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What You See Is What You Get: Integrating Visual Performance Methodology Into Vocal Pedagogy

Bakara Nkenge-Hinds

Belmont University, bakaranhinds@gmail.com

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WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET:
INTEGRATING VISUAL PERFORMANCE METHODOLOGY IN
VOCAL PEDAGOGY

By
BAKARA NKENGE-HINDS

A RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Music in Vocal Pedagogy
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Submitted by Bakara Nkenge-Hinds in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music in Vocal Pedagogy.

Accepted on behalf of the Graduate Faculty of the School of Music by the Mentoring Committee:

Date

Jennifer M. Coleman, D.M.A.
Major Mentor

Mark Whatley, D.M.A.
Second Mentor

Jeffery Ames, Ph.D.
Third Mentor

Date

Kathryn Paradise, M.M.
Assistant Director, School of Music

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Lecture Recital Outline

Chapter 1

- Introduction
- McGurk effect

Harlem Night Song 2:13 R.I. Gordon (b. 1956)

To illustrate what I have just spoken about, I will have the audience close their eyes while I sing “Harlem Night Song.” When the audience feels as though they want to see something, I invite them to open their eyes.

Chapter 2

- Audience perspective
- Singer relationship with audience

A Simple Song from *Mass* 3:40 L. Bernstein (1918-1900)

In the first part of the song, I will demonstrate good vocal technique and posture. In the second part I will demonstrate what the singer should be free to do: show expressivity and artistry.

Border Line from *Genius Child* 3:25 R.I. Gordon (b. 1956)

I am highlighting this song because it has a vocalise middle section. Since the composer has not notated a vowel or given any direction, the audience is dependent on enjoying this section based on how I express it.

Chapter 3

- Freedom of movement with a supported posture
- Feldenkrais exercises

Almen se non poss'io 3:14 V. Bellini (1801-1835)

After freeing my shoulders, arms, and neck of excess tension using the “Reaching Out” lesson, I will sing “Almen se non poss'io” to test my freedom of movement.

Chapter 4

- Release of tension through gesture
- Two Mark Ross Clark exercises

Kid in the Park from *Genius Child* 2:52 R. I. Gordon (b. 1956)

I will use this song to practice gesturing since the lyrics are so descriptive.

Après un rêve 1:51 G. Fauré (1845-1924)

I will show Clark's "Playing with Gestures and Movement" exercise while I sing "Après un rêve" by Fauré by alternating between movement and non-movement.

Chapter 5

- Character study and development

Quando me'n vo' from *La bohème* 2:17 G. Puccini (1858-1924)

I will exhibit Lucca's "Acting Beat" exercise while I sing this aria. Before I sing, I will reveal the acting beats and go through the process of finding them with the audience.

Conclusion

- Summary of what was learned.

Chapter One: Introduction

In many ways, singing is an aural event. Since much of the instrument cannot be seen in a normal setting, voice teachers and voice admirers must rely on their ears to evaluate what they hear. However, singing is also a visual event. In the context of voice studios, teachers need to train students to not only achieve a healthy singing technique but also to convey a message to the audience. Each performer must ask herself, “what do I need to do as a performer to *show* the music?” In the article *Sight Over Sound in the Judgment of Music Performance*, Chia-Jung Tsay, a Professor of Organizational Behavior at University College London, studied the influence of visual versus aural in several experiments. “The results highlight our natural, automatic, and nonconscious dependence on visual cues. The dominance of visual information emerges to the degree that it is overweighted [sic] relative to auditory information, even when sound is consciously valued as the core domain content” (Tsay 2013). The visual aspect of performance dominates the aural aspect of performance. Therefore, visual performance methodology must be habitually taught in the singing studio.

A specific example of visual dominance is the McGurk effect. In 1976, Harry McGurk and John McDonald, two British psychologists, discovered a phenomenon defined as when “perceptual identification of auditory speech syllables is influenced by simultaneous presentation of discrepant visible speech syllables” (Rosenblum 1997). This disconnect can result in a misperception, which is influenced by visual cues. In other words, the McGurk effect occurs when there is a conflict between visual speech (meaning

the movements of the mouth and lips), and auditory speech (meaning the sounds a person hears). When this happens, visual perception always overrides aural perception.

McGurk and McDonald's findings were published in *Nature*, the international journal of science, in 1976.

In the article: *Seeing What You Hear: Cross-Modal Illusions and Perception*, Casey O'Callaghan, a Professor of Philosophy at Rice University, discusses the McGurk effect: "Each of the preceding illusions is compatible with the following explanatory principle: *vision wins*. When, in these cases, information from vision conflicts with what you would expect to experience through another sense modality, vision exerts its influence and alters experience in the other modality" (O'Callaghan 2008, 316). This is an example of how the McGurk effect supports my thesis. Knowing this fact, the voice teacher needs to provide the performer with resources to elevate the visual aspect of the performance for a more cohesive experience for the audience.

O'Callaghan also discusses other perception illusions such as synesthesia. The word comes from Greek origins meaning "a union of senses." According to the American Psychological Association, synesthesia occurs in many different forms. Some synesthetes taste shapes, smell colors, or see specific letters and numbers in color. However, the most common form is "colored hearing: sounds, music, or voices seen as colors. Most synesthetes report that they see such sounds internally, in the 'mind's eye'" (Carpenter 2001). Some synesthetes are able to visualize music. Although research suggests about one in 2,000 people have synesthesia, performers have to capture the attention of the other 99.95% of the population that need assistance in coupling their auditory and visual senses.

The auditory aspect of singing is regularly taught through vocal pedagogy, artistry, and technique. Most vocal pedagogy textbooks outline the six main components of the instrument: laryngeal structure and function, breath support, phonation, resonance, registration, and articulation. Unfortunately, the visual aspect of singing is not regularly addressed in these resources or held to a high standard in some voice studios. Conversely, when it is addressed by the voice teacher, it is often added as the “cherry on top” once the piece is learned vocally. This approach does not allow the student enough time to practice her craft through development of interpretation, gestures, emotions, expressions, and character choices.

In the performing arts, visual information is either eliminated or elevated because of its influence. “The audition procedures of the great U.S. symphony orchestras began to change sometime in the 1970's [sic]. The changes included increasing the number of candidates at auditions—a democratization of the process—and using a physical screen during the audition to conceal the candidate's identity and ensure impartiality” (Goldin and Rouse 2000, 737). In a performance, the audience reacts to the visual sensation first and that in turn dominates the performance. Visual authority also takes place in other genres such as typecasting in musical theater, and even the Metropolitan Opera must consider who they employ, due to cameras broadcasting opera live from the stage to screens around the world.

In the symphonic, theatre, and opera world, appearance is often chosen over ability. The same is true for the movie industry as well. In 1964, Audrey Hepburn was chosen to play Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* over Julie Andrews, who premiered the role on Broadway eight years earlier. Andrews received a Tony nomination and critical acclaim for her portrayal. However, Jack Warner, one of the founding members of

Warner Brothers and producer of the movie wanted to cast Hepburn over Andrews because she was more famous. “In my business I have to know who brings people and their money to a movie theatre box office” (Warner 1965). He wanted a well-known movie star to secure the movie’s success. Hepburn’s well-known face on movie posters would persuade an audience to attend over Andrew’s less familiar face. Although Hepburn may have had the look, she did not have the voice. The studio dubbed Hepburn’s singing with Marni Nixon who also served as “ghost singer” for Deborah Kerr in *The King and I* and Natalie Wood in *West Side Story*. Be that as it may, all of this excitement was behind the scenes. With lights, camera, and a covert singer, all the audience perceived when they went to the movie theater was a beautiful actress who was agreeable to the ear and most importantly “looked the part.”

The goal for this lecture recital is to recognize the issues and challenges that a visual performance demands from the performer, and how it affects the audience. A visual performance may be challenging for a performer to achieve but with the right methodology, a visual performance will be advantageous for the performer and the audience.

Chapter Two: Personal: Singer and Audience

The voice teacher must find a balance between teaching healthy technical aspects of singing and teaching the performance of singing. These two elements cannot supersede one another. If the performer does not learn vocal health, she may become injured. Likewise, if the performer does not learn the performance aspect of singing, she and the audience will become apathetic. This lecture recital will provide the voice teacher with tools to achieve a cohesive, entertaining, and fun lesson, and in the end, a visually expressive performance for the singer. I believe through my own experience with this topic, and through research of credible pedagogues, I will be able to help other singers and teachers who struggle with the same barriers that I did.

During my first semester of graduate school, a video on the McGurk effect was presented in class. As previously mentioned, the McGurk effect occurs when there is a disconnect between what is seen and what is heard. When this happens, the visual information overrides the aural information. This sparked in me the interest of *why* visual performance is important. I am passionate about this topic because I have struggled with my visual presentation. Many performers are from the school of thought that the performer should stand stationary, sing well, and learn the music correctly. Composure and stability are wonderful qualities for a singer to possess; yet, it should never manifest into apathy. The performer cannot be one dimensional and above all, she must find joy in singing. She must be able to encompass a myriad of emotions and actions that can be

detected by an audience. The relationship between singer and audience and how this relationship affects performance will be discussed in this chapter.

Changing the mindset grounded in mechanical technique to singing grounded in artistry is something that the singer must work on. On the other hand, learning tools to help the singer move into the world of artistry, visual stimulation, and overall enjoyment of music for the performer and the audience, also is the responsibility of the voice teacher.

Audiences tend to gravitate towards dynamic performances. Therefore, it is helpful for the performer to approach visual performance from the perspective of an audience member. The performer should recall how connected or disconnected she felt while watching visually stimulating versus dull performances. When watching visually interesting performances, the singer might remember her appreciation for the ability to envision who a performer was talking to or what a performer was looking at based on the performer's intentional changes in perspective. Whenever a performer uses all of her musical abilities including timbre, diction, and emotion, the audience is hooked. Using a range of emotions, gestures, expressions, and intensity, makes the audience invested in the performer. It feels as though the performer let the audience read her diary and they are grateful that she, as the performer, was vulnerable enough to let them in. Conversely, feelings of awkwardness, detachment, and eagerness for the performance to end may have accompanied the visually uninteresting performances. With the audience member's mind occupied on these feelings, he is not able to truly hear the voice in front of him. The singer's reason for becoming a more visually stimulating performer is as much for the audience as the performer.

Often singers have difficulty engaging the audience in a recital context rather than in a staged production. A meaningful performance cannot be one dimensional. There is more to a performance than just listening—all senses should be evoked. This concept is similar to the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

The term ‘*Gesamtkunstwerk*’ was introduced in the romantic period. It describes the desire for and practice of combining various art forms into a whole, such as performances that combine text, visual arts, music, dance, and architecture. Richard Wagner was one of the early theorists of the concept, inspiring many modernist artists. (Finger and Follett, 2011)

Admittedly, the role of *Gesamtkunstwerk* is on a smaller scale in this case, but still applicable. A solo performer can still have a multi-dimensional performance with the use of audio, visual, and kinesthetic elements. The audience receives a performance from a singer that equally combines her voice, expressiveness, and movement into a unified character that can communicate with the audience. Once this happens, the disjointedness between what is seen and what is heard, like in the McGurk effect, is minimized.

In the article “Emotion and Empathy: How Voice Can Save the Culture,” Lynn Holding, Professor of Voice and Coordinator of Vocology and Voice Pedagogy at Thornton School of Music, discusses the relationship between emotion and empathy as it relates to giving and receiving a performance. Emotion was the first substantive discussed. She concluded that the “voice has the power to induce emotion, and emotion is a vital component of human existence. The power of emotion has been recognized for as long as modern humans have existed” (Holding 2017, 431). Every singer’s performance should be grounded in emotion. The character must be driven by some sort of emotion that can be musically and visually depicted. The audience must also be able to accept and relate to these emotions. As Holding writes, “Emotion is the basis of empathy” (Holding

2017, 431). Empathy may be defined as the ability to understand and experience the feelings of a person or group and may be credited to the reason why the human race has not destroyed one another. Holding believes empathy is the “cornerstone” of a healthy and civilized society. As such, engaging with art as a performer or audience member instills empathy. An audience is more likely to engage in a performance that evokes empathy through an expressive and emotional visual performance.

In the book *Singing and Imagination*, acclaimed baritone, Thomas Hemsley, discusses the treasured relationship between composer/poet, singer, and audience:

It should be perfectly possible for singers, in a studio, to share their experience with an *imagined* audience. But the moment this imagined audience is forgotten, an essential element in the singer’s performance disappears. It ceases to be a ‘live’ performance, and however superficially and technically perfect the recording may be, however much energy is poured into the performance, it is almost certain to lose some of its true vitality and spontaneity. (Hemsley 1998, 186)

A performance should always be a shared experience between performer and listener. It is important for a singer to always imagine she is sharing performance with an audience, even in the voice studio.

An area that often hinders the performer’s ability to emote and promote empathy is performance anxiety. The presence of an audience can often fluster the performer. Most vocal pedagogy books have a chapter dedicated to performance anxiety. It is important for the singer to understand that stage fright is not only cognitive but also somatic. Clifton Ware explains exactly what happens internally when the singer faces performance anxiety:

The *sympathetic division* is the “fight or flight” system and serves as a troubleshooter in emergency situations. When facing a stressful challenge, such as a major vocal performance, the sympathetic system mobilizes the brain for arousal and prepares the body for action. Digestion stops, blood flows away from internal organs to muscles, oxygen transfer increases, and the endocrine system is stimulated to facilitate a variety of motor responses, including the release of adrenaline, which has a stimulating effect. (Ware 1998, 60)

Before and during a performance, the performer may experience a variety of “fight or flight” somatic anxiety such as that stomach-dropping, palm-sweating, heart-racing panic that can blur the mind and stiffen performance. Once the performance is over, the parasympathetic division takes over to calm and relax the body to conserve energy. “Thus, digestion resumes, heart rate slows, and respiration relaxes” (Ware 1998, 60). The sympathetic and parasympathetic divisions are interconnected and must work together to balance the stressful psychophysical bodily reactions.

Like most singers, I too struggled with performance anxiety. Performance anxiety can be so crippling that no matter how prepared and ready the performer is, he is not eager to face the audience. When a performer has dealt with performance anxiety in the past, cognitive anxiety such as negative thoughts can flood the mind. The performer can convince himself that the audience thinks he is terrible. He can fill his head with past mistakes and put a boundless amount of pressure on himself to be perfect. The singer can obsess about a performance the days, weeks, and months leading up to it. The authors of *Power Performance for Singers* explain that anxiety is internal: “Anxiety is an inner demon, not a monster waiting on the outside to attack you. You can control your anxiety levels if you choose to” (Emmons and Thomas 1998, 160).

Hemsley further discusses the relationship between performer and audience:

Members of the audience at public concerts have, in the process, been to a large extent relegated to the role of observers, or eavesdroppers, rather than participants. One result of this is that singers too often tend to look on members of the audience as critics –there to observe and judge—rather than as fellow human-beings with whom they have something they wish to share. (Hemsley 1998, 186)

This fear of the audience’s motives or the unhealthy need to impress the audience feeds into the feeling of performance anxiety. With the singer on the defense, the joy of singing is lost, and the performance is no longer a shared experience

How can performers mitigate the feelings of performance anxiety? Many pedagogues, voice teachers, and medical doctors have weighed in on the topic. Ware offers relaxation techniques such as yoga, hypnosis, and meditation; cognitive therapy; and beta blockers as remedies. In the article “Performance Anxiety (Stage Fright): Causes and Control,” George A. Gates, M.D. along with associate editor Dr. Robert Sataloff, offer treatment ideas for performance anxiety which involve tranquilizers, muscle relaxers, and beta blockers (although they note that these strategies are antithetical to optimal singing):

When the mind/brain senses a threat or stress, it releases chemicals into the blood stream that cause the adrenal gland to release catecholamines. These possess two major types of stimulatory effects: alpha (α) and beta (β). For a cell to respond to these chemicals, it must carry the appropriate receptors on its surface. For example, β stimulation causes an increase in heart rate and blood pressure, and β receptors in the heart and blood vessels can respond to that particular adrenergic stimulus. (Gates 1988, 26)

According to Gates, Beta-blocking agents are used successfully for instrumentalist.

However, the caveat is that their usefulness in singing does not have the same effect.

Studies at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio concluded that high levels of β blockers adversely affect performance and are therefore not recommended for singers. Mark Ross Clark, Professor and Opera Theater Production

Director at Indiana University School of Music and author of *Singing, Acting, and*

Movement in Opera also offers exercises to counter the feeling of performance anxiety:

ZZZ Breathing

Objective: Feeling the body “under the breath” with the support of the “zzz.”

Directions: Breathe deeply and make a “zzz” sound with the mouth and lips as you breathe out. Keep breathing while making the sound “zzz.” When the body is free, you should feel the torso ‘underneath the hum.’ (Clark 2002, 109)

Mental Rehearsal

Objective: Using visualization to create a positive performing environment.

Directions: Close your eyes and visualize the performance setting. Picture yourself walking onstage, taking control of the stage, and starting the

performance. Each time you feel tension or your breathing becomes shallow, take a deep breath and release tension. Stay in the moment and visualize success. (Clark 2002, 109)

These exercises can be completed anywhere the singer feels comfortable up until the second the singer walks on stage. They are quick, easy, and effective in calming the singer's nerves to be successful on stage.

Singing, teaching, and performing are areas in my life that will continue to evolve. It is important to note that I, like many singers, am a work in progress. I still find myself falling back into old habits of stiffness, passiveness, and nervousness, but I feel like I now have the tools to recognize and revise my behavior. The tools presented in this lecture recital are some of those I learned to use. I am grateful that I was given the opportunity during my master's degree to reflect and challenge myself to become a better musician and teacher.

Chapter Three: Freedom of Movement Through a Supportive Posture

Posture is often the first subject in an introductory voice lesson. Phrases such as: “Make sure your feet are shoulder width apart, have a slight bend in your knees, imagine there is a string attached to the top of your head pulling you up,” flood voice studios. These phrases are so common because there is validity in them. Keeping the feet shoulder width apart encourages balance and a well-grounded feeling, having a slight bend in the knees allows for blood circulation, and the imagery of the string allows the sternum to stay up supplying the lungs room to expand. In 2018 alone, the Journal of Singing published eleven articles that refer to postural alignment. The issue, however, occurs when the performer becomes stuck in one stationary and stiff position.

It is fair to question the relationship between posture and singing. Why should a performer concern himself with the position of his torso, or any other body part for that matter, while singing? The larynx, which houses the vocal folds, is suspended in the throat. The larynx has the ability to move based on the contraction of the attached muscles. The muscles that connect to the larynx connect to other structures in the body as well. If these muscles are harmfully tensed due to a mis-aligned posture, the vocal folds can be negatively affected. Structures such as the tongue, soft palate, constrictor muscles-walls of the throat, jaw opening, laryngeal height, lips, teeth, and hard palate also affect resonance and need to be properly positioned so that the vocal folds can work on efficiency. If the efficiency of the vocal folds diminishes, and the voice can become over worked and abused, which can result in pathologies. Posture is visual and technical, but

there is a way to teach a supportive, healthy singing posture without causing the body to lock.

Janice Chapman, voice teacher and renown pedagogue, is very passionate about the importance of posture. “Posture is the dynamic interrelationship between muscular and skeletal tissues. The word dynamic is important because it implies an alignment which is stable rather than static and fixed and is a prelude to easy flowing movement” (Chapman 2006, 27). The performer must use a supportive posture to be expressive with the whole body, no matter how big or small the performance space is. She describes appropriate posture in two parts:

Torso and Legs

- Shoulder girdle needs to be relaxed down. ▪ There should be no activity in the pectoralis major muscles. The upper rib cage is maintained in a comfortable setting (not military or pigeonlike) and could be described as “noble.” This can be achieved by gentle activation of latissimus dorsi and serratus anterior muscles (singing teachers have referred to this as “like having a small balloon under each armpit”).
- The spine needs to feel elongated and not excessively lordotic (swayed). This can be achieved by releasing the knees, slightly tilting the pelvis up at the front and down at the back (Note: this also helps to engage the lower abdominal and pelvic floor muscles in a posturally advantageous setting).
- The back should feel wide. ▪ Buttocks should not be clenched. ▪ Knees should be soft and not braced back. ▪ The weight should not be back on the heels nor fully forward on the front of the foot. Awareness of the heel and the ball of the foot in equal contact with the ground suggests that the body’s weight is well-distributed for singing. (Chapman 2006, 27-28)

Head and Neck

- The neck is free and allowed to lengthen forward and up. ▪ The ears are located over the shoulders. ▪ The imaginary 90 degree angle exists between the plane of the eyes and the neck (this encourages activity of the deep neck flexors).
- Sternocleidomastoid muscles should be inactive. ▪ Jaw should be relaxed and open backward and downward rather than jutting forward and out. ▪ Head balances and is free to move easily both up and down (tiny nods) and side to side, on the atlas and axis vertebrae. (Chapman 2006, 28)

Properly aligning the torso, legs, head, and neck will create equilibrium in all body parts, which creates a supportive stance that can freely move during a performance. Once the

performer has the ability to capture the attention of the audience by moving, the performance becomes exponentially more interesting. Sometimes, a performer may need certain remedies or therapies in order to achieve and maintain a supported posture. One of the techniques Chapman mentions is the Feldenkrais Method.

Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais was an Israeli physicist and engineer. He earned degrees in mechanical and electrical engineering and earned his Doctor of Science in Physics at the Sorbonne in Paris. A knee injury prompted him to apply his knowledge of physics, predictability, learning theory, human movement, and attention to function into a method. Before the singer is able to visually capture the audience through movement and character, the performer will need to emancipate his whole being. The Feldenkrais Method allows the singer to unlock the body in order to achieve freedom of movement. “The Feldenkrais Method uses the body’s neurological language to break down those subtle barriers, resulting in an almost magical adjustment that truly frees the singer and the voice” (Nelson and Blades-Zeller 2002, 1). The Feldenkrais Guild of North America describes the Feldenkrais Method as follows:

The Feldenkrais Method is based on principles of physics, biomechanics, and an empirical understanding of learning and human development. Moshe Feldenkrais said, “We move according to our perceived self-image.” By expanding your perception and increasing awareness, you will become more aware of your habits and tensions and develop new ways of moving. By increasing sensitivity, the Feldenkrais Method assists you to live your life more fully, efficiently, and comfortably. (Feldenkrais Method 2019)

The Feldenkrais Method can be applied to singing when trying to free the expressive nature and beautiful sounds of the instrument. It is easy for the performer to become locked while singing when there is so much to think about. Diction, technique, and posture are areas that can consume a performance, and in turn, cause tension within the performer.

The Feldenkrais Method is based on self-discovery using movement at the performer's current level. Stepping outside the performer's comfort zone is not the point of this method and is actively discouraged. The focus is on simple movements that can be sequenced and repeated to introduce or clarify a function. The method also focuses on breaking ineffective habits by discovering a better way to perform a function based on two principles: Awareness Through Movement (awareness of what the performer is intending to do) and Functional Integration (integrating oneself around a function in order to alter the function). "Because, for the most part, this discovery involves the part of the nervous system that controls movement, as opposed to conceptual consciousness or 'thinking,' changes tend to be retained and often amplified" (Nelson and Blades-Zeller 2002, 3).

The Feldenkrais Method consists of five key developmental ideas: (1) Life is a process, (2) the whole self must be involved for effective movement, (3) learning is the most important human activity, (4) having a choice is necessary, (5) human development is key. Just like learning a piece of music is a process, so is life itself. As humans we are ever evolving and as teachers and performers, we should never become static. The entire self is needed for efficient and effective movement. When all parts are not involved, areas of the organism are counteracting an intended act and energy is wasted.

The authors of *Singing with Your Whole Self: The Feldenkrais Method and Voice* created lessons to be performed by voice students. Dr. Blades-Zeller and Dr. Nelson encourage voice teachers to apply these modules as part of the warm up and challenge singers to experiment with these lessons through self-discovery as part of their daily practice. The lessons are divided into seven to ten-minute modules that can be adapted to the singer's environment. When implementing the lessons, the performer should stop if

he feels pain or fatigue, pay attention to how a movement is performed through multiple repetitions, and allow the system to have time to observe and learn the actions of the body. Two modules from the handbook, which are major areas of difficulty in voice studios are: *Reaching Out* and *Releasing Shoulder, Neck, and Jaw* tension. Both modules are Awareness Through Movement exercises and can be done individually or as a group and will be demonstrated in the lecture recital. Most Feldenkrais exercises are done sitting in a chair or lying down. Since the final product of a performance involves standing and moving, these two modules have been adapted from *Singing with Your Whole Self: The Feldenkrais Method and Voice* to a standing position. The exercises involve a voice teacher to student relationship and would be suitable for a private voice lesson or a group voice class.

Relating Shoulders, Neck, and Jaw

The shoulders, neck, and jaw are infamously areas of excess tension in singers. The following module allows the performer to release tension in these areas so that he may freely move these areas in a performance.

(1) Have the student open and close his mouth a couple of times. Invite the student to notice how much effort this takes. Is it comfortable? (2) Encourage the student to gently move his right shoulder forward and back to resting position. Repeat four to six times. During each repetition, direct the singer to use less effort to perform this movement. (3) The singer will place his left hand on his forehead and gently move the head to the left one to two inches using the arm. Repeat four to six times. Pause. Perform this task again while moving the right shoulder forward. Repeat three to four times. Inform the student to continue the movement but remove the left hand from his forehead. Allow the neck muscles to control the movement. Repeat four to six times. Pause. Ask the singer to

compare how his right and left sides feel. (4) Finally, coach the singer to gently move his left shoulder forward a little then back to resting position. Repeat four to six times. The singer should make this movement very delicate and relaxed and feel how much his back is involved in this movement. (5) Repeat steps 1 through 4 using the opposite side. (Nelson and Blades-Zeller 2002).

Reaching Out

Gesturing is an important aspect of a visual performance and will be addressed in chapter 4. First the body must free itself from tension in order to produce an effective gesture. (1) While the student is standing, have the singer raise his arms in front of him (shoulder height). Student will alternate reaching forward with his left and right arm. Repeat three or four times. Ask the singer to notice how far each arm moves. How easy are these movements? How is breathing affected? Rest for at least 30 seconds. (2) Instruct student to raise right arm. With extended arm, move the right knee forward, without moving the foot (movement comes from the hip). Singer will then lower his right arm. With lowered arm, move right knee forward. Notice that the right shoulder moves forward as well. Repeat six or more times. Increase awareness of how the right shoulder is carried by this action. Pause. Repeat same movement but allow the head to turn slightly to the left. Instruct the singer to notice what this does for the movement of the shoulder. What does it do for the overall ease of the movement? Repeat four to five times trying to make each repetition easier. Rest. (3) Repeat steps (1) and (2) using the opposite side. (4) Inform the student to raise both his arms and alternately move them forward twice then lower them. Ask the student to compare how they move now with how they moved at the beginning of the exercise. Raise the arms again and alternately move the knees forward,

turning the head slightly in the opposite direction of the advancing knee. Repeat three times. Rest. Lastly, have the student raise his arms and alternately move them forward. How do they move now? Compare to before. (Nelson and Blades-Zeller 2002).

Although the Feldenkrais Method was not developed exclusively for singers, its principles support voice pedagogy, voice science, and vocal health. Nashville, Tennessee, is one of many cities with practicing Feldenkrais Method specialists who are qualified to open the consciousness of the individual to how she moves and to make the movements more effortless, efficient, and free. The voice teacher can use this method to free the body of excess tension and free the mind of obsession of mastery, which in turn will free the voice. With an unrestrained body, mind, and voice, the performer has the power to advance the visual performance with use of gestures, singer's interpretation and character development.

Chapter Four

Release of Tension Through Gesture

In order to present a dynamic performance, and maintain a realistic characterization, it is common to add gestures to the singer's performance. After the performer uses the Feldenkrais Method or any other approach to free the body, he is ready to expressively move while singing. Gesturing can be one of the most awkward elements for a singer; for, they are premeditated, but should look improvisational. Gesturing may feel uncomfortable onstage but is accepted and expected in normal daily life.

There are universal and cultural gestures to communicate common emotions such as: thumbs-up, thumbs-down, clenched fist, and even a hand shake. In the Washington Post article titled "What to do With Your Hands When Speaking in Public," authors Jena McGregor and Shelly Tan offer a new perspective to the common idea of keeping gestures to a minimum so the audience can focus on the speaker's words. The article details a 2015 study by Vanessa van Edwards in which she compared different TED (Technology, Education, Design) talks. Van Edwards found that the most popular TED talks featured speakers who gestured more in their talks than the speakers in the less popular talks. The less popular TED talks had an average of 124,000 views and featured speakers who used an average of 272 hand gestures. Comparatively, the TED talks that went "viral" had an average of 7.4 million views and featured speakers who used an average of 465 hand gestures during the same length of time. Admittedly, speaking is not

the same as singing, yet both are entertainments that aspire to capture and sustain the attention of the audience.

In the book *Interpretation in Song*, baritone Harry Plunket Greene writes about the audience and singer connection:

Any singer who has sincerity, a fair amount of imagination and perfected technique can interpret, but not necessarily successfully. To be successful he must have Magnetism. . . Magnetism is the indefinable *something* which passes from singer to audience and audience to singer alike, for the audience which the singer holds in the hollow of his hand, holds him as surely in its own. Each acts and reacts on the other in ever-increasing degree. It is a gossamer thread over which passes that nameless electric current which stirs the singer to his depths and holds his audience thrilled and still. (Greene 1912, 8-9)

Magnetism in a performance is what draws the attention of the audience. A singer can achieve this seductive nature of performance by creating a visually captivating performance through the use of gestures, movement, and character development.

“Talking with your hands” is a common occurrence in life. In a 1997 study entitled “What’s Communication Got to Do with It? Gesture in Children Blind from Birth,” Jana Iverson and Susan Goldin-Meadow at the University of Chicago studied gesturing in children who were blind from birth. The results show that even children that have never seen a gesture, use gestures to communicate (Iverson, Goldin-Meadow 1997, 453). Since gesturing is ubiquitous, it looks unnatural not to use gestures during a performance.

The voice teacher should guide the singer in developing natural looking gestures that do not negatively affect the voice. In general, these gestures should not be guided by the head or neck. If the gestures originate from the shoulders, the thoracic cavity can remain up and open allowing the lungs to fully expand. However, the performance is dependent on the subject of the piece. Some characters may call for a gesture that is not

informed by the ideal singer's posture. A compelling performance calls for physical expressiveness. Caldwell details attributes of an expressive performance:

The performer's face, body, and gestures are congruent with the musical and emotional content. If gestures are used, they enhance and punctuate the emotion being sung. The performer frowns, smiles, laughs, weeps, or grimaces, reflecting the emotional content of the composition. The body is free to move as necessary, with shoulders back or slumped, chest raised or sunken, stance defiant or light, all depending on the emotional content of the piece. The ability to use the face and body precludes the attitude that singers must stand in one fixed position in order to sing well. As the song says, "It ain't necessarily so." (Caldwell 2012, 73-74)

Gestures should be practiced during the voice lesson consistently, so that in the performance the gestures look natural. At first when teaching a singer who does not feel comfortable moving during a performance, the voice teacher should assign a certain number of gestures she requires to see from the student in each song. This could be as simple as extending an arm out while singing the word "reach." The goal is to evoke movement from the singer, which will then add more artistry and originality to the song once he becomes more comfortable.

Dalcroze Eurhythmics is another method of singing that demands the use of movement. Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) was a Viennese pianist, composer, conductor, and professor of music. It was during his brief conducting career that he realized gesture and music must be married. As a professor in Geneva, he discovered kinesthetics linked music, thought, and movement. Dalcroze Eurhythmics has become very popular in America. The approach is taught at many universities in the country such as DePaul, University of Kentucky, Baldwin Wallace, and University of Central Michigan. J. Timothy Caldwell Professor of Voice at University of Central Michigan, licensed Dalcroze Eurhythmics teacher, and author of *Expressive Singing Dalcroze Eurhythmics for Voice* writes about the connection between gesture and performance:

"All music begins with a gesture on the part of the performer. The gesture originates from

the music the performer hears internally and from the degree of control the performer has over the gesture” (Caldwell 2012, 19). Dalcroze’s founding principles include the belief that the source of music is when human emotions transfer into musical motion, emotions are felt physically, we sense emotions through the contraction and releases of the body’s muscles, and the theory that the body expresses internal emotions through gestures.

For an introverted singer who is content singing without any physical emotion, the pressure to gesture can create unhelpful tension in the body. Kristin Linklater, a world-renowned teacher of voice production writes about the body, specifically the spine, experiencing an amount of tension that is not harmful to the body but necessary for function. “There is, however, a vital difference between relaxing for the sake of relaxation, which inevitably includes mental collapse, and relaxing in order to accomplish something. Our aim is to remove unnecessary habitual tensions so that the muscles are free to respond to impulse without the short-circuiting created by habit” (Linklater 2006, 41). For the body to function and the singer to produce sound, the singer can never be fully relaxed. However, harmful tension does not allow the voice to work efficiently and should be eliminated.

LizBeth Abeyta Lucca is the Artistic Director and Founder of Repertory Opera Company. She is the author of *Acting Techniques for Opera* in which she offers various exercises for the singer to practice gestures and become more comfortable with movement in singing:

This exercise uses gestures to relax your body and make you be present in the room. While singing, move with gestures that involve contact with your body or objects in the room. Move your hand up one arm, rub your face, wipe your hands on your thighs, pick up an object in the room and study it, straighten something. Develop a few gestures for you, the actor, to do when you feel yourself tensing

up. These might be moving your hand across your cheek, or rubbing your hands together, anything that helps you to relax. (Lucca 2007, 148)

With the use of familiar gestures, the singer will feel less afraid of moving with his body, transforming him from singer to performer.

Mark Ross Clark, author of *Singing, Acting, and Movement in Opera* also offers useful tips to check if the performer is tensing during a performance. If the singer is holding tension in his arms, Clark suggests the voice teacher lift the singer's arms while he is singing, then let go. If the arms effortlessly drop to his sides, then the upper body is tension free. If the arms stay out a bit in space, then tension is present. In order to get rid of the tension so that the singer may have the freedom to gesture, the voice teacher can propose Clark's "releasing tension" activity: "When the instructor holds up one arm, the body will tense while singing—every muscle will contract. Signaling with the other arm will indicate that the student should let go" (Clark 2002, 83). Once the tension is released, the voice teacher can use Clark's "playing with gestures and movement" exercise: "Holding up one arm signals the request to be still with arms at the side. The other arm gives the singer permission to walk, move, pace, and gesture in any way without thinking about it" (Clark 2002, 83-84). These exercises can be adapted to a solo performance by alternating between gestures and non-gestures and tension and relaxation. For example, the singer can sing one page without gestures and the next page with gestures. Similarly, the singer can sing one page without unnecessary tension and the next page with unnecessary tension.

The difference between a gesture and a "characteristic gesture" should also be noted. "A Characteristic gesture is one that can be used throughout the opera for the character—a movement characteristic of the person's station, state of mind, and body language. It is often as personal as a signature" (Clark 2002, 71). It is important for the

performer to know how her opera character would gesture depending on the characteristics, set, and time period of the character. Although both roles are played by sopranos in Puccini's *La bohème*, Musetta's gestures would drastically differ from Mimi's. A non-characteristic gesture may be used in an opera or recital setting and is not specific to a character's temperament. Clark offers an exercise to develop a consistent characteristic gesture through exaggeration: "Place four people on chairs in a line representing a number of persons waiting to audition. Each should select one gesture that shows irritation or nervousness and repeat it over and over again" (Clark 2002, 74). This exercise can be adapted to a solo performance by choosing four gestures that show the personality of a character and apply them to performance.

Constantin Stanislavsky was a Russian stage actor, director, and creator of the "Stanislavsky method." Stanislavsky's philosophy of character development was highly influential within the arts and will be further discussed in Chapter 5. He was determined to abolish the mechanical gestures that absorbed stage productions.

The body needed to be trained, to improve posture, and make movements supple and graceful. There was no room for mechanical gestures or mannerisms in the theatre. For Stanislavski, a gesture needed to reflect inner experience. It then became purposeful, logical and truthful. The physical technique, he felt, would train an actor's feelings for truth and form. (Sawoski 2010,17)

It is important for the performer to commit to a gesture and not give up on it half way through the movement, which is why it is fundamental to practice moving in the studio and practice room. Stanislavsky believed captivating gestures require the balance between naturalness and introspection which in turn created honesty and sincerely.

Gesturing gives the performance a heightened level of captivation. The act of movement allows the performer to release her unhelpful tension into a powerful physical emotion. With the use of the aforementioned exercises by Lucca and Clark, the voice

teacher may help the voice student incorporate gestures into her practice sessions so that she feels prepared and comfortable when moving onstage. The next chapter will discuss the final element of a comprehensive performance. Once the performer achieves freedom of movement and ease of gestures, she is able to integrate these components into her character development and interpretation to amalgamate her performance.

Chapter Five **Singer's Interpretation of Character**

Shirlee Emmons and Alma Thomas, authors of *Power Performance for Singers*, divide the performance into three segments: pre-performance, performance, and post-performance. Each segment is important to a successful onstage presentation. Pre-performance includes preparations that have been previously discussed in chapters 2, 3, and 4 such as physical well-being and relaxation, dealing with anxiety, and developing self-consciousness through positive thinking. The voice teacher can require the singer to familiarize herself with the text, translation, notes, and drama of the song, but the singer must fuse her own imagination with the tangible aspects of the song. That intersection is where the character begins to develop and flourish.

During the performance itself, the performer's interpretation needs to have a visual result as well as an aural result of emotion and phrasing. Emmons and Thomas believe it is crucial for the performer to *show* the audience what each song is about:

The training for a singer is almost the antithesis of the actor's training. The singer is trained to place each note in its correct place; the breathing must be precise, the pitch accurate, the rhythm and tempo exact. *Control* is the key word for the singer. But the very controls so needed for singing seem to get in the way of good acting. Ideally a singer ought to be spontaneous in his or her acting and at the same time be able to maintain necessary vocal control. (Emmons and Thomas 1998, 236)

As discussed in previous chapters, excellent vocal technique cannot be at the expense of acting and visual character. Most performers have probably not thought about post-performance as a phase, but it is an important part of the trifecta. It is meaningful for the performer to allow himself time to relax and come down emotionally from the adrenaline

a performance creates, stay busy spending time with people to avoid becoming overly critical, and to finally critically and unemotionally evaluate the performance.

Admittedly, becoming a character in a staged production is much easier than in the context of a song recital. A singer's performance in an opera is supplemented with set, costumes, props, and other characters onstage. The recital performer has a challenging undertaking to convince the audience of the character, setting, and circumstance based on her portrayal only. In order to visually portray a character well, Emmons and Thomas quote the famous Heldentenor, Jean de Reszke (1850-1925), who believed the singer cannot allow himself to get wrapped up in emotion, for emotion can hinder singing. Instead of actually becoming emotional, the singer should alternatively imitate emotion. Emmons and Thomas implore the singer to construct an image of the character to take onstage, which is the source of the clues and messages the composer put in the text instead of basing the character on emotion.

This view seems to differ from Lynn Holding's view of the singer's performance grounded in emotion. Becoming so emotionally affected that the singer is not able to perform is understandably an issue, but ignoring emotion when creating a character is also problematic. In the Washington Post article titled: *Half of the world is bilingual. What's our problem?* Jay Mathews quoted some troubling statistics. "According to the U.S. Census Bureau, only 20 percent of Americans can converse in two or more languages, compared with 56 percent of Europeans" (Mathews, 2019). When singing in a foreign language to an American audience, the vast majority of audience members will not understand the text of the piece. Therefore, it is not always beneficial to rely on the composer's text when creating a character. The singer must rely on something that transcends the language barrier. "A proper use of one's emotional resources should alter

the feeling and sound of one's singing, and should communicate more effectively with the listener than would an uninvolved reading of the score" (Balk 1977, 55). After all, emotion is the basis of empathy according to Holding. Ergo, the audience is more likely to understand the visual and aural emotion of the singer.

As seen with Holding and Emmons/Thomas, different pedagogues have various views on aspects of performance, but most seem to agree that the singer's preparation must have a visual product. How the singer moves and perceivably expresses the character is essential for audience perception. "Of these communication tools, eyes are the most important, gesture is the most difficult to achieve with naturalness, and body movement is perhaps the most effective. In your plans for the dramatic elements of your performance, be sure to include all three" (Emmons and Thomas 1998, 236). The use of these three communication tools are important for the performer to communicate with her audience.

Constantin Stanislavski's book *Creating a Role* is devoted to the idea of this chapter. For the remainder of this chapter, the singer/performer will be addressed as the actor. Considering performers must embody a character in order to deliver a meaningful performance, it is important for singers to also regard themselves as actors. As discussed in chapter 4, Stanislavski's work was ground-breaking in the acting world as it related to character development and production. During a period of study, it is important for the actor to analyze his role. The process of analysis involves not only examining the work, but also the actor's thoughts, spirituality, and emotion for creative stimuli: "Therefore, the purpose of analysis should be to study in detail and prepare *given* circumstances for a play or part so that through them, later on in the creative process, the actor's emotions will instinctively be sincere and his feelings true to life" (Stanislavski 1961, 9). It is

important for the character research to become more than intellectual study. It must transform into genuine emotions and feelings the audience can relate to.

“This transformation is accomplished by the help of one of the principal creative forces in our art, *artistic imagination*. At this point our work is lifted from the plane of reason into the sphere of artistic dreams” (Stanislavsky 1961, 19). It is important for the actor to approach his role from a place of both emotion and intellect.

In the book *Acting Techniques for Opera*, Artistic Director and Founder of Repertory Opera Company LizBeth Abeyta Lucca offers a process for creating the character and exercises to aid in this process. Creating an ego-centric story, meaning a story completely told from the character’s point of view is one of the activities that Lucca offers. As a spectator in the audience or as the performer, the actor may not agree with the character’s actions, thoughts, and feelings, but as the character, the actor must wholeheartedly personify the character’s motives. Lucca suggests the actor choose a role and write his ego-centric story. While using the first person, the actor should tell the story from his point of view. From beginning to end, the actor should only include scenes he is in, knowledge he was privy to, provide details of the character’s relationships, and include the primary wants that control his actions. When not onstage, the actor should create new stories that explain where the character was and what he was accomplishing while he was absent from the audience. Once the story is ingrained, the actor must use the narrative to visually show the audience his story. This task is more established in an opera since the synopsis is clear. In a recital of art songs, the actor will have more creative license to build an ego-centric story for each song, set or cycle.

With the tools learned in chapter 3 and 4 relating to movement and gesture, the actor will be free to experiment with the physicality of the character. The actor must

walk, gesture, sit, stand, and perform other movements in character. Lucca offers the following exercise to help the actor achieve the physicality of the character:

Don't try to decide intellectually or logically what the best physicality is for your character. Just get up, put on the music and walk around the room. Use your body to find the answers to these questions— Where is your physical center? What part of your body moves forward first? If you were an animal, what animal would you be? How does your music make you feel like moving? From where do you imitate arm gestures? What is the tempo of your movements? (Lucca 2007, 60)

By performing this exercise, the actor can naturally discover character movements that are informed by the composition.

When singing an aria, the actor is essentially delivering a monologue filled with the character's innermost thoughts and feelings. As such, the actor can approach an aria the same way she would approach a monologue. "At this point if you were working on a monologue, you would drive the monologue into 'beats.' Acting beats change when there is a dramatic change in the scene or monologue" (Lucca 2007, 134). Lucca suggests going through an aria and finding the places where there is a change in drama, emotion, information, tactics, decision, tempo, or a distinct change in rhythm. In chapter 4, "Quando m'en vo" from *La Bohème* was discussed as it related to characteristic gestures. This aria will be revisited to find the acting beats. The following paragraph demonstrates how a student may take a song or aria and find specific moments to add in movement, gesture, and differences in emotion. These beats have been created for the lecture recital portion of this project. Dover's 1987 score publication was used as a reference.

Foremost, it is important for the actor to free the body of tension. The actor may use the "reaching out" exercise listed in chapter 3 to expressively move and gesture. The actor must familiarize herself with the plot and character of the opera. It is crucial for the actor to know what happens right before and after this scene, her relationship with the

other characters, and her motive. “Quando m’*en vo*” is a fairly short three-page aria. Therefore, there are few acting beats.

1. The first acting beat (mm. 1-15) takes place from the beginning of the aria through the phrase *e la bellezza mia tutta ricerca in me da capo a’ pié* (and all search for in me, my beauty from head to feet). This section features the main melody of the aria. The tessitura is high, the notes are mostly sustained, and the vocal line features the highest note in the aria (B-natural) near the end of this section. The action and emotion climaxes on the B-natural and is followed by the vocal line descending in pitch creating a natural falling action contour. During this section, the actor should choose big gestures that are connected exhibiting the pompousness, smoothness, and grandeur of Musetta’s attitude. In order to choose appropriate gestures for Musetta, the actor may use the characteristic gesture exercise listed in chapter 4 to choose gestures that show the personality of the character. Immediately following this section, Marcello and Alcindoro both have dialogue which offers another hint that the first acting beat has concluded.

2. The next acting beat belongs to the middle section of the aria (mm. 16-28). The notes of the vocal line are quick, the tessitura is lower, and Musetta becomes more specific in her language and offers more insight into her emotions and feelings admitting that she relishes in the attention she receives. Using tempo as a signifier for an acting beat is not very helpful in this aria because there is a constant ebb and flow between *ritardando* and *tempo*, a compositional device specific to Puccini. Since the text, emotions, and feelings shift to a more personal tone, the actor may choose to add some intimacy in her performance. In order to achieve a visually interesting performance, the actor may read about emotion and empathy and singer/audience relationship in chapter 2. To show a change in mindset to her audience, she may turn her body to expose less of herself to the

audience while still singing out, her gestures may be smaller and more active, and her facial expressions may illustrate a more contemplative look. This beat ends with a fermata during the phrase *Così l'effluvio del desio tutta m'aggira* (thus the scent of desire surrounds me).

3. The final beat (mm. 29-47) starts with the phrase *felice mi fa* (it makes me happy). The tension of the harmonic structure is resolved with an outpouring of emotion from the vocal lyricism of the line, Musetta's text changes from first person to second person, and the main melody returns. The actor may choose to change her visual outlook from intimate to direct, honing in on a single point to focus on Marcello. The final B- natural of the aria, *ma ti senti morir!* (but you feel as if you're dying!) is ostentatious in nature and should be accompanied by a strikingly tall and wide gesture.

After the actor finds her beats and decides which gestures, movements, emotions, thoughts, and facial expressions would be most appropriate for the aria, she must synthesize her findings:

Once you have divided your aria into sections, and identified your acting focus, then take time with each section. Read it, write it, sing it, think about it, whisper it. Do a dance to it. Do anything that gives insight into the life of the character in each individual section. Write down your discoveries. Then move on to the next section. After you explore each section separately, construct the path that gets you from one section to the next. (Lucca 2007, 140)

All of this preparation for one aria may seem daunting but investing so much time and energy into the aria sets the actor at an advantage to give a convincing portrayal of the character and the story.

Actors of the same voice type regularly perform the same songs and arias, often times for the same audience. Because of this redundancy, it is comforting to know that each actor brings her own portrayal of the character that is unique. No two singers will ever give the same performance, because each singer possesses a uniqueness that cannot

be replicated. Skilled composers leave a blueprint for the actor to follow, but much is left up to the actor of how she chooses to build her character. With the exercises and approaches used in this chapter, the voice teacher and the singer will be able to delve deeper into the world of visual performance.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to highlight the importance of adding a visual emphasis to performance through teaching in the studio. When given sensory information, the audience reacts, remembers, and values visual information above aural. The McGurk effect is a specific example of this visual dominance. Knowing this fact, the voice teacher and singer must work together to develop visual performance methodology for a result that is both expressive and stimulating.

Performance cannot only exist in the realm of reason and intellect. Emotion and artistry both affect singing and performance. There is a sacred relationship between the singer and the audience that must always be taken into consideration. It is helpful for the singer to approach visual performance from the perspective of the audience. Once the singer remembers what was perceived in the audience of a successfully engaging performance, she is able to realize the value of visual stimulation.

Understanding the relationship between emotion and empathy is also vital for the performer to deliver a successful performance that is shared with her audience. The human voice has the power to induce emotion. Participating with art as a performer or audience member instills empathy. "Emotion can no longer be considered a separate or lesser brain function, nor a distraction to reason" (Helding 2017, 431). An audience is more likely to engage in a performance that evokes empathy through an expressive and

emotional visual performance. Performance anxiety can often get in the way of a singer delivering the performance she intended and for which she has prepared. Performance anxiety is both cognitive and somatic. The sympathetic division of the nervous system takes over the brain and prepares the body for action. In order to not feel crippled by performance anxiety, the singer may use exercises such as *ZZZ Breathing* and *Mental Rehearsal* (both exercises are described in detail in chapter 2) to calm the body and focus the mind.

A supportive posture is essential to achieving vocal efficiency and wellness; however, it is important not to lock the body while trying to align it. Freedom of movement through a supportive posture allows the interconnection between the muscular and skeletal systems to be active and stable instead of static and stiff. In order to achieve this freedom of movement, the singer may choose a self-discovery methodology such as the Feldenkrais Method to open the consciousness of the singer to learn how to discover, unlock, and support the movements of the body. Exercises such as *Torso and Legs; Head and Neck; Relating Shoulders, Neck and Jaw; and Reaching Out* (all exercises are described in detail in chapter 3) allow the singer to explore how she moves and to make the movements more effortless, efficient, and free.

Once the body is free of excess tension, the performer can begin to add gestures to her performance. Gestures are ubiquitous in everyday life but can be difficult to add to performance. Gesturing should look improvisational, but is premeditated for a singer. The singer must relate physicality to music in order to achieve a natural-looking gesture that is specific and appropriate for the character. *Dalcroze Eurhythmics* is another method of singing that demands the use of movement. The Dalcroze method was founded under the

belief that music is felt physically and that the body expresses internal emotions through gestures. Pedagogues such as LizBeth Abeyta Lucca and Mark Ross Clark offer exercises to develop gestures that practice the ease of movement.

The singer's interpretation producing a visual effect is the final element of achieving a visual performance. When creating a character, the singer/actor must synthesize all her findings to create a comprehensive performance. The relationship between the singer and audience, freedom of movement, supportive posture, release of excess tension, and gesturing is now combined with score study and character development. The actor familiarizes herself with the plot and the character to draw her own conclusions, feelings, and emotions that add to her unique portrayal of the character. The aria is similar to a monologue in that it expresses the character's innermost thoughts and feelings. In order to organize the character's emotions so that the actor can succeed in depicting the scene, the actor should go through the aria or song and find beats that point to a change in perspective, drama, information, tactics, decision, tempo, or a distinct change in rhythm.

Putting these techniques into practice has helped me evolve in my musicianship. Instead of only being focused on the aural and technical aspect of singing, I am now able to think about connecting to my audience through a deeper understanding of the character, emotion, and physicality of the piece. Using a visual methodology has relieved my fixation to always sound great, has allowed me to focus my energy on the performance as a whole, and to have fun with performing. Because of this growth, future topics of research may include the effect of movement on vocal quality, the difference between the quality of performance with and without an audience present, and the number of collegiate schools that offer a set visual performance methodology

Performing is a complex display which requires the joining of audio and visual components to enrapture the audience. With the imbalance of audio and visual sensations, the performance will not be perceived as a cohesive presentation. When there is a disconnect between what is heard and what is seen, an uncoupling, similar to the McGurk effect, is in full swing and the audience will gravitate to the visual aspect. No matter the tempo, subject matter, or language, there is always room to incorporate a visual aspect into a performance. This incorporation happens through the guidance and education of the voice teacher. The end goal of any voice teacher is to prepare the student so that she becomes a knowledgeable advocate for her own voice. Through the guidance of a qualified voice teacher, who is aware of the importance of incorporating an emphasis on the visual perception during the teaching of singing, the performer will learn tools, exercises, and movement to aid in a cohesive performance.

Appendix A

The following exercises, which can be found in chapters 2 through 5, offer a resource for the teacher and student to reference.

Chapter 2: Performance Anxiety

Clark, Mark Ross. 2002. *Singing, Acting, and Movement in Opera*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

ZZZ Breathing

Objective: Feeling the body “under the breath” with the support of the “zzz.”

Directions: Breathe deeply and make a “zzz” sound with the mouth and lips as you breathe out. Keep breathing while making the sound “zzz.” When the body is free, you should feel the torso ‘underneath the hum.’ (Clark 2002, 109)

Mental Rehearsal

Objective: Using visualization to create a positive performing environment.

Directions: Close your eyes and visualize the performance setting. Picture yourself walking onstage, taking control of the stage, and starting the performance. Each time you feel tension or your breathing becomes shallow, take a deep breath and release tension. Stay in the moment and visualize success. (Clark 2002, 109)

Chapter 3: Freedom of Movement Through a Supportive Posture

Chapman, Janice L. 2006. *Singing and Teaching Singing: A Holistic Approach to Classical Voice*. Abington, Oxfordshire United Kingdom: Plural Publishing Inc.

Torso and Legs

- Shoulder girdle needs to be relaxed down. ▪ There should be no activity in the pectoralis major muscles. The upper rib cage is maintained in a comfortable setting (not military or pigeonlike) and could be described as “noble.” This can be achieved by gentle activation of latissimus dorsi and serratus anterior muscles (singing teachers have referred to this as “like having a small balloon under each armpit”).
- The spine needs to feel elongated and not excessively lordotic (swayed). This can be achieved by releasing the knees, slightly tilting the pelvis up at the front and down at the back (Note: this also helps to engage the lower abdominal and pelvic floor muscles in a posturally advantageous setting).
- The back should feel wide. ▪ Buttocks should not be clenched. ▪ Knees should be soft and not braced back. ▪ The weight should not be back on the heels nor fully forward on the front of the foot. Awareness of the heel and the ball of the foot in

equal contact with the ground suggests that the body's weight is well-distributed for singing. (Chapman 2002, 27-28)

Head and Neck

- The neck is free and allowed to lengthen forward and up. ▪ The ears are located over the shoulders. ▪ The imaginary 90 degree angle exists between the plane of the eyes and the neck (this encourages activity of the deep neck flexors).
- Sternocleidomastoid muscles should be inactive. ▪ Jaw should be relaxed and open backward and downward rather than jutting forward and out. ▪ Head balances and is free to move easily both up and down (tiny nods) and side to side, on the atlas and axis vertebrae. (Chapman 2002, 28)

Nelson, Samuel H. and Elizabeth Blades- Zeller. 2001. *Singing with Your Whole Self- The Feldenkrais Method and Voice*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press.

Relating Shoulders, Neck, and Jaw

(1) Have the student open and close his mouth a couple of times. Invite the student to notice how much effort this takes. Is it comfortable? (2) Encourage the student to gently move his right shoulder forward and back to resting position. Repeat four to six times. During each repetition, direct the singer to use less effort to perform this movement. (3) The singer will place his left hand on his forehead and gently move the head to the left one to two inches using the arm. Repeat four to six times. Pause. Perform this task again while moving the right shoulder forward. Repeat three to four times. Inform the student to continue the movement but remove the left hand from his forehead. Allow the neck muscles to control the movement. Repeat four to six times. Pause. Ask the singer to compare how his right and left sides feel. (4) Finally, coach the singer to gently move his left shoulder forward a little then back to resting position. Repeat four to six times. The singer should make this movement very delicate and relaxed and feel how much his back is involved in this movement. (5) Repeat steps 1 through 4 using the opposite side. (Nelson and Blades-Zeller 2001, 125-129)

Reaching Out

(1) While the student is standing, have the singer raise his arms in front of him (shoulder height). Student will alternate reaching forward with his left and right arm. Repeat three or four times. Ask the singer to notice how far each arm moves. How easy are these movements? How is breathing affected? Rest for at least 30 seconds. (2) Instruct student to raise right arm. With extended arm, move the right knee forward, without moving the foot (movement comes from the hip). Singer will then lower his right arm. With lowered arm, move right knee forward. Notice that the right shoulder moves forward as well. Repeat six or more times. Increase awareness of how the right shoulder is carried by this action. Pause. Repeat same movement but allow the head to turn slightly to the left. Instruct the singer to notice what this does for the movement of the shoulder. What does it do for the overall ease of the movement? Repeat four to five times trying to make each repetition easier. Rest. (3) Repeat steps (1) and (2) using the

opposite side. (4) Inform the student to raise both his arms and alternately move them forward twice then lower them. Ask the student to compare how they move now with how they moved at the beginning of the exercise. Raise the arms again and alternately move the knees forward, turning the head slightly in the opposite direction of the advancing knee. Repeat three times. Rest. Lastly, have the student raise his arms and alternately move them forward. How do they move now? Compare to before. (Nelson and Blades-Zeller 2001, 106-112)

Chapter 4: Release of Tension Through Gesture

Lucca, LizBeth. 2007. *Acting Techniques for Opera*. Pomona: Vivace Opera Publishers.

Gesturing

This exercise uses gestures to relax your body and make you be present in the room. While singing, move with gestures that involve contact with your body or objects in the room. Move your hand up one arm, rub your face, wipe your hands on your thighs, pick up an object in the room and study it, straighten something. Develop a few gestures for you, the actor, to do when you feel yourself tensing up. These might be moving your hand across your cheek, or rubbing your hands together, anything that helps you to relax. (Lucca 2007, 148)

Clark, Mark Ross. 2002. *Singing, Acting, and Movement in Opera*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Releasing Tension

When the instructor holds up one arm, the body will tense while singing—every muscle will contract. Signaling with the other arm will indicate that the student should let go. (Clark 2002, 83)

Playing with Gestures and Movement

Holding up one arm signals the request to be still with arms at the side. The other arm gives the singer permission to walk, move, pace, and gesture in any way without thinking about it. (Clark 2002, 83-84)

Characteristic Gesture

Place four people on chairs in a line representing a number of persons waiting to audition. Each should select one gesture that shows irritation or nervousness and repeat it over and over again. (Clark 2002, 74)

Chapter 5: Singer's Interpretation of Character

Lucca, LizBeth. 2007. *Acting Techniques for Opera*. Pomona: Vivace Opera Publishers.

Physicality

Don't try to decide intellectually or logically what the best physicality is for your character. Just get up, put on the music and walk around the room. Use your body to find the answers to these questions— Where is your physical center? What part of your body moves forward first? If you were an animal, what animal would you

be? How does your music make you feel like moving? From where do you imitate arm gestures? What is the tempo of your movements? (Lucca 2007, 60)

Acting Beats

Go through an aria and find the places where there is a bend or heightening in the dramatic path of the monologue. (Lucca 2007, 134)

Ego-Centric Story

Choose a role and write your ego-centric story. Tell your story from when it started until its end, talking of your point of view and thoughts. Justify to your audience what you said and what you did. Take yourself through the story point by point from beginning to end. Do not include any scenes that you were not in. Write scenes to fill your life between appearances on stage. (Lucca 2007, 55)

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