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Incorporating performance analysis in the training of an actor

Janis Bergmann
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Bergmann, Janis, M.A.

San Jose State University, 1992

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**INCORPORATING PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS IN THE
TRAINING OF AN ACTOR**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Theatre Arts

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

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May 1992

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ABSTRACT

INCORPORATING PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS IN THE TRAINING OF AN ACTOR

by Janis Bergmann

This thesis presents an analysis and development of a teaching method that encompasses a new perspective of actor training which incorporates the technique of Performance Analysis. Incorporating Performance Analysis, or the observation of other actors in performance, into the actor's training process, offers a much needed objective approach to a current process predominantly rooted in subjective introspection.

Performance Analysis directly addresses the too often neglected issue of communication in acting, which is the fundamental element in transmitting character information to an audience. A method is provided for observing, notating and evaluating communication signifiers within the performance process. This research acknowledges the two categories of communication, vocal communication and nonverbal communication, yet focuses solely on the vocal communication category. The process of observing and decoding allows the student an expanded awareness of communication signifiers which are then experimented with through a process of in-class exercises.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Role of Performance Analysis in Actor Training

Contemporary actor training in the United States has adopted a prevalent focus in psychological realism and subjective introspection. The inherent characteristic of such training is an emphasis on preparing the actor for performance while de-emphasizing the actual performance process. The focus of this thesis is an analysis and development of a teaching method that encompasses a new perspective which incorporates the training technique of Performance Analysis. At present, this technique is in a conceptual stage, needing definition of theory and approach. Incorporating Performance Analysis, or the observation of other actors in performance, into the actor's training process offers a much needed objective perspective. Whereas present methods focus on the development of an individual's physical, mental and emotional preparedness, Performance Analysis directly addresses the too often neglected issue of communication in acting, which is the fundamental element in transmitting character information to an audience.

This research will aim to establish the exigency for Performance Analysis and create a systemized process for its utilization in actor education. The development of such a process involves an analysis, definition and application of the trainable components of Performance Analysis. These components comprise two major categories: vocal communication and bodily or nonverbal communication. Although these categories are ultimately inseparable as a comprehensive means of actor communication, each can be studied

in isolation. Therefore, this research will examine only the vocal communication category. (Merridee McNelly addresses the nonverbal communication category in her M.A. Thesis, SJSU, May 1992.)¹

There are as many ways to train an actor as there are acting teachers. Individual teachers have their own idiosyncratic behavior and personality as well as life experiences and past training which colors the particular methodology that is applied. Instructors should be clear about their purpose in actor education. Lee Strasberg writes: "There can be no adequate facing of problems in the training of actors unless we possess some sense of the kind of actors and acting we wish to create."²

The question that arises in most instructors' thinking concerns how one might effectively teach a student the process of becoming a "good" or perhaps even "great" actor. Logically, the first step would be to define what a good actor is. This is an ambiguous point because of the enormous level of subjectivity involved in evaluation. The nature of our unique individualities will never allow a definitive explanation of this phenomenon. There are many who abhor Meryl Streep and other well-known actors whose talents are frequently and reverently praised. Sonia Moore, in supporting Konstantin Stanislavski's training system, believes that "The quality of an actor's performance depends on the sincerity of his experience."³ It is unclear whether the

¹ Merridee McNelly, "Defining and Implementing Performance Analysis as a Teaching Method" (M.A. Thesis, San Jose State Univ., May, 1992).

² Lee Strasberg, "Acting and Actor Training," Producing the Play ed. John Gassner (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1953), 128.

³ Sonia Moore, The Stanislavski System: The Professional Training of an Actor 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin, 1984), 42.

success of this personal experience is to be judged by an audience or the actors themselves. Tyrone Guthrie takes a more objective perspective in stating that "What is considered 'good' acting is that which is convincing and also appropriate to its context."⁴ Although clearly a judgment from the audience perspective, Guthrie still describes a subjective response.

Financial and popular success can be eliminated as a reliable gauge. There are certainly plenty of people in the business who have risen to "stardom" on the basis of personality, a look, or "who they know." Ben Gazzara reflects on this subject in saying, "An actor needs success in order to get opportunities to be good, so he concentrates on achieving success, and in the process he may lose whatever it is that has made him good."⁵ As a general statement, most audience members tend to define "good" acting in terms of how much they are "moved" or "emotionally touched" by the actor. Jose Ferrer describes this empathic response in reference to Walter Huston, whom he felt was one of the greatest actors, "Because every time I saw him do anything he just hit me sort of deeper in the pit of the stomach than most actors ever did."⁶

As obscure as this sort of evaluation appears, Ferrer and others imply a tangible essence which can be defined as communication. To define further, communication is the exchange and interpretation of messages through the

⁴ Tyrone Guthrie, On Acting (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 78.

⁵ Lillian Ross, and Helen Ross The Player: A Profile of an Art (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), 349.

⁶ John E Booth, and Lewis Funke, Actors Talk About Acting (New York: Random House, 1961), 78.

use of voice and body behaviors.⁷ The process of communication gives meaning and value to the acting process as well as to every form of art. As Stanislavski wrote: "Artists of colors, sounds, chisels, and words chose their art in order to communicate through their works with other people."⁸ And from an actor's perspective, Rod Steiger states:

The essence of any art is communication.... The best actors I know are those who try to talk to the audience, make the audience feel and discover feeling - actors who understand their audience and excite it... Actors may be the purest of all artists, because we attempt to reach other people, and to give something to other people through ourselves only.⁹

It is the communication of emotions therefore, and not merely emotional preparation that needs significant attention in the training of an actor. Guthrie explained, "... the actor will, sooner or later, have to translate imagination into practice, theory into action, and to this end it will not come amiss if he has paid some attention not only to what is to be expressed and why but also to how."¹⁰ In turn, the focus of the training process lies in creating actors who are not necessarily defined as "good," but are competitive in the field as interesting and adept performers for an audience.

Granted, these aspects of actor training and the ideal of a competitive actor are hardly new to the accumulated history of teaching methodology (a review of which will be addressed in the following chapter). Although the impetus of this research was born out of concern over probable deficiencies in

⁷Loretta Malandro, Deborah Ann Barker, and Larry Barker, Nonverbal Communication 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1989), 3.

⁸ Moore, 8.

⁹ Ross, 277.

¹⁰ Guthrie, 9.

the currently prevalent educational process, the purpose of this research is not intended to completely diminish the value of past and present teaching methods, or to suggest an abolition of them for something completely different. The many wonderful actors past and present and the plethora of enthusiastic support for various methods would refute complete abandonment. Instead this research aspires to present an adjunct to the learning process. Specifically, the tool is the incorporation of Performance Analysis in the actor's education.

To further clarify Performance Analysis it is necessary to go back to the definition of acting. In light of the previous exploration of its meaning, acting might be more fully described as: a mode of communication employing signs. These signs or signifying practices are physical manifestations, through vocal and bodily means, which are used by the actor to communicate specific character traits, emotions, and attitudes. Performance Analysis is the act of observing and decoding these physical signifiers. Performance Analysis teaches the student to objectively observe performances, thus, expanding the student's expressive consciousness. This occurs through the discovery of choices or the wide range of codes available in expressing text and emotions. Through a combination of learning observation techniques and participation in practical exercises, the students are made aware of the ample quantity of codes or choices available in order to create a richer, more abundant source of choices for themselves.

Two points need further exploration. The first is the concept of "choices." The term is used here with a slight difference than is advocated by

Stanislavski's teachings. Ned Manderino in All About Method Acting describes choices as "the technique ... you select in order to evoke emotion and behavior."¹¹ Whereas this approach defines choices as a process, Performance Analysis sees choices as a visible product. In this respect choice selection may be more readily tangible to the actor. The bulk of the training then would ultimately shift from the unconscious and ambiguous to the conscious and controllable, theoretically allowing for the discovery of more conscious choices in expression. This expanded awareness helps the actor create a more interesting and dynamic performance. In defense of such an ideal, Uta Hagen describes the limitations of those actors who rely more on personality than craft:

Because they are always the same does not mean that they are truly using themselves. They are simply playing the identical few notes in themselves over and over again without a real search of selection from themselves. Often, after an initial success, these "personality" actors simply copy themselves, imitating moments and effects which have worked for them before. They rely on a quality which they feel has worked with an audience, and end up playing "the manner of" themselves in as tiresome a way as another actor playing "the quality of" the character.¹²

The second point involves the actual act of observation which is the fundamental process within Performance Analysis. Training tends to guide acting students away from observing others perform for fear of the student copying that performance and subverting their own creative process. Rod Steiger makes a testimony of this problem, "a lot of actors present rehearsals,

¹¹ Ned Manderino, All About Method Acting (Los Angeles: Manderino Books, 1985), 12.

¹²Uta Hagen, Respect for Acting (New York: Macmillan, 1973) 28.

not performances. They are imitating, not creating."¹³ That may well be the case if the observing actor is not aware of what can be accomplished through observation. The key is education; as Socrates so aptly put it: "Knowledge is Power."

The biographies of many well-respected actors point to the observance of favorite actors as a major influence on their own skills. Sidney Portier spoke on the personal importance of observation:

I developed a kind of interest in watching other actors work in the theatre. But I watched many actors work because I was always involved in class work and group work and various theatre groups... that's where I did most of my learning... I became interested in certain actors. There were certain actors who were my kind of actors, people with great power, and I would go and watch them work.¹⁴

Jose Ferrer took this description a step further in expounding on the process of assimilating these observances.

There were several whom I studied a great deal... at one point, I would say, any of my performances was in one way or another an imitation of one of these men. I think that the sources are still there, but now they're snowed over by the development of my own personality and they're less perceptible.... My imagination was touched off. I simply thought - well, there are personal skyrockets, you know, and eventually you have to come to the conclusion that maybe you have some of your own.¹⁵

Michael Chekhov calls this type of interpretation "creative individuality," giving a comparison of a group of painters sitting before the same landscape, yet producing entirely different pictures. And again, quoting Goethe,

¹³ Ross, 277.

¹⁴ Booth, 205.

¹⁵ Booth, 54.

"How often has 'Iphigenia' been written and still each interpretation is different, and because each sees and expresses the thing differently in accordance with his artistic perception."¹⁶

This system of observation differs from the outmoded "representational" styles of the past that merely codified signifiers of emotions and transferred those specified signs to universal usage. Instead, Performance Analysis embraces individuality as part of the interpretive and practical phase of the training process. Although choices have been described as a result, the performance itself needs to be viewed as the work, not the end product. This alleviates the pressure of delivering a finished product. It is through this aspect of awareness and control of the process that the actor achieves a sense of freedom in risk-taking and creativity.

There is no attempt here to imply that Performance Analysis is a new phenomenon to the acting field, as is apparent with codifying methodologies which date back to ancient times. There are several books on the market today which, in fact, use Performance Analysis as a tool to make a specific point. For instance, in Acting in the Cinema James Naremore analyzes and records several actor's performances to show their particular contribution to movies and "how behavior on the screen can be linked to the presence of self in society."¹⁷ In Method Actors: Three Generations of an Acting Style, Steve Vineberg gives an explicit comparative analysis between Rod Steiger and

¹⁶ Michael Chekhov, On the Technique of Acting (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 16.

¹⁷ James Naremore, Acting in the Cinema (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), sleeve.

Ernest Borgnine in their respective title role performances of Paddy Chayefsky's Marty. This is done in terms of comparing a method actor to a non-method actor, yet is worth studying in terms of clarifying recording methods of Performance Analysis.

Steiger reproduces the natural cadence of conversation as closely as possible and refrains from large-scale emotional displays. He conveys the unhappiness of Chayefsky's Bronx butcher, suggestively: He gives the character a low-frequency whine, he talks a little too quickly,... he stutters occasionally. ...Steiger tamps down Marty's immediate impulses. Instead of exploding, he replies with a touch of irony while his eyes tell us he's reached the end of his patience.... Ernest Borgnine approaches the same pair of scenes in a more traditional, histrionic manner. When he's rejected by a potential Saturday night date, he falls back on the theatrical platitude of squeezing his eyes shut to indicate the intensity of pain. He stutters, too, though not causally - it's a set-piece stutter...Marty's painful confession speech sounds carefully rehearsed rather than unexpectedly arrived at, because Borgnine stresses all the obvious key words.¹⁸

Although Vineberg refutes his efficacy in ultimately evaluating the two acting approaches, what he has shown is useful information in notating the performances of certain actors and their art. What is missing in this and many other similar performance accounts is a substantiation of the inherent value of such a process within an actor's education, and a subsequent system for application.

The following chapters will further explore Performance Analysis as it relates to past, present and future methods of actor training. Chapter two reviews the history of actor training in an attempt to clarify contemporary train-

¹⁸Steve Vineberg, Method Actors: Three Generations of an American Acting Style (New York: Schirmer Books, 1991), 1-2.

ing ideology and substantiate the need for Performance Analysis. Chapter three offers the development of a system which outlines trainable components of Performance Analysis. Chapter four proposes the application of this system in the actor's education and addresses current experimentation.

CHAPTER 2

Actor Training Methodology: Past and Present

In order to understand the current state of actor training and the proposed value of incorporating Performance Analysis, it is first helpful to explore the history of actor training ideology. As a reflection of changing times, the theatrical event has undergone enormous experimentation, following trends in art, psychology, music, writing, and affected by social and political climates and tensions. Whereas theatre development has traveled a long and circuitous route through the centuries of its existence, actor training ideologies have seemed to evolve in a more linear pattern. Aside from the interspersed contributions from several prominent avant-garde educators, study of documented teaching methods indicate a gradual movement from past focus in objective considerations of style and theatrical artifice to a modern perspective predominantly rooted in subjective reality aiming to create an image of truth. This chapter presents a chronological overview of such documentation as evidenced in the writings of historians, theorists, actors, and acting instructors.

The specific study of currently available acting textbooks suggests strengths and weaknesses in the prevalent focus of contemporary actor training. The erudition acquired from an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses within past training methods leads to a clearer understanding of present training possibilities. The introduction of a Performance Analysis system is an attempt to contribute to the development of a more comprehensive educa-

tional process.

The History of Actor Training

Oscar Brockett's History of the Theatre, traces the beginnings of acting training to ancient Greece, where playwrights functioned as teachers or "didaskalos" emphasizing vocal excellence.

[The Greeks] judged actors above all by beauty of vocal tone and ability to adapt manner of speaking to mood and character...the actor's delivery was probably more declamatory than realistic for he did not attempt to reproduce the attributes of age or sex so much as to project the appropriate emotional tone.¹⁹

In his Rhetoric, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) recorded such ideals, referring to acting as "a matter of the right management of the voice to express the various emotions."²⁰ Aristotle was also responsible for the concept of relating emotions to the four primary fluids within the body, specifically: red (blood), clear (phlegm), yellow (choler), and black (melancholy). An imbalance of these "biles" was thought to produce an emotional counterpart, or "humour," forming the origin of the expression, "being in a bad humor."²¹ In Beginning Acting: The Illusion of Natural Behavior, Felnagle ascertains: "Aristotle's theories reduced emotions to the level of clinical symptoms of bodily disorders, and since symptoms tend to be fairly uniform from one sick person to another, this approach invited the idea of standardizing the expression of the

¹⁹ Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982), 27.

²⁰Helen Chinoy and Toby Cole, Actors on Acting (New York: Crown, 1957), 12.

²¹ Richard H. Felnagle, Beginning Acting: The Illusion of Natural Behavior (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 213.

emotions onstage.”²²

Evidence of this precept can be traced throughout the centuries to follow. Brockett deduces that “...many Roman actors received extensive technical training about the angle of the head, placement of the feet, use of the hands, and vocal intonations appropriate to each emotion and type of situation.”²³ After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, (in the sixth century A.D.) the Eastern, or Byzantine Empire developed a codifying system which classified gestures according to the parts of body and inner feelings. Verbal speech was similarly classified into elaborate patterns of intonation, pitch, and tempo as they related to emotion, character and situation.²⁴

Aristotle’s treatise reached a peak in popularity during the neoclassical era, beginning in the sixteenth century. An evolving concept was the ideal of verisimilitude, or the appearance of truth. Brockett explains that evidence of such was found in observable norms. “All humanity was categorized according to age, rank, sex, profession, and predispositions, and the attributes of each were described.”²⁵ Variances were considered accidental and consequently unessential. Actors therefore needed to be familiar with proper modes of expression in all given character types with training focusing on the “right” theatrical voice, stance and movement style appropriate to the character portrayed.

This neoclassical type of “realistic” drama continued in popularity into the eighteenth century. In 1710, Charles Gildon wrote: “To express Nature

²² Felnagle, 213.

²³ Brockett, 79.

²⁴ Brockett, 99.

²⁵ Brockett, 159.

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."²⁶

He then proceeded with the "rules" such as, "The dermission or hanging down of the head is the consequence of grief and sorrow. A lifting or tossing of the head is the gesture of pride and arrogance. Carrying the head aloft is the sign of joy, victory, and triumph."²⁷

Denis Diderot, in the late eighteenth century, supported this prevalent acting ideology. He argued that the actor should strive to feel no emotions while performing in order to more fully concentrate on the rendering of the appearance of emotions for the audience. This technique would produce a more consistent performance. In his work The Paradox of Acting, Diderot explains,

What confirms me in this view is the unequal acting of players who play from the heart...Their playing is alternately strong and feeble, fiery and cold, dull and sublime. Tomorrow they will miss the point they have excelled in today...On the other hand, the actor who plays from thought, from study of human nature, from constant imitation of some ideal type, from imagination, from memory, will be one and the same at all performances, will be always at his best mark...²⁸

Despite possible derision, the famous actor David Garrick made one of the greatest advancements in acting during this time. Through a more acute observation of real life, Garrick introduced the beginnings of naturalism into his acting style. In Theatre in the Age of Garrick, Cecil Price writes,

Instead of standing still so that his voice could entirely hold the

²⁶ Strasberg, 138.

²⁷ Strasberg, 138.

²⁸ Chinoy and Cole, 162.

audience's attention, he set off his words with appropriate action, gesture, and miming that approximated as far as possible to an everyday disclosure of the feelings. Elevation was achieved not through relentless grandeur of sound but by revealing that certain actions and gestures were true to human nature in a particular set of circumstances.²⁹

In the nineteenth century the French elocutionist, Francois Delsarte attempted to expound on the theory of natural expression in acting by formulating laws of speech and gesture. Delsarte specifically rejected the perpetuating idea of emotion as a symptom of fluid imbalances. Felnagle writes, "Delsarte postulated the existence of a mystical triune relationship among body, mind, and soul. Although this concept owed more to philosophy than to science, Delsarte was in effect proposing the revolutionary idea that emotions were organic processes, a function of body and mind together."³⁰ This concept of organic expression is easily gleaned from Delsarte's writings,

The artist should have three objects: To move, to interest, to persuade. He interests by language; he moves by thought; he moves, interests and persuades by gesture...Gesture is the direct agent of the heart. It is the revealer of thought and the commentator upon speech...If you would move others put your heart in the place of your larynx let your voice become a mysterious hand to caress the hearer.³¹

Delsarte analyzed the range of human expression and proceeded to catalogue and codify his findings. From the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century, Delsarte's system was the principle method of formal instruction. However, in his attempts to reform false exaggerated acting,

²⁹ Cecil Price, Theatre in the Age of Garrick (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), 16.

³⁰ Felnagle, 217.

³¹ Chinoy and Cole, 192-193

Delsarte's codification process merely proved to create the opposite. His students were required to learn and copy the cataloged indicators of specific emotions through the use of charts and exercises. The resultant acting style was mechanical and artificial.

Then Konstantin Stanislavski brought the formulation of a revolutionary "system" of natural acting to light. Appearing as the antithesis of Delsarte's teachings, and the declamatory acting styles of the past, Stanislavski's ideology encompassed a quest and subsequent discovery of "true" emotions as they relate to a particular text. As Ned Manderino describes it, "The method requires that the actor give less emphasis to the verbal interpretation of a writer's work, focusing instead on giving clarity to the inner interpretation of the writer's intention."³² Lee Strasberg further explains, "[Stanislavski's system] aims at giving the actor a method, a means by which he will evolve for himself the proper results. It aims at awakening those particular elements in a person which make him act without setting a predescribed form in which they must appear."³³ This natural style brought to the stage the "easy tone," "simple expression," and "everyday bearing" that Diderot abhorred. Sonia Moore writes, "Through the Stanislavski technique actors learn to 'enrich the ground,' which makes intonations expressive."³⁴

At about the same time as Stanislavski, Jaques Copeau established a training laboratory in France in a similar attempt to transform the prevalent "false" performance style resultant of "code acting." Although he reflected

³² Menderino, viii.

³³ Strasberg, 141.

³⁴ Moore, 13.

Stanislavski's beliefs in the actor's subjective concentration and exploration of inner motivations, Copeau focused on physical experimentation. His student Michel St. Denis writes, "He knew that acting, in order to be authentic, must be rooted in the very depth of self, but he also believed that the actor's inventiveness, in order to be liberated, needed a technique of physical and vocal expression."³⁵ Copeau presented a new approach in studying the expressiveness of the body through mime and gesture. His teachings developed a less realistic acting approach which incorporated the use of "sound of some sort to sustain the mimed passages...[inventing] a language of sound - articulation without any apparent logic - which transmitted states of feeling and states of mind by cries, mummers, and by a kind of chant, all related to the dramatic moment."³⁶

Copeau's training methods greatly influenced Antonin Artaud, who later surpassed Copeau in popularity. Artaud's work became known as the "theatre of cruelty," training actors to use their voices "not so much as an instrument of discursive speech, but more for tonalities, prolonged modulations and yelps, barks, in order to create harmonies and dissonances....Artaud wanted to assault the audience with sights and sounds that would break down its resistance and purge it morally and spiritually."³⁷

Along with Artaud, Germany's Bertolt Brecht is classified as one of the most influential of theoreticians and educators in the theatre between World Wars I and II. The mission of his actors was to raise the social consciousness

³⁵ St. Denis, 32.

³⁶ St. Denis, 39.

³⁷ Brockett, 227.

of their audience. The key to Brecht's approach was in keeping the spectator, as well as the actor, in an objective and critical state through a process called "alienation," or the "A-effect." Diametrically opposed to the teachings of Stanislavski and realism, Brecht instructed his actors to maintain a detached perspective of their characters. This was achieved through the use of third person and past tense deliveries, as well as the speaking of stage directions out loud. A distinct characteristic in acting style was the appearance of well-rehearsed speech and movements rather than the illusion of spontaneity.³⁸ The actor's communication to audience members was deliberate and manipulative. Brockett writes,

Brecht manipulated aesthetic distance so as to involve spectators emotionally and then to jar them out of their empathic responses, thus forcing them to contemplate and judge the experience. Consequently, in a Brechtian performance, there is a perpetual shifting, dynamic relationship between empathy and alienation.³⁹

Although Brecht's teachings presented a revolutionary objective approach in actor education, Stanislavski and his doctrine of subjective realism prevailed.

Contemporary Actor Training in the United States

The proliferation of Europe's experimentations in acting pedagogy during the early part of the twentieth century led to a welcome influx of instructors and new ideas into the United States. By this time Americans had begun their own experimentation with a realistic acting style and were most receptive to the importation of Stanislavski's teachings in subjective, psychological

³⁸ Willett, 136-138.

³⁹ Brockett, 250.

realism. Since the appearance of Stanislavski's landmark doctrine, fundamentals of American acting training have perpetuated a prevalent focus in the subjective realm. Support of this statement, as well as indications of exceptions, can be found in an analysis of teaching methodologies, as documented in actor and instructor writings and interviews.

The first step in this analysis requires a breakdown and definition of training possibilities within an actor. It seems appropriate to look back to the writings of Richard Boleslavsky, the man responsible for exporting Stanislavski's system from Russia, in order to define these elements. In his book, Acting: The First Six Lessons, Boleslavsky explains that the education of an actor consists of three "parts." The first part is the education of the body, "the whole apparatus, of every muscle and sinew."⁴⁰ Recommended exercises includes work in movement (dance and gymnastics), voice (diction and singing), breathing, fencing and pantomime. The second part is intellectual and cultural education.

I need an actor who knows the world's literature...who knows the history of painting, of sculpture and of music, who can always carry in his mind, at least approximately, the style of every period, and the individuality of every great painter. I need an actor who has a fairly clear idea of the psychology of motion, of psychoanalysis, of the expression of emotion, and of the logic of feeling. I need an actor who knows something of the anatomy of the body, as well as of the great works of sculpture.⁴¹

The third part is the education and training of the soul. This concept consists of developing "complete possession of all five senses in varying

⁴⁰ Richard Boleslavsky, Acting: The First Six Lessons (New York: Theatre Arts, 1933), 25.

⁴¹ Boleslavsky, 26.

imaginable situations; development of a memory of feeling, memory of inspiration or penetration, memory of imagination, and last, a visual memory."⁴²

Although a student of Stanislavski, Boleslavsky gives a vocabulary that can aid in analyzing and categorizing virtually any teaching method that has been documented or is currently in use.

These educational "parts" can, and have been, described in a variety of ways. Morris Carnovsky, for instance, chooses to break them down into two elements calling them "the body technique" and "the inner technique."⁴³ This is quite similar to Uta Hagen's terminology of the "organic inner technique" and the "outer instrument."⁴⁴ Stella Adler states the actor's elements of focus succinctly as the "body," "speech," "mind" and "emotions."⁴⁵ And an extrapolation from Michael Chekhov's teachings leads to the two concepts of "technique" and "inspiration."⁴⁶

This is obviously a small sampling of varying terminology available in defining the possible areas of focus in an actor's training. Yet all areas, whatever their labels, will undeniably make up one universal whole: the human being itself is the instrument of the training. Constant searching and experimenting with approaches are attempts to assure that all possible functions and assets of this human tool are used to their optimum abilities.

⁴² Boleslavsky, 27.

⁴³ Booth, 102.

⁴⁴ Hagen, 22.

⁴⁵ Stella Adler, The Technique of Acting (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1988), 9.

⁴⁶ Chekhov, xxxviii.

Analyzing Current Actor Training Textbooks

In combining the above definitions of training areas, a simplified model of educational elements is proposed: (1) physical preparation, (2) mental preparation, and (3) emotional preparation. This model or outline can in turn be used to analyze and categorize the various teaching methods with the purpose of determining what is actually being taught, and what might be missing in actor education.

An extensive investigation into available documentation of teaching methods has already proven the efficacy of such an outline. The vast amount of training rhetoric can be more clearly sifted through when assigned to specific categories. The most informative and accessible source is the acting textbook which is a documentation of individual theory and proposed practice for the student of acting. These textbooks are usually intended for supplemental use in an educational institution or group situation rather than used independently, considering the nature of the many group-involving exercises. Since the ultimate purpose of this investigation is to evaluate the current status of actor training, it seemed most useful to focus on the contemporary teaching methods found in textbooks which are readily available in libraries, bookstores, and through publishing companies, indicating probable use in training situations. An overview reveals that there is resounding similarity in current methodology. All accessible textbooks revealed an acknowledgment of the mental, physical and emotional preparation categories. The difference appears in the varying degrees of focus; however, most textbooks clearly emphasized subjective, emotional work.

Uta Hagen, for instance, in her widely popular book Respect for Acting, admits to her somewhat singular focus in the emotional preparation category. She does suggest that "ideally" actors should "seek a thorough education in history, literature, English linguistics" and all other components that may make up the mental preparation category. She puts equal emphasis on the necessity of outside training of the physical nature "comprising his body, his voice, and his speech...[since] all parts of his instrument should be limber enough to respond to the psychological and emotional demands he may make on it."⁴⁷ However, since this type of training is beyond her "realm as a teacher," Hagen devotes the bulk of her book to subjective introspection and psychological motivations.

Stella Adler, another forerunner of the contemporary education system, also admits to her emphasis on the emotional areas, "to put [the actor] in touch with a craft that I consider to be a totality of heart, mind, and spirit - an art that liberates ideas."⁴⁸ Although the word "mind" is used here, its implication seems more in tune with "emotional" thinking rather than "intellectual" thinking and therefore falls more appropriately into the emotional preparation category along with the rest of her description. In her book, The Technique of Acting, Adler does however discuss some basic "mental" text work, and the beginnings of physical work, yet the physical work specifically focuses on internal motivation, with the external being merely a by-product.

Edward Easty in his book, On Method Acting, theorizes, "In life outer

⁴⁷Hagen, 13-14.

⁴⁸ Adler, 116.

manifestations are the result of feelings and the inner spirit of a person."⁴⁹

And Lee Strasberg simply states that the emotional work is "the main phase of the actor's training."⁵⁰

These highly-regarded instructors represent a small sampling from many direct descendants of the Stanislavski system, including Harold Clurman, Robert Lewis, Elia Kazan and Morris Carnovsky. Each of these disciples personalized the system and passed their version to others who, in turn, helped create an infiltration of similar acting approaches that have prevailed, in America specifically, for the past several decades. The original purpose of the system was a search for "truth" in acting. Stanislavski's goal, according to Sonia Moore, was to "give an actor control over the phenomenon of inspiration. When an actor is inspired he is in the same natural and spontaneous state that is ours in life and he lives the experiences and emotions of the character he portrays."⁵¹

Eric Morris, a later proponent of "the method" decided that Stanislavski's teachings are weak in that they lack sufficient internal exploration. Through the writings of four books Morris expounds (somewhat repetitively) on his theory which includes about three hundred therapeutic acting exercises professing to break down obstacles which prevent the actors from being themselves. Morris believes that the Stanislavski system is designed to be personal and cannot work if the actors are not in touch with their own feelings. He explains, "Acting problems are often life problems. If you

⁴⁹Edward D. Easty, On Method Acting (Orlando: House of Collectables, 1978), 152.

⁵⁰ Strasberg, 147.

⁵¹ Moore, 5.

have difficulty exposing some aspect of yourself offstage, you'll have even greater difficulty exposing it on stage. Often an acting problem cannot be solved without changing something in the actor's life."⁵²

In defending his teachings Morris produces what he feels are "spectacular" results:

Actors, who at first couldn't express their true feelings, were able to eliminate their blocks, and to stimulate a variety of unpredictable emotional impulses...they were able to expose many more facets of their personality than ever before.⁵³

A capacity for emotional expression is certainly an asset to the actor, but there is no mention of performance or effective communication to an audience. The evaluation describes a self-actualized or "good" person rather than a good actor.

The appearance of a therapeutic emphasis is found in other textbooks as well. Ann Brebner, in her book Setting Free the Actor: Overcoming Creative Blocks, writes: "If we wish to do our work with a sense of freedom and joy, we must face the challenge of dissolving our old fears, angers, and hurts so that they no longer control us."⁵⁴ Robert Barton, in his book Acting: Onstage and Off, focuses on "life-enhancing aspects" which are "a higher priority than technical skills" in approaching the training process.⁵⁵ Leslie Abbott's Active Acting: Exercises and Improvisations Leading to Performance

⁵² Joan Hotchkis, and Eric Morris, No Acting Please (New York: Spelling, 1979), 13.

⁵³ Eric Morris, Irreverent Acting (New York: Perigree, 1985), intro.

⁵⁴ Ann Brebner, Setting Free the Actor: Overcoming Creative Blocks (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1990), 3.

⁵⁵ Robert Barton, Acting: Onstage and Off (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1989), vii.

immediately acknowledges performance in her title but uses the key word "leading" in a recoiling gesture away from that final step. Abbott's method-based book culminates in a final exercise called "The Encounter Session." This allows actors several hours to "divest themselves of their hostilities, fears, insecurities, and innermost secrets."⁵⁶

Two of the newest available textbooks includes Moni Yakim's Creating a Character: A Physical Approach to Acting. From such a title, this book appears to offer a somewhat more communicative approach to acting with a focus on physical rather than emotional work. Yet, Yakim, a student of Stella Adler's as it turns out, reveals how all of his proposed physical movements are inspired by a number of self-exploration exercises. The popular and concise collaborative work by a group of actors entitled A Practical Handbook for the Actor puts the acting process into an accessible, step-by-step intellectual mode, yet still eschews the issue of communication.

Again, the purpose is not to demean or absolutely refute the current status of actor training as a whole. As previously stated, there are many accomplished actors who attribute enormous personal growth to these and many other acting instructors. Paul Newman confessed:

I was probably one of the worst college actors in history. I didn't know anything about acting. I had no idea what I was doing. I learned my lines by rote and simply said them, without spontaneity, without knowing what it meant to act and react. I didn't really learn about any of that until I got into the Actors' Studio.⁵⁷

Likewise, Geraldine Page professes that:

People will assume that all you have to do is read something

⁵⁶ Leslie Abbott, Active Acting: Exercises and Improvisations Leading to Performance (Belmont: Star, 1927), 125.

⁵⁷ Ross, 241.

and then you can get up and act professionally. You can't. If you put down first that I am a graduate of a regular drama school, that I spent seven years in winter and summer stock, that I studied several years with Uta Hagen and two years with Mira Rostova, and was at the Actors Studio for ten years, then if I say I read a script, put it away and don't think about it, it's not misleading. The training that I have is in my brain and it works on material in not-so-conscious ways.⁵⁸

Upon reading Ms. Page's training credits a natural inquiry might be whether it usually takes over twenty years to become an accomplished actor. If so, might there be a less circuitous route. Not every actor of course has such an extensive educational background. Yet, as history might suggest, there will always exist a search for a more enlightening and accessible process.

Joseph Chaikin, in his collage of insights entitled The Presence of the Actor, reflects on his own personal acting training which he derived from several Stanislavski method-based instructors. He concisely reduces each instructor's teachings into a similar pattern consisting of four components. Two of the components, those of textual and character analyses, fall into the mental preparation category; the comprehensiveness of these areas being notably devoid of external influences in the intellectual process. The other two components fall, as anticipated, into the realm of emotional preparation. One focuses on the sensory and emotional recall work where "improvisations that seem like psychotherapy are freely used."⁵⁹ Chaikin argues that his "professional objection to this training is that it prepares the actor to play alone."⁶⁰ The fourth area of focus reiterates Moore's claim of "Inspiration." Chaikin

⁵⁸ Joanmarie Kalter, Actors on Acting (New York: Sterling, 1979), 17-18.

⁵⁹ Joseph Chaikin, The Presence of the Actor (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 44.

⁶⁰ Chaikin, 44.

describes the teacher as not using "direct criticism but 'inspires' the actor by giving him a kind of spiritual blood transfusion."⁶¹

Tyrone Guthrie expressed his attitude on such a curriculum,

Most of the dramatic schools which I know seem to me to spend too much time on classes planned to stimulate the imagination of the student - "inspirational" classes. If a student has very little imagination, he ought not, in my view, to be encouraged towards the stage.⁶²

The risk of such a subjectively focused extreme as described by Chaikin is that the actor will have to be in the "right mood" to act; or as Brecht once described: "They go into a trance and take the audience with them. Suppose they have to act leave-taking. They put themselves in a leave-taking mood."⁶³ The prevalent perspective of actor education today is that an attitude is being taught rather than a system, with the actor focusing on finding themselves and "feeling ready" rather than on how to successfully communicate to an audience.

The Weak Link: The Communication/Performance Process

With such a concentrated emphasis on actor preparedness, especially within the realm of emotions, the teaching of a tangible concept of what actually happens in performance is vague. Those texts that deal with performance often take a more commercial approach. At present, there are a plethora of books for the "professional" actor and his or her career. These books cover the practical aspects of an occupation in acting from audition and

⁶¹ Chaikin, 44.

⁶² Guthrie, 29.

⁶³ John Willett, trans. Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic by Bertolt Brecht (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 26.

rehearsal etiquette and ethics to business acumen. For example, Brandstein and Lipar's The Actor: A Practical Guide to a Professional Career offers insights into areas such as "The Nuts and Bolts of Show Biz", "The 'Who-You-Know' Game: Networking and Nepotism," and "How to Pay Your Rent." While taking into account the business of performance there is still no mention of performance logistics.

The clarification of the performance process becomes imperative.

When all the work is done, every artist wants to communicate, no matter how much he may speak of "art for art's sake." The painter has not painted with the final goal of looking at his work alone. The writer wants readers. The musician wants to be heard. The actor must want to be seen and heard after he has created a new human being, and he wants his creation to be meaningful to that body of people sitting in the auditorium.⁴

Uta Hagen acknowledges the immense significance of communication in the actor's performance. Yet her subsequent advice on how to go about attaining that skill leaves much to be desired. Hagen contends that communication will happen by "praying" it will happen. Several of the reviewed textbooks similarly acknowledge the importance of the communication process, with equally ambiguous pedagogy. Most tend to place the success of communication on the actor's level of "eagerness" to communicate.

Acknowledging that performance is a process that involves communication, there are two noteworthy methodologies found in current acting textbooks that work, in similar ways, on specifically pulling the emphasis away from the "self." The first is the Stanislavski-inspired system of "verb" acting in conjunction with another person, i.e., "to do something to" or "get some-

⁴ Hagen, 212.

thing from" another character.

The second is a unique exercise system developed by Sanford Meisner (another student of Stanislavski) which includes at least a two year process of learning how to listen, react and respond impulsively and spontaneously. Without attempting a detailed explanation, this is done through an intricate "connection" process between two actors. As successful as these two methods might be in developing a communication process between actors, neither one directly addresses the actor-to-audience process.

In order to more clearly identify the weak link in the actor's education, a fourth training area will be defined and added to the previously established model of the physical, mental and emotional preparations. That component will be referred to as the communication/performance process. This area cannot be skimmed over or ignored since it constitutes the anticipated culmination of any and all work within the three preparation phases.

Many experimental methods from the past have exhibited a consciousness of the communication/performance process, specifically Artaud's audience assaulting "Theatre of Cruelty" and Brecht's manipulation with audience alienation. Ideas and methods continue to arise and influence the state of actor training throughout the Western Culture. Grotowski's theatre in Poland, for instance, has been described as a training program focused in psychologically impelled physical expressiveness, where actors transform their voices and bodies to the fullest extent. The ultimate goal is "absolute control of capabilities that exceed those of the audience so far as to create a sense of awe."⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Brockett, Century of Innovation, 396.

In analyzing the current actor training textbooks however, the influences that vary from the Stanislavski system are not commonly apparent. Two textbooks in particular indicate original concepts in the communication/performance realm. The first is Michael Chekhov's theory of "Radiating and Receiving," found in his book On the Technique of Acting. Through a series of unique exercises Chekhov teaches students how to "send out the invisible essence of whatever quality, emotion or thought you wish." And in turn the actor learns how to "pull them in from the other characters, from atmospheres, from the audience, from everywhere."⁶⁶

The second technique is found in Robert Cohen's Acting Power. Here, the actor subconsciously "uses" the audience, not unlike an athlete, as a supporting body in "rooting" for his character to win his personal victory. Cohen contends that this approach is easier than it first appears "since the transformation is a simple extension of a well-known psychological phenomenon - human egocentrism, the feeling that we are all the heroes of our own plays."⁶⁷

In evaluating the presented acting methods taught within the communication/performance process, there still exudes a rather prevalent grounding in the psychological approach. There is a certain vagueness and subjectivity in each that contributes to the current "mystical" image of actor training.

The more prevalent, method-based approaches advocate a reliance on an empathic response from the spectator through indirect means. Sonia Moore describes this existing process,

To make the meaning and logic of his actions understandable to the spectators, an actor must communicate with them indirectly,

⁶⁶ Chekhov, xli.

⁶⁷ Robert Cohen, Acting Power (Palo Alto: Mayfield, 1978), 185.

through his communion with other actors. Stanislavski showed that (except in special cases, such as *Commedia dell'arte*) when an actor has direct contact with spectators he becomes merely a reporter instead of a live character. This relationship disrupts the truth of the performance and distracts the audience from the play itself. An honest, unbroken communion between actors, on the other hand, holds the spectators' attention and makes them part of what takes place on stage.⁶⁸

The communication process in performance becomes acutely vague and consequently overlooked, which points to the need for a more critical perspective of how communication occurs. Edward Easty, although a "method" advocate, confirms the need for "the proper attitude of objectivity which leads to originality in one's interpretation."⁶⁹ Sonia Moore writes that ultimately "Stanislavski believed in two sources of material for an actor's creative work: the inner life of an actor himself and his observations of the outside world--an inexhaustible source."⁷⁰

Therefore, the most commonly used approach towards communication analysis in actor training, as advocated by Stanislavski, is through the use of real-life observation. The theory contends that in closely analyzing a selected person's behavior, mannerisms and communicative skills in daily life the actor can assimilate and utilize these observable externals within a performance. Walter Matthau explains his use of this process in a cafeteria situation,

I love the chance it gives me to browse around in people's external behavior. I can look around as much as I like. Not that you ever imitate people as such. But you get the feel and smell and the taste of how they behave. I soak that up wherever I am.

⁶⁸ Moore, 35.

⁶⁹ Easty, 150.

⁷⁰ Moore, 43-44.

Then, when I'm onstage, I use it.⁷¹

The observance of people in real life certainly incorporates a level of objectivity in a training process that predominantly advocates subjective introspection. It can be (and has been) an extremely useful tool. The actor can objectively analyze and discover enormous possibilities in the communication of personality types, thoughts and ideas. However, the actual process of analyzing this communicative behavior, or manifested signifiers, is vague.

The one textbook found which begins to scientifically address signifier analysis is Robert Benedetti's The Actor at Work. Benedetti categorizes several external signifiers of communication, which are referred to as body and voice "gestures," and includes some useful exercises in implementation. Yet Benedetti still circumvents the actual performance process.

Introducing Performance Analysis

The analysis of communicative behavior in performance differs from an analysis in real life in that it acknowledges the variety of "unnatural" elements with which an actor must deal. These elements include a scripted text, a predetermined and perhaps unfamiliar place and time, and the transformation into a character, all within a particular performance medium (i.e., stage, screen). Michel Saint-Denis, an acting instructor from the early part of this century, observed this departure from reality.

Stanislavski, a great reformer, authentically 'naturalistic' declared: 'Our art is founded on the organic basis of the laws of nature.' But, to me, a true artist, even from this indisputable basis, can create worlds that have an existence of their own and are not directly governed by the laws of living nature. That artist can create characters, places and languages that exist independently

⁷¹ Ross, 422.

of nature. A Japanese No play, Jarry's Ubu Roi, the metaphysical theatre of Artaud, Genet's Balcony - they all go beyond the natural world.⁷²

This is not to imply an abolition of realism in acting style. Centuries of experimentation with acting techniques and pedagogy have anticipated the perfection of internally motivated "truthful" expression in performance. However, a performance is different from real life - it is a craft in communication and we must have the ability to learn from the (subjectively determined) master craftsmen.

Performance Analysis directly addresses the actor's work in communication within a performance by providing a method for observing, notating and evaluating the actual performance process. This method implements a systemized analysis of signifying practices used by the observed actor to communicate to the audience specific character elements including personality traits, emotions, and attitudes. Chapter three presents such a systemized analysis through the definition and categorization of trainable components of Performance Analysis.

⁷² Michel Saint-Denis, Training for the Theatre (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1982), 37.

CHAPTER 3

Trainable Components of Performance Analysis

Performance Analysis is the tool that enables the actor to objectively observe a performance. In order for observation to graduate from the realm of conceptual "osmosis," a detailed outline of visible and usable components must be developed. Without a coherent system the task of learning from other actors can be somewhat confounding. Uta Hagen relates a personal experience:

Laurette Taylor became a kind of ideal for me...Her work seemed to defy analysis. I went to see her again and again as Mrs. Midget [in Outward Bound] and later as Amanda in The Glass Menagerie. Each time, I went to study and to learn, and each time I felt I had learned nothing because she simply caught me up in her spontaneity to the point of eliminating my own objectivity.⁷³

Ideas, thoughts and emotions within a person are expressed and communicated through external means manifested by the body and the voice. Therefore, communication for the actor involves observable and to some degree, definable signifiers.

Delsarte's method of codifying this expressive behavior was certainly a form of Performance Analysis that attempted to take the ambiguity out of the concept of "good" acting. However, his system confined the actor to a specific set of signifiers that were somehow determined to be the "best" in expressing each internal experience.

The trend towards naturalism allows acting methods to surpass this

⁷³ Hagen, 4-5.

outmoded and confining approach in search of a far more interesting and life-like level of unpredictability. Consequently, instead of teaching a pre-codified system, what must be taught is a system of how to codify signifiers of communicative behavior within a performance. The fact that each category of signifiers is limitless must be eventually realized and completely clear.

Subsequently, the actor can apply this awareness to his or her own performance work, ultimately overcoming the compulsion to be "right" or to "please" in order for a more risk-oriented process of discovering a wider variety of choices in enhancing communicative skills.

Effective analysis begins with a definition and specification of observable components that the actor uses in order for communication to take place. These components comprise elements from two major categories: vocal communication and bodily or nonverbal communication. As previously stated, the following examination will focus solely on the vocal communication category.

The Vocal Perspective

The actor must be aware of the enormous signifying capabilities of the voice. Ben Jonson once said: "Language most shows a man. Speak that I may see thee!"⁷⁴ This essential part of the actor's expressive mechanism has the ability to communicate thoughts, emotions and attitudes, as well as personality, gender, socioeconomic status, age, educational level, race, regional origin, and to some extent height and weight. The voice can in fact dominate the visual image of a person. For example, boxing champion Mike Tyson and

⁷⁴ Belle C. Kennedy, and Patricia Challgren, The Busy Speaker's Pocket Practice Book (New York: Samuel French, 1970), 1.

the Oakland Athletics' pitcher Dave Stewart similarly surprise their listeners with incongruously high pitched, quiet voices. A raspy, harsh, deep voice would be equally overwhelming coming from a petite, delicate woman.

Vocal training traditionally focuses on helping the student find the "right" voice, in creating a clear and pleasing mechanism. Stanley Kahan contends that prior to the twentieth century "speeches took on the aspect of an operatic aria, designed to display the vocal resources of the actor rather than to communicate meaning."⁷⁵

Lane Crawford described Sarah Bernhardt's skill as an actress in terms of expertly employing elocutionary tricks. "She would lull her voice to a solemn chant, then pause, and sweep up to an ever-increasing volume of attack, or suddenly break into a swift staccato, which she was wont to use with consummate effect."⁷⁶

The effects of such technical training approaches merely create barriers to the voice's true expressive powers drawn from the actor's individual inner resources. Lee Strasberg describes this type of training as it relates to both the voice and body.

[Teachers] simply bring their system of dancing or training of the singing voice into the theatre. The aim is to produce a physically developed body and a good voice, rather than an expressive body and a dramatic voice. The body and the voice are treated as if they had to win prizes at a fashion show, instead of being made flexible and fluent to convey any thought or emotion which the actor experiences.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Stanley Kahan, Introduction to Acting 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1985), 111.

⁷⁶ Lane Crawford, Acting: It's Theory and Practice (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), 27.

⁷⁷ Strasberg, 147.

Recent vocal instructors, such as Cicely Berry and Kristin Linklater, have propagated more organic approaches to liberating the “natural” voice, rather than imposing a vocal technique. In her book Freeing the Natural Voice, Linklater describes her emphasis on “the removal of the blocks that inhibit the human instrument as distinct from the development of a skillful musical instrument...The objective is a voice in direct contact with emotional impulse, shaped by the intellect but not inhibited by it.”⁷⁸ Similar to exercising the body muscles, this type of training which focuses on relaxation techniques is essential for the actor in acquiring voice flexibility. This, in turn, is important preparation in acquiring the greatest benefit from the application phase of the Performance Analysis work, in order to explore a wider range of vocal possibilities than may be immediately available.

Observable Components of Vocal Communication

The initial phase of Performance Analysis requires an intellectual awareness of observable components. The necessity of this fundamental work is pointed out by J.A. Starkweather in a summary report of a series of vocal communication studies,

Judges agree substantially, both when asked to identify the emotion being expressed and when given the task of estimating the strength of the feeling. Judgments appear to depend on significant changes in pitch, rate, volume and other physical characteristics of the voice, but untrained judges cannot describe these qualities accurately.⁷⁹

A breakdown of the physical characteristics of the voice begins with the

⁷⁸ Kristin Linklater, Freeing the Natural Voice (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1976), 1.

⁷⁹ J. A. Starkweather, “Vocal Communication of Personality and Human Feelings,” Journal of Communication 11 (1961): 69.

principal category of vocal communication and subdivides into verbal (words) and extraverbal (sounds) categories. The categorizations have attempted to unite the many elements of existing communication terminology with an actor's frame of reference. It is important to clarify that this study, while including observations of a diversified range of cultures, will focus solely on the English language.

A descriptive analysis of the inclusive vocal signifiers follows, incorporating definitions, examples and functions as well as prevalent stereotypical perceptions. The awareness of the latter is an essential element in approaching the actor's "choice menu," enabling the actor to play "with" or "against" an anticipated result. Figure 1 provides a chart which illustrates the categorization of vocal signifiers.

Verbal Signifiers

Beginning actors in general have a tendency to rely heavily on the author's written words alone to communicate a message. Antonin Artaud acknowledged such tenacity, pondering,

Whether there is not in the domain of thought, of intelligence, that which words are incapable of conveying, states which gestures and all that pertains to language in space can express with more precision than words...It is not a question of eliminating the use of words in the theatre, but of giving words approximately the importance of dreams...We must manipulate words like solid objects which unsettle things, first in the air, then in the much more mysterious domain of far-reaching influences.⁸⁰

As important as the actual words are in imparting the cognitive aspects of meaning, much significance actually rests in--as the cliché goes--how some

⁸⁰ Saint-Denis, 39-40.

thing is said rather than what is said. Yet, as the communication educator Mark Knapp reveals, "the dichotomy set up by this cliché is misleading, because how something is said is frequently what is said."⁸¹ The implication is that the analysis of how the words are vocalized will lead to a clearer understanding of what is being communicated.

The verbal signifiers are consequently broken down into observable components. These are vocal cues accompanying verbal content and are identified in two separate categories: vocal qualifiers and vocal modifiers.

Vocal Qualifiers. This classification of signifiers qualify, or specify, vocal sound in conjunction with word and sentence formation. Included are the qualities of pitch, volume, tempo, articulation, rhythm, and tonal "texture" that are observed in the voice.

Pitch. Kahan defines pitch as referring to "the position of the spoken sound on the musical scale."⁸² Pitch level refers to how high or low the sound is. Inflection is the upward or downward sliding of pitch within a word or a phrase. A compilation of studies and texts reveal that high pitches relate to heightened emotional states such as fear, anger, rage, surprise, great excitement and hysteria. K.R. Scherer's study concludes, "Pitch has two effects: raised pitch is judged as extroversion, assertiveness, confidence, and competence, but also as tense and nervous, perhaps because raised pitch is a cue for emotional arousal."⁸³

⁸¹ Mark L. Knapp, Nonverbal Communications in Human Interaction 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), 322.

⁸² Kahan, 122.

⁸³ Joseph A. DeVito, and Michael L. Hecht, The Nonverbal Communication Reader (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1990), 259.

Figure 1
Signifying Cues in Vocal Communication

Low pitches seem to suggest more deep-keyed emotional states such as sadness, boredom, affection and religious awe. Knapp suggests that the stereotypical person possessing such a voice is generally perceived as sophisticated, appealing, sexy, or masculine.⁸⁴ DeVito and Hecht in their book The Nonverbal Communication Reader determined that,

Lower pitched voices are often seen as more credible and powerful. Listen to radio announcers and see how both men and women have lower-pitched voices than most of us. Interestingly, male voices in the United States are among the lowest pitched in the world, and the pitch differences between men and women cannot be explained by physiology alone.⁸⁵

D.W. Addington successfully linked specific vocal cues with personality stereotypes. A portion of his study shows that increased pitch variety in females proved them to be more dynamic and extroverted, while males were thought to be more dynamic, feminine and aesthetically inclined.⁸⁶

A monotone voice, or that which lacks pitch variety, is generally viewed as dull and uninteresting and has the ability of quickly losing audience attention. On the other hand, DeVito and Hecht believe that these less varying voices are seen as more powerful.⁸⁷ Others have used this device in their favor as well, as is observed in the distinctly wry deliveries of comic Steven Wright, whose lack of pitch variety is used as a gimmick in accentuating humor in a barrage of one-liners.

Vocal coach Kristin Linklater suggests that an upward inflection at the

⁸⁴ Knapp, 330.

⁸⁵ DeVito, 251.

⁸⁶ D.W. Addington, "The Relationship of Selected Vocal Characteristics to Personality Perception," Speech Monographs 35 (1968): 492.

⁸⁷ DeVito, 251.

end of a phrase or sentence may imply vulnerability.⁸⁸ A supporting example is Patrick Stewart's portrayal of Captain Picard on the TV series Star Trek: The Next Generation. His authoritative character is noticeably lacking this particular mannerism.

Volume. Volume relates to the degree of loudness in the voice. This is most crucial to the stage actor who must simply be heard in order for any vocal communication to take place. This does not, however, imply the need for a consistently loud volume, since the exploration of volume range can be a powerful tool. Technology generally manipulates this feature with screen actors, allowing for greater range possibilities in general.

Volume has been associated with levels of personal security and awareness. For example, loud volume may reflect a lack of personal awareness or a need for attention. Robert Benedetti observes,

Psychotherapists have often noted how vocal projection relates directly to a person's sense of self-esteem and assertiveness. Nothing reduces the effectiveness of the human voice more than a lack of confidence; even when we speak loudly, insecurity causes our voices to "hide" in unintelligibility.⁸⁹

Different cultures may have their own perspectives of volume. The Asian culture traditionally views loudness as rude behavior. There is much to be said for soft speech in the American culture as well. Steve Vineberg for instance points to this quality in Montgomery Clift as an asset in bringing out a poetic nature in his characters.⁹⁰ Yet, if the words are intended to be heard,

⁸⁸ Linklater, 108.

⁸⁹ Robert L. Benedetti, The Actor at Work 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 113.

⁹⁰ Vineberg, 150.

extremely low volume can only be explored by the actor in taped or filmed mediums, or in extremely intimate theatrical settings.

Tempo. Continuing with an analysis of Montgomery Clift, Vineberg described him in terms of his speech tempo.

A modern variant on the western archetype, the strong, silent hero, he speaks as slowly as John Wayne does -- there's always a slight retardation in Montgomery Clift's speech - but we can sense the sexual force that's curbed by that verbal leisureliness, and we wait patiently through the movie for it to flood through.⁹¹

The speed of speech and number and length of pauses constitutes tempo. This directly relates to audience comprehension in the communication process. Studies reveal that "the normal speaking rate is between 125 and 190 words per minute. Some feel comprehension begins to decrease once the rate exceeds 200 words per minute."⁹²

Speed might be dictated by the type of work being performed, as can be seen in comparing various tragedies to farces. Also, actors may decide to give important lines with a slow delivery, and fast deliveries for more trivial or inconsequential matters. In opposition, speed might emphasize excitement in important lines while a slow rate may indicate pointless ramblings.

Stereotyping speech tempo seems to characterize the fast individual as young, excitable, animated, dynamic, competent and extroverted, while the slow individual might be seen as more aged with a reflective, quiet disposition. M. N. Millet and his colleagues are cited as finding that:

[A] faster rate of speech is more persuasive. Simply put, faster rates create greater attitude change in listeners. Faster rates also

⁹¹ Vineberg, 144.

⁹² Knapp, 350.

produce higher ratings of intelligence, knowledge, and objectivity... greater credibility was ascribed to the faster speaker.⁹³

Another study by Street and Brady revealed similar findings, "Moderately fast and fast speaker rates produced higher judgments of competence...[and] had a significant impact on listener's judgment of social attractiveness."⁹⁴

Emotional dimensions, as charted by Mark Knapp, relate slow speech to boredom, disgust and sadness and fast speech to pleasantness, activity, potency, anger, fear, happiness and surprise.⁹⁵

Articulation. Articulation has to do with the distinctness of word and sound formation through movement of the speech organs. This can range from careless mumbling and slovenly slurring to labored over-emphatic enunciation. Clear articulation must be present if the audience is meant to understand what is said. The style of the work may dictate a higher level of proficiency in this area--for instance when dealing with the poetic language of Shakespeare or Moliere. Michel Saint-Denis expresses his view that:

[T]he world of Othello is unique to the play itself...it is above all a poetic world. It does not imitate life; it is nourished by reality but rises above it. Its essence is expressed by rhythmic images in a musical language with which a realistic performance based on rational details, will come into conflict.⁹⁶

Unclear articulation is generally associated with laziness of the tongue

⁹³ Malandro, 244.

⁹⁴ Malandro, 241.

⁹⁵ Knapp, 348.

⁹⁶ Saint-Denis, 37-38.

and lips. Contemporary mediums may more easily accommodate the nearly incomprehensible muttering and mumbling extreme, made famous by James Dean and, of course, Marlon Brando.

Careful observance is paid to an actor's treatment of the consonants and vowels which create the words. Variations in length, stress and weight occur through intentional or subconscious controlling of muscle changes. For instance, vowel lengths can be elongated or clipped short, and consonants can change with varying degrees of applied pressure. Each usage creates differing effects.

Over-emphatic articulation can sound forced and false in a naturalistic context, yet some actors may use this technique sparsely for an interesting effect. Vineberg points to Geraldine Page's delivery: "the mocking way she stretches one syllable words into two ("sow-urr" for "sour" in The Pope of Greenwich Village) or breaks up two-syllable words for sarcastic emphasis ("Is she pret-ty?" in You're a Big Boy Now)."⁹⁷

James Naremore identifies a similar technique used by Cary Grant in the film North by Northwest, for yet another effect.

[Grant's] enunciation tends to improve the humor in Lehman's writing. At one point, he protests to Leo G. Carroll that George Kaplan must be a real person: "I've been in his hotel room! I've tried on his clothes! He's got short sleeves and dan-druff!" The stress he gives to each syllable of the last word makes him seem like a whimsical aristocrat who has discovered a true oddity.⁹⁸

Rhythm. Rhythm is comprised of the time, pace and meter of speech - the retards, stops, syncopations and structural emphasis. It dictates speech

⁹⁷ Vineberg, 207.

⁹⁸ Naremore, 230.

flow through the alternation of silence, sound, strength and weakness.

A study by J. R. Davitz contends that, regular speech rhythms indicated joy, cheerfulness, affection and satisfaction while irregular rhythms show anger and sadness.⁹⁹ This theory would seem to be supported by scansion practitioners who analyze the texts of Shakespeare and the like for emotionally indicative rhythm changes.

Some actors easily succumb to a seemingly prescribed rhythm of elegantly written words. This happens even in contemporary drama, as shown in the chastisement of a student by Robert Lewis: "You're too 'poetic'--your character, Val [from Orpheus Descending] doesn't know he's been written by Tennessee Williams."¹⁰⁰

Upon entering the film business in 1950, Marlon Brando was something of a forerunner in experimental speech rhythms, breaking past traditions of lulling, regular rhythm patterns. Vineberg writes:

He tore apart the conventional music of a line of dialogue, discovering a way for scripted words to express the tension in an inarticulate man between what flies out of his mouth and what he can't find words for... Sometimes he dives into the middle of the traditional rhythm of a line and grapples with it as if he were swinging a snake around by its middle. When [in The Men] he yells at another man in a hospital ward whose radio is on too loud, "You're very funny - now turn it down!" he races for the last word, throwing the rest of the sentence off balance.¹⁰¹

Likewise, Naremore points out underlying power created by the irregular rhythmic patterns in Brando's famous speech,

⁹⁹ Knapp, 346.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Lewis, Advise to the Players (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 112.

¹⁰¹ Vineberg, 155.

"I coulda had class! I coulda been a contender! I coulda been somebody!" He savors the poetic, musicalized flavor of the three lines...Then he expels breath and lets the rest of the speech out in a rapid, prosaic fall: "...Instead of just a bum, which is what I am, let's face it."¹⁰²

Tonal "Texture". Tonal "texture" covers a range of phonetic characteristics such as breathiness, hoarseness, nasality, resonance and tenseness. Most often the product and measure of vocal training (or lack of such) in the speaker, this category is the one most often to receive the "pleasant" or "unpleasant" audience judgments. Many successful actors can be recognized by consistent voice qualities, for example Katherine Hepburn's harsh and strident deliveries, James Earl Jones' trademark resonance, Blythe Danner's squeakiness, Dustin Hoffman's nasality and Geraldine Page's whining, thin and breathless speech. Training can not only eliminate undesired sounds, but can develop the use of any of these qualities for specific purposes. Consider the many voices of Lily Tomlin as she presents a range of vocally different characters: a nasal phone operator, a tense throated upper-class lady, a hoarse crazy woman and a deeply resonant coed, to recall a few.

Addington's stereotyping study found specific results for several of these texture qualities. Throaty, nasal, breathy or tense deliveries were found low in credibility and competence. Individually, nasality showed a "wide array of undesirable characteristics" in both males and females. Tenseness in males found them to be older, more unyielding and cantankerous, while the females seemed to be younger, more emotional, feminine, high strung and less intelligent. Breathiness in males gave the impression of youth and artis-

¹⁰² Naremore, 210-211.

tic bent while females were perceived as more feminine, prettier, more petite, more high-strung and shallower.¹⁰³ This last quality was intentionally cultivated by Marilyn Monroe.

Vocal Modifiers. This classification of signifiers is the second category of vocal cues accompanying verbal content. They modify word or sentence structure through the use of style--pronunciation, accent and dialect; nonfluencies - such as sentence change, repetition, stutter and false starts; and shading - through intensity, and tone.

Style. Style includes pronunciation, accent and dialect. Aside from indicating regional origin, these features also play a role in distinguishing the socioeconomic status of a person through the level of "correctness" of speech delivery in relation to a "standard" dialect. This type of evaluation can be very subjective, depending on the viewpoint of the listener/evaluator. Knapp has compiled existing data from various studies which indicate a racist bias in stereotyping such speech patterns,

- (1) Chicano English speakers were rated lower on success, ability, and social awareness;
- (2) native born Americans rated Europeans (speaking English) less positively than other native-born speakers;
- (3) teachers will tend to label a child as "culturally disadvantaged" especially if the speech exhibits perceived irregularities in grammar, silent pausing, and pronunciation, and
- (4) "standard" dialects were preferred and judged more competent than "nonstandard"--regardless who spoke--except standard dialects were more often associated with white speakers than black.¹⁰⁴

The relationship between accent and pronunciation and class distinc-

¹⁰³ Addington, 492.

¹⁰⁴ Knapp, 334.

tion is particularly evident in England, as seen in Shaw's Pygmalion where a higher social status is attained through a rigorous training process that transforms an undesirable cockney accent into a well-respected standard British style. The ideal of "correct" pronunciation is dictated by an existing "standard" dialect for each particular country. This is established and passed on by the higher educated ranks through generations. DeVito and Hecht describe "standard" dialect in saying that "middle-class and educated accents are more clearly articulated, use more intonation, and are less blurred. Consonants are sounded more clearly and there is less stumbling over words."¹⁰⁵

Although certain regionalisms in American accents are accepted (i.e., the Southern pronunciation of "thang" in place of the standard "thing") there is often a lower-class stigma associated with grammatical mistakes in standard pronunciation. Although frequently learned within a region or culture, these words are usually the product of careless articulation through acquired habits, as in saying "lenth" instead of "length," "fith" instead of "fifth," and "aks" instead of "asks." Words that appear similar in spelling and sound are also a frequent cause for such a distortion. Included are words such as "accept" and "except," "access" and "excess," "affect" and "effect," "celery" and "salary," "allude" and "elude."¹⁰⁶

Foreign dialects are also responsible for deviations from standard American pronunciations since the speaker applies familiar phonetics to the English translation. For example, French accents replace "th" with a "z"

¹⁰⁵ DeVito, 261.

¹⁰⁶ Christine Edwards and Marian Rich, "Supplementary Training," Producing the Play, ed. John Gassner. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1953), 175.

sound and Russian accents switch the "v" and "w" sounds. A working knowledge of different dialects can be an asset to the actor wanting to play a variety of roles. Some actors, such as Meryl Streep, are quite successful at this. Vineberg offers his opinion of Brando's failings in this endeavor, beginning with his attempt at Fletcher Christian in Mutiny on the Bounty,

Speaking in deliberate, half-whispered tones, he sends up lines like "Did you ever hear of destiny, Desiree? Desiree - desired one?" by pounding lightly on the repeated consonant sound. Similarly, his southern-gentleman Major in Sayonara is a game to delight himself with; his German accent in The Young Lions is absurdly haute; his Asian accent in The Teahouse of The August Moon is preposterous; and he devises a riotous western drawl for One Eyed Jacks, with "r's" as hard as a brick wall.¹⁰⁷

Nonfluencies. Nonfluencies consist of specific breaks within the flow of a person's speech, such as sentence change or incompleteness, repetitions, stuttering, false starts and buffers (such as "but uh," "you know," or "uh-well"). Occasionally these are written into the script, as Arthur Miller does in the telling repetition of Willy Loman's desperately charged words before committing suicide: "That boy-- that boy is going to be magnificent!"¹⁰⁸

The efficacy of these devices are often overlooked by actors who feel compelled to deliver the author's words exactly as written. Liberties taken with nonfluencies can lend a more natural quality to the delivery, although excessive liberties can prove disregarding of the author's work.

Nonfluencies are often viewed as stemming from anxieties or deep seated psychological problems, especially in the frequent use of stuttering.

¹⁰⁷ Vineberg, 171.

¹⁰⁸ Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman, Masterpieces of the Drama, ed. Alexander W. Allison et al. 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 908.

Yet, Benedetti points to another perception of such a device in the speech of Shakespeare's Hotspur who stutters "as an expression of his impulsive nature, which prefers actions to words."¹⁰⁹ James Dean's verbal practices serve as an appropriate example for the use of nonfluencies in more contemporary language as well,

Dean's trademark muttering and verbal meandering are appropriate for Jett [in Giant], and he uses them for comic effect when he tells Bick's bride Leslie (Elizabeth Taylor) how beautiful she is, so uncomfortable handing out compliments that he keeps sputtering and backtracking and starting over.¹¹⁰

Shading. Emphasis, tone and intensity are signs for decoding subtext, or rather the unspoken thoughts of the communicator. This takes the form of either consistent or inconsistent messages where the verbal content respectively matches or contradicts the vocal cues. Studies show that in the case of the latter, the vocal cues are the stronger communicators. A. Mehrabian and his colleagues concluded,

The variability of inferences about communicator attitude on the basis of information available in content and tone combined is mainly contributed by variations in tone alone. For example, when the attitude communicated in content contradicts the attitude communicated by negative tone, the total message was judged as communicating negative attitude.¹¹¹

A commonly used example of this sort of tone communication is sarcasm. The vocal cue used to indicate the expression of sarcasm is often inflection, or a sliding pitch within a word or sentence.

¹⁰⁹ Benedetti, 95.

¹¹⁰ Vineberg, 196.

¹¹¹ A. Mehrabian and M. Wiener, "Decoding of Inconsistent Communication," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 6 (1967): 109.

Emphasis refers to the meaningful stress given to a particular word in a sentence or phrase. The switching of emphasis from one word to another can completely change the underlying intent. For example, a simple statement such as "You look great today" might be communicated as follows:

<u>Text</u>	<u>Subtext</u>
1) " <u>You</u> look great today."	"I feel like I look lousy."
2) "You <u>look</u> great today."	"...but your perfume smells horrible."
3) "You look <u>great</u> today."	"You look like you need a confidence boost."
4) "You look great <u>today</u> ."	"You look a lot better than yesterday"

The level of power, force, concentration or energy within an actor is referred to as intensity. Although loudness is often an indicator, a higher level of intensity does not directly relate to a higher level in volume, since the actor can employ camouflaging techniques for various reasons. For example, a young man may be furious with his employer for being forced into working on a particular weekend, yet chooses to outwardly control his anger through various vocal techniques in order to keep his job. These techniques might include low volume, even rhythm and slight variations in pitch.

An effective use of tone, emphasis and intensity is in the subtlety of its application. This makes its use often difficult to detect, but fascinating to perceive.

Extraverbal Signifiers

The term extraverbal is used here to describe all nonverbal sounds within vocal communication--vocal cues that are substituting for verbal content. These sound components are identified in two separate categories: vocal isolators and vocal characterizers.

Vocal Isolators. This classification of signifiers appear in the space between words, interrupting the flow of words within sentences. They include three approaches to sound: filled pauses, silent pauses, and silence.

Filled Pauses. Filled pauses consist of types of phonation such as "ah," "uh," "um," "uh-uh," and variants. Knapp describes perceptions of these sounds. "A variety of sources associate filled pauses with a range of generally undesirable characteristics. Some people associate filled pauses and repetitions with emotional arousal; some feel filled pauses may reduce anxiety, but jam cognitive processes."¹¹²

Sandy Dennis used this device in her very naturalistic acting style, appearing somewhat as a constant barrage of nervous "tics." Vineberg describes her voice as carrying "all sorts of excess baggage with it-- little 'mmm' sounds that zoom into the beginnings of sentences; swallowed 'ums' and 'uhs' and 'ahs' grafted onto words; involuntary repetitions of some phrases, like a rickety typewriter that's developed repeating keys."¹¹³ Naremore describes James Stewart's use of the filled pause as a more spontaneous and positive mannerism.

The familiar stammering hesitation of his speech is a calculated device, used to make his responses naturalistic - as when he tries to object to something Grace Kelly is saying [in Rear Window]: "aw, well, now wait a minute - wa...now wait a minute!" This fumbling nervousness with language also contributes to his stylized, "folksy" persona.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Knapp, 356.

¹¹³ Vineberg, 214.

¹¹⁴ Naremore, 256.

Silent Pauses. Hesitations or delays are the brief suspensions of the voice that are termed silent pauses. They assume the function of contrast or emphasis to divide thoughts, to allow time for listener comprehension, to increase curiosity, and to breathe. Depending on where the pause occurs, it may prove to change the meaning of a sentence or communicate a different line of subtext.

Goldman-Eisler supports the idea that spontaneous speech is highly fragmented and discontinuous, with two-thirds of spoken language usually being delivered in phrases of less than six words at a time.¹¹⁵

Malandro, Barker and Barker link silent pauses with a higher level of unpredictability, "You will notice that if you are finding it difficult to express your thoughts in words, you will pause more often and for longer periods of time, and your listeners will find it more difficult to predict what you will say next."¹¹⁶

Silence. Silence is a function of the voice used as a means of communication in itself. It can provide a background for sound as well as convey a message. It is often difficult to interpret relying heavily on physical movement as an indication of inner intentions. Silence can be self-imposed as time for prayer and reflection, or time for pondering ideas and problems, as well as creating a sense of awareness to the surrounding world's elements. It is a sign of respect and an acknowledgement of propriety in church and class situations.

¹¹⁵ F. Goldman-Eisler, Psycholinguistics: Experiments in Spontaneous Speech (New York: Academic Press, 1968), .

¹¹⁶ Malandro, 251.

Malandro, Barker and Barker observe that silence can create interpersonal distance, as evidenced in a crowded elevator, or as a nervous reaction towards a handicapped individual. It can lessen interpersonal distance as well, in the comfortable silences between longtime friends for example. They also contend that "both positive and negative emotions evoke silence, and silence is often the language of the strongest of passions - love, anger, surprise, fear."¹¹⁷ An example of the power of silence in communicating extreme emotion is found in a moment from Denzel Washington in the movie Glory. His rage and pain pour forth through his choice of silence while being whipped, whereas another actor might have chosen to scream and moan. The silence is then accentuated by the drop of a single tear.

Other messages communicated through silence often take the form of behavior modification. Silence can be used as a refusal to reinforce particular behavior when ignoring an inappropriate remark or action. Also, a parent may impose silence on a disobedient child--often referred to as a "time-out."

Vocal Characterizers. Vocal characterizers are additional sounds including the "creature releases" that have the ability to communicate a particular message. A list might include laughing, crying, coughing, moaning, groaning, sighing, yawning, sucking, spitting, sneezing, clearing of the throat, sniffing, swallowing, belches, hiccups, and snoring.

For example, a sigh can indicate boredom, frustration or relief. A clearing of the throat can demand a person's attention, and a yawn can ask a late night guest to leave.

¹¹⁷ Malandro, 253.

Functions of Vocal Signifiers in Combination

Realistically, vocal cues are used in multiple combinations during the course of a speech or conversation. Decoding can be enormously complex and tedious. Yet the existing documentation of stereotypically perceived cue information can become a helpful guide in this process.

Emotions.

Each vocal cue may be a specific component within an emotion, but it is the combination of cues that effectively make the communication of that emotion possible. A study by Davitz attempts to illustrate this interplay. For example, expressing anger is often perceived as the combination of loud volume, high pitch, fast tempo, irregular inflection and rhythm, and clipped enunciation. Sadness on the other hand frequently uses soft volume, low pitch, resonance, slow tempo, downward inflection, irregular pauses and slurred enunciation.¹¹⁸ A complete study of these findings is useful as a springboard for individual observations, yet an acknowledgement of variations and a perception of camouflaging tactics is also imperative. For example, a quiet seething anger may exhibit completely different vocal cues from the stereotypically loud version, and sadness may be disguised by cues interpreted as indicating anger or happiness.

Attitudes.

Interpersonal attitudes in relation to specific vocal cues have been suggested, (i.e., volume to confidence, pitch to authority, tonal qualities to competence and credibility, and tempo to competence and persuasion). Several studies attempted to more fully identify this category as well. Echerer and

¹¹⁸ Knapp, 346.

Oshinsky determined that friendly voices are high pitched, with frequent upward pitch variation, pure tones and regular rhythm; whereas hostile voices are loud, fast, harsh, often lower pitched, with sharply rising pitch contours.¹¹⁹ Frick characterized dominance as loud, low pitched and slow; and submission as higher pitched, less resonant and more upwards inflection.¹²⁰ And credibility was studied by Pearce and Conklin who found that a serious, scholarly voice, using low pitch and volume with little variation in both was judged more credible than a more emotional, varied delivery.¹²¹

Personal Traits.

The communication of personality may also be a product of many combined vocal cues. Studies have shown that extroversion manifests itself through higher pitch (for males), greater vocal affect, faster speech, and fewer pauses (for females).¹²²

Siegmán found that anxious people "speak fast, but with silent pauses, especially long pauses (over 1 1/2 seconds); perhaps they need more planning time, and succeed in controlling other kinds of disfluency."¹²³

Jacobs and Schuchter describe the "type A" personality (competitive, aggressive, impatient, success oriented) as possessing voices that are loud, fast, with explosive emphasis, a lot of variation in speed, and little pause before

¹¹⁹ K. R. Scherer and J. S. Oshinsky, "Cue Utilization in Emotion Attribution from Stimuli," Motivation and Emotions 1 (1977): 331-346.

¹²⁰ R. W. Frick, "Communicating Emotion: The Role of Prosodic Features," Psychological Bulletin 97 (1985): 412-429.

¹²¹ W. B. Pearce and F. Conklin, "Nonverbal Vocalic Communication and Perceptions of a Speaker," Speech Monographs (1971): 235-241.

¹²² DeVito, 259.

¹²³ DeVito, 259.

speaking.¹²⁴ Melanie Griffith gives an example of playing against this stereotype successfully, bringing her high pitched, soft, slow vocal mannerisms to her role as an aggressive businesswoman in Working Girl. Gender is usually associated with pitch level, (higher pitch in females and lower in males), yet studies show additional cues that may be involved. Women, for instance, show greater variation in pitch, and more upward inflections (expressing higher levels of surprise and appeasement). Men have been categorized as speaking louder, with more downward inflections and an overall greater effort at controlling conversations. This is done through the use of the conversation regulators defined as turn-maintaining cues.

Conversation Regulators.

Vocal cues work in conjunction to create an effective structure for managing interaction. Listeners are commonly able to interpret these cues quite accurately. Together they are called turn-taking cues.¹²⁵ The four categories of turn-taking cues used in conversation are: turn-yielding, turn-denying or (back channel cues), turn-requesting, and turn-maintaining.

Turn-Yielding Cues. The turn-yielding cues indicate that the speaker has finished and "yielded" the turn to speak to another person. Vocal cues involved may consist of intonations, drawls (speaking slowly and elongating vowels, usually on the last syllable), buffers ("ya know," "or something," "so, ah"), changes in pitch, changes in volume, upward inflections (questions), and silence.

¹²⁴ DeVito, 259.

¹²⁵ Malandro, 246-247.

Turn-Denying or Back-Channel Cues. When the listener denies a turn to speak when offered, the back-channel cues are involved. The most common signifiers used are vocal segregates as reinforcers such as "mm," "uh-huh" and "oh." Other indicators arise when the listener completes a speaker's sentence or requests clarification on some point. Silence may also be an effective communicator in this instance.

Turn-Requesting Cues. Turn-requesting is what a listener does to indicate the desire to speak. Cues may consist of a quick, audible inhalation, or several different nonfluencies, such as stutter starts ("I...I...I...") or buffers ("uh-huh," "Yeah...well"). The listener uses these either by interrupting the speaker, talking simultaneously, or jumping into normal pauses.

Turn-Maintaining Cues. Turn-maintaining cues are used when the speaker wants to keep talking. This is often done by increasing volume and rate in order to overpower turn-requesting cues from the listener. More filled pauses are used as well, as was cited by Rochester:

(1) More filled pauses and fewer silent pauses are found more often in dialogue than monologue, (2) more filled pauses and fewer silent pauses are not found when people want to break off speaking, and (3) more filled pauses and fewer silent pauses are more likely when the speaker lacks visual means of controlling the conversation.¹²⁶

Uta Hagen tells of an enlightening exposure to turn-maintaining when working with the German actor Albert Basserman:

There was such a vibrant rhythm of his speech and behavior that I was swept away by it. I kept waiting for him to come to an end with his intentions so that I could take my "turn." As a re-

¹²⁶ R. Rochester, "The Significance of Pause in Spontaneous Speech," Journal of Psycholinguistic Research 2 (1973): 51-81.

sult, I either made a big hole in the dialogue or desperately cut in on him in order to avoid another hole. I was expecting the usual "It's your turn; then it's my turn." At the end of the first act I went to his dressing room and said "Mr. Basserman, I can't apologize enough, but I never know when you're through!" He looked at me in amazement and said, "I'm never through! And neither should you be."¹²⁷

Awareness of signification and range of available vocal cues is imperative in effective communication. In fact, a study by Woolbert found that large variations in rate, force, pitch and quality increased audience comprehension and retention.¹²⁸ In addition, variety can certainly create interest as well as communicating a host of desired effects.

The systemization of vocal communication is a necessary process in Performance Analysis. Requiring an initial period of study in order to gain familiarity with the many components involved in communication, this breakdown offers an essential vocabulary for the process of observation.

Once an awareness of vocal signifiers is attained, the next step is practice. The following chapter outlines a system for observing and decoding vocal cues in Performance Analysis.

¹²⁷ Hagen, 6.

¹²⁸ Knapp, 350.

CHAPTER 4

Performance Analysis in Practice

Once an awareness of observable components in vocal communication is achieved, the student may begin the process of analyzing performance. In order for an objective evaluation, the student systematically observes and records the specific elements of vocal communication that the actor physically manifests. Figure 2 illustrates a proposed chart for this purpose. This actor observation chart requires the student/evaluator to identify definable vocal cues employed within a specific performance. The next step is an awareness of available sources for observation and comparison. An outline of combinations of actors to texts and observable traits will follow.

To reiterate, the purpose of this detailed work is not intended as a categorization of “correct” choices to be merely memorized and imitated. It is a methodical development of awareness giving the actor a chance to transcend his or her own subjective identity and limited inner resources. Training must include an assimilation process through exercises and experimentation, which will be addressed in this chapter.

How to Observe Performance

Using the Actor Observational Chart, the student/evaluator can systematically categorize communicated character traits. All available visual and textual information should be utilized in determining this information. For example, wardrobe, occupation, living conditions, or any other details provided by the author, actor, or visual image. First is a listing of observable person-

ality information including specifics such as gender, age, body type, occupation, regionalism/culture, and socioeconomic status (SES). Also included in this category is a generalized indication of personality type. One or more descriptive labels should be used such as evil, romantic, insecure, extroverted, humorous or nervous. The next two categories entail a listing of specific emotions and interpersonal attitudes chosen for analysis. Emotion labels might consist of words such as anger, joy/elation, boredom, excitement, fear, depression, anxiety, surprise, or confusion. Interpersonal attitudes which are closely related to and often overlapping emotions might be designated as friendliness, superiority, submissiveness, indifference, affection, or disgust.

Subsequent work consists of documenting the specific vocal cues responsible for indicating any of the defined character traits. For instance, anxiety in a character may be indicated through high pitch, loud volume, fast tempo, poor articulation (slurring and mumbling), tense tonal quality, frequent nonfluencies (stutters and repetitions), high intensity, frequent and long silent pauses, and occurrences of sniffing, clearing of the throat and laughing. Figure 3 provides a listing of suggested vocabulary and ideas for filling in the specific categories. This list is by no means exhaustive, and therefore should be supplemented with individual interpretations.

The Actor Observation Chart may be used partially or in its entirety depending on the evaluator's focus. For example, the evaluator may wish to compare only a specific emotional state, such as confusion within performances of two different actors. Choosing to disregard any other character information the evaluator need only notate observable vocal cues that pertain

to this particular trait. Eventually, a familiarity with the observation chart can supersede its actual use.

What to Observe

The student analyzes other actors either through documented performance (films, videos, television shows, or audio recordings), or live performance (in production or in class). Observation can be accomplished through visual and aural means combined or through aural means alone (i.e, looking away from the visual image, listening from another room or through a barrier, or using tape recordings or records).

Analysis consists of decoding vocal cues used by the actor which indicate particular traits (character traits consisting of personality, emotions, and interpersonal attitudes) within a specified text (identified as the script as a whole or an isolated scene, sentence, phrase or word). There are many combinations of actors in relation to traits and texts. In order to ensure awareness of the varying possibilities in observation, a listing of combinations are as follows:

- (1) Same actor, different text, same traits.
- (2) Same actor, different text, different traits.
- (3) Same actor, same text, same traits.
- (4) Same actor, same text, different traits.
- (5) Different actors, same text, same traits.
- (6) Different actors, different text, same traits.
- (7) Same actor, same text, different performances (pertains to live performances only).

Examples can further clarify this categorization process.

Figure 2

Actor Observation Chart for Performance Analysis

Actor: Character: Text:		CHARACTER TRAITS:				
		Personality Type/Characteristics		Emotions/Attitudes		
		Gender				
		Age				
		Body Type				
		Occupation				
Region/Culture						
		SES				
EXTRAVERBAL SIGNIFIERS	VOCAL QUALIFIERS	Pitch - level				
		Inflection				
		Volume				
		Tempo				
		Articulation				
		Rhythm				
		Tonal "texture"				
	VOCAL MODIFIERS	STYLE				
		Pronunciation				
		Accent/Dialect				
		NONFLUENCIES				
		Sentence change				
		Stutters				
		Repetition				
		False starts				
		Buffers				
		SHADING				
		Emphasis				
		Tone				
		Intensity				
VOCAL ISOLATORS	FILLED PAUSES					
	SILENT PAUSES					
	SILENCE					
	VOCAL CHARACTERISTICS Laughing, Crying, Sighing, Clearing of Throat, Sniffing, etc...					

Figure 3.1

Observation Chart Reference Sheet (Part I)

<p>Part I Character Traits</p> <p>Personality Type: Use one or more descriptive adjectives. (i.e., evil, romantic, extroverted, nervous.)</p> <p>Characteristics: <u>Gender</u>-Male or female (or male impersonating a female/female impersonating a male.) <u>Age</u>-Given or estimated <u>Body type</u>-(i.e., thin to heavy, athletic, muscular, stalky, fragile, tall to short.) <u>Occupation</u> -Given or conjectured. <u>Region/Culture</u> -State, Country, City, cultural background. (i.e., British, Asian, Southern.) <u>SES</u>- (Socioeconomic Status) - Low, middle, upper-middle, or high class. Emotions/Attitudes : Choose and label one or more to be analyzed. <u>Emotions</u> - (i.e., anger, joy, boredom, excitement, fear, depression, anxiety, surprise, confusion.) <u>Interpersonal Attitudes</u> - (i.e., friendliness, superiority, submissiveness, indifference, affection.)</p>
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Figure 3.2

Observation Chart Reference Sheet (Part II)

Part II Vocal Cues.

Pitch:

Level - Low, medium, high. Slight variations (monotone) to wide variations. Placement of variations. (i.e., end sentences on low pitch, begin sentences on high pitch.)

Inflection - Low to high, high to low. Frequency of occurrences. Frequent, infrequent placement of occurrences. (i.e., beginning or end of sentences, within words.)

Volume :

Low level (quiet) to high level (loud). Frequency of variations.

Tempo:

Slow to fast.

Articulation:

Clear, distinct to unclear, slurred, lazy. Site any examples of vowel or consonant formations and word or syllable treatment. (i.e., adding syllables in words, elongating vowel sounds.)

Rhythm:

Even, deliberate, controlled to erratic. Slow to rushed within sentences or portions of speech.

Tonal "Texture":

Use descriptive adjectives of most prominent qualities. (i.e., breathy, throaty, nasal, resonant, hoarse, relaxed, tense, fluid, choppy/staccato.)

Style:

Pronunciation - Correctness of speech (poor to correct) in relation to standard speech deliveries. Clarity of articulation and indication of grammatical mistakes (cite examples). Rate level of education and SES. (i.e., lower educated, middle class.)

Accent/Dialect - (i.e., cockney, New Yorkese.)

Nonfluencies:

Sentence change - (i.e., "Are you going to the...you know what I need to do?")

Stutters - (i.e., b-b-but.)

Repetitions - (i.e., "Just, just don't!")

False Starts - (i.e., "But I...")

Buffers - (i.e., "but uh, " "you know, " "uh-well.")

Shading:

Emphasis - Deliberate, regular to erratic, randomly placed. Indicate any reoccurring placement. (i.e. at end of sentence, second word of sentence.)

Tone - Subjective interpretation of subtext. (i.e. sarcastic, negative, positive, patronizing, sympathetic.) Include any qualifiers or conversation regulators that lead to interpretation.

Intensity - Low to high. Controlled, uncontrolled. Relate to volume, emphasis, tone, conversation regulators.

Filled Pauses:

Indicate frequency. Cite examples. (i.e., "ah," "uh," "um," "uh-uh.")

Silent Pauses:

Even to erratic. Frequent, infrequent.

Silence:

Frequency and indication of usage.

Vocal Characteristics:

Indicate frequency. Cite examples. (i.e., laughing, crying, coughing, moaning, groaning, sighing, yawning, sucking, spitting, sneezing, clearing of throat, sniffing, swallowing, snoring, belches.)

(1) Same actor, different text, same traits. Within this category the evaluator analyzes one consistent character trait performed by a particular actor in different scripts. This can be an emotion, attitude, or a similar character type played by the same actor. As an example of similar character types, Alan Rickman presents an accessible study of two different formidably evil characters in Die Hard and Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves. Rickman portrays Hans Gruber (the professional thief, posing as a terrorist, in Die Hard) with a calculating controlled manner allowing a subtle, conversational speech to mask his range of inner intensities. The Sheriff of Nottingham, on the other hand, though equally self-assured is seen as a crazed tyrant, with Rickman indulging in pitch, tempo, volume and rhythm variations. Figures 4 and 5 exemplify a more detailed notation in comparing these two roles. Included is Rickman's general vocal style in portraying each character, along with an analysis of that character's manifestation of anxiety. This provides an indication of range within each of Rickman's performances.

(2) Same actor, different text, different traits. This is an effective method in evaluating the range and versatility of a particular actor. Approaches to differing character types can be dissected, providing a useful tool in following a career of an actor such as Dustin Hoffman. Types from Hoffman include an innocent college graduate in The Graduate, the dirty street bum Ratso Rizzo from Midnight Cowboy, a workaholic businessman in Kramer vs. Kramer, an actor playing a female TV soap star in Tootsie, and an autistic savant in Rainman. In order to create these and many other characters, Hoffman creatively experiments with rhythm, tempo, pitch, pauses, and

the various other available vocal choices.

(3) Same actor, same text, same traits. An actor often repeats a specific emotion or attitude within a single script. Analysis will determine the range of one character's expression of the specified trait. Examples include Meryl Streep's reoccurring anguish in Sophie's Choice and Daniel Day-Lewis' repeated frustration in My Left Foot.

(4) Same actor, same text, different traits. Occasionally an actor goes through significant character transformations within a single script. This is often associated with a dramatic shift in brain functioning. Examples include Harrison Ford's portrayal of a gunshot victim in Regarding Henry who must relearn all the physical and vocal abilities he lost. Similarly, Robert DeNiro's catatonic mental ward patient in Awakenings slowly and briefly gains normal communication functioning through a drug testing experiment. Sally Field's title role portrayal in Sybil offers an extensive study in the playing of a multi-personality girl who experiences extreme and frequent shifts in character type. Other notable transformations can be found in Isabelle Adjani's title role portrayal in Camille Claudel, a woman completely overwhelmed by the lack of recognition as an artist, and Anne Parillaud in La Femme Nikita, drastically changed from a crazed drug addict to a sophisticated government agent. While these are extreme examples, transformations can occur with greater subtlety as well. Analysis clarifies the actor's range of approaches to a variety of observed traits.

Figure 4

Sample Observation Chart: Alan Rickman in Die Hard

Actor: Alan Rickman Character: Hans Gruber Text: <u>Die Hard</u> (script in its entirety)		CHARACTER TRAITS:						
		Personality Type/Characteristics		Emotions/Attitudes				
		evil/merciless	Gender: male	anxiety				
		authoritative	Age: late 30's to early 40's					
			Body Type: thin					
			Occupation: thief					
			Region/Culture: German					
			SES: upper-mid class					
EXTRAVERBAL SIGNIFIERS	VOCAL QUALIFIERS	Pitch - level	low level, slight variations, end sentences on very low pitch		raised, slight variations			
		- inflection	infrequent inflection		infrequent			
		Volume	low level(quiet)		slightly louder			
		Tempo	slow		slightly faster			
		Articulation	clear, distinct - sharp consonants(i.e., sl <u>t</u> d <u>own</u>)		same			
		Rhythm	even, deliberate, controlled		same			
		Tonal "texture"	resonant, relaxed		throaty			
	VOCAL MODIFIERS	STYLE Pronunciation	standard, educated-sometimes over enunciated (i.e., <u>dir</u> /ect and rat/ <u>tle</u>)		same			
		Accent/Dialect	slight German accent combined with British					
		NONFLUENCIES Sentence change	none		none			
		Stutters						
		Repetition						
		False starts						
		Buffers						
		SHADING Emphasis	deliberate, regular		weight on last few words of sentence			
		Tone	use of sarcasm and finality (no upward inflection) to indicate superiority		finality only			
		Intensity	frequently low, higher intensities masked by nonchalant delivery		slightly higher through increased volume and emphasis of words			
		VERBAL SIGNIFIERS	VOCAL ISOLATORS	FILLED PAUSES	none		none	
				SILENT PAUSES	infrequent (speech is fluid)		infrequent	
				SILENCE	used as a refusal to speak indicating superiority		none(no loss for words)	
VOCAL CHARACTERISTICS	Laughing, Crying, Sighing, Clearing of Throat, Sniffing, etc...		infrequent subtle laugh		none			

Figure 5

Sample Observation Chart: Alan Rickman in Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves

Actor: Alan Rickman		CHARACTER TRAITS:				
Character: Sheriff of Nottingham		Personality Type/Characteristics		Emotions/Attitudes		
		Gender: male		anxiety		
		Age: late 30's to early 40's				
		Body Type: thin, athletic				
		Occupation: Sheriff				
		Region/Culture: British				
Text: Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves		SES: mid to upper middle				
EXTRAVERBAL SIGNIFIERS	VOCAL QUALIFIERS	Pitch - level	wide variations		less variation	
		- inflection	several high to low(i.e., coud/in)indicating patronizing manner/several low to high at end of sentences-indicating vulnerability.		same	
		Volume	soft to frequent loudness		loud	
		Tempo	usually fast		fast	
		Articulation	clear and distinct to often unclear and lazy formation of consonants(i.e., "jus' a minute"-soft 't')		slurred, unclear, draws out words adding syllables(i.e., "close the gate!" sounds like "kiilosse the gaajit!")	
		Rhythm	erratic often rushes beginnings to a slow deliberate finish		more erratic (i.e., "for once in my life I-will-have something pure will-you-stop interfering!"	
	VOCAL MODIFIERS	Tonal "texture"	often throaty, some resonance		throaty, tense (barely able to squeeze out sound)	
		STYLE Pronunciation	lower educated - through less distinct articulation and slurring together of words		same	
		Accent/Dialect	British		same	
		NONFLUENCIES Sentence change	none		none	
		Stutters				
		Repetition				
		False starts				
		Buffers				
		SHADING Emphasis	erratic, randomly placed		more erratic , increase in emphasis within word	
		Tone	often negative - high to low inflection used in condescension		same	
		Intensity	high - through frequent emphasis of words and frequent loudness		uncontrollable	
		VOCAL CHARACTERISTICS/ISOLATORS	FILLED PAUSES	none		none
SILENT PAUSES	erratic		erratic			
SILENCE	infrequent		when lost for words			
Laughing, Crying, Sighing, Clearing of Throat, Sniffing, etc...	infrequent groans		several groans, grunts, and screams			

Another aspect within this category occurs most often in a rehearsal or classroom situation in which there is a conscious manipulation of character traits within a text. An actor can completely change a character type, for example, from a garbage man to a company executive using the same script. Emotions and attitudes can be interchanged as well, regardless of text indications. As an example, an actress experimenting with the role of Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire might approach the "confrontation" scene with Stanley with an attitude of disgust one time, and then an attitude of affection and attraction. The evaluator observes the variance in vocal changes as a product of different approaches to the same scene.

(5) Different actors, same text, same traits. This category analyzes the techniques of different actors in approaching the same role. An example of this was cited earlier in comparing the performances of Rod Steiger and Ernest Borgnine in the title role of Marty. Lee J. Cobb and Dustin Hoffman provide another appropriate comparison in their respective playing of Willy Loman in Miller's Death of a Salesman. Vineberg conceptually observes some pertinent vocal cues in each:

[Cobb is] conscious of his voice - a rich, stage-trained voice with its aristocratic Yankee accent that attains moments of Shakespearian grandeur on lines like his bewildered plea, "Why is he stealing? What did I tell him? I never in my life told him anything but decent things."...Hoffman, on the other hand,...has a craggy, raw voice; as usual, Hoffman makes no attempt to hide his nasal quality, and here he accentuates his New York accent as if he were playing vaudeville.¹²⁹

Creating individual charts for these actors provides a more thorough

¹²⁹ Vineberg, 296.

analysis of vocal uses within specifically selected line deliveries, clearly evincing varying possibilities.

(6) Different actors, different text, same traits. This category focuses on a consistent character trait played by varying actors--either in different selections within the same script, or performing different scripts. A similar character personality type can be perpetuated in varying texts, as seen with the dashing, daring and romantic James Bond character played by the likes of Sean Connery, Roger Moore, and Timothy Dalton. The evaluator can observe and notate similar and varying voice qualities and other vocal cues used in each actor's approach to the role. An emotion can also be analyzed from varying sources. Fear is a frequently observable trait for example, comparing the handling of a moment for Sigourney Weaver in Alien and a similar moment for Geena Davis in The Fly.

Also valuable in this category is the analysis of similar traits played by actors from contrasting cultures, genders, age groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Differing approaches to portraying a single trait such as hostility can be found in Spike Lee's film Do The Right Thing, replete with a variety of cultural perspectives and individual idiosyncrasies. Christopher Walken and Louis Gossett Jr. provide examples of actors from different cultures playing similarly authoritative drill sergeants in their films Biloxi Blues and An Officer and a Gentleman, respectively. The previously mentioned women's portrayal of fear can be compared to a man's, for instance, in observing James Caan in Misery or Michael Douglas in Fatal Attraction. Again, comparisons can identify similarities as well as differences.

(7) Same actor, same text, different performances. Live performance offers the additional opportunity to observe a particular actor in the same role at different times. This is a useful tool in determining an actor's level of spontaneity and choice flexibility. In live Performance Analysis it is imperative to be prepared for specific textual isolations since "rewind" is not an option.

Self Observation and Awareness

The next step in the Performance Analysis system is the process of internalization, or an awareness of one's own performance. Self observation occurs through either external or internal means.

External observations of the self can be accomplished through the use of documented performance (video, film, or audio recordings), or through critiques from others. Though subjective, critiques provide indications in content and breadth of successful communication. In class, evaluations should focus on what is communicated rather than value judgments. This removes pressure from making "right" choices in favor of encouraging varying choices.

Internal awareness is achieved through the sensitization of self to a range of capabilities without the aid of external sources. The student's work makes a transition from observation to application, entailing individual experimentation with observed information. The following outlines a range of application techniques.

Application of Observations

Through a form of mimicry (conscious or subconscious) the actor ex-

pands his or her awareness of vocal possibilities in expressing a character and concomitant text. Experimentation can be effectively applied in the classroom where students are encouraged to utilize this expanded range of vocal cue choices in a more risk-free environment. Vocal cues can vary through intentional and unintentional manipulation in exercises that incorporate differing combinations of character traits and text. The possibilities of experimentation are limitless and the instructors are likewise encouraged to use their own creativity in exploring a variety of exercises and applications. The following presents several tested combinations and suggested inclusive exercises which focus on vocal cues as a product:

Different text, different traits.

1) The creation of a variety of character personality traits can be inspired from an assortment of costumes, accessories and props. The student chooses particular accoutrements and improvises a monologue or responds to audience questions in character. The audience/class subsequently identifies personality traits and the indicative vocal cues involved in such a determination. Similarly, the student can attempt to communicate personality, emotions, and attitudes by drawing from slips of paper containing specified traits.

2) A familiar song can be an effective vehicle for communicating emotions. Regardless of singing ability and performance quality, the student connects the song to a strong emotion and sings for the class with minimal body movement. The class then interprets the emotions felt by the singer.

3) Isolating commonly used vocal sounds can be done through the suggestion of various scenarios. A nonverbal sound is requested in response to

such phrases as: "You just stubbed your toe," "Your car just ran over a squirrel," "You're watching the sunrise," and so on.

4) Identifying subtext through the use of tone, inflection, and emphasis can be accomplished by speaking in gibberish for any given text.

Different text, same traits.

1) The instructor or a student describes an improvisation which utilizes a particular character trait. Students in turn perform (through improvisation) the same trait in different ways - incorporating different vocal cues. Also, useful is an attempt to "copy" each other with intentional switches between genders and cultures.

2) "The Adverb Game" is an effective way to explore different approaches to a particular attitude. One student is asked to leave the room while the others choose an adverb, such as "seriously," "dramatically," or "seductively." The student reenters and sets up improvisations between the other students who, in turn, act out the situation in the manner of the chosen adverb. Different situations are set up until the student guesses the adverb.

3) Another exercise uses two actors in an improvisation with a wall or barrier between them. In turn each actor attempts to duplicate, vocally and bodily, a single character trait. The audience determines the similarity in physical manifestations.

Same text, same traits.

1) The student begins by performing a monologue or scene with another student. Subsequently, students view others performing the same text - either documented performances or within the class. Specific vocal variations

are noted and the text is performed again with desired adjustments.

Same text, different traits.

1) The students attempt to infuse different traits into a specific text, regardless of whether they seem to coincide with the obvious intention. For example, when performing a seemingly sad monologue the student tries it hysterically happy.

2) Experimentation with subtext and word emphasis can be developed using slips of paper containing single phrases such as: "I think you're great," "Are you going to the party?," and "Take your time." Two students draw one slip between them. The first student adopts a character and subtext and speaks the phrase, with the other responding and beginning a short improvisation between the two. This sequence is repeated with each actor taking turns beginning the improvisations, incorporating a different character and subtext.

Different vocal cues.

Class exercises can also explore a more external approach to discovering character traits, through a focus on the conscious manipulation of vocal cues.

1) Slips of paper can contain suggestions of individual or combined vocal cues to be used such as "loud," "slow," "frequent stuttering," "frequent low to high inflections," in an improvisational situation, or imposed on a specific script. The class then evaluates the achieved character communication.

2) Another approach asks the actor to remain as monotone as possible when delivering a text, then slowly add vocal dynamics only as absolutely

necessary. Vocal cue usage becomes immediately apparent through these exercises.

Experimentation with Performance Analysis

As an instructor of college level acting students, I performed a considerable amount of preliminary experimentation. Although one full quarter's class was documented on video, the overall results are less scientific than would be required for a thorough evaluation. To speak generally then, the results have been consistently positive, providing a potent stimulus in pursuing a Performance Analysis system.

One use of a vocal cue-infusing exercise took place during a student's monologue work of the "gentleman caller" from The Glass Menagerie. Having limited stage experience and a multitude of nervous habits, the actor first played the role meekly, with a low, monotonous pitch, slow, consistent rhythm, and little other dynamic variety. There were many nonfluencies (stutters and repetition) and mispronunciations. When asked about his choice in using a slow pace the actor commented on purposely trying to portray confidence through the vocal cue. After mixed confirmations from the rest of the class, the actor was asked to merely try a faster pace. He immediately went into a speedy recitation and was stopped to be reminded of his character and situation. The actor eventually became accustomed to the faster pace and additionally began developing enormous pitch range, volume variety, and several levels of intensity. To respond conceptually, the performance was far more captivating, exciting and lifelike. When asked about this performance, the actor commented on an increase in energy and inner confidence.

The class unanimously agreed on his effectiveness and appropriate increase in visible confidence in relation to his pace, pointing as well to the mitigation of nervous habits.

An extremely enlightening exercise within this same class was the showing of documented performances in conjunction to their own performances of previously assigned monologues and scenes. For instance, one student began by performing his version of Puck's closing monologue from Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. Video taped versions of the same monologue were shown including the BBC's, Joseph Papp's and one from a recent production on campus. The three versions covered character types from evil to silly to mischievous. The actor's first attempt was sufficiently full of vocal variety but appeared to lack any connection with meaning - merely a random selection of pitch, volume and vocal characterizers (laughing, sighing). After exposure to the variety in content communication the actor realized a myriad of choices with which to experiment. The actor admitted to a new understanding of the text which he did not find readily apparent from the printed words themselves. Through an awareness of possibilities each subsequent performance of his Puck varied in vocal experimentation, yet all were infused with a clear, strong intention now realized by the actor and supported by corresponding evaluations from the class.

This assimilation of the actor's inner thoughts and creativity as required by a realistic acting style is a consistent element in an ostensibly technical, external process. The actor's expanded awareness of available communication choices allow for the development of physical as well as psychological

and emotional expression. Performance Analysis offers a cognitive systematic approach to a technique used by highly competitive actors and other artists throughout history. Albright and Albright in Acting: The Creative Process summarize this assertion:

There is a difference between copying and being influenced by those who preceded them. It is said that Beethoven was influenced by Mozart and Haydn. Modern artists Modigliani and Picasso freely admitted their rediscovery of the beauty of African primitive art influenced much of their own creative thinking. The point is that before you allow yourself to be influenced, you must be capable of good judgment and the ability to evaluate. You must be able to recognize the basic elements of the creative art and to understand how those elements have been used. Your critical judgment, which is a product of your own individuality, will increase as you use it. Eventually, you will be able to allow the beauty of a great actor's work to sift through yourself, emerging at last as your own creation.¹³⁰

Experimentation in Performance Analysis removes the fear of merely copying another actor's performance in offering a technique that systemizes the process of observation. There is much to be gleaned by the talents as well as the failings of other actors within the performance process. Other actor's performances can inspire the students to transcend their own existing inner resources and physical habits to create a wealth of interesting, dynamic and unpredictable characterizations.

¹³⁰ Hardie Albright, and Arnita Albright, Acting: The Creative Process 3rd ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1980), 110.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

In the actor training process, Performance Analysis is considered an adjunct tool. "What works for some may not work for others" is a cliché that should be remembered when giving instruction in any existing acting method. Centuries of trial and error within the actor's training process provide a model of experience from which Performance Analysis is born. Early history shows a significant focus on externally generated acting and the declamatory style. A slow evolution to naturalism peaked with the institution of Stanislavski's teachings. This internally focused quest for truth in acting has brought about a current fervor in psychotherapeutic adjuncts to the training process. Performance Analysis offers an objective perspective to acting training which ultimately allows a communing of objective and subjective approaches.

Thus far a practicable theory has been proposed. Its uniqueness arises in its systematic approach to analyzing performance. Through the acknowledgement of communication in the acting process, a system of trainable and observable signifiers is established. Observation techniques are also systemized avoiding the reliance on a vague sense of "osmosis" in order to learn from other actors. The process of observation and decoding allows the student an expanded awareness of communication signifiers which are then assimilated through a process of exercises and experimentation. Initial experimentation has indicated success in the expanded "choice" awareness of the

students.

In order to determine the efficacy of the Performance Analysis system, an in-depth documented study should be put into place. This may consist of video taping classes and student's performances along with categorizing specific norms and expanded utilizations of signifying practices. A questionnaire or evaluation sheet provides useful information from actors as well as audience members. This questions the actor's intended communication and how it was attempted, and subsequently discovers the audience's interpretation of achieved communication.

An actor may have two reasons for incorporating this system into his or her training process. First, it expands the creative awareness in discovering what capabilities lie beyond a readily obvious individual realm. The second addresses the issue of individual curiosity. From a subjective list of favorite actors the student/actor can more thoroughly analyze the performances of these "master craftsmen," perhaps discovering an indication of what makes them so appealing. For a contrasting perspective, subjectively determined "bad" actors should be analyzed as well.

The difficulty in evaluating performance arises in attempting to separate vocal and body communication signifiers. The subtle lift of an eyebrow can completely refute a seemingly clear vocal message. Ultimately actor communication should be decoded using all available physical manifestations. The nonverbal adjunct is systemized in Merridee McNelly's M.A. Thesis, and is intended for use in conjunction with the vocal communication system. In practice, however, the power of each vehicle becomes greatly apparent when

viewed in isolation.

This work represents the beginning of a system that can benefit from further exploration. The key is the testing and development of communication signifiers in determining their observability and trainability. The more educators who can substantiate positive progress in class situations through the use of Performance Analysis, the more valid the system becomes. As learned from the past, the path to the future relies on experimentation.

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