Ella Marchment, who observed my teaching at Shenandoah Conservatory where she is Director of Opera, I aim to produce a comprehensive guide for educators, with lesson plans, detailed instructions and examples for each exercise.

While the exercises comprising the new teaching method have been in development since 2014, the extensive amount of new territory that needed to be explored and the time required by iterative experimentation meant that the current study remains small in scope. There is ample opportunity for development and refinement, and more comprehensive testing would be valuable. However, taking into consideration the plethora of contemporary techniques and methodologies I have explored throughout this thesis, I wish to reiterate the importance and utility of historical acting as part of an integrated teaching process. Exercises could be used by other practitioners as building blocks for developing alternative versions or improving their efficacy, and new hybrids can be established. Much more needs to be done, but having for the last eight years taught these techniques to hundreds of singers and seen the impact they can have, I am optimistic that this thesis will prove a valuable case study for other researchers, performers and educators to explore a variety of potential paths for future progress.

Handouts

APPENDIX I

This appendix includes the assigned readings, worksheets and learning resources that complement the new teaching method and are given out to the students as handouts. Handouts with a star symbol (★) next to their title are not fully reproduced here because they are either excerpts of other works or include elements that are included earlier in this thesis, so they contain only a summary of the contents, with appropriate references and cross-references to all the material.

1. Facial Muscles ★

Content summary:

- A. Figure 22 (p. 207) diagram showing the location and names of fifteen facial muscles involved in facial expression, enlarged to fit a full A4-size paper for easy reference.
- B. Links to a selection of anatomy websites with interactive models and other freely available online resources for visualising the action of facial muscles.

2. Face Gym



3. Passion Embodiment ★

Content summary:

- A. Hill's *Actor's Epitome*, which comprises of short descriptions of the ten principal passions (joy, grief, fear, anger, pity, scorn, hatred, jealousy, wonder and love) in verse, Aaron Hill, 'The Actor's Epitome' in: *The Works of the late Aaron Hill, Esq; in Four Volumes. Consisting of Letters on Various Subjects, and of Original Poems, Moral and Facetious. With an Essay of the Art of Acting*, Volume IV (London: Printed for the Benefit of the Family, 1753).
- B. Hill's long descriptions of five of the ten principal passions (joy, grief, fear, anger, hatred) in verse, Idem, *The Art of Acting: Deriving Rules from a New Principle, for Touching the Passions in a Natural Manner. An Essay of General Use, to Those, who hear, or speak in Public, and to the Practisers of Many of the Elegant Arts; As Painters, Sculptors, and Designers: But Adapted, in Particular, to the Stage: With View to quicken the Delight of Audiences, And form a Judgement of the Actors, in their Good, or Bad, Performances* (London: Printed for J. Osborn, at the Golden Ball, in Pater-noster Row, 1746), *op. cit.*, pp.11–15, 17–18.
- C. Hill's long descriptions of five of the ten principal passions (joy, grief, fear, anger, hatred) in prose, Idem, 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' in: *The Works of the late Aaron Hill, Esq; in Four Volumes. Consisting of Letters on Various Subjects, and of Original Poems, Moral and Facetious. With an Essay of the Art of Acting*, Volume IV (London: Printed for the Benefit of the Family, 1753), *op. cit.*, pp.357–373, 378–380.
- D. Table 3 (p. 236), the five basic emotions with words suggested for each of their ten degrees.

4. Character Analysis Worksheet

Please choose an aria you are currently working on and spend some time completing this worksheet. Most of the exercises originate in the system created by Constantin Stanislavski, and they aim to help you better understand the psychological constitution of the character you are portraying. If English is not your first language, you can complete the exercises in your mother tongue. You do not need to return this worksheet to me, so you can be as personal as you want with your answers which will help you build a stronger connection with your character. However, it might be helpful to bring it along with you in case you want to refer to or share any of your notes during our group discussion.

4.1. GENERAL DETAILS

Aria:

Character's name:

Opera:

Composition date:

Act and Scene:

Singer who originally created the role:

4.2. CHARACTER BUILDING

Answer the following questions as your character (in the first person). Start by researching the story, plot and character (especially if your character is an existing historical person or derives from mythology), but for anything that you do not know, be as imaginative as you want. The more details you write about your character, the better:

- (1) Who am I? *Personality (introvert/extrovert), appearance, age, sex, background, beliefs, prejudices, interests and the four basic traits: physical characteristics, emotional state, psychological profile, morals.*
- (2) When and where am I? *Century, year, season, month, and the setting, whether it is inside or outside, slum or mansion, city or forest. The environment and the atmosphere you are in, the furniture, colours, smells, textures and sounds.*
- (3) Where do I come from? *Just before the beginning of the aria. What are your given circumstances? Your recent past and how this has affected you and brought you to where you are.*

- (4) What are my relationships? *Your relationships with other characters, events and things that surround you.*

4.3. OBJECTIVES

Answer the following questions as your character:

- (1) What is my objective? *The main thing you want to achieve during the aria. Your main or overall goal across the whole piece. The objective should be action-oriented, as opposed to an internal goal. Example: 'I am very tired, and I want to sleep'.*
- (2) What is the obstacle? *The problem that is stopping you from achieving your objective, what you need to overcome to reach your goal. Example: 'the neighbours are having a very loud party'.*
- (3) What is my action? *What you do or plan to do to overcome your obstacle and attempt to reach your goal. Examples: 'I threaten the neighbours', 'I charm them', 'I beg them to stop', or 'I will demand that they stop the music'.*

4.4. TRANSLATIONS

Take a new sheet of paper and follow the steps below:

- (1) Write out the words of the aria in the original language.
- (2) Produce a literal translation of the words. *You can ignore this step if the aria is in your mother tongue or a language in which you have a high level of proficiency.*
- (3) Produce a colloquial translation. *Use your literal translation above as a basis to produce a version of it in everyday colloquial language, capturing the meaning of the original phrases but expressing it in a modern, personal way. Be direct and do not shy away from using strong or rude language if the situation requires it. If the aria is in your primary language do not skip this step: it is highly unlikely that you would have used the original words or phrasing to express the same meaning, so there is ample scope for trying to rewrite the text in a way that feels more personal to you.*

4.5. TEXT ANALYSIS

Have a closer look at the text in the broad sense: both words and music. Try to identify and note down any salient musical elements in the harmony, rhythm and style, as well as any literary images and symbolisms that might complement or contradict elements of the character as constructed through your research in the

previous exercises. Describe how any new observations further inform or change your understanding.

4.6. LETTER

Write a letter as your character and address it to your closest friend (ideally they should be imaginary and not an existing character from the opera) or as an entry in your personal diary. Think that you are writing the letter at a specific time (of your choice) during or before the point in the plot when the aria comes. You can describe your feelings and emotions, your desires, your fears, your hopes, etc. You can write about recent events or your relationships with other characters in the opera. Try to be as creative and inventive as you can about what you write. Even if the libretto or the results of your research do not provide all the clues, try to define your character by using your imagination.

5. The Four Temperaments ★

Content summary:

- A. Culpeper's descriptions of the four temperaments and eight commixtures, Nicholas Culpeper, *Galen's Art of Physic: Translated into English, and largely Commented on; Together with convenient Medicines for all particular Distempers of the Parts, a Description of the Complexions, their Conditions, and what Diet and Exercise is fittest for them* (London: Printed by Peter Cole, at the sign of the Printing-Press in Cornhil, neer the Royal Exchange, 1652), *op. cit.*, pp.52–67.
- B. Kant's descriptions of the four temperaments, Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1798), *op. cit.*, pp.257–265. For students not able to read the German original, there are many excellent modern English translations available such as the one used in Chapter 1 (p. 70), Idem, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. by Robert B. Loudon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), *op. cit.*, pp.186–190.
- C. Figure 32 (p. 252), Eysenck's diagram of the four temperaments plotted in a two-dimensional system, Hans Jurgen Eysenck, *The Biological Basis of Personality* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1967), p.35.
- D. Table 4 (p. 253) outlining the rate of change and intensity of emotions of the four temperaments in the theories of Kant, Wundt and Eysenck.

6. Temperament Embodiment

This is a summary table to use as a reference during your practice of characterisation through movement with the help of the exercises we explored in class: the Galenic four elements, Lecoq's four elements, Chekhov's four qualities, and Laban's eight efforts.

| Temperament | Element | Chekhov | Laban | |
|-------------|----------------------------|-----------|---|---|
| | | | Sudden | Sustained |
| Sanguine | Air <i>soft/light</i> | Flying | Flicking Flipping Flapping Jerking | Floating Strewing Stirring Stroking |
| Choleric | Fire <i>hard/light</i> | Radiating | Dabbing Patting Taping Shaking | Gliding Smoothing Smearing Smudging |
| Melancholic | Earth <i>hard/heavy</i> | Moulding | Thrusting Shoving Punching Poking | Pressing Crushing Cutting Squeezing |
| Phlegmatic | Water <i>soft/heavy</i> | Flowing | Slashing Beating Throwing Whipping | Wringing Pulling Plucking Stretching |

Empedocles was the first ancient author to introduce the notion that everything in the universe is composed of four basic elements, which had a profound impact on medicine and came to underpin Galenic humourism. According to this theory, every humour, and by extension each of the four temperaments, is associated with one of the four elements: air (blood, sanguine), fire (yellow bile, choleric), earth (black bile, melancholic) and water (phlegm, phlegmatic).

When you are working at home, start with the movement quality we found for each of the four elements during class. Air is light and soft, fire is hard and light, earth is hard and heavy, and water is soft and heavy. Explore the quality bestowed on your movement by each of these elements one by one, and experiment with different levels of that quality, from 0 to 10. For example, 0 for neutral, 1 for barely perceivable, 10 for extreme, and everything else in between, aiming for 5 or 6 to be something that would be appropriate for the stage.

You can then run the same exercise, but incorporate Lecoq's descriptions for each element, and observe how they might give more texture and definition to the quality of your movement:

- Water: *Start with the movement you found for water, with soft and heavy movement. Now think of water as a force that can be encountered and experienced through struggle and physical movement, particularly in the pelvis. To fully experience it, it is important to avoid using arm or hand gestures that might symbolise the sea without actually experiencing it.*
- Fire: *Start with the movement you found for fire, with hard and light movement. Now think of fire as an internal energy that comes from within, specifically from breathing and the diaphragm. It can be divided into two movements: combustion and flame. The dramatic power of fire is rooted in anger.*
- Air: *Start with the movement you found for air, with soft and light movement. Air can be experienced through movement, such as extending the body as if gliding, and can be affected by people using a fan or other means. At its most intense, it can push or pull on humans in the form of the four winds.*
- Earth: *Start with the movement you found for earth, with hard and heavy movement. Now think of earth as a material that can be manipulated, especially with the hands, and can also be experienced through the body. Working with earth, such as clay, can involve compressing, smoothing, and stretching it. It is important to involve the whole body, including the pelvis and solar plexus, in the experience of manipulating the earth.*

After that, you can move to Chekhov's four qualities. Explore each one with expansive movements around the space until you are happy with the movement, before you start performing natural gestures and everyday movements while trying to maintain the same quality:

- Moulding: *Start with the movement you found for earth, with hard and heavy movement. Now think of moulding, shaping and sculpting the space around you. Make strong, broad movements with your whole body. Create definite forms and feel a sense of strength and power flowing through your body, but avoid unnecessary tension.*
- Flowing: *Start with the movement you found for water, with soft and heavy movement. Make simple, well-shaped movements that flow gently*

into one another, like waves. Avoid tension or weakness, and imagine the air around you as a surface of water that supports your movements, creating a sense of continuity and flow.

Flying: *Start with the movement you found for air, with soft and light movement. Imagine your body flying through space, making movements that merge smoothly into one another. Maintain strength and lightness and change tempos while moving. Imagine the air around you as a medium that instigates your flying movements and strive to overcome gravity. Focus on creating a sense of freedom and lightness in your movements.*

Radiating: *Start with the movement you found for fire, with hard and light movement. Feel that you are continuously sending rays from your body into the space around you, in the direction of your movement. Imagine the air around you as filled with light, and that you radiate from your entire body, such as your arms, hands and chest. Experience freedom and warmth as you focus on creating a sense of energy and radiance in your movements.*

Finally, try the last exercise we explored, where the movement quality of each temperament is linked with two efforts from Laban's theory, one for each of the two 'decisions', as Laban calls them: sudden or sustained. Continue your experimentation with these efforts, varying their intensity and utilising their derivatives to fit different points of your character's development as the drama progresses.

REFERENCES

- Chekhov, Michael, *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
- Laban, Rudolf; Ullman, Lisa, editor, *The Mastery of Movement*, 4th edition (Alton: Dance Books, 2011).
- Lecoq, Jacques, *The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre*, trans. by David Bradby (London: Methuen Drama, 2009).

7. Animal and Temperament Worksheet

Please revise your notes from Character Analysis Worksheet (Handout 4) and spend some time working on the exercises below. Bring your notes with you to the next class for our discussion.

7.1. TEMPERAMENT

- (1) Read the descriptions of the temperaments by Nicholas Culpeper (Handout 5, item A) and Immanuel Kant (Handout 5, item B). Which temperament is the one closest to your conception of the character and why?
- (2) Examine Hans Jurgen Eysenck's diagram (Handout 5, item C), where the four temperaments are plotted in a two-dimensional system. If you ignore Kant's argument that there are no mixed temperaments where exactly would your character best fit in Eysenck's diagram and why?
- (3) Try to place your character on the diagram below from Eysenck's *The Structure of Human Personality* (1960). Why did you make this choice?

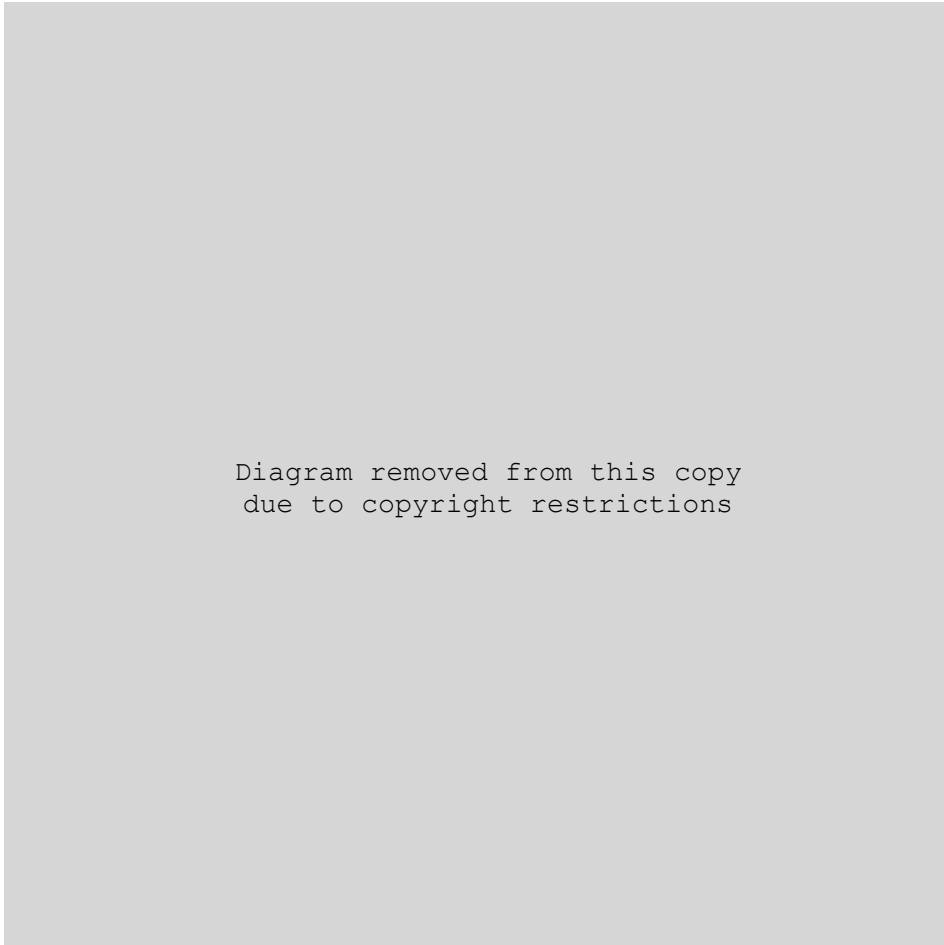


Diagram removed from this copy
due to copyright restrictions

- (4) After placing your own character, think about the other characters of the opera and try to place them on the diagram too. What insights does this give you? Now that you have an overview and can more easily compare the personalities of the different characters, do you want to revise your original placement?
- (5) Do the temperament which you assigned to your character clash with the original conception of the character in your Character Analysis Worksheet? Do you feel that any elements of your characterisation need to be revised?

7.2. ANIMAL

An effective technique for translating elements of character analysis into physicality is animal work. In the next class, we will be doing an animal exercise, but before that, it would be helpful if you could spend some time thinking of an animal that you feel shares some of your character's key personality traits and take some notes to guide our discussion. If your character was an animal, what animal would they be? This can be any animal, earthbound, bird or fish.

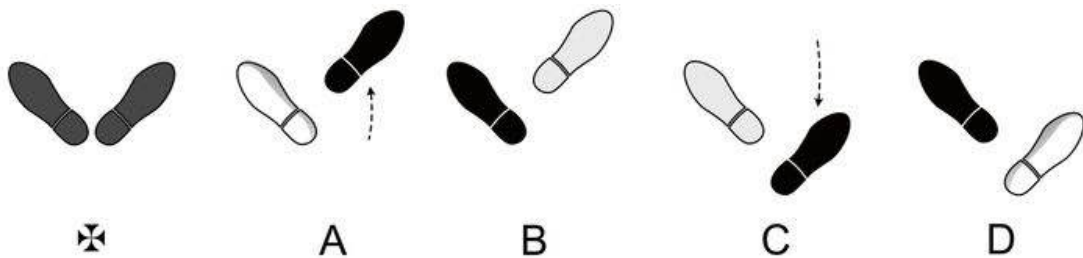
Then explain which animal you chose and why. How would you describe this animal? What does it look like? How does it move? What are its core personality traits? You can research more about it, look for images, videos, stories and poems about it, or you can rely on the knowledge you already have—what the animal represents for you personally. What elements of the animal (looks, movement, personality) correspond with your dramatic character? Which elements of the temperament you chose are reinforced by the animal, and which fight against it?

8. Contrapposto

The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines contrapposto as the ‘asymmetrical arrangement of the human figure in which the line of the arms and shoulders contrasts with, while balancing, those of the hips and legs’. Breaking the symmetry is the key objective.

8.1. BASIC STANCE

There are four different arrangements of the feet, shown in the diagram below. Two with the right foot forward, with the body weight on the right foot (A) or left foot (B), and two with the left foot forward, with, again, the weight on the right foot (C) or left foot (D): The gradient of the footprints indicates weight.



For example, the starting position (⌘) is an equi-poise, where the weight is equally distributed on both feet; in stance A the right foot carries the body weight, while the inside of the left gently touches the floor; in stance B the left foot carries all the body weight, while the right gently touches across the whole sole.

To assume a contrapposto, first stand as in ⌘, with your heels touching and your feet forming a 90-degree angle with each other. Then take a small step forward with your right foot and put all your weight on the right leg. When you do this, make sure you tilt your hips as far as possible to the left, which should bend the knee of your left leg. Your shoulders should tilt slightly to the right. The leg that carries the weight (currently the right leg) is called the *engaged* leg, and the other the *free* leg. The knee of the engaged leg should be extended (not bent). Test that your free leg does not carry the body’s weight by lifting your left foot off the floor for a second. Although the free leg does not support all your weight, it still supports some of its weight and gently touches the floor: it should feel that it touches more on the inside edge of the free foot (rather than on the toes, heel, or outside edge). You are now standing in a contrapposto with the front leg engaged (stance A).

Let us shift now to *contrapposto* with the back leg engaged. Straighten your left knee without moving your feet at all and put all the weight on the left leg, making it the engaged leg (stance B). The right leg is now your free leg. Tilt your hips as far as possible to the right, which will bend your right knee, and then slightly tilt your shoulders to the left. Test again that your free leg does not carry your body weight by lifting your right foot off the floor for a second. The weight of your right foot should rest gently on the right foot and should be equally distributed across its sole.

Now take a step back with your right foot and put all the weight of your body on it (stance C). This is a mirror image of the second *contrapposto* stance you tried, so make all other adjustments (waist tilting towards the left, shoulders bent towards the right, and the knee of the left leg bent). After you feel comfortable and have made all the adjustments, shift the weight to your front leg without moving your feet (stance D). Again adjust your body in a mirror image of the first *contrapposto* stance you tried.

If you followed all the steps above, you will have moved through the four basic *contrapposto* stances. This posture does not come naturally to most people, so it is crucial that you repeat these steps several times until you feel that you can go through the motions comfortably and without having to think of each detail. If you have a full-length mirror, you can practise in front of it, pausing for each stance to ensure that your posture appears relaxed and free. To aid your practice, you can use the diagram above (which includes the arrows which indicate the steps forwards and backwards) as a mnemonic device.

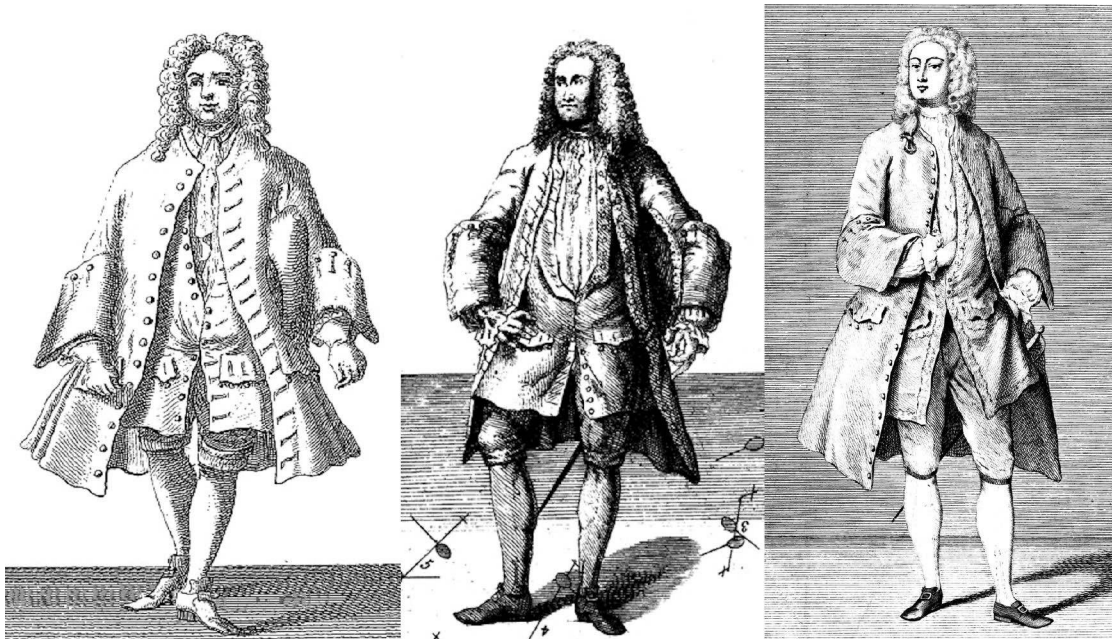
It is not uncommon to find *contrapposto* awkward at first, especially if you are used to standing in *equipoise* when singing. If you experience extra tension as you practise this exercise, make sure that before you first start practising the *contrapposto* stance, you always begin with a body warm-up, and between each repetition, give five shakes to each of your legs and stretch your body with your hands above your head. This will alleviate any tension and allow your body to register *contrapposto* in your muscle memory as a relaxed and comfortable posture.

Even if you find *contrapposto* difficult at first, do not give up. With perseverance, you will discover complete freedom within it, adding considerable power and beauty to your performance.

8.2. FURTHER STUDY

When you are used to contrapposto and you can comfortably shift between the four different stances, you can read four excerpts from eighteenth-century dance treatises that delve deeper into the fine graces of this stance, which you might wish to explore.

In eighteenth-century London, dancing was considered an important social skill. Many members of the gentry, as well as actors and singers, received basic dance training, and the teaching of dance was closely linked to class and proper behaviour. Dancing masters were often recognised as authorities of the rules of etiquette, and with their help, people learned the genteel manner of standing and walking, how to curtsy and bow, and how to move agreeably. They also learned how to achieve the proper basic resting posture, which was none other than contrapposto, as you can see in these three plates:



Detail from plates in Essex's translation of Rameau's *The Dancing-Master* (1728), Tomlinson's *The Art of Dancing Explained* (1735) and Nivelon's *The Rudiments of Genteel Behaviour* (1737), depicting versions of the contrapposto stance, described respectively as 'a graceful Posture', 'a most genteel and becoming Posture', and 'the Foundation of all Exercise, that is to STAND firm, yet easy and without Affectation'

For example, Kellom Tomlinson (1690–1753) wrote that 'Grace and Air' is essential both in dance and 'when we *stand* in Company', and described as 'a most genteel and becoming Posture' a stance where the 'Foot be moved open from the other,

sideways, to the Right or Left, about the Distance of half a Foot, or as far as, in setting it down to the Floor, the Weight of the Body resting on the contrary Foot is not disordered by it, with the Toes handsomely turning out, the Hat under one Arm, and the other in some agreeable Action, the Head also turning a little from the Foot on which the Poise rests’.

Describing the same posture, Pierre Rameau (1674–1748), whose treatise was translated into English by the choreographer John Essex (1680–1744), wrote that the ‘Head must be upright, without being stiff; the Shoulders falling back, which extends the Breast, and gives a greater Grace to the Body; the Arms hanging by the Side, the Hands neither quite open nor shut, the Waste steady, the Legs extended, and the Feet turned outwards’.

François Nivelon published in London in 1737 a short treatise called *The Rudiments of Genteel Behavior*, which he described as a ‘Method of attaining a graceful Attitude, an agreeable Motion, and easy Air, and a genteel Behaviour’. Describing the proper stance, Nivelon called for an erect head and a

manly Boldness in the Face, temper’d with becoming Modesty; the Lips must be just join’d to keep the Features regular; the Shoulders must fall easy, and be no farther drawn back than to form the Chest full and round, which will preserve the true Proportion of the Body, but if they are too far drawn back, the Chest will appear to[o] prominent, the Arms stiff and lame, and the Back hollow, which will intirely spoil the true Proportion, and therefore must be carefully avoided; the Arms must fall easy, not close to the Sides, and the Bend of the Elbow, at its due Distance, will permit the right Hand to place itself in the Waistcoat easy and genteel, as in this Figure [see above] is represented; but any rising or falling [of] the Hand from that Place, will make it appear lame, and consequently disagreeable; the Hat shou’d be plac’d easy under the left Arm, and that Wrist must be free and strait, and the Hand support itself above the Sword-hilt; the Sword exactly plac’d as shewn in this Figure [as above], is the only proper and genteel Situation for it; the whole Body must rest on the right Foot, and the right Knee, as also the Back be kept straight; the left Leg must be foremost, and only bear its own weight, and both Feet must be turn’d outwards, as shewn by this Figure, neither more or less, but exactly.

Similarly, John Weaver (1673–1760) advised that

the Weight of the Body should be on one Foot, the Line of Innixion* falling thereupon; and the other Foot bearing a little upon the Floor, and its Knee somewhat bent. The Gracefulness of this posture requires the Body to be erect, the Head upright, and easy, and always a little inclining, or somewhat turn'd towards one side or the other; its Motion to be free, natural, and various; which gives an Air and Vivacity to the whole Body: The Shoulders not shrug'd up, or thrust forwards, but hanging easy in their natural Situation; and the Chest, or Breast, extended, that it appear full.

Weaver also provided some sharp observations on characterisation through movement and posture, offering a glimpse into the perceptible differences of deportment in depicting on stage people of different social classes:

from the Regular or Irregular Position, and Motion of the Body, we distinguish the handsome Presence, and Deportment of the fine Gentleman, from the awkward Behaviour of the unpolish'd Peasant; we discover the graceful Mien of a young Lady, from the ungainly Carriage of her Maid; and this Regulation even stamps impressions on the Mind, which we receive from the outward Figure of the Body; for as the Soul is inform'd from the external Objects of Sensation, how careful ought we to be, to give the most agreeable Impressions, which cannot be affected without this Regularity; and how commendable, how advantagious it is, for a Gentleman, or Lady, to be *Adroit* at every Step, and, that every Motion, and Action of the Body, be consonant to Symmetry and Grace. 'Tis an elegant Way of touching the Passions which we call Address; and, which renders the Person at first so agreeable.

There are four main contrapposto stances, but each of these stances could be presented in infinite small variations. Changes in the degree to which you tilt the hips or your shoulders and the placement and distance between your feet can create a range of different hues and colours in the stance that can be used as means for expressing character and emotional state.

*Weaver defined the term 'Line of Innixion' as: 'THE *Center of Gravity* is a certain Point in every solid Body tending to one common *Center*, through which any *Plane* being drawn, the Body will be always divided into two Parts of equal Weight, and ballanced in such a manner, as that the Parts on one side have neither more nor less Force than the Parts of the other side; but all the Parts remain in *Æquilibrio*. EVERY Line drawn through such *Centre* is the *Diameter*, or the Line of *Gravitation*, *Propension*, *Direction*, or *Innixion*. A SOLID Body will remain fix'd , if the Line of *Innixion* fall from the *Center of Gravity* perpendicular to the Horizon, within the Basis of such Body; but if such Line fall without the Basis of such Body, that Body must fall'.

As you take this technique forward and become more comfortable with using contrapposto more regularly in your performance, start experimenting with the more advanced expressive possibilities this stance can offer.

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- Nivelon, François, *The Rudiments of Genteel Behavior* (London: n.p., 1737).
- Rameau, Pierre, *The Dancing-Master: Or, The Art of Dancing Explained. Wherein the Manner of Performing all Steps in Ball Dancing is made easy by a new and familiar Method. Done from the French of Monsieur Rameau by J. Essex, Dancing-Master*, trans. by John Essex (London: Printed, and Sold by him at his House in Rood-Lane, Fenchurch-street; and J. Brotherton, Bookseller, at the Bible in Cornhill, 1728).
- Tomlinson, Kellom, *The Art of Dancing Explained by Reading and Figures; Whereby the manner of Performing the Steps is made easy By a New and Familiar Method: Being the Original Work First Design'd in the Year 1724, and now Published by Keloom Tomlinson, Dancing-Master* (London: Printed for the Author: And are to be had of him, at the Red and Gold Flower Pot next Door to Edward's Coffee-House, over against the Bull and Gate, in High-Holbourn, 1735).
- Weaver, John, *Anatomical and Mechanical Lectures upon Dancing. Wherein Rules and Institutions for that Art are laid down and demonstrated. As they were Read at the Academy in Chancery Lane* (London: Printed for J. Brotherton, and W. Meadows, at the Black Bull in Cornhill; J. Graves, near White's Chocolate House in St. Jame's Street; and W. Chetwood, at Cato's Head in Russel Street, Covent Garden, 1721).

9. Austin's Gestural Notation ★

Content summary:

- A. A link to the online learning resource for Austin's gestural notation system. It includes a practical overview of the core elements of the notation and a step-by-step guide to a notated example of Gay's fable *Miser and Plutus*, with each element of the notation explained and accompanied by plates, aiding their practice: Dionysios Kyropoulos, 'Austin's Gestural Notation' *Online Learning Resources*, ⟨URL: www.kyropoulos.com/austin⟩, *op.cit.*
- B. Synoptic tables of all the notation's symbols and their application, Gilbert Austin, *Chironomia; or a treatise on rhetorical delivery: comprehending many precepts, both ancient and modern, for the proper regulation of the voice, the countenance and gesture. Together with an investigation of the elements of gesture, and a new method for the notation thereof; illustrated by many figures.* (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, in the Strand; By W. Bulmer, and Co. Cleveland-row, St. James's, 1806), *op.cit.*, pp.363–366.
- C. Gray's poem *Elegy* with gestures notated by Austin, followed analytical observations on the notation, *ibid.*, pp.524–539.

10. Active Analysis

The following exercises originate in the Stanislavski system and they will form the basis of our work on the scenes.

10.1. UNITS OF ACTION

The first step of active analysis is breaking down your scene into units of action, most commonly called ‘bits’. A new bit starts when something significant happens, for example: when a character comes on stage or leaves the stage, when an incident takes place that changes the way a character thinks or feels, when something happens that alters the character’s motivation or action. A significant change in the music can also indicate a psychological or physical change in the character, so look at the text as a whole when you try to divide it into bits.

After you finish marking the bits on the score with a special symbol (for example ※), name each bit with an adjective which reflects the emotional state of your character during this section, such as ‘angry’, ‘confused’, ‘impatient’, etc. You can use the extended list of passions I gave you in the first lesson to select the most appropriate description.

10.2. SCORE OF ACTIONS

During every one of the bits you identified in the previous exercise, your character’s emotional state requires a resolution, which most often comes in the form of an action. Mark each of these actions on your score (⊗) and then name them with a verb. For example: a character in an ‘angry’ bit might ‘draw his sword’, ‘curse the other character’ or ‘exit the stage’; a ‘confused’ character might ‘cry in despair’; and an ‘impatient’ character might be ‘pacing nervously’.

Some of the physical actions identified in each bit might not be reactions to the emotional state of the character or the dramatic situation, but generic actions that help set the scene. For example if a character is on stage weaving, then the ‘weaving’ can be marked as an activity (⊖) and not action. If another character comes on stage, surprising the weaving character, who stops weaving and stands up, the ‘stops weaving’ is an action and not activity, because it is a reaction to the dramatic event that has just happened on stage.

The score of actions marks the main actions which are clearly indicated by the text and help the character achieve their objectives.

10.3. SCORE OF PHYSICAL ACTIONS

After you have identified the main purposeful actions of your character in the previous exercise (score of actions), it is time to start creating a list of more detailed actions (score of physical actions).

To help you with this, Stanislavski introduces the concept of the ‘magic if’: asking yourself ‘what would I do if I was in my character’s place?’, imagining the progression of your physical actions, and then writing them down in the right order. For example, if a character in a ‘suspicious’ bit resorts to the action of ‘reading someone else’s letter’, the score of physical actions could be: ‘looking around the stage’, ‘listening carefully’, ‘holding his/her breath’, ‘gently opening the box’, ‘looking around again’, ‘taking out an envelope’, ‘exhaling nervously in anticipation’, ‘opening the envelope’, ‘taking out the letter’, ‘trembling slightly while unfolding the paper’, and ‘start reading eagerly’—at which point the ‘suspicious’ bit stops and the ‘enraged’ bit starts, after the information in the letter changes the emotional state of the character.

10.4. ACTIVE ANALYSIS

In preparation for the rehearsals, take the work you have done in your previous exercises and put it into action. Start from the beginning of the scene and go through all the physical actions from your score of physical actions silently, without speaking or singing. Trying the actions you imagined might make you realise that something does not really work, or that you forgot something. Amend your score of physical actions accordingly and repeat the exercise. After many repetitions your score of physical actions will be improved and your understanding of the character and their motivations will have become clearer.

After several repetitions of the silent work, go through the score of actions again but this time also speak your lines, in the colloquial translation you prepared in a previous worksheet (Handout 4). This will further inform your understanding of the character and might result in more adjustments of your score of physical actions.

The repetitions of the physical actions while speaking your colloquial translation will help create strong associations between the cognitive work you have done in the previous worksheet and the physical actions. This will allow you now to concentrate on the actions alone, and let them depict a clear image of your passions. At this stage, you can repeat the exercise but speak the original text.

The final stage of the active analysis is to put the physical actions together with the original text and the music. You will observe that the music will force

you to change the rhythm and quality of your movements. Let this inform you and further adjust your score of actions to perfectly fit both text and music.

Active analysis relies on precise repetition of actions, and leads to continuous refinement. Following your solo preparation, active analysis would continue during the rehearsals, and the actions of the other characters would further affect and change yours.

Empirical Work

APPENDIX II

This appendix includes details about the Empirical Inquiry and the four experimental student productions.

Empirical Inquiry (2021–2022)

Research methods included participant observation, qualitative interviews and discussions, analysis of photographs taken during meetings, analysis of participants' self-reflections and autoethnography. All the work followed the University of Oxford's Best Practice Guidance and Approved Procedures that aim to minimise any risks to the participants and ensure the respect of their dignity, rights and welfare. The professional guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (*Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, 2018) and the British Psychological Society (*Ethics guidelines for internet-mediated research*, 2021) were taken into consideration, as well as the review paper by the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods regarding ethical guidelines related to visual research (*Visual Ethics: Ethical Issues in Visual Research*, 2008). This work was approved by the Central University Research Ethics Committee (approval reference R77288/RE003). Although participants understood that complete anonymity could not be possible because of the use of visual material, in their consent forms they were given the opportunity to designate how they wanted their name to appear in any research outputs: one participant wished to remain anonymous (referred to as Participant A), two preferred only their first name to be used, three chose initials and last name, and the rest agreed for their full name to be disclosed. The Empirical Inquiry was divided into three distinct implementations (A, B and C) that ran in parallel and independently.

IMPLEMENTATION A

Implementation A (iA) focused on the use of Austin's gestural notation as a training tool and how it could most effectively be combined with facial expression and temperament embodiment, and took place over a series of online meetings and two in-person workshops. Because the historical notated examples available are purely text-based, for this implementation I worked with a trained actor and educator, Participant A, who attended six hours of online teaching sessions between November 2021 and January 2022, and two full-day workshops which took place on 17 December 2021 and 21 January 2022 in Studio 7, The Clore Music Studios, New College, Oxford.

Participant A, 'Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation A', post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 26 January 2022), *op. cit.*

IMPLEMENTATION B

Implementation B took place in the context of rehearsals for a professional production of Handel's *Tamerlano* I directed, and aimed to use the expertise reversal effect to test a number of hypotheses relating to pedagogical theories that underpin the resulting teaching method. It included the collection of autoethnographical observations from the preparation and rehearsal process, together with qualitative observations, feedback and self-reflections by the consenting members of the cast. Observing how professional singers (each with a unique level of experience and specialist knowledge) processed and incorporated elements of the techniques offered invaluable insights into the cognitive processes involved, further informing the new method's instructional design. The aim of Implementation C entailed teaching some of the techniques to a group of undergraduate students (four singers and one actor) in two intensive whole-day workshops and collecting reflections through interviews and questionnaires.

Implementation B was divided into two parts: the first (iB) included two full-day workshops on the 18 and 19 October 2021 at Stone House, Lewisham, London, followed by online interviews in October and November 2021; the second (iBx) included observations from rehearsals taking place in London and Cambridge between 7 March 2022 and 4 April 2022, performances between the 5 and 9 April 2022 at the Great Hall, The Leys, Cambridge, followed by online interviews in April and May 2022. The consenting participants were the singers Caroline Taylor,

Thalie Knights, Christopher Turner, Leila Zanette and J. Laing, and the actors V. Adler and Flóki Snorrason.

Although the new teaching method is designed for undergraduate students in vocal courses, Implementations A and B of this Empirical Inquiry allowed me to try out some of the proposed techniques in a different context to gather insights produced by the expertise reversal effect. Each member of the *Tamerlano* cast that participated in Implementation B had a unique level of experience and expertise: J. Laing and Christopher Turner were both highly experienced opera singers, but the first had long experience in historical acting and the latter no historical acting experience. Caroline Taylor, Thalie Knights and Leila Zanette were all experienced early-career opera professionals with advanced performance training, but Caroline and Thalie had also undertaken an academic education (possessing more schemata for processing theoretical information), and Caroline also had training in Laban technique, movement and dance. V. Adler and Flóki Snorrason were early-career trained actors. After the initial theoretical training which was planned in advance, the work with each of them was tailor-made and each benefited from a unique approach. Seeing what they needed and how they progressed provided great insights, confirming many hypotheses, especially ones relating to pedagogical theories that underpin the resulting teaching method.

Thalie Knights, 'Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation B', post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 28 October 2021), *op. cit.*

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Thalie Knights, 'Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation Bx', post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 20 April 2022)

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Caroline Taylor, 'Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation Bx', post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 23 April 2022), *op. cit.*

V. Adler, 'Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation Bx', post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 8 May 2022), *op. cit.*

Christopher Turner, ‘Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation Bx’, post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 27 May 2022), *op.cit.*

IMPLEMENTATION C

Implementation C (iC) included two full-day workshops on 13 and 27 November 2021 in Studio 7, The Clore Music Studios, New College, Oxford, with questionnaires completed after each of them, followed by online interviews in December 2021 and January 2022. The participants were Maryam, William, Gabriel Tufail Smith, Annie Hsu and L. M. Humphries.

Gabriel Tufail Smith, ‘Teaching Acting to Singers: Empirical Inquiry, Implementation C’, post-participation interview/discussion with Dionysios Kyropoulos (online, 20 December 2021)

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Experimental Student Productions (2014–2016)

The practical nature of this subject requires empirical observation to clarify concepts outlined in the historical texts, so as part of the early stages of my work I staged three experimental student productions through which I developed the core of the teaching techniques presented in this thesis. The experimental student productions were Pergolesi’s *Livietta e Tracollo* (2014), Molière’s *The Doctor In Spite of Himself* (2015), Purcell’s *The Prophetess* (2015) and Purcell’s *The Fairy Queen* (2016).

LIVIETTA E TRACOLLO

This was the first experimental production I devised, which took place just before I commenced my work on this thesis and helped me set the course for my research. The production was funded by Clare College Music Society, Clare College, University of Cambridge.

Performances: Two performances, 22 June 2014, Clare College Chapel, Trinity Lane, Cambridge.

Singers: Jenny Ashworth (Livietta) and Tristan Harkcom (Tracollo).

Actors: Rosie Paul (Fulvia) and Dionysios Kyropoulos (Faccenda).

Creative and production team: Dionysios Kyropoulos (stage director), David O'Shea (music director) and José Manuel Izquierdo (producer).

THE DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF

This production took place in my first year of doctoral studies and was produced by Theatron Novum, a theatre company I founded with seventeenth-century French acting specialist Dr Sabine Chaouche as a vehicle for experimentation with historical acting techniques. The play was performed in English translation, and the production was funded by myself and Dr Chaouche.

Performances: Five performances, 10 to 14 March 2015, Burton Taylor Studio, Gloucester Street, Oxford.

Actors: Tim O'Leary (Sganarelle), Tiphaine Ramenason (Martine), Imogen Allen (Lucinde), Will Spence (Lucas), Iarla Manny (Valère), Christian Amos (Léandre and Mr Robert), Daniel Abu (Géronte) and Rebecca Heitlinger (Jacqueline).

Creative and production team: Dionysios Kyropoulos (stage director), Sabine Chaouche (producer), Kira Liebert (designer), Ed Horner (lighting designer) and Bertha Chan (make-up artist).

THE PROPHETESS

This was another production of Theatron Novum, and the focus of experimentation was chorus-building techniques from physical theatre, tableaux composition and improvised movement. In this production the two-hour spoken drama which comprised the central part of the original work was replaced by a modern dramatic text by Leo Mercer, creating a historical/modern hybrid work to mirror the historical/modern hybrid acting techniques I wanted to experiment with. The production was funded by King's Hall Trust for the Arts, the Brasenose College Arts Fund, Magdalen Players and Oxford University Drama Society.

Performances: Five performances, 28 to 31 October 2015, Keble O'Reilly Theatre, Blackhall Road, Oxford.

Singers: Danny Scarponi (Diocles), Johanna Harrison (Aurelia), Betty Makharinsky (Drusilla), Raphaël Millière (Charinus), Rachel Maton (Flora), Salvador Mascarenhas (Bacchus), Ben Christophers (Maximinian), Jasper Gold (Momus), Patrick Keefe (Silenus), Rory Green (Silvanus), Emily Brinson (Tellus) and Issy Fidderman (Comus).

Creative and production team: Dionysios Kyropoulos (stage director), Matthew Reese (conductor), Leah Broad (producer), Leo Mercer (librettist), Sharon Yip (designer), Ollie Tobey (lighting designer), Camille Jetzer (choreographer), Harriet Astbury (production manager) and Matthew Woolley (technical director).

THE FAIRY QUEEN

This was my last experimental production by Theatron Novum. *The Fairy Queen* is a cut and altered version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with additional masques, dances, and musical episodes composed by Purcell. This work was chosen because it combined a wide range of spoken drama with several sung scenes (solos, duets, trios and choruses) and dance. Actors, singers and dancers had to work together on the same stage to tell the same story, relying on the successful interaction of many different types of theatrical expression. The text offers a wide emotional range, from intense passions of love, fear and anger to a parody of them in the Mechanicals' play and near-slapstick farce, demanding a great variety of acting styles. The fairy ensemble that comprise the train of Titania was played by a mixture of actors, dancers and singers, and the coordination of these disparate specialities provided many insights that contributed towards the development of the new teaching method. Like most Restoration plays, *The Fairy Queen* included a prologue, a highly topical spoken piece that often commented on aspects of the particular production, addressed the audience directly, poked fun at them and prepared them for the drama to come. In order to remain timely and topical, new prologues were written for every revival of older works, and following this historical practice I commissioned a new prologue for this production through a competition, which attracted a diverse body of submissions. The production was funded by the Oxford University Drama Society, the Brasenose College Arts Fund, the King's Hall Trust for the Arts, Accidental Death Productions, Magdalen Players, Pembroke Angels and St Hilda's College Drama Society.

Performances: Six performances, 4 to 7 May 2016, Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford.

Actors: Rebecca Bowen (Titania), Laurence Belcher (Oberon), Georgie Murphy (Puck), Chloé Delaney (Fairy), Brittany Neihardt (Changeling), Anushka Chakravarti (Hermia), Hannah Marsters (Helena), Tobias Sims (Demetrius), Joe Stephenson (Lysander), Beth Evans (Duke), Ivo Gruev (Egeus), Gregory Coates (Bottom), Will Spence (Flute), Alannah Burns (Quince), Arya Rallan (Starveling), Zeenia Framroze (Snug) and Ella Langley (Snout).

Singers (soloists): Patrick Keefe (Drunk Poet), Amelia Gabriel (Night), Ella McCarthy (Mystery), Johanna Harrison (Secrecy), Amschel de Rothschild (Sleep), Raphaël Millière (Coridon), Danny Scarponi (Mopsa), Timothy Coleman (Apollo), Sofia Kirwan-Baez (Juno), Jake Gill (Hymen) and Indyana Schneider.

Singers (chorus): Frances Bell-Davies, Amy Perkis, Patrick Bolton, Ann-Kathrin Kirschbaum, Gabriella Noble, Isobel Rose, Harriet Aspin, Alec Badenoch, Andrew Doll, Camilla Dunhill, John Leung, Anja Rekeszus, Michelle Sokol and Rory Turnbull.

Dancers (soloists): Marta Arnaldi, Daisy Porter and Alex Stoffel.

Dancers (chorus): Camilla Dickson, Emma Fagan, Andy Ledigo, Sophie Pace-Bonello, Lena Schneidewind and Miranda Shaw.

Creative and production team: Dionysios Kyropoulos (stage director), Adrianna Stoiber (musical director), Amy Thompson (choreographer), Rebecca Thornton (designer), Klara Kofen (costume designer), James Percival (lighting designer), Jennifer Hurd (sound designer), Eleanor Sax (assistant director), Sophia Hall (assistant musical director), Marisa Crane (assistant costume designer), Briana Che, Margaret Chung, Rianna Nayee, and Bethany Wise (costume making assistants), Anna Livesey (production manager), Hannah Merwood (company manager), Hae Jin Yang and Aisha Tahir (stage managers), and Charlotte Cohen and Islah Wallace (assistant production managers).

Select Bibliography

This select bibliography contains the historical treatises on acting, rhetoric, gesture, movement, emotions, personality and aesthetics that comprise the core of this study. The works are listed under two categories: fifty non-English treatises published in France, Italy, Germany, Austria and the Netherlands; and ninety English treatises published in London (thirty-eight of which in the first half of the eighteenth century), including translations. To help the reader get an overview and easily identify the works within their historical context, the two lists have been arranged in chronological rather than alphabetical order, and include the short title, place and date of publication, as well as any known dates of birth and death of the authors. Full bibliographical details of all of these works can be found in the Bibliography.

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