

Process Workbook for Voice and Movement

To be an actor is to be a medium through which art can be expressed. "Spiritual, social, political, emotional, intellectual worlds are all interpreted through this physical body." Delgado and Svich (2002). To be able to do this I must be able to control and accurately use my voice and my body to convey the characters I play. We were introduced to the works of practitioners to develop techniques in creating an authentic performance. We then used these techniques to create a performance of a poem that we got to choose.

One of the first practitioners we were introduced to was Grotowski (1968). We discussed what his principles meant to us. His Statement of Principles was used to establish a professional environment built on trust, respect, and an appreciation for our work. In order his principles state; the role of an actor in society, why we perform, the importance of courage and freedom to perform, the relationship between actors and directors, focus on respect and collaboration, the importance of only claiming your own work, to look after your own health, the importance of a collection of ideas, not just playing a character but being a character and not to let greed corrupt art. These work quite nicely as a code of conduct for actors to follow and a good standard to hold myself to as a professional, to create a healthy working environment.

We did the slow-motion study of Wangh's (2000) actors warm up, where we had to walk through different textures and feel their impact. This was useful to experiment with movements and pressure, how different contexts and locations affect the ways we move. Wangh (2000) also makes a strong point of "bringing your body to your mind" and harnessing that as a source of energy, rather than remaining so focused on keeping your mind clear that you lose vision of the here and now. He does this in his stream of consciousness exercise, where you move according to how you feel. I find this a particularly helpful mindset, as it directs my energy away from closing myself off and allows me to use that energy to bring more to my performance.

We were also introduced to Laban's graph of motion, Somerset Theatre Factory (2015), which is a helpful way to put into plan what movements a performer or a character may do and what properties those movements have. This helped me get into the physicality of the piece and portray my intentions to an audience. I will continue to use this technique to achieve a flow through my motions and emotions as I perform more.

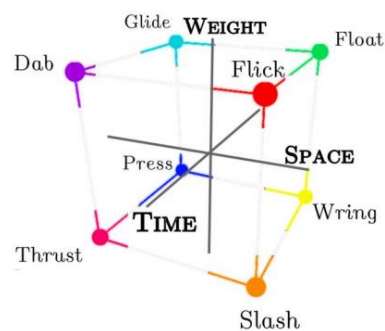


Image 1: Laban's graph of motion. (Garcia & Ronfard, 2020).

At first, when reading Bogart and Landau (2004) viewpoints I found it difficult to understand, particularly the differences between behavioural gesture and expressive gesture and what was meant by lines and curves in shape. I watched Bogart's conversation with Geoffrey Coleman on Digital Theatre Plus (2019). but I still was not too sure how to wrap my head around viewpoints. When I asked my lecturer and other students, I got a better understanding, but it was once I started acting on their practices, I truly got a sense of what they were trying to explain, and I found these methods extremely helpful and useful. This went from being a work that I almost disregarded to one of the works I find most necessary. Next time I struggle to understand a practice I will seek multiple formats to ensure that I do not miss any techniques. We used the images of the gold band, strong legs, relaxed shoulders, soft focus, and open heart to create a team dynamic to work together and feel the room. This is a practice that I now find particularly important to collect a company feel.

I also watched a video of the warmups of Frantic Assembly on Digital Theatre Plus (2016), which I found to be extremely helpful to build upon the images of Bogart and Landau (2004) and help us collaborate.

These are also notions I have taken in my practices outside of university to build teams.

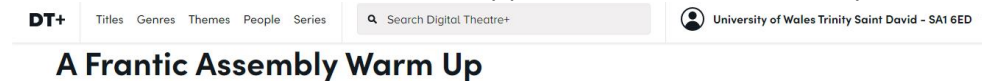


Image 2: Screenshot of A Frantic Assembly Warm Up from Digital Theatre Plus (2016).

I was paired with Jaimee to create a warmup for the class. Jaimee planned the opening and closing activities while I planned the middle activities. Jaimee had planned an exercise where we plotted our daily and weekly aims, whilst appreciating the work we had done in the previous week. This was to create a headspace for productivity. She then planned an improv game where we had to use memory and creative thinking to improvise a shop scenario. I then planned a game of dragon and shield with the twist of playing through emotions to bring energy to the room and keep people mentally present. I then had everyone play a game with the concept of balancing the stage, which aimed to get everyone working as a team. Jaimee then ended our warmup with a game of park bench, wherein every time someone left the scene someone else had to jump in and improvise what was going to happen. This was to keep everyone's brain active. I feel our warmup did not fully achieve our goal and we could have put more movement into it as well as explain the aims of each warmup beforehand.

We were then introduced to Lecoq (2020) as a method to explore ourselves as a tabula rasa to use as a canvas. After being introduced to Lecoq, we engaged in an activity to embody characteristics of an animal into our motions. I decided to do some further reading and discovered his seven stages of tension, Hendersen (2016); The exhausted or catatonic, the laid back, the neutral or the economic, the alert or curious, the suspense or the reactive, the passionate, and the tragic. When I embodied characteristics of a lemur, it put me more into the alert or curious stage. Embodying these helped me

explore the expressions in such a way that I could embody different tensions in my poem allowing me to build upon my work.

I performed the poem *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman (1886) from the book of the same name. I was primarily using Bogart and Landau (2004) viewpoints to guide my performance. I used tempo and repetition in my voice to convey what the meaning was at different points. I also used a lot of expressive gestures, shapes, and spatial relationships to exaggerate the drama of the piece and show the lighthearted nature, without taking away from the serious moments. Initially I was unsure of where to take this performance and when presented with the question of what I wanted the audience to think, I was taken aback. I already had a thought of wanting some humour in the piece but not knowing how to convey it. It was only when my lecturer, Jon, gave me feedback, that I realised that the over-the-top drama was exactly how I can get the tongue-in-cheek nature across. I also used the Laban movement chart to explore my motions further and plan my journey throughout the performance. When we performed on the 6th of December, I was given feedback that I needed to work on my voice as I was not as loud as I planned, and I needed to be more direct in my motions. So, to combat this I will practice in front of people more often next time so that I can get a better grasp on how loud I need to speak in the space. When we did the aspects of the performance inspired by McBurney (1983) *complicite* we agreed upon our view of the scene. This made it easier to come together on how we performed this aspect. By the time we did the performance we were able to get into a company mindset and work well together. We did have a problem that only one of us lives on campus, and we all have quite different schedules, so we found a way, through social media and quick blockings to get across what we wanted from this aspect of the performance, however, as there was still a moment where a cue was missed, I had to keep still for longer. I feel that next time I need to push harder into the teamwork aspect and will arrange more rehearsals.

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