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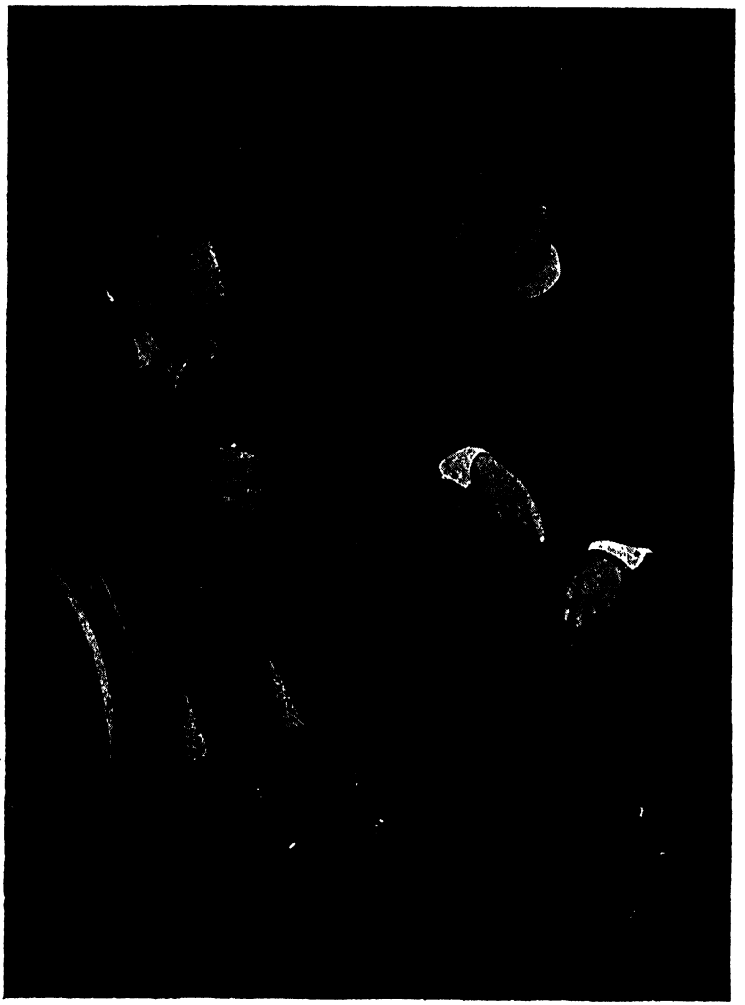
REHEARSAL

The Principles and Practice
of
Acting for the Stage



First Legion, by Emmett Lavery.

REHEARSAL

The Principles and Practice of Acting for the Stage

REVISED EDITION

By

MIRIAM A. FRANKLIN

Director of Division of Speech
Grove City College

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK

PRENTICE-HALL, INC.

PRENTICE-HALL DRAMA SERIES

EDWARD C. MABIE, Editor

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To

MY MOTHER AND FATHER

Who Have Encouraged My Love
for the Theater

PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION

Now that the time has come for Act Two, a revised *Rehearsal,* I have reset the stage, deepened the perspective, and brought on new characters. The flavor in this act can be credited largely to this last—the change in personnel.

Before the curtain goes up I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to the many helpful publishers and authors, passages from whose plays make up a large portion of both the first and second *Rehearsals.* These men and women have been notably gracious. They have granted permission to quote from their valuable literary pieces. Without the exercise material, this method of teaching dramatics could not have been offered.

The occasion for this revision is not due to any changes in underlying principles of acting or in its styles. A revision has been desirable, however, for three reasons. Numerous teachers and directors use *Rehearsal;* some of them have generously offered suggestions and criticisms. One of the needs expressed is for more exercises with few characters. To meet this need I now include many excerpts in which only two or three characters take part. Since some principles cannot be illustrated with only two or three or four, I continue to include certain scenes in which several characters appear.

Other users of *Rehearsal* have offered worthy suggestions about background material. College people need it, they say. Students should know about the people of the stage, those who have painstakingly developed the theater heritage we enjoy. To some extent I have provided this material.

The third suggestion came from several who wish more material for girls. They say, "Give the girls a chance. We have girls, five to one man, tingling for the glamour of theater. They

must have training." I sympathize. Why must the proportion be as it is? To fulfill this request I now include a larger number of parts for women characters. However, I have not included feminine roles five to one. I feel that girls' voices need to be developed. They are too thin. Most of them need to become bigger, fuller, deeper, richer. Since range for speech is developed just as it is for singing, by exercising the voice on various pitches, I believe that most girls should work on men's roles to develop their low vocal tones. And too, since men's parts predominate in forty plays out of fifty, we women must accept the situation with grace. That's the plight that greets us at the stage door.

This advantage given the men is, after all, our own fault. Women are the theater fans; we swarm there in order to thrill or sigh or ache as we watch the male of the species perform. Men authors write plays filled with men's roles to be enacted before women audiences simply because these women audiences demand that the men authors write plays full of men's roles.

The stage is set. As the curtain goes up you will see a changed scene and a more expansive background. The principles of acting remain unchanged. But supporting these principles will be new characters among the old, arranged into new groupings. The angles of the spots again focus on the old, old principles of the old, old story—theater.

Places! Lights! Emotions!
Curtain!

M. A. F.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THIS volume is intended for the person who likes to act but who has had no opportunity to improve his latent talents systematically, and for those who refuse to sit back and enjoy plays only as members of an audience.

Rehearsal has been prepared neither for him who finds the work of the theater laborious and dull nor for him who thinks only of the opportunity for livelihood that such training presents; but rather for the individual who finds real satisfaction and pleasure in acting.

Can acting be taught? Is it possible for one to become able to act by mastering merely a technique that may be used in rendition of the lines of a play? Or do one's native ability and talent give him the only adequate means for interpreting the thought of the playwright?

In many instances prominence on the stage has been achieved through native ability, dogged determination, and hard work. A far larger number of actors have fallen by the wayside, discouraged and disheartened, left with nothing more than blasted hopes and ambitions. What, therefore, is the answer?

Undeniably, the ability to act cannot be *taught.* However, native talent that has remained dormant, untrained, and undeveloped can be cultivated and improved through practice, guidance, and training. To supply such opportunity for training is the purpose of this book.

David Belasco said, "Everyone feels competent to act without training, yet acting is the most exact and exacting of the arts." It is true that many people enjoy acting, and, with the growth of the Little Theater, a new field has been opened up to indi-

viduals who heretofore had no opportunity to satisfy their desire to act.

Any number of books have been written concerning the theory of acting on the stage. But theory alone is inadequate and does not enable the chemist to perform valuable experiments; neither does it enable the singer to sing a song, an artist to paint a picture, or a man to drive a car. All these must have theory, but they must also have practice. The actor is no exception.

This volume contains principles, but no rules. All the fine arts are built upon principles, but not upon rules. All of the principles of acting must be studied and then be suited to the situation, mood, character, and atmosphere of the play. They must at times be disregarded entirely when other means give the desired effect. "The play's the thing," first, last, and always.

Styles of acting have changed, are changing, and will continue to change. One who is trained can readily adjust himself to the changes as they occur.

The exercises and the text are offered to provide more pleasure, more joy for this life of ours, and it is hoped that this aim will be realized by enabling the students to derive pleasure from the exercises, the practice, the drill, and the toil, in improving their ability.

M. A. F.

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Book I

THE PLAYER ACQUIRES HABITS

1

ABBREVIATED BACKGROUNDS

LYCON HELD the donkey by its halter as Penelope mounted. It tried to make the mounting difficult; it moved forward and back, forward and back, then from one side to the other and back again. When Penelope was satisfactorily located, Lycon stepped over to his own droopy ass and was astride him before the animal was awake. Because dusk of evening was already falling it was necessary that they make haste to be on their way. To reach Athens, a distance of more than two hundred stades, by daybreak would keep them hurrying. At the city's gate Lycon and Penelope were joined by others; many other villagers were also going to Athens to celebrate the wine festival to their great god of the vine, Dionysus.

All night long as they trudged, the twinkling blanket of summer stars guided them along the rough paths. The party stayed close together; it was safer that way. Occasionally the riders would exchange places with those on foot; they could rest while riding, even though they must continually probe and urge the donkeys forward to keep them in pace with the eager walkers. To attend the celebrated drama festival to Dionysus was a memorable privilege; they were eager to arrive.

As the first streaks of day glowed in the east the travelers saw ahead of them the outlines of the great amphitheater set against the hillside. Tiers of stone seats, on the bare sides of the bowl-shaped hill, sloped out and up from three sides of the circular stage. It loomed in the early dawn like a great grooved cone. The thousands, arriving and finding places, made the amphitheater take on a quavering appearance in the soft gray light. Everybody must be in place and ready; the acting would begin at the break of day and it would continue until dusk. The multitudes were eager to be ready when the actors first stole out from either side of the flat, stone stage.

Since Lycon, Penelope, and their friends must take seats sixty-five tiers up and back from the terracelike stage, they knew they might not be able to hear all of the stories. Nevertheless they were content. They could hear the rhythm of the poetry and most of the lines; Greek actors trained their voices for power. Voices would be sonorous and speech beautifully modulated. Lycon and Penelope could understand the well-known myths through merely the melody of the speech, the wails of the tragedian, or the chants of the chorus. Then too, they were sure to be moved by the broad sweeping gestures and would enjoy seeing the bright colors of the actors' flowing draperies. Even those seated in the last rows could not help being thrilled by the chants, songs, and dances of the chorus.

The mask worn by each actor set his mood for him. It provided for the tragic actor a wide mouth drawn down at the corners to help him more fully to represent the tragic figure he was portraying. The comic mime wore a broad smile painted on his mask, to show his continued pleasure. Each mask contained a large opening for the actor's mouth and lips; his words dare not become muffled.

Such was the setting, and such were the spectators' feelings toward the first enacted drama. These rituals belonged to the people—to everybody. They were their own national worship festivals, supported by the state.

Although many of the dramas were written by Sophocles or Euripides, nevertheless a large proportion of the verses spoken were improvised by the one, two, or three actors as they played.

In the earliest years festivals had been less dramatic. There had been no speaking parts. All were chants and dances of worship about the altar of Dionysus in which everybody took part. However, Thespis, who lived about 700 B.C. conceived the idea of acting out the myths and stories of the gods. He provided a single actor to fill with speech and mimicry the intervals between choral odes and dancing. During Thespis' day there was only one actor, but Aeschylus raised the number to two in his plays and Sophocles brought it up to three. Only tragedy was known until about the sixth century B.C.; then the frolic and gaiety accompanying the open-air festival in midyear developed into comedy. Aristophanes was the first great comedy writer.

The tragedian's methods were formal and severe but the comedian's part was boisterous, made up of horseplay and song and dance that included much vulgarity. The chorus, which always played an important part in Greek drama, sang the dithyramb, danced until exhausted, then rested during the spoken verses.

Rome followed Greece in its general theater plan, both ancient countries enjoying this diversion for several centuries. However, the Romans did not develop a theater of lasting qualities, although theirs far excelled the others in pantomime. One actor after another would take each role in succession, dancing and mimicking the entire day.

Centuries came and went. Life in the theater changed. Acting was subdued in form, even forbidden. But throughout those ancient days the theater instinct was not destroyed. After the days of Christ the theater was still in vogue in and about Rome. Then, when women began to take part in plays, standards were lowered, acting became vulgar and obscene, and the Christian church objected. As the church rose in power, the pagan theater disappeared and the professional actor passed into disrepute. Many

centuries went by before he again gained a respected place in society.

The Chinese have always taken a lively interest in the spectacle. They love music and drama. In about the eighth century the Chinese established groups of organized players. The Emperor called the comedians in his private playing group "Students of the Pear Tree Garden."

During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Chinese arts flourished and drama took on particular characteristics which have lingered through the centuries. Many and longer plays were given; music was played throughout most of the dialogue; the hero was always triumphant and the villain always punished; and a property man remained on the stage throughout the play to make changes in the settings.

Chinese theater held certain conventions of the stage. Costumes, properties, make-up, and gestures were only symbolic. All was utterly unrealistic, resembling a ritual. A screen, some stools, a bamboo pole, and some strips of cloth could be made to represent anything. The property man sat on the stage in sight of the audience and put into place something to represent whatever property was called for—a mountain, a door, or a river.

The Japanese theater, even though it was an off-shoot of the Chinese theater, had two distinguishing characteristics. The *No-plays—Nō* meaning drama—came into existence in the fourteenth century. The themes of these were taken from religious literature but were worked out and presented with aesthetic excellence. Some of the words were chanted by a chorus and some were recited by dancers. The *nō-gaku,* or Japanese drama, used very few actors—only three or four, and all of them men. All women's roles were played by men wearing masks. These plays were very short, usually five or six being presented on a single occasion. They were serious in nature and utterly fanciful.

The *Kabuki,* a more elaborate Japanese play, was built from diversified themes and played upon stages which projected out into the midst of the auditorium among the spectators. A prop-

erty man, robed in black to make him invisible, helped the play progress by placing all articles needed. The earlier Kabukis began at daybreak and lasted until sunset.

Although the Christian church could not accept degrading forms of drama, nevertheless, time and again, it embraced the theater as a teaching device and as wholesome entertainment. But when acting became corrupt, the Christian church frowned upon it. Through the church, the *miracle* plays, dating back to the thirteenth century, arose. These were dramatic adaptations of the lives of saints.

After the institution of the festival of Corpus Christi the miracles were given by the town craftsmen, each scene being presented by a particular guild, or trade union as we think of it today. Cooks would depict the scene of the Last Supper; shipwrights would give Noah and the Ark; goldsmiths would enact the wise men presenting their gifts; and bakers would act the feeding of the five thousand.

Miracle plays were at first stationary. The craftsmen prepared and gave their plays only in their home towns. Later, however, about the fourteenth century, certain groups took their plays from village to village in professional cycles. These religious plays were in vogue for about two hundred years. Gradually they deviated from their original purpose and secular material to amuse the people was inserted with the Biblical. Miracle plays were instituted by the church and later were banished by the church. They fell into decay because they became coarse and sacrilegious. Four of the miracle cycles are still in existence in England: York has forty-eight plays, Towneley has thirty-two, Chester has twenty-five, and Coventry has forty-two. All of these date back to the fourteenth century.

Another class of religious play, the *mysteries,* came into being about the same time. However, these were so nearly like the miracle plays that it is not necessary for our purpose to separate them.

When allegory crept into the miracle play, a third class of

religious play called *moralities* sprang up. In these, virtues and vices were personified. They continued in fashion until the time of Elizabeth. *Everyman,* a good example of a morality play, is often enacted by college and Little Theater groups in modern times.

Around 1500 A.D. the *commedia dell'arte* made its appearance. It originated in Italy, then spread to France, Spain, and England. It flourished for two hundred years. Even today, centuries after this type of entertainment vanished, its tradition lasts. The stock characters created by it, *Harlequin, Pierrot, Columbine, Pulcinella,* and others still play a definite part in our theater life.

The *commedia dell'arte* centered about a company of comedians. Each wore his distinctive mask, spoke with a particular accent or dialect, and moved in a characteristic manner. The plan was peculiar in that the actors were given only a scenario of action which someone had scribbled out on his knee on the morning of the performance. The players improvised their own dialogue, on the spot, just as inspiration struck them. Each, in addition to having a nimble imagination, had a liberal supply of jokes, riddles, charades, songs, cocksure stories, and clever repartee. He used them when and as he willed. Every actor planned his share of the dialogue. The actors did not await turns; all might exercise their quips and tricks at once.

However, dialogue was not all-important in *commedia dell'arte;* pantomime was brilliant, dancing was robust, and acrobatics were exciting. Sometimes whole scenes were given with no words at all. The performances were lusty, coarse, spirited, and theatrical. They were performed on wagon stages drawn by horses. The stage was halted in an open street or court, a painted backdrop was hung on one or two sides, and the show began. *Commedia dell'arte,* although cheap and tawdry, was a type of theater exceedingly popular throughout Europe for two centuries.

In France the theater came into its own with Moliere. His brilliant wit brought life into the art. Actors began to be trained

in naturalness and became skillful in depicting daily life with truth and sincerity.

Not until Shakespeare awakened his countrymen did the theater in England become outstanding. Shakespeare's genius produced plays to satisfy all. He wrote of the life about him, creating plays that depicted all classes. He wrote, also, historic plays to satisfy the English craving for things historic. He portrayed with great dexterity both the ruling and the serving classes. Genuine feeling, in his writings, took the place of the old exaggeration and bombast.

In addition to inn yards—the most customary place for public assembly—every conceivable playing space was utilized. Woods became stages, courtyards were often packed with spectators, streets held improvised stages, and theaters came into great demand. Every Englishman began to see, hear, and enjoy theatrical performances. Such performances became the chief interest of both courtier and serf. A number of public playhouses were built, among them the Globe, where Shakespeare's plays were often presented. These theaters were open to the sky and all plays were given in broad daylight, torches being carried by the actors when they wished to convey the idea that it was night.

The standard of acting was high in Elizabethan times and warranted the support given it by all of the people. It was a difficult task to keep the grade of the acting high in those days of uncurbed rowdyism when drunks interrupted the plays at will. Only men actors carried roles, all women's parts being taken by men, who enacted them in a realistic and professional manner. The manner of speaking lines also was superior—Elizabethans knew how to render poetry. Since costuming and staging were of little importance, the actors had to depend upon the spoken word to secure effects. Particular names of Elizabethan actors are almost unknown to us today because they were not heralded as individuals but only as members of groups of players.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries constituted a period of great actors. Personalities of the stage during those two hundred

years loom high in world history. Every country had become theater-conscious and all were erecting buildings in which to house the spectators who thrilled to the excellent work of these great actors.

This resumé of the backgrounds of acting is too brief to take up the work and accomplishment of individual actors—even the greatest of them. However, to provide a basis for further study the accompanying chart will be found helpful.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, improvements in theater buildings definitely affected and fostered excellence of individual acting. The apron of the stage was steadily decreased until acting eventually appeared only back of the proscenium arch—behind the picture frame. Roofs were placed over theaters, thus making them more usable in all weather but also making lighting a necessity. Seats were made more comfortable, and at the same time, strangely enough, length of performance was reduced. Plays began to be performed at night instead of in the daytime, and stage setting became more realistic. After 1800 gas light was used, kerosene lamps or candles providing the light where gas was not available. About 1860 limelight made possible brilliant spot lighting, and a method of color lighting was improvised. Photography was invented in 1840. After that, acting became more realistic. Ibsen furthered realism through his writing. He wrote about real, everyday people troubled by real, everyday problems. His plays, more than those of any other dramatist, have influenced our modern conception of acting and the theater. The feeling for realism came into the air. It penetrated into every crevice of modern world drama. America felt the influence as strongly as did Europe.

The American theater had come into existence as early as 1700. After the Revolutionary War, the theater soon regained its equilibrium and by 1800 many of the large eastern cities had their established theaters. The institution had not been welcomed with open arms by the Puritans, for much had been introduced into playing of which the Christian church disapproved. In many

SOME OUTSTANDING ACTORS

Actor	*Country*	*Roles and Plays*	*Personal*
Thomas Betterton 1635-1710	England	Hamlet. King Lear.	Foremost actor of his day. Manager of his theater. Made many improvements in stage settings after studying French theatrical styles.
David Garrick 1717-1779	England	King Lear. Hamlet.	Foremost actor of his century. Began the school of realism in acting. Introduced new scenic and lighting effects.
Mrs. Siddons (Sarah Kemble) 1755-1831	England	Lady Macbeth (with her brother John as Macbeth).	Eldest of the twelve Kembles. David Garrick discovered her. She played with great fervor.
Edmund Kean 1787-1833	England	Richard III.	Accepted as the greatest of romantic actors. Finished career in America. Died on the stage.
William Charles Macready 1793-1873	England	Famous English tragedian.	Came to act in America. Left America because of an injustice done him by Edwin Forrest.
Tyrone Power 1798-1841	Ireland	Delineator of Irish character parts.	Grandfather of the American screen actor, Tyrone Power.
Charles Matthew 1803-1878	England	Played "himself" in 200 roles.	Devoted himself to light comedy.
Edwin Forrest 1806-1872	America	Othello.	First to encourage and develop native American drama. Played every American city.
Fanny Kemble 1809-1893	England	Juliet. Mrs. Beverly in *The Gambler.*	Eldest daughter of Charles Kemble. Author of plays, poems, reminiscences.
Charles Kean 1811-1868	England	Shakespearean roles.	Son of the famous Edmund Kean.
CharlotteCushman 1816-1876	America	Meg Merrilies in *Guy Mannering.*	First great tragedienne of the American stage.
Mrs. John Drew (Laura Lane) 1820-1897	America	Mrs. Malaprop. Lady Teazle.	Noted character actress. Mother of John and Sidney Drew and Georgiana Drew Barrymore; grandmother of Ethel, John, and Lionel Barrymore.

SOME OUTSTANDING ACTORS—*Continued*

Actor	*Country*	*Roles and Plays*	*Personal*
Rachel (stage name of Elisa Félix) 1821-1858	France	Phèdre. Great tragic actress.	Daughter of a Jewish peddler. As a child sang in the streets of Paris. Considered one of the greatest of French actresses.
Mrs. George Henry Gilbert 1822-1904	America	Actress and dancer. Aristocratic dowager roles.	Called the "grand old lady of the stage."
Laura Keene 1826-1873	England America	*Our American Cousin.*	Actress-manager. Produced light comedies. At her production of *Our American Cousin,* Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.
Joseph Jefferson 1829-1905	America	Rip Van Winkle.	Known as the dean of the American stage.
Tomasso Salvini 1829-1915	Italy	Macbeth. Othello. Hamlet. Saul. Orasmane.	One of the truly great Macbeths. Tremendously popular everywhere. Toured both North and South America.
Edwin Booth 1833-1893	America	Hamlet. Richard III.	Brother of John Wilkes Booth. Retired from the stage after the assassination of Lincoln, but by popular request returned.
Sir Henry Irving 1838-1905	England	Mathias in *The Bells.* Hamlet. Macbeth. King Richard III. *Becket* by Tennyson. Richelieu.	Was a most successful theater manager as well as actor. Playing partner of Ellen Terry. Was the first actor to be knighted. Is buried in Westminster Abbey.
Lawrence Barrett 1838-1891	America	Cassius. Lanciotto in *Francesca da Rimini.*	Joined with Booth and two others. The four acted the great roles in turn.
Benoit Coquelin 1841-1909	France	Cyrano de Bergerac. Played with Sarah Bernhardt in *L'Aiglon.*	*Cyrano de Bergerac* was written especially for him to act. He made many valuable contributions to the history of the stage through his writings.
Helena Modjeska 1844-1909	Poland	Nora in *A Doll's House.*	Was a famous actress in Poland for many years. Became an immediate success in America.

SOME OUTSTANDING ACTORS—*Continued*

Actor	*Country*	*Roles and Plays*	*Personal*
Sarah Bernhardt 1845-1923	France	Theodora. Cléopâtre. L'Aiglon. Hamlet. La Tosca.	A great actress. Successfully impersonated young men. Worked to excel in new fields of acting.
Robert Mantell 1845-1928	England America	Shakespearean roles. Touring stock companies.	Played with grandiloquent manner. Did much to take the theater to all the people.
Ellen Terry 1848-1928	England	Olivia in *Vicar of Wakefield.* Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing.*	Married to B. F. Watts, the painter. Playing partner of Henry Irving.
Fanny Davenport 1850-1898	America	Ophelia. Rosalind. Mistress Ford.	Acted under Mrs. John Drew's management. Noted for her beauty.
John Drew 1853-1927	America	The leading American actor during his long career.	Son of John and Louisa Lane Drew.
Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree 1853-1917	England	Rev. Robert Spalding in *The Private Secretary.* Svengali in *Trilby.* Sir Peter Teazle. Falstaff.	A great actor-manager. Manager of His Majesty's Theatre in London. Knighted in 1909.
Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson 1853-1939	England	Dick Heldar in *The Light That Failed.* Hamlet.	Toured America several times in Shakespearean roles.
Richard Mansfield 1857-1907	America	Prince Karl. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Beau Brummel.	Clyde Fitch wrote *Beau Brummel* especially for this actor.
Otis Skinner 1858-1942	America	Charles Surface. Kismet. Mr. Antonio. Sancho Panza. Uncle Tom.	Played in many foremost companies. Author of numerous books on the theater.
E. H. Sothern 1859-1933	England America	One of America's leading romantic actors.	Married Julia Marlowe in 1911. The two, playing together, were tremendously popular.

SOME OUTSTANDING ACTORS—*Continued*

Actor	*Country*	*Roles and Plays*	*Personal*
Eleanore Duse 1859-1924	Italy	Leading roles in *Theodora, Divorçons, Fedora, La Locandiera, Princess of Bagdad* and Ibsen's plays.	*La Gioconda* was written to celebrate her beautiful hands. Her acting in this play brought its author, D'Annunzio, fame.
Mrs. Fiske (Minnie Maddern) 1855-1932	America	Becky Sharp. Ibsen plays. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles.*	Brought up in the theater. Became one of the great women of the stage. A great advocate of acting that seemed natural.
Julia Marlowe 1866-	America	Rosalind. Juliet. Ophelia. Beatrice.	Married E. H. Sothern in 1911.
George Arliss 1868-	England America	*Disraeli.* *Old English.*	Starred alike on the stage and in the cinema.
James K. Hackett 1869-1921	America England	Falstaff. Many devil-may-care roles.	Controlled three New York playhouses. A laughable Falstaff. Made himself very large for the role.
Maude Adams 1872-	America	Peter Pan. Chantecler. Lady Babbie in *The Little Minister.*	In 1940 she conducted work in theater in Stephens College. Beloved by American people.
Walter Hampden 1879-	America	Cyrano de Bergerac. Shakespearean roles. Ibsen roles.	Has been an outstanding actor on the American stage for many years.
Lionel Barrymore 1878- Ethel—1879- John—1882-1942	America	All are great actors of the American stage and motion pictures.	Daughter and sons of Maurice and Georgiana Drew Barrymore; grandchildren of the famous John and Laura Drew.
Alla Nazimova 1879-	Russia America	*The Cherry Orchard.* Hedda Gabler. Nora.	Has played continually in Europe and America. Great emotional actress. Famous for Ibsen roles.

places, indeed, the law forbade the public presentation of plays. Philadelphia, however, had no restrictions and was for many years the center of activity in dramatics. New York built its first playhouse in 1732, but Boston ruled out all acting of legitimate plays in public playhouses until nearly 1850.

Showboat attractions began to operate in their unique way, bringing plays to the river towns far from the eastern centers. Mobile, St. Louis, New Orleans, and other towns along the water's edge had periodic visits from showboats. Actors, with their families, lived, traveled, and acted on their flat river boats, several members of a family often playing roles. They make a picturesque page in the history of the American theater. Showboats and their entertainments flourished all through the nineteenth century.

San Francisco became the center of all life of the far west after the 1849 gold rush. Theatrical productions soon followed the gold seekers and provided the men with entertainment that was not always of the highest grade.

The twentieth century will some day be pointed back to in theater history as an age of innovations: motion picture, talkie, radio drama, television, the Little Theater Movement, and the national free theater. At the top of the list of free theaters is the Russian.

The Moscow Art Theater has achieved phenomenal success in its strategic venture. Through all the years of Russia's internal revolution and during her foreign wars Russia never forsook her theater. That fact pays tribute to the institution's strength and to the peoples' feeling for it. The Russian free theater, known as the Moscow Art Theater, was brought into existence largely through the efforts of Constantin Stanislavsky. He and his young dramatist friend, Nemirovish-Danchenko, while conversing one day, decided that the ideal theater could be organized, and that they themselves would do it. Stanislavsky was the leader of a semiprofessional society of actors who would act as the nucleus of the venture. In the summer of 1898 rehearsals began in a barn,

and in October the Art Theater made its debut. In a few weeks the Moscow Art Theater was famous, and eventually it became the foremost repertory theater in the world.

The aim of the creators of this new movement was to make a theater for the common people and to give productions that would be as nearly ideal as possible. About half of the plays produced were Russian and the other half were plays chosen from the great classics of all countries. The Art Theater strove to create something new, something different from conventional productions and worthy to be called true art.

A number of means were and still are pursued by this theater to obtain the ends in view. There is no applause at performances, and no music fills the time between acts. Every role in a play is acted as well as possible even though the role is a small one. The group produces only plays of the highest caliber, dividing their efforts between native Russian plays and foreign plays. No player is considered a star, but each is given roles offering varying opportunities. A play is not presented until it is as nearly perfect as it can be made. Stage settings are of the simplest. Often only a bare stage is used, or a platform in a large room. The profit-sharing basis has put the Moscow Art Theater on a sound financial footing.

In America the twentieth century has proved to be an age of entertainment. During the first quarter of the century both stationary and traveling acting groups satisfied the peoples' craving for amusement. Stock companies, which featured a different play each week, were located in every fair-sized town. Vaudeville houses in the cities and circuit chautauquas in the villages used troupes of entertainers who moved from city to city and from town to town. Vaudeville provided a popular type of theatrical play for many years. Its several short acts, making up an evening's show, yielded plenty of spice and flavor. Every small city had one and sometimes two houses featuring vaudeville acts.

Distant communities, small towns, and county seat centers received the other type of traveling entertainment, the chautau-

qua. It brought lecturers, musicians, novelty entertainers, as well as full plays. The plays were usually confined to small casts. Tents were packed to the limit on the day the play came to town. Everybody was eager. The public had developed a taste for things dramatic.

The Little Theater Movement in America—an outgrowth of the free theater idea that had developed a little earlier in Europe—raised its lusty voice soon after the turn of the century. In 1915, three of our influential New York playing groups came into being as little theaters: the Neighborhood Playhouse, the Washington Square Players, and the Provincetown Players. Later the Civic Repertory Theater was organized by Eva Le Gallienne.

The end of the First World War marked the beginning of a new zest for the theater. Our country found itself bubbling over with enthusiasm for new interests, new expressions, new businesses, and new pleasures. The boys "over there" had lived, striven, sung, and played together. They brought home an ardent zeal for combining play with work. The contagion spread. People sought ways of playing and working together, of giving vent to their enthusiasm. In the excitement, however, work was often pushed aside and only wild play resulted.

The depression, in general a destructive force, stimulated still further the growth of amateur theatricals. Following the leadership of the little theater, every wide-awake community of any size organized at least one group of players. Churches, schools, and clubs began to produce plays. Colleges and universities seethed with busy theater workers. Barns and garages were converted into playhouses. Businessman and housewife turned stage mechanics. Embryo lawyer and office girl became actor and actress. The Lycons and Penelopes of the day were as likely to be found among the players as among the audience. All was done for the love of this work that was play.

It was this abrupt awakening of interest that caused not only those personally interested in dramatic production but also those concerned with social welfare to recognize the valuable contribu-

tion to society that was coming from work in this new institution. Hence, this hobby-developing interest was welcomed. All kinds of amateur theater life has resulted: outdoor plays; children's plays; little theater, school, university, and church dramatics; pageants, revues, and puppet shows.

And what is the result? The benefits are numerous. The little theater, through satisfying the aesthetic desires and tastes of individuals, is proving to be of inestimable value in personality development. Through the constructive pastime that it provides, creative instincts and pent-up energies are given an outlet. Then, too, the amateur theater raises the standards of the theater-going public, which learns to appreciate, and eventually to demand, good productions.

In addition to benefiting both the individual and society, amateur theatricals also benefit the professional theater. They have made their audiences become more play-conscious, and hence professionals can present better plays with the assurance that they will be well received.

Imaginings and experimentation in stage mechanics by the amateur also have resulted in valuable contributions to the professional theater. As interest in the theater grew and audiences increased, a wholesomely critical attitude developed. Hearers came willingly to sit on hard chairs placed on rough boards, but they demanded better and still better scenery, more and more effective lighting, and illusion-creating sound devices. Audiences were entranced by the vivid contrasts of light and darkness, by delightful ensemble colorings, and by pictorial arrangements of characters on levels. There was a newness, a freshness, about all this which seemed not only to satisfy and please but also to charm and enthrall. Since audiences were looking to mechanical phases of production, these were given much attention and improvement was quickened.

But acting, not mechanical perfection, is the heart of the theater, and therefore the continued life of this institution and

especially of that community phase of it, the little theater, depends, without a doubt, upon the strengthening of acting.

Acting is also a part of the normal life. It is probably the only art in which everyone, not only occasionally but frequently, takes part, and—let us speak secretively—in which he takes pride. To act, to pretend, to seem to feel something which in reality he does not feel is an art necessary to all. The doctor cheers his patient when he feels anything but cheerful about the case. The businessman boasts prosperity when he feels far from prosperous. The lawyer encourages his client when he fears he has a losing case. The hostess feigns gaiety when she is suffering from a headache. And so on, ad infinitum. We are all actors, and we pride ourselves on the successes of our daily deceptions.

For acting on the stage, however, the pretense is more deliberate, more studied. Successful stage acting can be acquired; it can be learned, but it cannot be taught. The ability to express emotion must be achieved by the individual.

Certain innate equipment is essential to one who would achieve a high degree of success in acting. To intimate that one person can achieve the same success as another would be utterly false. We cannot all be Paderewskis, or Katharine Cornells, or Burgess Merediths, no matter how much effort we put forth. We are born with certain definite equipment; our success will depend upon that equipment as well as upon our effort.

An essential element with which the student actor should be already equipped is a *desire for improvement.* Woe to the actor who, having played leads and received flattering comments concerning his work, becomes self-satisfied. When a student actor loses the burning desire to improve by every possible opportunity, he need not hope to go far.

An actor needs a good ear, an *acute ear.* He should hear shades of difference in his own speech and in the speech of others.

The student of acting who has a *well-developed imagination* can use it to his advantage. Nobody can know accurately the feelings and impulses that the authors intended for the multitude

of different characters in plays, but the actor can sense them, can imagine them, and can portray his ideas of them.

The emotions are intangible forces which we all experience to a greater or lesser degree. In acting, one is not supposed actually to feel emotion too vividly. The actor does not feel it beyond a certain degree, but he must express it. The student can be taught form and principles and technique but he cannot be taught emotional expression.

The student should consider four phases of acting: the *mechanical,* that which becomes habitual; the *physical,* that which the body performs; the *mental,* that which decides; and the *emotional,* that which concerns the feelings. These are present in all acting. No one of these phases can be omitted from acting any more than can roots, stems, limbs, and leaves be omitted from a tree. The student actor must develop in all four.

One cannot learn to act by reading and studying methods or by watching others in plays. One can learn only by doing. Acting is an art, and, as in any art, one must both know the principles and be able to enact them.

A mistaken notion still is widespread that acting is just for fun; that it consists in just being yourself, and is therefore easy. But acting is not being yourself, and being yourself is not acting. To act you must suggest, not show what another person is. Acting is indefinite, vague, made up of intimations and hints.

There is grave danger of the player putting on only an exterior and then thinking that he is acting. An actor is only an instrument working upon the imagination of the spectators and helping them to see the character he is portraying.

The art of acting involves many talents, all of which must be woven intricately into a pattern to give aesthetic pleasure to others. Some of these talents the student has inherited; others he has acquired as habits through daily living; still others he must develop until they become part of him. He must understand them all and get them ready for immediate use when he has need of them. In the process of acquiring this understand-

ing and making this preparation the wise student will be critical of his own work and will gladly accept criticism from others. Only after expending much time and effort will he be able to play his part in strengthening and advancing the theater and especially that community phase of it, the little theater.

Topics and Exercises

2

SOME TRADITIONS

A. THE ACTOR'S A B C'S

B. STAGE LOCATIONS

EXERCISES 1-3

C. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

D. POSITION AND POSTURE

EXERCISE 4: from *Thursday Evening* by Christopher Morley

E. DRESSING THE STAGE

EXERCISE 5: from *The Fool* by Channing Pollock

2

SOME TRADITIONS

THOSE OF US—and we are many—who take an active interest in the amateur theater realize that it has been in the throes of revolution for thirty years and that it is still changing. Once amateur plays were presented in a slipshod and slovenly manner, but now both the schools and little theaters are the seats of high-grade performances. Due largely to the popularity of the movies, the public has grown theater-conscious and has become critical. Audiences will no longer tolerate performances full of promptings, late cues, misplaced properties, and overacted or underacted parts.

Making a study of the art of acting is a comparatively new idea. Many good people still think that it is a waste of time to study acting. To such people, giving a play means merely learning lines and walking about on the stage while saying them. The same sort of feeling existed not long ago about singing. Everybody could sing. People once thought that when some of the men could "get" the tenor and others the bass, the glee club was ready for its audience. But now we are not satisfied with barbershop harmony except in informal situations. We do not want to pay admission to hear it.

The nonprofessional theater has in the past twenty years acquired high standards in the technical phases. Since acting is the heart of the theater, it must keep in step. And since few people can act sufficiently well without training, theater workers have come to realize that aspiring young actors should be trained. Some few players have a fine inherent acting sense, but most of the millions who enjoy work on the stage acquire this sense only through study and practice.

The average spectator recognizes both good and poor acting, but few see or understand what it is that makes the difference. Some homely individual without any "come hither" qualities causes thousands of theaters to be crowded to the street, while another actor playing the same role is not able to draw a handful.

Those who wish to act, therefore, feel that it is necessary to learn why this actor is good and that one poor, how one gets the effects that another cannot get, and what they themselves must do to improve. In other words, young people want to learn to act.

Probably very few young people are looking forward to acting as a career. Some of them want the stage training as a means of personality development. Perhaps they are backward, or overly reserved, or self-conscious and need to loosen up in order to fit themselves into the social pattern. Others hope to teach dramatics in schools or to work in children's theaters, church theaters, school theaters, or little theaters. But by far the largest number of young people, in fact tens of thousands, are interested in acting and theater work as a hobby. Hard years, depressions, discouragements, and idle days may be ahead of any of us, and nothing can be found in which we will be able to drown our troubles so completely as in work of the stage. The stage is a land of make-believe where people forget for a while that life is real and life is earnest. It is exciting, absorbing, thrilling. When a play is under way you talk, eat, and sleep it. It pushes every other interest aside. In this day of hobbies, then, it is well to find one

that you like better than playing around, or eating, or anything else, and to which you can devote endless fascinating hours.

How, then, can one train for "fun behind the foots"? If we were to ask our present-day theater stars how each of them trained we would receive a variety of answers. They have acquired their skill in different ways. Since no one formula may be followed in starting this study, it seems best to begin on middle ground—that is, with the fundamentals. A knowledge of these is necessary for everyone. A student, however, cannot master the fundamentals of acting in a day, a week or a month, any more than a singer can acquire proper tone placement without endless hours of practice.

Much of the actor's stage deportment, that is his body control —how to move, to stand, to react, and so on—should become habitual. If you practice until the mechanical part becomes second nature, you will then be able to gesture or move without consciously planning every action. Much that you do on stage will result from good habits.

Many principles of acting have become traditions for stage deportment. They are all supported by reasons, although these may not always be obvious. Nevertheless, you should not change them unless you understand the bases of the traditions. Most of them have good solid reasons behind them which cause actors to hold to them.

Along with movement and action habits you will also wish to form traditional thinking habits. The acquisition of such habits will help you tremendously.

If you are a student who is truly interested in improvement, you will wish to add to your inherent ability certain other valuable attributes. First, learn to *concentrate.* Work at it constantly, even in adverse situations, until your train of thought cannot be disturbed. Try these exercises:

You are at lunch and a number of your friends are talking. Close your ears to them and recall your third-grade year in school—your

playmates, your plays, your clothes, your teacher, and some particular happenings.

While sitting in an interesting class think back to the Christmas of year before last. What did you do? What gifts did you present? What did the dinner include?

During an exciting part of the next athletic game you attend think back to the time you took your first interest in athletics.

You should also learn to be *observant.* You will wish to enact on the stage scenes resembling life about you. Everywhere you go you will find opportunity to observe the actions of other people. Observe while shopping in a bargain basement, while conversing with a few intimate friends, or while walking between classes. Watch some one person—his posture, the position of his knees and feet, the movement of his hands, the tilt of his head, his mannerisms, the look in his eyes, his facial movements. Notice how he reacts toward others and how they react toward him. Try to discover cues that will hint at his likes and dislikes.

You will wish to discover those movements that are characteristic of different nationalities, those of different ages, and those of varied personalities. A Negro does not walk like a Scotsman, nor an Italian like a Chinese. Discover how a slender nervous man and a heavy slow-thinking man differ in their movements. Try to learn constantly to observe, and, having observed, remember your observations.

Suppose, for example, a woman picks up a magazine and decides to read. She sits in an easy chair, crosses her knees, and leans back. The cushion at her side is in the way. She fidgets, trying to push it into a corner. She lifts the magazine and opens it. The cushion is still bothersome. She pulls it out of the corner, starts to lay it on the floor, looks at it, then looks at the floor, realizes the floor might soil it, again looks at the pillow, has an impulse to put it behind her, but decides it is too large. She drops it on her lap, picks up the magazine, leans back in her chair, fidgets to adjust herself to the chair, and leafs through the magazine. The student of acting will acquire the habit of

observing and storing away such observations until he has a large storehouse full, ready to be used at any time.

Try these exercises:

Observe a few people, then go off to a place where you can be entirely alone and see how well you can mimic them. Practice until your characterizations become convincing. Be very careful that you do not overdo or burlesque your acting. Mimic, for example:

One of your parents or a middle-aged friend finding a telephone number and using the telephone.

One of your teachers getting ready to open class.

Your neighborhood grocer waiting on a customer.

An acquaintance raising the hood of his car and examining the engine.

Another tradition essential to success in the theater is *co-operation.* Acting is only one phase of a great game. It includes not only actors but also director, stage crews, publicity workers, janitor, prompter, and certainly the audience.

The monologist works alone; he has to consider only himself. The dialogist works with one other; he has to co-operate with only that one. But the actor must give and take endlessly. Many plays are weak because the actor playing the star role insists that every trick be used to give him more than his share of prominence. For that reason, all-star casts often give poor performances. Even when only one star is in a cast, attention may be so completely directed toward him that an excellent production is out of the question.

However, no one of you who studies these acting principles has yet become a star. Some of you have played leads in home-town or college plays, but that is as far as your stardom reaches. Keep the grade of your acting high. The highest-type production gives each player an opportunity to play his part in a manner that will create the best effect for the play as a whole.

For example, two characters are in conversation. Jim is describing an incident in full detail. He has most of the lines, but Tony is acting in the responses he offers. He uses his head, face,

and bodily movements to assist Jim in playing his part. He may use a nod, a shrug, a hand movement. He may even start to speak, but without any interruption to Jim. He may laugh or frown or bite his lip. Whatever the thought and characterization suggest may be used as long as it promotes rather than retards the play. Co-operation ceases to be co-operation when it takes the attention away from the actor upon whom the attention should be centered. Tony may also stand slightly downstage of Jim, in order to allow the latter to more nearly face the audience.

Scenes in which a large number of characters are taking part often have the attention centered upon only a few. In such scenes the subordinate characters on stage will direct interest and attention to the ones speaking. This will psychologically telegraph to the audience the idea that these characters are of greatest interest. The subordinate characters will also co-operate by physical movement and facial expression. They may speak to each other, nudge, or nod or gesture toward those speaking. The eyes and attention are always in the direction of those deserving it at the moment.

It seems unnecessary to speak of looking beyond the footlights and into the audience. Sometimes lines should be spoken front toward the audience, but an actor should never see anyone out there. This blasts the illusion. Only the most thoughtless player ever glances into the audience. The real actor always co-operates to promote the effectiveness of the play.

You as an actor can co-operate in many ways, among them the following:

1. When you can't understand a line of another player, tell him so. He will enunciate more clearly.

2. When the crew is changing the set, go off stage and keep out of their way.

3. You should not use the off-stage props to sit on or to place your hat and gloves on. These may be in the way of a quick scene shift and thus may become misplaced.

4. Keep happy. That's a good way to co-operate. But don't become giddy and thoughtless.

5. When an hour is set for rehearsal, come, not on time, but from ten to thirty minutes ahead of time. Use these extra minutes for private rehearsal to get into the "feel" of your role. This will help your playing.

6. Listen intently to all of the director's suggestions to others as well as to those he gives to you.

7. Carry two sharp pencils at *all* rehearsals until your script has been discarded. Make notes in the margins of your script with pencil, not pen. Indicate all movement and action that in any way concern you.

8. If a move outlined by the director is not fully motivated, try to find appropriate motivation and fit it into the movement. When the director is at liberty, ask him if your motivation is appropriate. For example: you must move over by the piano in order to clear the doorway for an entering character. You may have left your handkerchief over on the piano and you cross to get it. This is motivation.

9. Be in place for your entrance three full speeches or more ahead of your cue.

10. Be grateful for every bit of direction. Welcome it. It is all planned to build the production as a whole.

11. Use your own script or sides—don't borrow. Keep your script in hand when waiting between scenes.

12. Don't talk to other players while on stage unless doing so is a part of your stage business.

13. When off stage during rehearsals, talk with others only in a whisper.

14. Learn to take criticism gracefully.

15. Become critical of yourself.

16. Don't allow disappointment to get the better of you.

17. Be proud of a bit part. Work it until it becomes outstanding.

18. Help each other memorize. At rehearsals, when two players are off stage, each can help the other memorize lines.

19. This point seems almost too obvious to mention, yet even

in college plays some actors object to dressing in old clothes, ugly clothes, or unbecoming things. The costume director is working for the effect that is most appropriate to the play. Individual likes, dislikes, and complexions cannot be considered too carefully.

20. At all times be helpful to those who need help. Be patient with the one who does not readily adjust himself to his role. He may have an inferiority complex which you can help him to overcome. He may be underacting or overacting. Try to help him adjust.

21. Be tactful and tireless and uncomplaining.

The different ways in which players can co-operate are endless. You may think together to lengthen this list and to fit it to your particular group. During, or immediately following, a series of rehearsals is probably the best time to recall the co-operative points you most need. Co-operation is the foundation upon which the theater is built.

In addition to learning to observe, to concentrate, and to co-operate, a student who is trying to improve his acting will exercise his mind also in *remembering his emotional experiences.* Actors are constantly faced with the difficult task of depicting feelings for circumstances that they have never experienced. It is often helpful to think through, step by step, an incident which brought to you a similar emotional reaction. By telling the details of the incident to someone else you may again experience, to some degree, the physical sensation aroused by the original situation.

Suppose, for example, that Mrs. Smith is thinking back to a fit of anger. First, she recalls the occasion and the conversation. She remembers that an acquaintance referred to a disturbance in their home community. After a few minutes of discussing it, she recalls how the acquaintance suggested that Mrs. Smith herself should know more of the facts of the incident than anyone else. Mrs. Smith overlooks the hinted insult and hurriedly talks on. Again the inference is made, and a third time, until the in-

sult and the sneer on the face of the companion cannot be ignored. As Mrs. Smith describes the incident—talking through it aloud—she again feels the indignation she first experienced: the tightening of muscles, the rush of blood, the interruption of her train of thought, the quickening of breathing. Thus, by reviewing emotional experiences in every detail, one's stage portrayal of them will be greatly improved.

Recall incidents which brought on the following emotions:

Embarrassment.	Disgust.	Submission.
Humility.	Delight.	Happiness.
Anger.	Terror.	Affection.
Sorrow.	Dread.	Expectancy.
Disappointment.	Worry.	Surprise.

The Actor's ABC's

Almost every business has its own language, the words and terms of which relate to the field and are understood only by those engaged in it. The sailor's lingo is probably the most colorful, but the actor's language is not far behind it. Some of the terms of this language—most of them in fact—were instituted because they are meaningful. A knowledge of these is essential for the actor's training. There are other terms not essential to the actor's vocabulary which, when used, compose a delightful jargon that makes the actor's speech almost unintelligible to outsiders.

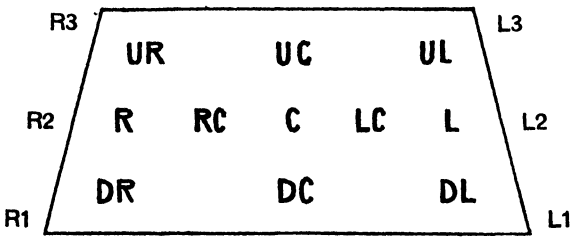
The actor's words, then, were coined to fulfill a need. The theater involves work and equipment so unlike any other business that it is desirable to have and use a vocabulary fitted to it.

Since the director needs and uses these theatrical terms, the student can save his own as well as the director's time by becoming familiar with the necessary terminology.

Stage Locations

Stage locations are designated according to the actor's right and left as he faces the audience.

Areas. The various stage locations outlined on the accompanying diagram are only approximate. You may know, however, that "up left center" means a space on stage left, near center, as the actor faces the audience, and that it is farther upstage than downstage.



EXERCISE 1

1. Laura, reading, is seated *R* of table *LC.*
2. She hears signal, *X* to *ULC* door, and looks out.
3. Comes down to above table *LC,* lays book on table, and picks up vanity.
4. *X* to divan *RC.* Sit. Face *DR* and apply make-up.
5. Helen ent. *UL.* Stop *ULC.*
6. Girls exchange greetings. Laura turns to face *UL* and asks Helen if she should wear a hat.
7. Helen comes down, sits *L* of table *LC,* leafs through book.
8. Laura *X* and exit *DR.*
9. Laura returns with hat in hand.
10. Helen rises, joins Laura, and they exit, *L1.*

EXERCISE 2

1. Saunter in *DR* ent.
2. *X* to upper end of divan *UL,* hear something, stop.
3. Rush to window *UR,* look off *R.* Listen.
4. *X* to lower end of divan and search for radio guide behind cushion.
5. Look about room, bewildered. Search on top of radio *DL.*
6. Telephone on desk *RC* rings, *X* to it. It is a wrong number. Scowl.
7. Suddenly see radio guide on window sill *UR.*

8. Circle below table to *DL.* Turn on radio.
9. Sit upper end of divan, lean back, relax.
10. See footstool *R* of desk *RC. X* to get it.
11. *X* to divan, get settled, feet on stool, head back.
12. Telephone rings. Scowl. Rise *X RC* to answer it.
13. Wrong number. Exit *UL,* in a huff.

EXERCISE 3

1. Enter *UR.*
2. Stop, look aghast at the disheveled room.
3. *X* to end table above divan *UR.*
4. Place magazine there. Turn and again look at the disorderly room.
5. Push up sleeves. *X* to piano bench *LC,* gather up the three sofa pillows from floor.
6. Return them to divan *RC.*
7. Take books from divan to table *UR.*
8. *X* to above piano *LC.* Gather up newspapers cluttering the top of it.
9. Fold them, and *X* to below divan *RC.* Place papers in reading rack.
10. *X* to chair *LL,* pick up piano scarf, shake it out, spread on piano *LC.*
11. *X UR* corner, pick up the coffee table, and return it to its place *RC.*
12. *X LL* to table, take up two flower bowls, return one to coffee table *RC,* the other to piano at *LC.*
13. *X* rear *C,* view the orderliness of room. Look satisfied. Exit *UC* ent.

In earlier days of acting, stages were built on the slant. They sloped toward the audience so that the spectators, seated on the level, could see the actors. In those days, actors moving toward the rear wall actually walked up the sloping stage, and actors coming toward the footlights moved down the slant. Hence the expressions *upstage* and *downstage.* You can imagine the joy that must have come to the actors when the order was reversed, the actors being placed on a flat stage and the audience in a sloping auditorium.

GLOSSARY OF STAGE TERMS

Act.—A natural division of a play, consisting of one or more scenes.

Ad lib.—To extemporize in a performance.

Amateur.—Anyone who works for the theater without pay.

Amber.—Soft, yellow light used to simulate sunlight.

Anticlimax.—An event that is notably less important than the preceding climax.

Apron.—That part of the stage projecting in front of the act curtain.

Area, acting.—The part of the stage used for acting.

Asbestos.—The fireproof curtain, required by law, located between the stage and the audience.

Baby spot.—A small spotlight.

Backdrop.—A curtain at back of a scene giving panorama effect.

Backstage.—The stage, dressing rooms, and storage space behind the curtain.

Balloon.—To forget lines.

Barnstorm.—To go from town to town giving performances. Originally in barns.

Batten.—A long strip of pipe or lumber above the stage upon which scenery is hung.

Blow up the show.—To run away from an engagement.

Board.—A wooden rack in the shape of the theater seating plan to hold tickets in the box-office.

Book.—The term used for the play manuscript.

Booking.—Hiring or contracting companies to act in a theater.

Borderlight.—Strip of individual reflectors in varying lengths to light stage from overhead; used for toning and blending other lights on stage.

Born in a trunk.—A term meaning born into a theater family.

B.O.—An abbreviation used for box-office.

Breakup.—Interruption of one actor's lines by another actor's horseplay during a performance.

Burlesque.—Exaggerated acting.

Burnt cork.—A make-up agent used for blacking faces.

Business.—All action and movement on the stage.

Call board.—A bulletin board backstage on which are posted important notices for the actors.

Call boy.—Man employed to notify actors of their entrance cues.

Cat walk.—Ledge near the overhead lights used by electricians.

Character part.—A role necessitating changes in manner of speaking, habit, walk, and so on.

Chew the scenery.—To rant and rave on stage. A slang expression.

Chorus.—Group of singers, dancers, or speakers who work in unison.

Civic Theater.—A noncommercial theater.

Clear stage.—A command to all not in the opening scene to leave the stage.

Clip cues, to.—To begin to speak one's lines before the other actor has finished his cue phrase.

Cloak and sword plays.—Plays full of fighting and adventure.

Closet drama.—Plays written to be read, not performed.

Comicer.—The opposite of a straight man in a comedy team.

Coming down.—Approaching the part of the stage nearest the audience.

Co-starring.—Billing which gives equal prominence to two performers.

Crash the gate.—Slang meaning to gain free admission to a theater.

Crepe hair.—An artificial wool-like substitute used for making beards.

Cue.—A signal provided by the last words of the speech preceding an entrance or dialogue rejoinder.

Cue sheet.—A tabulated list of cues for noises, entrances, light changes, and so on. Notations usually made in prompt copy.

Curtain going up.—A signal to the cast that the curtain is rising.

Curtain line.—The last line spoken before the curtain comes down.

Curtain line.—An imaginary line where the front curtain touches the floor.

Cyc.—Cyclorama or large backdrop.

Dead wood.—The tickets unsold.

Dicky bird.—British slang for an actor who both sings and acts.

Drama, folk.—A play made up of legends of the popular lore.

Drama, left-wing.—Play of social consciousness.

Dramatis personae.—Latin, meaning literally "persons of the play."

Dressing the house.—Distributing a small audience over the house.

Dumps.—Tickets returned, unsold.

End men.—Performers, seated at either side of a stage in a minstrel show, who have most of the jokes.

Equity.—Actors' Equity Association, an actors' union.

Featured.—A billing, secondary only to starring.

Flies.—Space directly above the stage up into which scenery is raised.

Flop.—A theater production that fails.

Foots.—Footlights.

Fourth wall.—Name given to the imaginary side of a room toward the audience.

Full set.—The use of the entire stage.

Gag.—Slang term generally applied to a highly noticeable twist of comedy.

Gagging.—Slang term. Unauthorized improvisation of lines by an actor.

Going up.—Approaching to rear of the stage. Upstage.

Go up on lines.—To forget one's lines.

Grease paint.—A composition used in theatrical make-up.

Green room.—A lounge near the stage used by author, directors, and actors.

Grips.—Stage hands.

Ground cloth.—Large piece of canvas to cover the floor of the acting area. It reduces sounds of footsteps.

Ground row.—Low flats set on stage floor to complete scenic background.

Grouping.—The placing of the cast about the stage.

Half-hour.—Warning by call-boy a half hour before the curtain goes up.

Ham.—An actor who is bad but who thinks himself good.

Hand props.—Items which actors themselves carry on stage for business.

Handbill.—Printed sheet giving title of play, cast, theater, date, and time of performance.

Hardwood.—Tickets for standing room.

Hare's foot.—Good luck charm used by actors to apply dry rouge.

Headliner.—A star or leading player.

Hokum.—Sure-fire stock situation, good for laughs or heart throbs.

Hold.—Keep a position without moving until time to release it.

Hoofer.—A dancer.

Horseplay.—Rude, boisterous playing by an actor.

Ingenue.—The young girl who usually provides the love interest in a play.

In the red.—Losing money on a show.

Jury.—A slang term meaning a first night audience.

Juvenile.—Player of youthful male parts, up to the age of 25.

Kill.—To eliminate a piece of scenery or property from a set.

Knockout.—A sure-fire hit.

Levels.—Acting areas placed higher than stage level.

Line of business.—The type of roles in which an actor may specialize.

Lines.—Speeches in a play.

Make-up, straight—Grease-paint so applied to an actor's face that natural features are visible yet only enough to offset the foots.

Masque.—A type of early dramatic presentation of mythology.

Merry-go-round.—A slang term meaning the stalling off of an actor by the producer.

Milk it dry.—Slang, to squeeze the utmost laughs out of a line or situation.

Mime.—A form of drama popular among the ancients, travestying scenes from life.

Monologue.—A protracted speech by one person.

Notices.—Reviews, clippings, dramatic criticism.

Out front.—Area occupied by the audience.

Pace.—Timing of lines and actions.

Packing the house.—Filling a theater for performances.

Paper.—Term used for general free admission into a theater as: a papered house.

Peanut gallery.—Top gallery, containing the cheapest seats.

Pit.—Orchestra pit in the modern theaters.

Pirating.—Stealing a script and playing it under another name.
Places.—Signal for cast to assume places on stage ready for the curtain.
Plant, A.—Person stationed in the audience who works with the actors on the stage.
Planting.—Emphasizing an idea, a property, or a character to make its importance felt.
Playing to the gas.—Playing for audiences not worth lighting up for.
Point-up (or to *point*).—To emphasize; to play up an idea or character.
Position.—An actor's place on the stage as set by the director.
Prompt book.—Book of the play used by the prompter to aid actors with cues and lines.
Properties (*props*).—All objects on stage exclusive of scenery.
Prop. plot.—List of properties used in the play.
Quick study.—One who can hurriedly memorize a part.
Ramp.—Sloping walk leading to a higher elevation.
Rave.—Highest praise by a critic.
Repertory.—Collection of plays which may be readily performed because of their familiarity to the actors.
Rep show.—Company playing repertory.
Revamp.—To revise a scene or a play by bringing it up to date.
Revolving stage.—A turn-table stage.
Revue.—A musical comedy, without a plot.
Ring down.—Close the front curtain, often in an emergency.
Ring up.—Raise the curtain to begin the performance.
Road apple.—Slang term used for a touring player.
Road, The.—Area outside New York played by touring companies.
Run.—Length of a stage engagement.
Scene.—Division of an act of a play, usually referring to a section with change of characters.
Script.—Typewritten or printed copy of a play.
Second lead.—Secondary role in a play.
Shoe-string production.—Production put on with a minimum of financial expenditure.
Show.—General term to cover every type of theatrical entertainment.
Sides.—Half sheets of manuscript paper holding the actors' part and cues.
Simon Legree.—Slang term applied to the stage manager.
Sitting on their hands.—Slang term meaning the unresponsiveness of an audience.
Situation.—Term used synonymously with plot.
Spotlighting.—Stage lighting by a series of spots, used to throw a strong light upon any given spot on the stage.
Stage call.—Meeting of cast and director on stage for instructions.
Stage directions.—Instructions in the script of a play concerning all movements and groupings on the stage.

Stage-hands.—Helpers employed in any capacity backstage.

Stage-staff.—People who help with the mechanical phases of producing a play.

Stage superstitions.—

Signs of bad luck:

1. To be wished good luck.
2. To be whistling in the dressing-room.
3. Using an old rabbit's foot for new make-up.
4. Opening telegrams before an opening performance.

Signs of good luck:

1. Pocketful of coins.
2. Good luck pieces.
3. A cat backstage.
4. Wear old shoes associated with a hit.

Stage wait.—Unexpected delay in the play's action.

Stage whisper.—Whisper seemingly intended for only one, but loud enough to be heard by entire audience.

Star.—Leading actor or actress.

Sticks, The.—Smaller towns and villages played by touring companies.

Stock.—Companies in which a group of players work up a new play for each week.

Strike.—A call given to stage crew to take down the set already standing.

Strolling players.—Groups of traveling actors.

Sword carrier.—An actor with a very small part.

Tableau.—A living picture posed by players.

Tag.—An actor's line at the close of a climax. It points up the preceding speech or situation.

Take a call.—Term meaning to come before the audience and bow.

Teaser.—The shallow overhead drapery or canvas that cuts down the height of the proscenium opening.

Topping cues.—Pitching voice slightly higher and louder than preceding player's voice.

Tormenter.—The flats or drapes at the sides, directly upstage of the act curtain.

Traps.—Opening in stage floor through which actor may come or go.

Trouper.—A seasoned actor who always works for the best interests of the play.

Understudy.—An actor capable of playing a given role in an emergency.

Upstaging.—An actor moving upstage thereby directing audience attention toward himself and compelling the cast to face him.

Walk-on.—A person who plays a bit, or merely walks on and off the stage.

Wardrobe.—Costumes and all articles of dress for a production.

Wild catting.—Booking shows without consent of the New York office.

Wings.—Space at either side of the stage behind the scene.

Position and Posture

The number of areas that can be used for the acting in a particular play will depend upon the arrangement of furniture, lights, and the emphasis desired. Center stage is your strongest acting area and about it the acting pivots. The most important scenes will probably be played at center unless the director has reasons to have them played elsewhere. He will make use of the different available acting areas.

A *full-front* position is taken when the actor faces the audience. This was used a great deal in plays of an earlier period. Styles have changed. Today we use, for the most part, a more realistic style or technique which blends the acting of players. The style now in most general use is a turned-in or quarter position.

A *full-back* position, not often used, is taken when the actor stands with his back toward the audience, his face turned away from it.

A *quarter* position is a quarter turn away from the audience. This is used far more than is any other position, especially when sharing a scene. When standing in quarter position, the upstage foot is slightly in advance of the other foot. "Upstage foot forward" is an expression used by directors of inexperienced groups.

A *profile* position is that taken when the actor faces to either right or left so that the audience sees his profile.

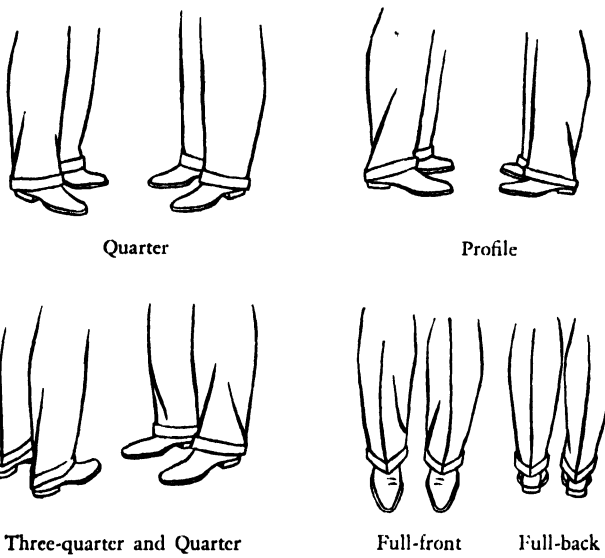
A *three-quarters* position is that taken when the actor turns nearly full back so that the side of his head and shoulder is toward the audience. It is used often when giving the scene to another actor.

When two players are sharing a scene, usually both are in quarter positions. The audience can see the actor's facial expressions and bodily action when he is in this position.

Some directors have more use for full-front or three-quarters position than others. Directors work for varied effects but attain them in different ways.

How is your posture? One of the habits an actor should acquire is that of standing in good posture. Try to get the "feel" of *standing tall.* The spine is the laziest part of the body. It will follow lines of least resistance unless disciplined. Too many Americans have lazy spines. Work to maintain good posture, with head and shoulders up; step lithe, weight on the balls of

STANDING POSITIONS



the feet, and the length of the step in keeping with your height. You should keep thinking "stand tall." Doing so will assure good standing and walking positions.

Since bad postures show up far more on the stage than in real life, it is advisable for players to guard postures carefully. Nobody wants to see the hero of a play slump about like a lubberly bear. Certainly an audience is most critical of a girl's posture and position. The players need not be playing leads to need poise and grace. As you go into training you must see to it that your shoulders do not droop; that your back is not rounded while you are seated. The audience may not know why the pretty girl on

stage does not quite please, but the reason is often posture. The bad posture of a young person whether standing or seated creates an unhappy feeling. Watch motion picture actors. You will notice that all except character actors habitually use good postures.

Work for poise when practicing your dramatic work. It is an art to be able to stand still, inconspicuously. Your movement and action will be planned for you; you should learn to stand still, gracefully, until time to move.

Sitting down and rising can be very awkward movements or they can look graceful and easy. Men, be careful about elaborate pulling up of your trouser knees as you sit down, and while seated seldom—never without being so directed—rest a foot across the other knee. Some people have, in real life, the abominable habit of spreading out over all territory near their chairs. One may have an elbow looped around a chair back, a fist supporting his head, his knees apart, and be sitting on his backbone. On stage—don't! The director will ask for that kind of rest cure if he thinks it helpful.

The girls, too, have bad habits. It seems to be a universal custom for them to cross their knees as soon as they are seated. That is all right—in real life, but not on the stage. A more graceful position is to cross the feet at the ankles. If, however, you are playing a casual or careless person, you may be ungraceful. You may sit on one foot—or even on both feet.

To rise from a seat gracefully, an actor or actress places one foot back, the other forward, then rises with the weight on the backward-placed foot. The following improvised dialogue will furnish practice in sitting down and rising:

John is reading *RC* when Mary enters *DL*. He rises and *X L* to her.
She asks if he has seen Phil.
He hasn't. He invites her to be seated on divan *RC*.
Mary *X RC*, sits. John follows.
Mary describes an auto collision she has just seen.
An off-stage call is heard.

Both rush to window *ULC.*
Not their call. Return to divan. Sit.
Mary continues description.
Telephone rings.
Both rise to answer.
Phil phoning to say he isn't coming.
Mary exit *DL.*

EXERCISE 4

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[*The maid always has Thursday evening off. On that evening* GORDON *plans to help his wife,* LAURA, *do up the kitchen work after dinner. He is now looking over the food in the garbage pail.*[1]]

GORDON. A little mildew won't hurt anybody. There'll be mildew on my bank account if this kind of thing goes on. [*Still examining garbage pail.*] Look here, about half a dozen slices of bread. What's the matter with *them,* I'd like to know.

LAURA. I think it's the most disgusting thing I ever heard of. To go picking over the garbage pail like that. You attend to your affairs and I'll attend to mine.

GORDON. I guess throwing away good, hard-earned money is my affair, isn't it?

LAURA. You're always quick enough to find fault. I know Ethel's careless, but she's the best I can get out here in this god-forsaken suburb. Maybe you'll be good enough to find me a better servant. A well-trained girl wouldn't work in this old dump, where there isn't even gas. You don't seem to know when you're lucky. You come back at night and find your home well cared for and me slaving over a hot dinner, and do you ever say a word of thanks? No, all you can think of is finding fault. I can't imagine how you were brought up. Your mother—

GORDON. Just leave my mother out of it. I guess she didn't spoil me the way yours did you. Of course, I wasn't an only daughter—

LAURA. I wish you had been. Then I wouldn't have married you.

GORDON. I suppose you think that if you'd married Jack Davis or some other of those profiteers you'd never have had to see the inside of a kitchen—

[1] Morley, Christopher, *Thursday Evening,* in Tucker, S. Marion (editor), *Twelve One-Act Plays for Study and Production.* Boston: Ginn and Company, 1929.

LAURA. If Junior grows up with your disposition, all I can say is, I hope he'll never get married.

GORDON. If he gets married, I hope it'll be to some girl who understands something about economy—

LAURA. If he gets married, I hope he'll be man enough not to be always finding fault—

GORDON. Well, he won't get married! I'll put him wise to what marriage means, fussing like this all the time—

LAURA. Yes, he *will* get married. He *shall* get married.

GORDON. Oh, this is too absurd—

LAURA. He *shall* get married, just to be a humiliating example to his father. I'll bring him up the way a husband *ought* to be.

GORDON. In handcuffs, I suppose—

LAURA. And his wife won't have to sit and listen to perpetual criticism from his mother—

GORDON. If you're so down on mothers-in-law, it's queer you're anxious to be one yourself.

✣ *Dressing the Stage* ✣

Our own dress is supposed to give us a pleasing appearance, to make us look well; the same is true of the stage. To dress the stage is to arrange the stage attire in a way that will be most effective and pleasing to the aesthetic sense.

To look well, stage composition needs balance. A number of elements,—characters, properties, scenery—enter into consideration when thinking of stage balance. Setting and furniture must be balanced without the actors. A piece of scenery sometimes balances a character, one on either side of center. However, we are interested here only in the actor's relation to the principle of stage balance.

Balance of characters really means balance of their importance. Since there is ordinarily little difference in the importance of the characters, right and left sides of the stage are balanced by placing characters almost equally on the two sides of the stage. They may be arranged in different positions or in different form, nevertheless balance is maintained. This is balancing mass in the scene.

If, however, one part of the stage is in shadow and another is in brightness, the light spot will overbalance the shadow. Light has more *weight* than has shadow. Bright colors also are stronger than dark colors; therefore they add up weight against the darker shades. Position, likewise, adds weight. If one character is placed higher, or lower, or is set apart, or is reclining while others stand, the one person is emphasized and can thus balance a number of others. Placing a character on a higher level is a common means of adding weight to the important individual.

When characters are not of equal importance, the arrangement must be adjusted to maintain balance. On a teeter-board the heavier person takes a position nearer the center to balance a lighter person farther back on the other side. In working for stage balance, the same principle is true. If a character is emphatic —that is, of greater importance—he can balance a number of minor characters. Symmetrical arrangement is used little except in classic plays and sometimes in fantasy. Realism calls for balance but seldom for symmetrical arrangement.

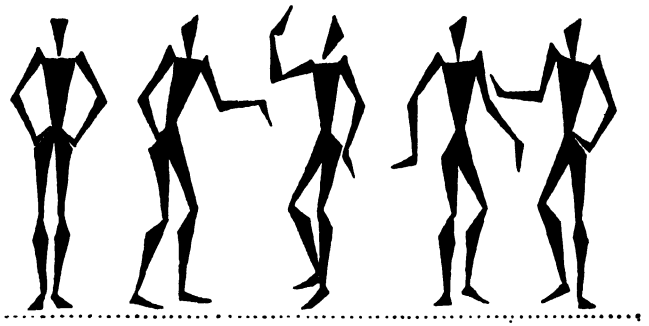
Because of the constant change in positions to maintain stage balance, the problem also arises of keeping the characters so arranged as to dress the stage attractively.

The triangle is a pleasing form and is also full of strength. Endless possibilities for rearranging grouping present themselves as the play moves, but care must be taken lest unpleasant arrangements creep in.

Some emphatic *don't's* and *do's* might be helpful:

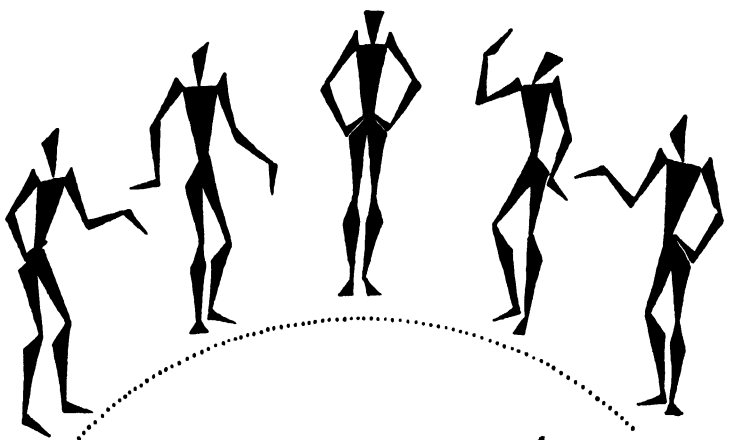
Don't stand in a semicircle.
Don't stand in a straight line across the stage.
Don't stand equal distances apart.
Don't bunch.
Don't cover or allow yourself to be covered.

Do group in two's, three's, four's, five's.
Do retain your triangles.



Don't stand in a straight line across the stage.

Don't bunch.

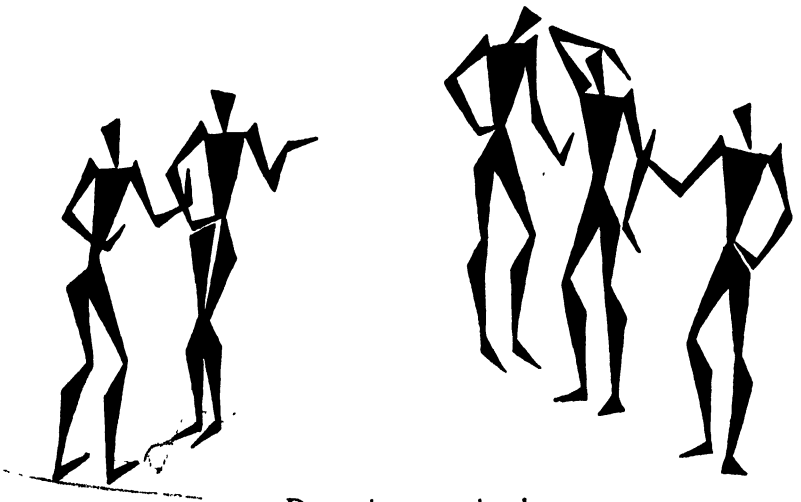


Don't stand in a semicircle.

Do keep your relationship to other characters and to the scene distinct and convincing.

Do give stage to another who needs your place, but immediately blend in with another group.

AN EMPHATIC *DO*



Do retain your triangles.

Do arrange for variety. The line of heads and shoulders should not be monotonous. All characters will not be seated nor will all be standing; rather they will take varied positions to keep the line irregular.

Do guard against covering. If someone unknowingly covers you, adjust your position but keep your relation to others.

The stage should be attractively dressed whether few or many characters are on it. Dressing the stage with a large number is a painstaking task. But whether the characters are few or many, whether the effect desired is gay or drab, the sight through the proscenium arch is much more interesting when the whole resembles a composite picture surrounded by its frame.

As you continue your study, you will realize that there is no place to begin and certainly no place to stop in learning about this work of acting. However, if you take up this simple "practice of scales and finger-exercises" now, you will soon be able to work into the more interesting phases of playing. Within a comparatively short time you will have trained your body, mind, and emotions to act as *you* will them not as *they* will.

In the following exercise, taken from Channing Pollock's *The Fool,* the players have an opportunity to practice moving to different stage locations and to work for effective stage groupings and pictures.

EXERCISE 6

(THREE MEN; FOUR WOMEN.)

[*The scene is laid in the chancel of a fashionable church in New York City. A group are trimming a Christmas tree which stands below the communion rail at R. A tall stepladder stands L. of the tree. Two folding chairs at LC., and two others ULC.*[2]]

[MRS. TICE *angrily goes to* BARNABY.]

MRS. TICE. Who are those people on the church steps? A lot of dirty foreigners blocking the sidewalk!

MR. BARNABY. It's the grating, Mrs. Tice. The furnace room's underneath, and they're trying to get warm.

MRS. TICE. Well, let 'em try somewhere else! [*After* MR. BARNABY *removes her coat and places it on chair up L., she crosses to* MRS. GILLIAM *RC., shaking hands.*] I don't mean to be unkind, but there must be missions or something!

[MR. BARNABY *removes his coat, hangs it on cross piece of ladder; then climbs to attend to the star and connects the plug.*]

MRS. THORNBURY. We didn't hope to see *you* here, Mr. Goodkind.

JERRY. [*Down L.*] I met Mrs. Tice on the most dangerous corner in New York.

MRS. THORNBURY. Where?

JERRY. In front of Tiffany's. [*Goes up and lays hat, coat, and stick on chair LC.*]

[2] Pollock, Channing, *The Fool.* New York: Samuel French. All rights reserved. Copyright, 1922. Reprinted by permission of the author and Samuel French, Inc.

MRS. TICE. Yes, I lured him here by mentioning that *Clare Jewett* was helping us.

DILLY. [*Runs down stage left, puts one knee on the left of the two chairs LC. and looks straight up into the face of* JERRY.] Somebody page Mr. Gilchrist!

[MRS. GILLIAM *crosses upstage to* DILLY. MRS. TICE *crosses downstage to* MRS. THORNBURY *at R.*]

MRS. GILLIAM. [*Taking hold of* DILLY.] Dilly! [*To* JERRY.] Isn't Dilly looking wonderful? So young and—and—

JERRY. [*UL.*] And fresh.

DILLY. Oh, boy!

MRS. TICE. *Do* come and see what I've got for the girls of the Bible Class!

[*All the women rush to* MRS. TICE *at RC. front. They group themselves around her.* MRS. THORNBURY *is on her R.* MRS. GILLIAM *on her L.* DILLY *injects herself between her mother and* MRS. TICE.]

MRS. THORNBURY. Testaments?

MRS. TICE. [*C.*] That's just it: I haven't! I want to give them something they can *really use!* And it's so hard to think of presents for those girls; they've got everything! [*Opening a small parcel she has withheld from* MR. BARNABY.] Guess how I've solved the problem!

MRS. THORNBURY. I can't! [*Speaks simultaneously with* MRS. GILLIAM *and* DILLY.]

DILLY. [*Beside her mother.*] I'm dying to know!

MRS. GILLIAM. I haven't an idea!

MRS. TICE. [*Impressively displaying the gift.*] Sterling silver vanity cases!

DILLY. [*Takes it, crosses up L. and shows it to* JERRY *who stands above chairs LC.*] How ducky!

MRS. GILLIAM. Charming!

MRS. THORNBURY. [*Goes up for coat.*] Quite an inspiration!

MRS. TICE. [*Turning up R. to* MRS. THORNBURY.] You know, Bibles are so bromidic.

[BARNABY *descends from the ladder.*]

MRS. THORNBURY. [*Gathering up her coat, and crossing to* JERRY *below chair LC.*] Yes, aren't they?

MRS. GILLIAM. [*With the air of one bereft.*] Oh, Mrs. Thornbury!

MRS. THORNBURY. [*Goes toward* JERRY: *down stage of chairs LC.*] I've done my "one kind deed" for today, and I've an engagement for

dinner. [*As she reaches the chairs LC.,* JERRY *comes down between them and takes her coat.*]

JERRY. Permit me. [*Puts coat over her shoulders.* MRS. THORNBURY, *sinking into it, leans up against him.* JERRY *starts to put his hand on her shoulder.* MRS. THORNBURY *is looking up flirtatiously into his face. At this moment,* MRS. TICE *RC., facing L., sees what is going on, and says "Tst"! to attract the attention of* MRS. GILLIAM: *who turns to look.* MRS. THORNBURY *and* JERRY *both see that they are observed.* JERRY'S *embracing hand immediately camouflages by slipping down the arm of the coat, as though feeling the fur.*] Some coat!

MRS. THORNBURY. [*Archly.*] Yes—thanks.—See you all tomorrow at the Christmas Service! Goodbye, everybody! [*Crosses to door L.*] And Mr. Goodkind! You'll find Miss Jewett wrapping things in the choir room!

[*Everybody laughs. Exit* MRS. THORNBURY *L.* JERRY *drops down L.*]

MR. BARNABY. I'll just try those lights. [*Exit L. putting on coat.*]

MRS. GILLIAM. She has an engagement for dinner, but you notice she didn't say with whom! [*Crosses* MRS. TICE; *to down R.*] I don't think they ought to allow divorced women in the church! [*To boxes again.*] Where does she get all her money?

MRS. TICE. [*L. of tree.*] Her husband settled for thirty-six thousand a year!

JERRY. [*With growing amusement.*] Think of getting thirty-six thousand a year out of munitions! Gee, what a lot of lives that coat must have cost!

Topics and Exercises

3

MOVEMENT AND BUSINESS

A. STAGE MOVEMENT

EXERCISES 1-3

EXERCISE 4: from *Beauty and the Jacobin* by Booth Tarkington

TAKING AND GIVING STAGE

ENTRANCES AND EXITS

MOVEMENT WITH A LARGE NUMBER

B. STAGE BUSINESS

DEFINITE BUSINESS

INDEFINITE BUSINESS

EXERCISE 5: from *The Black Flamingo* by Sam Janney

EXERCISE 6: from *The School for Scandal* by Richard B. Sheridan

BUSINESS FOR ENSEMBLE EFFECT

EXERCISE 7: from *The Green Pastures* by Marc Connelly

3

MOVEMENT AND BUSINESS

STAGE BUSINESS is an all-inclusive term. It means all action that the audience can see on stage during a play. The term *stage business* really includes all business and movement, the latter being only a portion of the former.

Action is planned by several of the people who work on the play. Some authors visualize action and insert quantities of it; but the director makes changes. He scans the script, visualizes entirely different action than was planned by the author, and outlines business as he sees it; or, he may merely add to the plans of the author. The director then places *sides* in the actors' hands and they take their turns at building the play. In rehearsals, as the play progresses, they embellish the planned action with additional bits. Some delightful pieces of business have no lines suggesting them. For example, Cornelia Otis Skinner in *Theatre* picked up a newspaper, couldn't see the print, held the paper farther and farther away, but still could not read it. She then held one open palm out toward her husband. He, disgruntled, handed her his glasses; she put them on, with a bit of humor in her movement brought the newspaper from its far reach back to a normal distance, and the play went on.

Many an unplanned action has come into a play. We can hardly classify mishaps as business although they sometimes fit in very well, and accidents do occur in the best regulated acting groups. Unplanned action should not, however, be inserted except when unavoidable.

Stage Movement

An adage in the theater is "No movement without a purpose." The principle underlying this adage has governed stage movement of the better actors for years. The term *stage movement* is used here to refer to changes of position and location. Using the term broadly thus, we may say that no movement at all, not even stepping from a chair to a table, turning toward a window, or walking across the stage to sit down, should take place without legitimate reason.

There are many reasons, however, for stage movement. The director may insert movement to set the mood or he may use it to reveal anxiety, excitement, or trepidation. He may use it to establish an atmosphere, as when people gather around the displays at a fair. In the play *You Can't Take It With You* confusion reigns. Movement helps to create this atmosphere; without it, the play would lack much of its charm. The director may use movement to emphasize an idea in a play or to shift attention from one actor to another.

There are also technical reasons for stage movement. Sometimes the director needs movement to arrange characters for a pictorial stage effect, to point-up a particular scene, to keep stage balance, to place a character in position for an important scene, or for a speech that has to do with a particular part of the room. Among the reasons for the use of movement the following are important.

1. Movement, also, is an excellent means of delineating character or of showing the state of mind of a character. A nervous person usually moves more often and more quickly than do

others. The movements of a disheartened character can show his state of mind. The same is true of movement to express other moods.

2. Movement is of great value for building up a scene. It gives force, power, and adds speed. It may be used with a large number of people to secure a rhythm, a feeling, and thus may build the scene climactically; or it may be used, through the crossing backward and forward of a number of individuals, merely to fill the scene with comings and goings.

3. One of the greatest building-up aids that movement can offer comes when the tempo of the scene is increased, sometimes even hurried. When a director is striving to step-up a scene through movement, the actor may do his part by sensing the right rhythm of the play and acting in that rhythm. Rehearse until your acting is smooth and related in some way to the lines.

4. Strong movements are generally short and firm, while weak ones may be long, languid, perhaps even flowery. Movements may indicate a composed state of mind or carelessness or despair. When emotion is intense, both movement and voice are firm.

5. Strength of feeling is conveyed when one moves forward, holds his head erect and higher, and straightens his shoulders. Weakness is shown in the opposite way by stepping back, leaning, or drooping, thus indicating a languid feeling.

6. Sometimes actors are asked to pace the floor. When this is necessary, the movement must be irregular and diversified. There will be pauses, steps, turns, but little unbroken pacing. Movement will be fashioned into a pattern with a varied rhythm.

7. The athlete's and the dancer's training comes in good play at this point. Their bodies have been trained and disciplined. Yours, as an actor's body, must also be trained so that it may *move freely*. Your arms, hands, feet, head, and shoulders, after they are trained, will be flexible, free, able to do easily whatever the play calls for.

8. You will want to be able to move with grace and ease, but the audience should never have its attention attracted to any

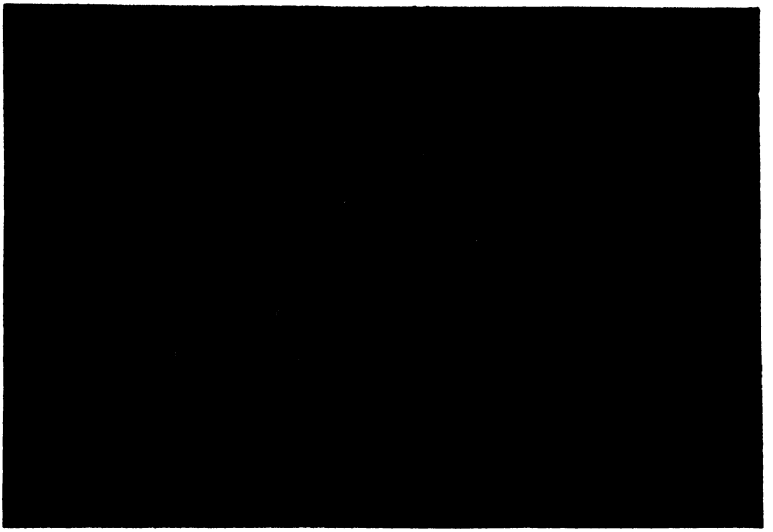
particular action, for movement is merely *a part* of the play. A single stage position is usually held for but a short time. Since your whole body takes part in every movement, it is necessary for your muscles to be so controlled and co-ordinated that they respond quickly and accurately to your will.

9. Perfect *repose,* the opposite of free movement, is another valuable asset. One of the things that experienced actors often find most difficult is to stand still when action is out of order. Although this complete repose is difficult, the student actor should strive diligently to attain it. Repose is the "art of doing absolutely nothing" and, at the same time, maintaining relationship to the play by keeping in character.

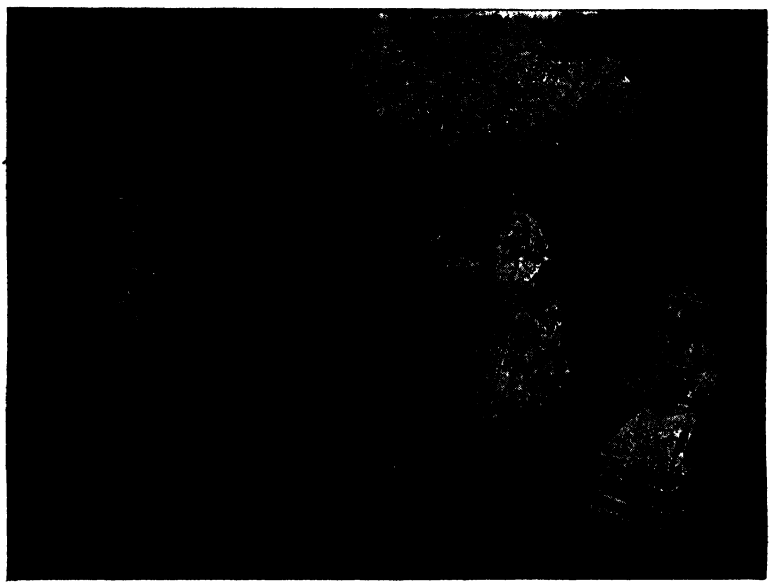
10. Every movement must be in accord with the *mood* of the scene. The author and director strive to secure and maintain the appropriate mood. Through the players, they plan to project this mood to the audience. All players must realize and constantly keep in mind that they, together with lights, scenery, costumes, stage furnishings, and the like, make up the composite whole for the harmonious presentation of the play, and that the slightest move out of harmony will strike a discordant note. For example, if one were sharing in the excitement over some good news, he would not cross his knees or fold his arms. Both of these attitudes signify ease and relaxation. Instead, he would probably be leaning slightly forward in his chair and have both feet on the floor.

11. Not all plays need a great deal of walking about. Therefore, you will not walk unless there is some point to it. An overabundance defeats its own purpose and makes a scene dull and monotonous because of sameness. There should be quiet scenes in all plays, more in some than in others.

Heavy, deep, thought-provoking plays usually need less movement. A play of sorrow, or one of romance and beauty, calls for less. On the other hand farces, sparkling comedies, melodrama, and most mysteries call for much action. Consequently, whether the mood of the scene be gay, serious, happy, sad, gruesome, or



The Moon of the Caribbees, by Eugene O'Neill. A scene from the play as it was presented at the University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado. To be in absolute repose is an art.



Charles S. Price.

East Lynne, by E. P. Wood, as produced by University Civic Theater, Denver, Colorado. Period plays usually call for action quite different from the casual movements of modern trend.

whatever else, all of the players in it must strive first to secure the mood and then to maintain it.

12. Principles regarding movement must not be held as rules. Any or all of the ideas set down here are disregarded when production demands it. The player will use his good judgment in working movement into his part.

13. The actor must move *in character.* A mood is set for a play, but that does not signify that in a comedy all movements must be gay. Nor does it mean that a grouchy old character will never have a happy thought or that a happy, bright, cheerful person will have no serious moments. It does mean, however, that an actor must be intimately acquainted with his character and must *always keep in character.* Often he will be unable to judge just how the movements look. However, such movements may be criticized from the auditorium by someone else. A step on the stage looks longer than it does on the street, a sway seems broader, a slump appears sloppier, and so on.

14. The experienced actor will have learned the *line of movement* through experience; the beginner needs to learn which way to move and how far. The line of movement is usually—not always—straight toward the objective point. If there is need for the player to reach that point soon, he will probably go directly there. If, on the other hand, the play is enhanced by grace and beauty in the movement, he will probably add these by moving in a curved line toward the objective point.

15. Some actors feel uncomfortable while walking between other players and the footlights; they seem to feel that it is impolite to walk in front of another. Try to overcome this feeling if you have it. A character crossing the stage usually needs to pass in front of another because attention is centered upon him. If someone else is speaking while you must cross, however, your line of movement will probably be planned to allow you to pass behind; then you will disturb attention less. An actor seldom if ever crosses in front of a speaking character. On the other hand

it is sometimes necessary for an actor while speaking a line to cross behind another actor. When this necessity occurs, it is best to break the line, giving part of it before passing the character and part after.

16. Tradition says that the player should follow straight lines in movement. There are many exceptions to this principle. When working for grace of movement, players may follow curved lines. A short cross does not lend itself to a graceful curve, but a longer cross may often be made in other than a hard, straight line. This may give a more pleasing effect. If a character is hurrying, quarreling, or feeling in a mood that calls for decisive movements, he will then move directly toward the objective point.

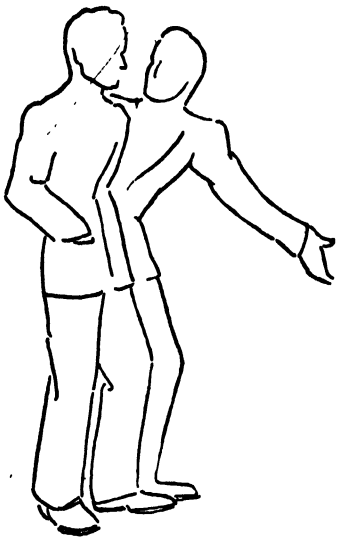
17. It will sometimes be necessary to make your cross upstage, even though it would be more effective if you could be farther front. Since a director cannot plan the action to help all of the players or move everyone down front for lines, it is occasionally necessary to choose the lesser of the two evils.

The actor has a duty to the play. Even though attention should be centered upon him, he dare not hold up the progress of the play. If, under certain circumstances, there is danger of slackening the tempo of the play, the actor must sacrifice the effect of his cross for the good of all.

18. A player is occasionally kept in a weak position, at a table or seated, or up-stage, in order that he may add force to some scene coming later. When a player is moved from a weak to a strong position for a scene or speech, the movement is made doubly forceful. If the movement is made to strengthen the scene, it, in itself, must be strong.

19. It is often necessary to prepare an open space for a character of some importance who is to enter soon. If he enters from UC, those on stage prepare for him by moving either R. or L. When the character enters from the side, an open space may be made on the side from which he is to enter. This movement of characters into other positions must be motivated.

20. Two actors very often cross the stage together. If they are talking, the audience wants to see the speaker and hear what he is saying. If the one who is to do most of the talking walks upstage a short step in advance of the other, he will look back slightly as he talks to his companion. His face will then be in view of the audience.

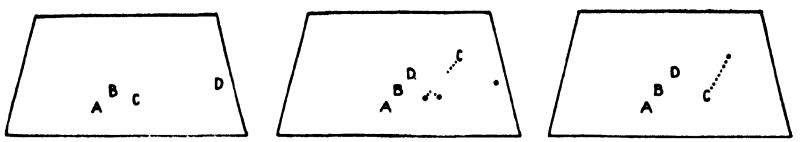


When two actors cross stage together, the audience should see face of one who is talking.

21. If several players are to enter in a group, the one speaking enters first. If only two are entering, the speaker may enter either first or last, but he usually comes in first. In this way, attention goes at once to him. However, when the speaker follows in he has a somewhat easier task; he can then look forward to the other as he speaks.

22. A director works out movement and positions. If the players are able to move easily into the appointed places, time is saved for all. Here are some planned movements for practice.

EXERCISE I



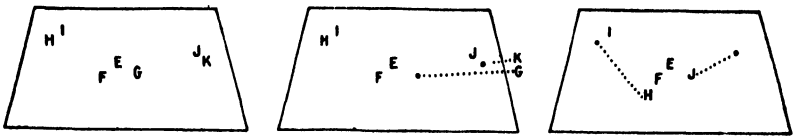
D joins the group on left. In the scene, D is to be the important character.

D enters.

D approaches.
C gives stage.
A and B move down.

D takes center.
C comes down *LC.*

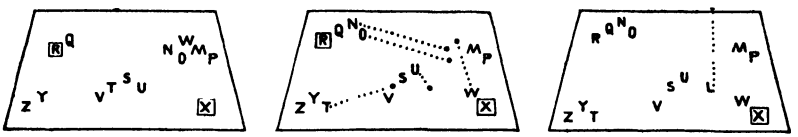
EXERCISE II



F and G come down to save E from turning around while speaking.

E, F, and G talking at *C*. G and K exit. H and J join E and F.
H, I, J, K listening. I listens in.

EXERCISE III



L, an important character, is prepared for by creating an open space for him on stage.

X and R seated. Others standing.

23. People in plays will be placed in positions that relate to their attitudes toward others in the scene. If characters are to disagree, they will probably not be grouped together. However, when they must be placed in the same group they will stand somewhat apart. If, on the other hand, their relationship is a happy one, they may stand side by side.

24. *Line* of movement cannot be planned arbitrarily according to rule. It must sometimes be adjusted to a particularly difficult stage or to suit the needs of the local group. Every part of the

stage not used for setting and props should be used by the actors.

25. The *rate of movement* will depend upon the scene. It must correlate with the mood, character, atmosphere, and so forth. Beginning players have trouble walking in the same tempo as that of their speech. A slow movement, simultaneous with earnest, animated speech, is jarring to the spectators' innate sense of rhythm. Too often young players do not synchronize their speech and movements. They usually have little trouble in talking briskly. However, when they walk, they merely stroll or lounge about stage. This is wrong. Speech and action must move faster in plays than in real life and they must, by all means, correlate one with the other.

When a character is happy, interested, concerned, or angry he will speak in an animated way and certainly should move also with animation. When he is worried, sad, or thoughtful he will walk and talk slowly. You will probably have less difficulty with slow movements than with fast ones.

26. There are varied moods for either slow or fast movements. One may merely *move* down, or he may *drift* down, *ease* down, or *edge* down into place. But, whether movement is to be slow or fast, decide upon the right kind, then work to co-ordinate speech and action.

27. The *time of the movement* refers to the time when it is taken. It must start and finish at the psychological moment. Taking one's seat, or rising, often needs to start or finish *exactly* with the line. To start with a line is not hard, but to finish with a line, exactly with the final syllable of an important word, demands careful timing and rehearsing. If a player were to move across stage and seat himself as he says, "No, you heard me; I'm staying here," he would need to break the line, walking while not speaking for a part of the way, and save the last three words to get in position and be seated. The careful timing of movement and speech is necessary if these are to harmonize.

28. Generally a player moves on his own speech and remains in his place when another is speaking. Crosses which emphasize the thought will be taken on one's own line. Or the actor may move, stop, then speak if a special kind of emphasis is needed. But you must not get the mistaken idea that the actor should take steps every time he speaks. He should do so only to make the play seem natural and easy, or for other reasons which the director has in mind.

29. When a character needs to direct parts of a long speech to different members on stage he may turn toward or walk to them on or between the ideas in the speech.

30. Movement either *before* or *after* the line will emphasize if the movement is strong. Imagine two boys arguing over who shall play on the ball team. Alex says to Phil, "I'm *going* to be on that team," then he turns, walks across the stage and picks up his bat, glove, and cap in preparation to go. Or he may speak after the movement. Phil has told Alex that Henry should play the game. Alex turns, walks over, picks up bat, glove, and cap, then turns back to Phil with "I'm *going* to be on that team." Either movement would give additional strength to the line because both the movement and line are strong to begin with.

31. In making a turn, the character usually does so *toward* rather than *away* from his audience. However, when too great a turn is necessary, it is better for the character to turn away, his back toward the house. As much as a two-thirds turn would probably both look and feel awkward. When you turn *away* from the audience it is better to make the complete turn quickly so that you are again in profile position.

In the modern school of acting, much is done for general pictorial effect. In some plays, however, the director strives to secure the effect of true realism. There are times, therefore, when the principles of turning and standing are disregarded. Characters often now both turn and remain with their faces away from the

audience in order to enhance the effect of the whole or to emphasize some phase of the production.

32. Actors may avoid turns many times by *easing* a few steps into place. To give stage, to reach a desirable spot for the next scene, or to group with other characters may often be accomplished by backing inconspicuously into the desirable spot.

33. When you are to sit down it is a good idea to go near the chair then back toward it until you can feel the edge of it against the back of one knee. When you are sure you are in position, you can feel safe in sitting down without turning to look at the chair. We don't like to see an actor do that, and certainly he doesn't like that sinking feeling which comes when he sits, not knowing just where the chair is or whether he will "make" it.

34. An actor sometimes backs away a step or two before turning to make an exit. This will make the turn easier when one is to leave by an upstage exit. This backing away may be done for two different reasons. When the actor is directly in line of the entrance and not far from it it is natural to simply back toward it until he is framed by it for the exit line. Or, if to exit will require an awkward turn, the actor may back away a few steps and be in a position for an easier turn. Even at the door one can sometimes make an effective exit by backing out. He may be talking as he goes, so much interested in what he is saying that he seems to pay little attention to the door.

Plan an abundance of movement for the following scene. Practice until movement and action work together smoothly and build the excitement in the lines.

EXERCISE 4

(TWO MEN; TWO WOMEN; EXTRAS.)

[LOUIS, *a French marquis, and his sister* ANNE *are trying to escape the French Revolutionists, taking with them their unwilling cousin,* ELOISE. *A spy who has been following them is the source of their*

greatest fear. ELOISE *has only scorn for their fear, believing herself one of the people.*[1]]

LOUIS. My cousin, suffer the final petition of a bore. Forgive my seriousness; forgive my stupidity, for I believe that what one hears now means that a number of things are indeed ended. Myself among them.

ELOISE. [*Not comprehending.*] "What one hears?"

LOUIS. [*Slowly.*] In the distance. [*Both stand motionless to listen, and the room is silent. Gradually a muffled, multitudinous sound, at first very faint, becomes audible.*]

ELOISE. What is it?

LOUIS. [*With pale composure.*] Only a song! [*The distant sound becomes distinguishable as a singing from many unmusical throats and pitched in every key, a drum-beat booming underneath; a tumultuous rumble which grows slowly louder. The door of the inner room opens, and* ANNE *enters.*]

ANNE. [*Briskly, as she comes in.*] I have hidden the cloak and the dress beneath the mattress. Have you—

LOUIS. [*Lifting his hand.*] Listen! [*She halts, startled. The singing, the drums, and the tumult swell suddenly much louder, as if the noise-makers had turned a corner.*]

ANNE. [*Crying out.*] The "Marseillaise!"

LOUIS. The "Vultures' Chorus!"

ELOISE. [*in a ringing voice.*] The Hymn of Liberty!

ANNE. [*Trembling violently.*] It grows louder.

LOUIS. Nearer!

ELOISE. [*Running to the window.*] They are coming this way!

ANNE. [*Rushing ahead of her.*] They have turned the corner of the street. Keep back, Louis!

ELOISE. [*Leaning out of the window, enthusiastically.*] *Vive la—* [*She finishes with an indignant gurgle as* ANNE DE LASEYNE, *without comment, claps a prompt hand over her mouth and pushes her vigorously from the window.*]

ANNE. A mob—carrying torches and dancing. [*Her voice shaking wildly.*] They are following a troop of soldiers.

LOUIS. The National Guard.

[1] Tarkington, Booth, *Beauty and the Jacobin,* in Cohen, Helen Louise (editor), *One-Act Plays.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1921. Reprinted by permission of the author.

ANNE. Keep back from the window! A man in tricolor scarf marching in front.

LOUIS. A political, then—an official of their government.

ANNE. O Virgin, have mercy! [*She turns a stricken face upon her brother.*] It is that—

LOUIS. [*Biting his nails.*] Of course. Our spy. [*He takes a hesitating step toward the desk; but swings about, goes to the door at the rear, shoots the bolt back and forth, apparently unable to decide upon a course of action; finally leaves the door bolted and examines the hinges.* ANNE, *meanwhile, has hurried to the desk, and, seizing a candle there, begins to light others in a candelabrum on the dressing-table. The noise outside grows to an uproar; the "Marseillaise" changes to "Ça ira"; and a shaft of the glare from the torches below shoots through the window and becomes a staggering red patch on the ceiling.*]

ANNE. [*Feverishly.*] Lights! Light those candles in the sconce, Eloise! Light all the candles we have. [ELOISE, *resentful, does not move.*]

LOUIS. No, No! Put them out!

ANNE. Oh, fatal! [*She stops him as he rushes to obey his own command.*] If our window is lighted he will believe we have no thought of leaving, and pass by. [*She hastily lights the candles in a sconce upon the wall as she speaks; the shabby place is now brightly illuminated.*]

LOUIS. He will not pass by. [*The external tumult culminates in riotous yelling, as, with a final roll, the drums cease to beat.* ANNE *runs again to the window.*]

ELOISE [*sullenly*]. You are disturbing yourselves without reason. They will not stop here.

ANNE. [*In a sickly whisper.*] They *have* stopped.

LOUIS. At the door of this house? [ANNE, *leaning against the wall, is unable to reply, save by a gesture. The noise from the street dwindles to a confused, expectant murmur.* LOUIS *takes a pistol from beneath his blouse, strides to the door, and listens.*]

ANNE. [*Faintly.*] He is in the house. The soldiers followed him.

LOUIS. They are on the lower stairs. [*He turns to the two women humbly.*] My sister and my cousin, my poor plans have only made everything worse for you. I cannot ask you to forgive me. We are caught.

ANNE. [*Vitalized with the energy of desperation.*] Not till the very last shred of hope is gone. [*She springs to the desk and begins to tear the discarded sheets into minute fragments.*] Is that door fastened?

LOUIS. They'll break it down, of course.

ANNE. Where is our passport from Paris?

LOUIS. Here. [*He gives it to her.*]

ANNE. Quick! Which of these "permits" is the best?

LOUIS. They're all hopeless— [*He fumbles among the sheets on the desk.*]

ANNE. Any of them. We can't stop to select. [*She thrusts the passport and a haphazard sheet from the desk into the bosom of her dress. An orderly tramping of heavy shoes and a clinking of metal become audible as the soldiers ascend the upper flight of stairs.*]

ELOISE. All this is childish. [*Haughtily.*] I shall merely announce—

ANNE. [*Uttering a half-choked scream of rage.*] You'll announce nothing! Out of here, both of you!

LOUIS. No, no!

ANNE. [*With breathless rapidity, as the noise on the stairs grows louder.*] Let them break the door in if they will; only let them find me alone. [*She seizes her brother's arm imploringly as he pauses, uncertain.*] Give me the chance to make them think I am here alone.

LOUIS. I can't—

ANNE. [*Urging him to the inner door.*] Is there any other possible hope for us? Is there any other possible way to gain even a little time? Louis, I want your word of honor not to leave that room unless I summon you. I must have it! [*Overborne by her intensity,* LOUIS *nods despairingly, allowing her to force him toward the other room. The tramping of the soldiers, much louder and very close, comes to a sudden stop. There is a sharp word of command, and a dozen muskets ring on the floor just beyond the outer door.*]

ELOISE. [*Folding her arms.*] You needn't think I shall consent to hide myself. I shall tell them—

ANNE. [*In a surcharged whisper.*] You will not ruin us! [*With furious determination, as a loud knock falls upon the door.*] In *there,* I tell you! [*Almost physically she sweeps both* ELOISE *and* LOUIS *out of the room, closes the door upon them, and leans against it, panting. The knocking is repeated. She braces herself to speak.*]

ANNE. [*With a catch in her throat.*] Who is—there?

A SONOROUS VOICE. French Republic!

ANNE. [*Faltering.*] It is—it is difficult to hear. What do you—
THE VOICE. Open the door.
ANNE. [*More firmly.*] That is impossible.
THE VOICE. Open the door.
ANNE. What is your name?
THE VOICE. Valsin, National Agent.
ANNE. I do not know you.
THE VOICE. Open!
ANNE. I am here alone. I am dressing. I can admit no one.
THE VOICE. For the last time: open!
ANNE. No!
THE VOICE. Break it down. [*A thunder of blows from the butts of muskets falls upon the door.*]

Taking and Giving Stage

This matter of taking and giving stage should become second nature to the actor. The constant changing of positions on stage and the balanced picture that is always before the audience make it necessary for actors to move, even when they are not going anywhere, in order to make room for others. The one holding attention at the moment is usually the one who will *take stage* (move into a more desirable position); the others will *give stage* to him.

Practice taking and giving stage a few times with five characters grouped near the center of the stage. Lawrence may be the important figure during this scene—in which a murder is being discussed. When it is time for him to dominate the scene, he may walk in front of Cecelia, Ruth, and John and take the upstage center position as he speaks to Nolya. Cecelia, Ruth, and John may *turn* back or *back* away a few steps as they give stage to Lawrence.

A character may take stage twice in the following scene. Mrs. Gaume drops in to show her neighbors the new afghan she has just completed. Bette, Mary, and Naomi are seated at a card table

L. As Mrs. Gaume approaches, Mary may push her chair away L, thus giving the principal position to Mrs. Gaume. After a moment Mrs. G. may take stage R. where five other young people are having a heated argument. Mrs. G. will take the upstage-center position of the group. Jocille, Billy, and Margie on Mrs. G's L. may turn, take a step L, then turn back toward the group. Don and Jean on Mrs. G's R. will back a short step to make room for the newcomer.

Entrances and Exits

The importance of an entrance is seldom felt by amateur actors. The first entrance of a character is, generally speaking, the most important. It establishes the key for the character in the scene, it creates a new relationship between characters, it develops the plot, and it sets forth new circumstances. Hence, the manner of entry is most significant and should be planned with thought and executed with finish.

An entrance should be carefully timed. It is often necessary to reach a certain place on the stage just as someone finishes speaking a particular word. Careful rehearsal is necessary so that the actor may arrive at the exact spot upon the appointed second.

Young actors often mar their performances by making a well-timed entrance and then delaying the assuming of their characters until it is time to speak. The maxim "Actions speak louder than words" is perhaps truer in stage work than in any other place. The old rule is a good one: assume the character and walk twenty paces before reaching the stage door. But one must be sure to enter in plenty of time to hear the cue for his first speech. He cannot wait for the cue to his speech before he enters. Instead, he will have two cues—one to enter, the other to speak. The first may be just a word or two ahead of the other. Often a character speaks as he enters. If this is the case, the cue is less difficult to time correctly.

A few entrances are important enough to emphasize thorough techniques; however, not many entrances should be pointed-up. Making several of them important destroys emphasis for any. Also, if the audience is led to believe that a character is of special interest, it expects him to prove that he is deserving of particular attention. They will not feel very happy about it if he fails them.

An entrance may be pointed by the character remaining framed in the doorway for a moment after he appears. Another method of pointing an entrance is for other characters on stage to glance often at the door through which he is soon to enter. If a number of players are to enter with an important character they will come first, one after another at close intervals. After all of the minor members of the group have come in, they take position on stage and focus on the door until the entrance of the important character. He will appear shortly after the last minor character has come in.

Up center is the strongest entrance place. If the character comes down stairs, the entrance will become doubly strong; and if, in addition, servants precede him, the character becomes almost formidable as he appears.

When a butler is announcing the arrival of someone, he will enter first; his manner of announcement will depend upon the occasion and his characterization. Usually he will simply step inside, standing upstage of the entrance if it is on left or right stage; then he will announce the name formally and exit after the guest has entered.

Many tricks can be used to point-up an important entrance, but the player should not use them unless the director instructs him to. Not many entrances should be emphasized, and those that are pointed-up should be only the important ones.

It makes a difference which foot a player first steps out on when entering from either right or left stage. The upstage foot

is placed out first. This turns the face more toward than away from the audience.

A character on entering should usually close the door after him. He will wish to do this as we do in real life—easily, and without turning around. If he is entering a door on stage left, he should open it with his right hand, pass through it and, without turning around, reach back and close it with his left hand. If he enters from right, he will open with the left hand and close with the right.

Since *exits* are often more important than entrances, they too must be duly planned and considered.

It is often better to take the last speech, or a part of it, near the exit. Sometimes a player can break his speech. He can give part of it, cross, turn, give the last four or five words, and exit. The speech will be more emphatic if it is not taken at the door; instead, the actor may speak it while in his place on stage, then turn and walk rapidly to the door and through it.

An exit is considered stronger when taken on one or the other side of the stage rather than at upstage, rear. When one goes out by a side door, his profile is in sight of the audience until he exits. An exit from upstage, center, can be made emphatic if the character goes to it, turns, and is framed in the opening for his last words.

When the door is at right or left stage the actor's foot nearest the exit should take the first step toward it. Using the advanced foot first will seem a bit awkward because it is not the natural thing to do. It is, however, a custom observed by the best actors and should be practiced by beginning players until it becomes habitual. There is a reason for it. The audience is interested in the actor's face, and this movement allows more of his face to be in sight of the audience as the character starts to go.

In exiting it is usually well to save a part of the last speech to be given at the door. This exit line makes a smooth exit and causes less break in the scene.

The eyes of the actor may point the way to his exit. If it seems advisable for the audience to look forward to his leaving, the actor may glance toward the door several times as his exit time draws near.

Entrances and exits must be made on time, in character, and they must be appropriate to the mood of the scene. Above all, the player will wish to consider the purpose of each and to practice his entrances and exits with care.

Movement With a Large Number

Movement in the ensemble scenes always creates difficulty. The director works out his plan carefully, but it is the players' task patiently to rehearse the difficult movement and business until these are smooth.

The changes of position cannot be taken with precision, yet they must be taken the same at each rehearsal. While characters are talking, their grouping will change as different players give the lines. Each character will listen to the play as it progresses, although, since he must help to create the illusion, he may not appear to be listening.

All of the players must *keep constantly in character.* Without attracting attention to themselves, the fussy, little man must continue to be fussy and the haughty matron must continue her haughtiness. All should know exactly what ad lib. lines they will use and then use the same ones at every rehearsal. The actor should always laugh on the same lines and react to other characters in exactly the same way. Only when each player does his part can an impressive ensemble effect be attained.

The movement must not attract attention to itself. When a character has a change of position to make, he will know the particular line on which to move and will practice doing so until he can move easily and inconspicuously.

The scenes will be better if they do not seem to be composed

merely of masses of people. Characters will do different things and act as individuals, just as they do in real life. Distinctive mannerisms; individual characteristics—gossipy, bashful, bold; different moods—some laughing, some listening; can give variety to the scene. But remember that crowd scenes must remain crowd scenes. Attention must not be drawn to individuals unless it is supposed to be drawn to them. There is usually some center of interest and the crowd is merely background and atmosphere for it. If some player thoughtlessly overacts or makes himself either interesting or conspicuous, attention is drawn to him and the artistic effect of the scene is destroyed by his overdiligence.

When the director, considering the line, mass, color, emphasis, and pictorial effects of the whole stage, has plotted the movement, rehearse it with greatest care until it, as well as the lines, is memorized. After the movement has been worked out, little alteration should be made.

Since every movement affects both balance and the characters' relationships, the director must check the new arrangement after every cross. Students should become conscious of the line, balance, and stage picture so that they can make the necessary adjustment of position to maintain these at their best. Effective stage movement involves many principles that the embryo actor needs to practice from the beginning.

Stage Business

Stage business means stage action. That is, action of the hands and body, the character's mannerisms. It includes the working with and handling of properties. However, some directors and authors use the term *stage business* to refer to both the movement and action of the players.

We speak of interpreting a role or interpreting the play as a whole. The director interprets the feeling to be gained from the

whole play, but the actor, with the help of the director, interprets his own role.

Interpretation—what does it include? Some individuals think of interpretation as relating only to the vocal expression of an author's lines; but it includes much more than that. It is true that vocal interpretation is the best a radio speaker can give. On the stage, however, the actor interprets with his voice, his face, and his body. Good interpretation demands deft use of all parts of the body. A shrug of the shoulder often means even more than to say, "I don't care." Lifting the head sometimes warns, "Take care!" Raising the eyebrows may signal "Come here"; and remaining quite motionless may challenge, "I dare you!"

Shakespeare gave advice to players in more than the famous Hamlet speech. He says, in *A Winter's Tale*: "There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture." Styles of gesture and stage business have changed, but the advice given three hundred years ago is as good today as it was then. The student of acting will do well to strive to live up to Shakespeare's standards of expression.

Business, if it is to be helpful to the play, must be "opened up" so that the audience can see it. Action must be made larger than in real life, and emphasized. If a book or a letter is to play an important part in the plot, the audience should be made conscious of it. Just what business is to be used needs to be planned early and practiced in pantomime at every rehearsal. If a woman comes from the street, she knows that she will be wearing hat and gloves and carrying a purse. Her first business will have to do with these articles. She may remove and lay them aside. The act of taking them off should be fully rehearsed just as the lines are rehearsed.

You will not have all props to work with as you rehearse. Indeed, you will never see some of them before property rehearsal night; but during the weeks of rehearsal you may handle your fake props just as you would the real things. If you use a blackboard eraser for a gun, handle it gingerly. If a chair represents a

heating stove, warm your hands before it and duck your face from its heat just as though it were blazing hot. Your reactions will thus be made more convincing.

Business must be timed so that it is not hurried yet is completed at the right moment. And remember to work from a position that will make it possible for all of the audience to see your action. Open up for them.

Some pieces of business, on the other hand, are not "opened-up" but are covered. The lighting of a kerosene lamp, if it is connected up with electricity, may need to be covered. A letter may need to appear mysteriously from a table drawer, or flowers may have to "evaporate" from a vase.

Business should be in rhythm with the thoughts and characters of the players. A frivolous, rattle-brained girl will need to do things that a quiet reserved girl would not do. The business of Negroes in *Green Pastures* is beautifully rhythmic in its whole atmosphere.

There must be freedom of action to make the play live before the eyes of the audience. Gestures and business should be free, broad and abandoned, opened-up, so that all of the spectators will respond to it. The audience should be conscious of the stage business. They ought not, however, have their attention drawn to it. When an actor becomes proficient, he will not use gestures that draw attention to themselves because of either their abundance or their abandonment.

Definite Business

Definite business is that which is suggested by the lines of the play. John may say, "Are you cold, Elinor?" as he goes to close the window. Sometimes the definite business is written into the dialogue as "Henry, please stir the fire." Other times it is merely suggested. In either event, it should be executed at the psychological moment.

Business is usually taken on the line. However, it may be ex-

ecuted either just before or just after voicing a particular idea if both the action and the line are strong.

A piece of business or a gesture coming *just before* the thought will arouse suspense. Mr. Smith might rise. point toward the door, look at his guest, and say, "Leave." Or a character might cross the room, lay a book on the table, point to it, and announce, "That's the best one yet." Business *just following* the thought, if well executed, emphasizes in a different way. If it is not well executed, it may appear to be just tagging along.

Business is usually taken *simultaneously with* the line. It is often desirable to finish the business as one finishes speaking a particular word. This may require repeated rehearsal, but, if executed well, it will add polish to the performance. One might say, "Is it possible that I must tell that all again?" If he were to be seated while speaking, he might finish taking a seat as he finishes either "possible" or "again."

The character arrangement may occasion a change of furniture during a scene. There is no reason why, when a chair, table, or lamp is in the way, it should not be moved by one of the players during the scene. If your director finds that some piece of furniture should be moved and asks you to set it in another place, you will feel quite comfortable after one or two rehearsals in moving it to the other position. Chairs often need to be used in different places on stage during a single act. The one precaution that you must take is to move the piece so that it looks as though the task were an easy one. A girl may move quite a large piece of furniture if she does it without seeming to make an effort.

In the Broadway production of *Life With Father,* two of the young sons cleared the table after dinner, took off the tablecloth and folded it, spread the between-meal cloth, and set the bowl of fruit in place. All this was done easily during unimportant dialogue. It made the scene seem natural.

Sometimes mishaps occur during the real performance which make it necessary to either cover up the shortcomings or to

allow an awkward situation to spoil the scene. If a player thinks quickly enough, the accident can be corrected without the audience knowing that anything is wrong. A sofa cushion may fall on the floor. If it does, pick it up. The property manager may have forgotten the matches, a vase, a vanity, or a magazine when he set the scene. If possible, make some excuse and go off stage to get the missing piece.

Not all plays are as easily adjusted to such mishaps as is *Our Town*. However, it took quick thinking on the part of the "Stage Manager" to cover a mishap in a performance of this play. When Emily sat down in one of the rickety stage chairs to eat her breakfast, the chair broke down. Embarrassed, she regained her equilibrium and stood bewildered. The "Stage Manager," however, said nonchalantly, "Accidents will happen in Our Town," and he stepped off stage, took the chair handed to him, brought it to Emily, and the play went on without the audience realizing that the chair's collapse was an accident.

Correcting such mistakes are not pieces of definite business, to be sure, but they are adjustments that every player should try to be ready for when the occasion demands.

Indefinite Business

Indefinite business is that which is planned by the director or actor to help in creating characterization, atmosphere, or other elements that make the play come alive. It is usually the simple, every-day acts that we do thoughtlessly, as playing with our fingers, fixing our hair, tracing lines with a finger or a pencil, rolling a magazine and squinting through it, twirling a cane, or playing with a coat, hat, or gloves in our hands.

The director and players may at times find it difficult to invent appropriate business. You will need to experiment in the early rehearsals, trying out different possibilities until the best can be decided upon. The actor should then fit the movement and lines together.

When building a part, a list of the objects that will be on stage and which the characters may use in their acting may be made. All pieces of furniture and knickknacks about a room may be used; also pieces of wearing apparel, such as scarves, hats, gloves, coats, and so on, may be handled. Or the character may use accessories, such as vanity cases, canes, cigars, matches, pens, pencils, and dozens of other pieces of ordinary equipment.

Costume, also, should be considered in planning business. The player will then work with the costume, or a substitute for it, as early as possible. Dresses with trains, hoops, ribbons, or buttons offer bits of possible business. A man will find that a uniform, a swallow-tailed coat, a beard, or frilled cuffs provide excellent business possibilities.

All hand props or adequate substitutes should be used early in the rehearsals. These will often suggest pieces of business.

In *Liliom,* by Ferenc Molnar, two young people, Julie and Liliom, are sitting together on a bench outside of an amusement park. They muse and speak only a few words. Julie has been enjoying herself in the amusement park. She might be toying with the ribbons on a fancy carnival cane such as are sold in these places, or she could trace the decorations on her purse with her index finger or twist her parasol this way and that as it stands on the ground. Liliom might be fingering his hat or breaking a small stick into bits.

In *Shannons of Broadway,* a number of loafers are sitting about the heating stove in a country hotel. As they talk they may occupy themselves with many possible pieces of indefinite business. They have eaten their supper in the dining room. One might rise and go to get a toothpick from the toothpick-holder. Finding it empty, he could come back to his chair, take a match from his pocket, sharpen one end of it with his pocket knife, and use it for a toothpick. Another might fill his pipe and smoke; another might clean his fingernails with a blade of his pocket knife. One of the men might take the poker and poke the fire or throw the burnt match in the stove after lighting his pipe.

Other mannerisms and characteristic hand movements may be used, such as taking one's eye-glasses off, wiping them and putting them on again, only to again take them off, wipe them and put them on, over and over again. One can rock back and forth on a straight chair, lean back and balance on one leg of the chair, hold and pull his suspenders, fan with a paper, tuck up straying locks, bite the lips, peer over the eye-glasses, or tap on the arm of the chair.

Innumerable pieces of indefinite business make acting seem natural. You must, however, guard against inserting business that is out of keeping with the mood, character, setting, or situation of the play.

EXERCISE 5

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[*During the French Revolution a deserted inn in the north of France served as a refuge for many French nobility who were fleeing from Paris.* POPO, *a funny, round little man, has engaged a room and now comes down into the court.* POPO *enters cautiously and advances down stage, hugging his great coat around him.* CLOTILDE, *the frousy maid of all work, enters R. She does not see* POPO *at first, but when she does she utters a startled cry, at which he jumps in terror.*[2]]

CLOTILDE. Ah, *mon Dieu*—is Monsieur sick?

POPO. No!

CLOTILDE. But Monsieur looks so strangely.

POPO. Ah—you notice it?

CLOTILDE. But yes!

POPO. Splendid! [*In a mysterious whisper.*] I am in disguise.

CLOTILDE. Ah, that explains why Monsieur wears a wig.

POPO [*indignantly*]. Wig! That is no wig, girl—see, it is my own beautiful, exquisite, matchless hair! [*He takes off his hat and holds his head toward her.*]

CLOTILDE. [*Seizing a handful and giving a mighty yank.*] Why, so it is!

POPO. Ouch—! *Mon Dieu*—are you a wrestler?

[2] Janney, Sam, *The Black Flamingo.* New York: Samuel French. All rights reserved. Copyright 1930. Reprinted by permission of the author and Samuel French, Inc.

CLOTILDE. But why does Monsieur wear such funny clothes? Monsieur is perhaps a gypsy? Monsieur does queer tricks? Ah, good Monsieur, show me how you take a roast pig out of your hat.

POPO. My hat? Heaven forbid! Nay, I can do no such sorcery—but I warrant you, I could make a roast pig disappear fast enough.

CLOTILDE. Ho, then I am cleverer than Monsieur, because I can make a roast pig appear.

POPO. Truly? From where?

CLOTILDE. From my oven where it is roasting.

POPO. [*With eager condescension.*] My good girl, as I now behold you, in a better light, I begin to perceive that you possess no small measure of personal beauty.

CLOTILDE. Monsieur—!

POPO. Yes—*morbleau!*—rarely have I seen such eyes—such cheeks—such lips—so swanlike a throat—

CLOTILDE. Nay, Monsieur—nay—!

POPO. Truly, truly—and such a form—such ankles—even Marie Antoinette herself—ah—! [*He pauses in consternation.*]

CLOTILDE. Yes, Monsieur—yes?

POPO. No, no—I must be careful—I must be discreet.

CLOTILDE. [*Eagerly*]. You spoke of the Queen!

POPO. Nay, 'twas but a slip of the tongue.

CLOTILDE. But you did—you know her—you know the Queen?

POPO. Shhh—not so loud!

CLOTILDE. But you know her—the Queen?

POPO. Hush—hush! [*In a whisper.*] I will tell you a secret.

CLOTILDE. Yes, yes—!

POPO. A dark and fearsome secret.

CLOTILDE. A secret about the Queen?

POPO. Yes. [*Lowering his voice again.*] The Queen loves me.

CLOTILDE. Holy Father in Heaven—why?

POPO. [*In amazement.*] Why—? Is it not apparent?

CLOTILDE. Monsieur is very wealthy?

POPO. On the contrary I am superbly penniless.

CLOTILDE. Monsieur is very clever?

POPO. On my honor, no! I am renowned far and wide, as the stupidest man in France.

CLOTILDE. Monsieur is very brave?

POPO. I am like a palsied rabbit if the door slams. [*There is a sharp crash of thunder. He starts convulsively.*] See—I told you!

CLOTILDE. Monsieur is very passionate?

POPO. Nay—I am like a glacier. But I can arouse passion, passion so furious that strong men weep with rage and mighty warriors wring their hands in envy.

CLOTILDE. Oh, Monsieur—tell me—I die to know—what is this fatal spell, this magic power?

POPO. It is my leg.

CLOTILDE. Blessed Virgin—!

POPO. Ah—you doubt!

CLOTILDE. Nay!

POPO. Behold girl! [*He throws aside his great coat and stretches a somewhat chubby limb encased in garish hose.*] There stands the most exquisite, shapely, flowerlike leg in Christendom.

CLOTILDE. [*Unmoved.*] It is rather fat.

POPO. Yokel! Do you not know symmetry when you see it? I tell you that leg is like music, like wine, like rare perfume. Great ladies weep at the sight of it, young girls swoon at the thought of it. All Versailles envies it. Tell me, as you gaze upon its rapturous curves, do you not tremble? Yes, you do tremble, for I see you.

CLOTILDE. Truly—but that is because my feet are wet and I have a chill.

POPO. Clodhopper! You have no soul.

CLOTILDE. [*Stubbornly.*] I don't need a soul to know fat when I see it.

POPO. Lout! You do not understand contour. See, watch the play of muscles as I walk. [*He minces elegantly across the stage.*] Is it not a rhapsody?

CLOTILDE. [*Dubiously.*] Perhaps it is not fat, but only bloat.

POPO. Loon! Lunkhead! I tell you, there is not in all the civilized world, a more rhythmical, a more euphonious, a more mellifluous calf.

CLOTILDE. Aye—and 'twill soon become a cow.

EXERCISE 6

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[SIR PETER, *a middle-aged bachelor who has married a young wife, is very much distressed over the extravagance of his bride and her indifference to his desires and requests. He admonishes her for her actions, and she in turn replies with debonair lightness.*[3]]

[3] Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, *The School for Scandal.*

SIR PETER. Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll not bear it!

LADY TEAZLE. Sir Peter, Sir Peter, you may bear it or not, as you please; but I ought to have my own way in everything; and what's more, I will, too. What! though I was educated in the country, I know very well that women of fashion in London are accountable to nobody after they are married.

SIR PETER. Very well, ma'am, very well! so a husband is to have no influence, no authortiy?

LADY TEAZLE. Authority! No, to be sure: if you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me, and not married me: I am sure you were old enough.

SIR PETER. Old enough! ay, there it is. Well, well, Lady Teazle, though my life may be made unhappy by your temper, I'll not be ruined by your extravagance.

LADY TEAZLE. My extravagance! I'm sure I'm not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be.

SIR PETER. No, no, madam, you shall throw away no more sums on such unmeaning luxury. 'Slife! to spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon into a greenhouse, and give a *fête champêtre* at Christmas.

LADY TEAZLE. Lord, Sir Peter, am I to blame, because flowers are dear in cold weather? You should find fault with the climate, and not with me. For my part, I'm sure, I wish it were spring all the year round, and that roses grew under our feet!

SIR PETER. Oons! madam, if you had been born to this, I shouldn't wonder at your talking thus; but you forget what your situation was when I married you.

LADY TEAZLE. No, no, I don't; 'twas a very disagreeable one, or I should never have married you.

SIR PETER. Yes, yes, madam, you were then in somewhat an humbler style: the daughter of a plain country 'squire. Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I first saw you sitting at your tambour, in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys at your side; your hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with fruits in worsted, of your own working.

LADY TEAZLE. Oh, yes! I remember it very well, and a curious life I led. My daily occupation to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family receipt-book, and comb my aunt Deborah's lapdog.

SIR PETER. Yes, yes, ma'am, 'twas so, indeed.

LADY TEAZLE. And then, you know, my evening amusements! To draw patterns for ruffles, which I had not materials to make up; to play Pope Joan with the Curate; to read a novel to my aunt; or to be stuck down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase.

SIR PETER. I am glad you have got so good a memory. Yes, madam, these were the recreations I took you from; but now you must have your coach—*vis-à-vis*—and three powdered footmen before your chair; and, in the summer, a pair of white cats to draw you to Kensington Gardens. No recollection, I suppose, when you were content to ride double, behind the butler, on a docked coach-horse?

LADY TEAZLE. No—I swear I never did that: I deny the butler and the coach-horse.

SIR PETER. This, madam, was your situation; and what have I done for you? I have made you a woman of fashion, of fortune, of rank—in short, I have made you my wife.

LADY TEAZLE. Well, then, and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation, and that is—

SIR PETER. My widow, I suppose?

LADY TEAZLE. Hem! hem!

SIR PETER. I thank you, madam—but don't flatter yourself; for, though your ill-conduct may disturb my peace of mind, it shall never break my heart, I promise you: however, I am equally obliged to you for the hint.

✣ *Business for Ensemble Effect* ✣

Business with a stage full of people must be still more carefully planned to give an impressive ensemble effect. Each character should know exactly what he is to do at a particular time. Almost all business should *point-up* the dialogue. In other words, business usually should supplement the discussion uppermost at the moment in order to point the attention of the audience to it. Again I would remind the student—*do not overact.* Action should not attract attention to itself.

In creating indefinite business, it is necessary to *seem* to talk to other characters in a natural manner. This ad libbing seems more natural when spoken in a low tone than when done in a whisper. Those who have the lines that are to reach the audience

must, of course, project them above the murmur of the many other voices. Actors should not say just anything in such scenes. They must ad lib. and ad lib., but it should be something that the character would say under the circumstances; otherwise, players are likely to get out of character or out of mood in reacting to what is said.

If an inarticulate off-stage murmur is to be attained, your director may have different groups say over and over a particular word or short sentence. A good effect has been attained by one group repeating "sassafras," another group "rhubarb," and a third group "Hungarian." If you are assigned some meaningless jabber like this, keep in character while you are in the scene, vary your inflections like real conversation, and make it seem like real talk. Some of you may laugh, some argue, some become deeply serious, and some converse happily. Use also variety in manner and movements.

In scenes in which one person is speaking to a crowd of others, those who are listening will use indefinite business which will point-up the words of the speaker. Whispers, nods of assent, and glances toward the speaker will all point-up what he is saying.

In other scenes, indefinite business used for ensemble effect is carried on in small groups about the stage. Each character is concerned only with the person or persons nearest him.

If all indefinite business is fused with characterization and atmosphere, an impressive ensemble effect will result.

EXERCISE 7

[*An elderly Negro preacher has been teaching his Sunday-school class of young boys and girls. The children visualize the joys of heaven as the pleasures they themselves most enjoy here upon earth. In the following scene the angels appear to be happy Negroes at a fish fry.*

The principal singers are marching two by two in a small area at the right of the stage. Two MAMMY ANGELS *are attending to the frying beside the kettle. Behind the table a* MAN ANGEL *is skinning fish and passing them to the cooks. Another is ladling out the custard. A*

Julius Caesar, by William Shakespeare, as produced in the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Individuals in an ensemble group respond each in a different way.

Boy Meets Girl, by Bella and Samuel Spewack, as produced by Pennsylvania State College, Pennsylvania. Business is in the mood of the scene, and is convincing.

MAMMY ANGEL *is putting fish on bread for a brood of cherubs, and during the first scene they seat themselves on a grassy bank upstage. Another* MAMMY ANGEL *is clapping her hands disapprovingly and beckoning a laughing* BOY CHERUB *down from a cloud a little out of her reach. Another* MAMMY ANGEL *is solicitously slapping the back of a* GIRL CHERUB *who has a large fish sandwich in her hand and a bone in her throat. There is much movement about the table, and during the first few minutes several individuals go up to the table to help themselves to the food and drink.*[4]]

FIRST MAN ANGEL. Well, it jest so happen dat minny fishin' is de doggondest fool way of fishin' dey is. You kin try minny fishin' to de cows come home an' all you catch'll be de backache. De trouble wid you, sister, is you jest got minny fishin' on de brain.

SECOND COOK. Go right on, loud mouf. You tell me de news. My, my! You jest de wisest person in de worl'. First you, den de Lawd God.

FIRST MAN ANGEL [*to the custard ladler*]. You cain't tell dem nothin'. [*Walks away to the custard churn.*] Does you try to 'splain some simple fac' dey git man-deaf.

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL [*to* CHERUB *on the cloud*]. Now, you heerd me. [*The* CHERUB *assumes several mocking poses, as she speaks.*] You fly down yere. You wanter be put down in de sin book? [*She goes to the table, gets a drink for herself and points out the* CHERUB *to one of the men behind the table.*] Dat baby must got imp blood in him he so vexin'. [*She returns to her position under the cloud.*] You want me to fly up dere an' slap you down? Now, I tol' you. [*The* CHERUB *starts to come down.*]

STOUT ANGEL [*to the* CHERUB *with the bone in her throat*]. I tol' you you was too little fo' catfish. What you wanter git a bone in yo' froat fo'? [*She slaps the* CHERUB's *back.*]

SLENDER ANGEL [*leisurely eating a sandwich as she watches the back-slapping*]. What de trouble wid Leonetta?

STOUT ANGEL. She got a catfish bone down her froat. [*To the* CHERUB.] Doggone, I tol' you to eat grinnel instead.

SLENDER ANGEL. Ef'n she do git all dat et, she gonter have de belly-ache.

STOUT ANGEL. Ain't I tol' her dat? [*To* CHERUB.] Come on now;

[4] Connelly, Marc, *The Green Pastures,* in Coe, K., and Cordell, W. H. (editors), *Pulitzer Prize Plays.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1935. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

let go dat bone. [*She slaps* CHERUB's *back again. The bone is dislodged and the* CHERUB *grins her relief.*] Dat's good.

SLENDER ANGEL [*comfortingly*]. Now she all right.

STOUT ANGEL. Go on an' play wid you' cousins. [*The* CHERUB *joins the* CHERUB *sitting on the embankment. The concurrency of scenes ends here.*] I ain't see you lately, Lily. How you been?

SLENDER ANGEL. Me, I'm fine. I been visitin' my mammy. She waitin' on de welcome table over by de throne of grace.

STOUT ANGEL. She always was pretty holy.

SLENDER ANGEL. Yes, ma'am. She like it dere. I guess de Lawd's took quite a fancy to her.

STOUT ANGEL. Well, dat's natural. I declare yo' mammy one of de finest lady angels I know.

SLENDER ANGEL. She claim you de best one she know.

STOUT ANGEL. Well, when you come right down to it, I suppose we is all pretty near perfec'.

SLENDER ANGEL. Yes, ma'am. Why is dat, Mis' Jenny?

STOUT ANGEL. I s'pose it's caize de Lawd he don' 'low us 'sociatin' wid de devil any mo' so dat dey cain' be no mo' sinnin'.

SLENDER ANGEL. Po' ol' Satan. Whutevah become of him?

STOUT ANGEL. De Lawd put him some place I s'pose.

SLENDER ANGEL. But dey ain't any place but Heaven, is dey?

STOUT ANGEL. De Lawd could make a place, couldn't he?

SLENDER ANGEL. Dat's de truth. Dey's one thing confuses me though.

STOUT ANGEL. What's dat?

SLENDER ANGEL. I do a great deal of travelin' an' I ain't never come across any place but Heaven anywhere. So if de Lawd kick Satan out of Heaven jest whereat did he go? Dat's my question.

Topics and Exercises

4

POINTING-UP

A. POINTING-UP LINES

EXERCISE 1: from *Whatsoever Things are Honest* by Marianne Paden

B. POINTING-UP CHARACTERS

EXERCISE 2: from *Idiot's Delight* by Robert E. Sherwood

C. POINTING-UP OBJECTS

EXERCISE 3: from *The Witching Hour* by Augustus Thomas

D. POINTING-UP ACTION

EXERCISE 4: from *Two Crooks and A Lady* by Eugene Pillot

EXERCISE 5: from *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell

E. POINTING-UP COMEDY

EXERCISE 6: from *Being Valeted*

F. POINTING-UP EMOTIONS

EXERCISE 7: from *Expressing Willie* by Rachel Crothers

G. POINTING-UP STAGE PICTURES

4

POINTING-UP

WE HUMAN beings are largely creatures of instinct. We learn to adjust our speech and actions to our natural surroundings, but we often have trouble when it is necessary to adjust actions and speech to the unnatural surroundings of the stage. The difficulty comes because we work *for* those in the audience but *with* those on the stage. We adjust our speech instinctively for the ones near at hand. On the stage, we should adjust it for the ones at a distance.

In real life, if someone wishes to speak with a friend half a block away he will instinctively throw or *project* his voice to reach that distance. However, he will not yell. In a small room, also, he instinctively adjusts his voice to the right distance; and, of course, he uses less power in pushing out the words.

In the theater, this matter of projection must be cultivated to fit a peculiar and unnatural arrangement. We are likely to carry over instincts of speech because they have become habits, unless we are consciously on guard.

In order to project important ideas, important entrances, comedy bits, hinges of the plot, and significant actions, the player must *point them up,* that is, emphasize them. It is his task to

project every item, not so that every person in the audience *can get* the point, but so that he *can't miss* it.

"The stage is like life, only bigger." Then let us consider how to express ourselves in "bigger" ways when acting.

Making speech or action *bigger* does not mean necessarily using louder voice or broader actions. It does mean making voice and action more pronounced. Anything made more prominent seems bigger. It is all a matter of emphasis. A phrase may be made more important by speaking it slowly, or by pausing before it, or by using a gesture with it. A line, a character, or an action may be emphasized in dozens of ways.

Many phases of acting must be emphasized: story, plot, mood of the play, characters, objects, emotions, entrances, pictorial effects. It is important that the player form the habit early of emphasizing while acting his role.

The *mood* of the play must not be overlooked. Light scenes in a serious play dare not be made as light as in a sparkling comedy. The mood must be sustained and built. A serious play sometimes must be made overly serious and a farce overly farcical to project the mood effectively to the audience.

The *plot* also must be pointed-up. When a line or an action is significant to the plot or to the major conflict it must be pointed to bring out its full importance.

All of the contrasting elements must be found and the feeling for them projected to the audience. Gaiety in one scene will make the sadness in another seem sadder. A mass scene full of confusion will make a quiet scene following it more beautiful.

Sometimes one scene must be underplayed in order to play *up* another that is more significant. A play dare not move on a level; dark and light, gay and sad, fast and slow spots must be present in order to create the rhythmic movement of the whole. It is often necessary, therefore, to *point-down* one scene in order to *point-up* the next.

Mass movement needs to be dancelike with effective phrasing, space control, and force control. Although an individual player

is only an atom in the entire effect, he should try to sense the whole and to make his action and speech blend with the action and speech of the other players.

All "signposts" that indicate the direction in which the story is moving must be pointed-up for the benefit of the audience. If a character, significant to the plot, is mentioned, his name must be made important so that it will be heard and felt by everyone.

All action which points to the plot, all important changes of thought, must be pointed for the hearers. Characteristics of those around whom the plot weaves must be felt.

The *emotion* of the play must be built. It is the actor's task to project emotions to the audience, although he may and usually will express in low tones and restrained actions the deepest emotions. These will be pointed up by proper timing, facial expressions, and taut muscles. The emotional climaxes will be built gradually but they will be consistent with plot and story. The whole play will move from fall to swell, to fall to higher swell, to another fall followed by a still higher swell.

Because the single actor plays only his bit, it is difficult for him to sense the movement of the entire plot. Since it is hard to see a play as a whole, we will now take up a study of the various phases of the actor's work which need to be pointed-up in order to be projected.

First, and probably most important, *the voice* must be projected. That is, speech itself must be *lifted* in order that it may reach all parts of the house. Here are some helps which may be considered rules. They should be constantly followed in order to project speech.

1. Bring out clearly all final consonants:

"We helpeD theM do iT."
"IN spiTe oF aLL we coulD thinK."

2. Keep up, and *loud,* the last four words of your speech. Don't run down like a phonograph.

3. Speak groups of words together and pause between groups.

This allows the audience to get thoughts separated. Speak no more than four or six words in a group.

4. Clip words short. Make them staccato. Are you one of those who muffle and blur the edges of words? If so, you need to learn to bite off each word. We Americans are notoriously slovenly in our speech, but players dare not be. They must clean and brighten up our language with precision of speech.

5. Talk louder. This is the last requirement. Speak out with push and volume, but do not depend upon volume to make your speech heard. Use every other help, then volume. Direct your words. Focus them. *Speak as though speaking to those in the last row* is a good rule to follow. The actor will do well to learn to consider subconsciously those farthest away, whether he uses a whisper or a speech needing little, medium, or great volume. An actor often tries to "talk louder." He will soon realize, however, that *not mere loudness,* but rather *purity of tone and distinctness* are what really project the voice. The lips and tongue must work freely, precisely, forcefully. Project every emotion to the audience. Many emotions are best projected when coupled with a low rather than a loud tone. To learn to project, the student must practice, and practice, and practice. He may, thereby, learn to project his voice as naturally in stage speech as he does in ordinary speech. Begin to practice projecting the voice by reciting the following lines from *Patience,* by Gilbert and Sullivan, in a number of ways.

> If you want a receipt for that popular mystery,
> Known to the world and a Heavy Dragoon,
> Take all the remarkable people in history,
> Rattle them off to a popular tune.

1. Speak the lines of the stanza from the stage of a large auditorium. Focus your voice on the last row.

2. Decrease the tone lower and lower through several repetitions. Think only of projection.

3. Turn profile and repeat the lines. Increase volume slightly.

4. Face upstage and again repeat it. Use enough volume to project every word.

5. Increase the volume until you almost shout the stanza. Through several repetitions gradually decrease the volume until you can project a very low tone even when facing directly away from the audience.

Pointing-Up Lines

So far we have been thinking about all the lines of a play. But certain lines, particularly those that represent important ideas, must be given special attention. First, get the core of the meaning; find the significant words and phrases, then play these hard.

Pointing-up important thoughts can be done in various ways:

1. You can, for example, *place unlike thoughts side by side,* thus showing them in sharp contrast to each other.

2. Then, there is the much overworked method, *change in volume.* Speak the important words louder. You can go from a full tone to a whisper or from a whisper to a full tone. Pointing-up by using either more or less volume, however, must be used with good judgment. Many players abuse this means of emphasis shamefully. They "tear to tatters" the lines which should be given with restraint. They know only loudness for emphasis. "Pray you, avoid it."

3. *Change in energy* is closely akin to change in volume. This means is common and is very good form. Energize. *Never substitute loudness for energy. Push* on the words to gain the effect, and notice how the effectiveness increases.

4. *Change of pitch* adds importance to the words upon which the wider inflection is used. Skillfully raising or lowering the pitch of the voice will make words on which the change comes stand out. Try its use on Rebecca's line in the following exercise: "We can't. He's already using it." Let the voice both rise and fall on "using." In real life we work to improve our diction by using wide inflection, because, by so doing, our speech becomes

more pleasing and effective. If this is true in real life, it is doubly true on the stage. The skillful use of a wide range of voice and variety of inflection should become habitual in all speech. Undoubtedly both the rise and fall of inflection is most necessary to point-up lines in a play.

5. Quite as important as change in pitch and volume for emphasis is *change of tempo.* The mood of a scene will suggest the tempo most appropriate to it as a whole. A very sudden change from fast to slow for the telling word or from slow to fast will emphasize it. In order to slow down for an idea, the dialogue just preceding it must clip along rapidly. To point by reading the line rapidly you may speak the important words staccato.

6. Most effective of all devices used for pointing-up lines is the *pause.* A pause has power. It has punch. It is usually placed just before the important word. If more than one word must stand out, the pause may then precede a phrase or, quite possibly, a sentence, if the sentence is not long. Sometimes it is best for the pause to follow, rather than precede, the important idea. To pause after the idea creates no suspense; however, it gives the idea time to sink into the mind and, in this way, emphasizes its importance. During such a pause, all actors on the stage should remain motionless. Until the next speech, any movement or disturbance would distract the hearers from the significant idea.

7. Take an *important position* to emphasize a line; or you *may speak the line front,* thus causing it to stand out.

Climax is largely a matter of emphasis. Climax occurs at many different places in a play; the player must locate the climaxes and build them appropriately in order to enhance the dramatic value of the production. Words are often arranged in climactic order. A *speech* may move toward a climactic point. A *scene* has its climax, and the *play* as a whole has climaxes.

A three-act play usually has a strong climax at the end of the first act, a stronger one at the end of the second act, and the crisis near the end of the third act. After that, there is the resolution to the end.

EXERCISE 1

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[REBECCA *has always pampered her son,* PHIL. *He has now entered into a shady business deal and needs money to clear himself.* PHIL *and his mother have, under various pretenses, schemed to get the necessary funds, by degrees, from the father. Suddenly the father finds the collected money in its hiding place and thinks that it is some he lost two years previously. He makes use of it.* REBECCA *has drawn her son aside to tell him about it.*[1]]

PHIL [*lightly*]. Now, out with it!

REBECCA [*with intensity*]. Phil, he's taken it!

PHIL. Taken what?

REBECCA. The money!

PHIL. The money? What money? Whose money? [*Pause as he realizes. Then in a low voice.*] *The money!*

REBECCA [*miserably*]. Yes.

PHIL. Impossible!

REBECCA. But he has. He found it there in the safe. He thinks it's some he had overlooked.

PHIL. We must get it back.

REBECCA. We can't. [*With wide inflection.*] He's already using it.

PHIL Don't worry, Mother. I'll manage it.

REBECCA. O, we can't. [*She turns from him and covers her face with her hands.*] He needs it.

PHIL. Well, so do I. In fact, I have to have it or go to jail. He'll never know I got it. I'll fix it so it looks like a theft.

REBECCA. But he's overjoyed at finding it.

PHIL. I'll cover him after dark on his way home. After I shake him for the roll, I'll let him go. He'll come home, and you call the police.

REBECCA. No, no, Phil. [*Louder.*] It wouldn't be fair.

PHIL. Not altogether agreeable with one's own dad, I grant you.

REBECCA. But you don't understand! [REBECCA *speaks rapidly.*]

PHIL. I understand my position. That's enough. [*Turns away casually.*]

REBECCA. But the mortgage, Phil, that he's been so worried about. He didn't know how he'd manage. Then he found this, and called the bank at once.

[1] Paden, Marianne, *Whatsoever Things Are Honest*. Unpublished. Printed by special permission of the author.

PHIL. [*Faces* REBECCA *quickly.*] But he hasn't given it to them, has he?

REBECCA [*speaking rapidly*]. No. He called Jim to get the papers ready for him. He's gone up there now.

PHIL. Maybe somebody'll lay him out up in that end of town and delay him an hour or two.

REBECCA. If somebody only would! [REBECCA *stops suddenly, then says slowly and quietly.*] Oh [*pause as she turns away*], what a ghastly thing to say.

PHIL. Don't let that bother you, Mom. He's made life uncomfortable for us often enough.

REBECCA. But it's the harsh life he's had. He can't help that.

PHIL. Life, huh!

REBECCA. Oh, there must be some other way out. [*She continues in a voice of anguish.*] If *only* you had kept out of this scrape.

PHIL. It was the chance of a lifetime [*pause, then slowly*], if it had gone through. [*He strolls up and looks out the window.*]

REBECCA. Yes—if! [*Following him.*] Oh, Phil, my boy, don't you see I can't let him suffer for your mistakes. No, I must not. Don't you see I must not?

PHIL. Say, what's the idea? [*Speaks hastily as he turns to her.*] I thought you were goin' to help me out. Haven't I pulled for you? Haven't I schemed and worked for you? Where would we both be if we just accepted the miserly pittance he handed out.

REBECCA. Yes, Phil, but that was before the break. He had plenty then. It's different now.

PHIL. It'll be nice for me if we bungle this one.

REBECCA. If there was only some other way. [*She pauses, then speaks front.*] I'll tell him. Tell him the truth—myself. It will hurt him less.

PHIL. From you! [*Angrily.*] It'll hurt him ten thousand times more.

REBECCA. Others, in business—his friends—they've all been turning against him. [*Quietly.*] Ah, we had such happy times—once.

PHIL. In the dim, dark past.

REBECCA. [*Thoughtfully.*] *His* dark past. And now I fear [*pause*]—his future will be darker.

PHIL. He snuffed his own candle.

REBECCA. Mine is his only light that still burns. And it is often only —a flicker.

Pointing-Up Characters

Lines, even though we agree that they are highly important, are only parts of a play. Characters around which the plot weaves must be emphasized. A leading character has less difficulty in becoming the center of interest than does an actor playing a minor role. But whether the character is important or unimportant, some means of contrast often needs to be used to emphasize the character of the moment.

1. The character of greatest importance may be placed down stage center or up stage center. By leaving an open space on all sides of him, he will seem to stand out alone and will thus draw attention.

2. He may be placed either right or left stage with vacant stage about him. Other players located on the opposite side of the stage may focus on him.

3. He may be located on a contrasting level, as on steps, a platform, a chair, a throne, or a table. He may sit on the floor while others stand; lie on a couch or crouch on a stool with others above him. He may stand while others are seated, or sit while others stand.

4. If an open space is left and other actors do not enter that space, the audience will expect something important to take place there. The open space arouses suspense and gives the character who enters it still greater importance.

5. Light may be focused on the space into which the character will come. Or light may be merely centered upon the character as he plays. It may follow him about the stage, thus making him stand out.

6. If emphasis is to focus upon a specific character for most of an act, he may be made to look different. His clothes may be bright-colored while others are drab; they may be black while others are white or light. Clothes will point-up when they are coarse and crude or when they are overly elegant. A hairdress may be outstanding in some way.

7. An entering character may speak off stage to attract attention, then enter. A whistle, the sound of horses' hoofs or of an auto horn, or a call from off stage will attract attention to an important entrance.

8. He may pass a window where he can be seen by the audience before his entrance, or he may knock on the door. The expectant pause of the players on the stage will emphasize an important entrance.

9. When the players on stage hear some one coming, they may point-up the character by focusing on his entrance. Or, when they hear someone outside, they may run to look through a window then primp, or straighten the room, or stand expectantly waiting.

10. Those on stage may seem surprised to see him. They may stop what they are doing and focus on him.

11. The character may stand framed in the doorway. He may stand poised on the stairs, or in the apex of a strong triangle, or on a level where lines of scenery converge.

12. Minor characters may throw attention on the important individual by entering just before he enters. They may hurriedly talk together, then focus on the entrance. Or minor characters may precede the important character, group about the entrance, and pause and wait for him.

13. Locating an important character near an imposing piece of furniture, as a throne, a large fan-back chair, or behind a desk, will point his importance.

14. Other characters may precede the individual and scurry about to set the room in order. They may prepare a seat, a lounge, or a desk for him. Then they may focus on his entrance.

15. There may be a long pause in the dialogue to create suspense. After the pause, talking may be heard off stage.

16. Loud talking off stage will point-up an entrance.

17. An entering character must speak above all others, making his own speech top theirs.

In the following scene from Sherwood's *Idiot's Delight,* a num-

ber of means are used to point up Irene's importance. They are: her striking appearance and elegant attire, Harry's complete attention, and the use of a higher level, the stairs, for playing space. Add to these still other means of emphasis.

EXERCISE 2

✓ (FOUR MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[*The time is at the outbreak of the war between Italy and England. Guests are arriving at an Italian hotel because transportation is impeded.* DON *ushers* IRENE *into the cocktail lounge to show her the vista from the windows there.*[2]]

DON [*coming in.*] This is our cocktail lounge, madame. [IRENE *enters. She is somewhere between thirty and forty, beautiful, heavily and smartly furred in the Russian manner. Her hair is blonde and quite straight. She is a model of worldly wisdom, chic, and carefully applied graciousness. Her name is pronounced* "Ear-ray-na." . . . *She surveys the room with polite appreciation, glancing briefly at* HARRY.]

DON. Your suite is up there, madame. All this part of the hotel is quite new.

IRENE. How very nice!

DON. We have our best view from this side of the hotel. [*He goes to the window.* IRENE *follows, slowly.*] You can see four countries—Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Bavaria.

IRENE. Magnificent!

DON. Yes—we're very proud of it.

IRENE. All those countries. And they all look so very much alike, don't they!

DON. Yes—they do really—from this distance.

IRENE. All covered with the beautiful snow. I think the whole world should be always covered with snow. It would be so much more clean, wouldn't it?

DON. By all means!

IRENE. Like in my Russia. White Russia. [*Sighs, and goes up to the next landing.*] Oh, and—how exciting! A flying field. Look! They're bringing out the big bombers.

[2] Sherwood, Robert E., *Idiot's Delight*, in Gassner, John (editor), *Twenty Best Plays*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1939. Reprinted by special permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

DON. Madame is interested in aviation?

IRENE. No, no. Just ordinary flying bores me. But there is no experience in life quite so thrilling as a parachute jump, is there!

DON. I've never had that thrill, I'm ashamed to say.

IRENE. Once I had to jump when I was flying over the jungle in Indo-China. It was indescribable. Drifting down, sinking into that great green sea of enchantment in hidden danger. [DUMPTSY *comes in.*]

DON. And you weren't afraid?

IRENE. No—no—I was not afraid. In moments like that, one is given the sense of eternity.

HARRY [*viciously*]. Dumptsy! Get me another Scotch.

DUMPTSY. Yes, sir.

HARRY. And put ice in it, this time. If you haven't got any ice, go out and scoop up some snow.

DUMPTSY. If you please, sir. [*He goes into the bar.*]

IRENE. [*Her gaze wandering about the room.*] But your place is really charming.

DON. You're very kind.

IRENE. I must tell everyone in Paris about it. There's something about this design—it suggests a—an amusing kind of horror.

DON. [*Not knowing quite how to interpret that.*] Madame is a student of decoration?

IRENE. No, no. Only an amateur, my friend. An amateur, I'm afraid in everything. [*The siren sounds from off at the right.* IRENE, *near the top of the staircase, stops to listen.*]

IRENE. What is that?

DON. Oh—it's merely some kind of warning. They've been testing it.

IRENE. Warning? Warning against what?

DON. I believe it's for use in case of war.

IRENE. War? But there will be no war. [PITTALUGA *enters from the lobby, escorting* ACHILLE WEBER—*which is pronounced* "Vaybair." *He is a thin, keen executive, wearing a neat little mustache and excellent clothes. In his lapel is the rosette of the Legion of Honor. He carries a brief case.*]

PITTALUGA [*as they come in*]. *Par ici, Monsieur Weber. Vous trouverez Madame ici . . .*

IRENE [*leaning over the railing*]. Achille!

WEBER [*pausing and looking up*]. Yes, my dear?

IRENE. Achille—there will be no war, will there?

WEBER [*amused*]. No, no—Irene. There will be no war. They're all much too well prepared for it. [*He turns to* PITTALUGA.] Where are our rooms?

PITTALUGA. *Votre suite est par ici, Monsieur. La plus belle de la maison! La vue est superbe!*

IRENE [*to* DON]. There, you see! They will not fight. They are all much too much afraid of each other. [WEBER *is going up the staircase, ignoring the view.* PITTALUGA *is following.*]

IRENE [*to* WEBER]. Achille—I am mad about this place! *Je rafolle de cette place!*

WEBER [*calmly*]. Yes, my dear.

IRENE. We must be sure to tell the Maharajah of Rajpipla, Achille. Can't you imagine how dear little "Pip" would love this? [*They go out on the landing above.*]

HARRY. Who was that?

DON [*impressed*]. That was Achille Weber. One of the biggest men in France. I used to see him a lot at St. Moritz. [*There is a sound of airplane motors off at the right.*]

Pointing-Up Objects

Often a letter, a piece of wearing apparel, or a piece of stage property will have unusual significance. Actors can make such an article seem important to the audience by using it to an unusually great extent—more often than is necessary.

Pieces of stage property may be *planted* by handling them, looking at them, or touching them as though they were important. A fan may be opened, touched gently, admired, closed, rubbed across one's cheek, and again fingered delicately. A scrap of paper may be *planted* by taking it carefully from a pocket, looking at it, placing it in an envelope, and again tucking it safely into a pocket.

For example, the paper knife in the following exercise must be made significant. Helen might toy with it, look at its edge, try its strength, admire its handle, fondle it, and balance it carefully on the edge of the table. Nothing is said about the paper knife, but it plays an important part later in developing the plot.

Certain objects by their very nature are so important that the actor dare not more than mention them or allow the audience a glimpse of them to point-up their importance. Any piece of firearms—a pistol, a rifle, or a shotgun—attracts attention immediately even when it is not supposed to. For that reason a revolver, a vicious-looking hunting knife, a dagger or any other attention-catching object must remain out of sight except for perhaps a momentary showing of it to arouse suspense. However, most objects other than firearms need to be pointed-up.

Some playwrights have written appropriate stage directions into their plays to point-up articles. When, however, the author has not foreseen the necessity of this, the actors must plan appropriate business to emphasize the item of importance.

EXERCISE 3

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[*A number of guests have gathered at* JACK BROOKFIELD'S. HELEN *has taken* JACK *aside to try to persuade him to stop influencing her son to gamble. The ivory paper knife is to be used as a weapon later in the play.*[3]]

HELEN. I only feel sure that anything which the majority of good people condemn is wrong. [*Sits left of table.*]

JACK. [*Sits right of table.*] I'm sorry—

HELEN. I'd be glad if you meant that—but you're not sorry.

JACK. I *am* sorry—I'm sorry not to have public respect—as long as you think it's valuable.

HELEN. I amuse you—don't I?

JACK. [*Elbows on knees.*] Not a little bit—but you make me blue as the devil, if that's any satisfaction.

HELEN. I'd be glad to make you blue as the devil, Jack, if it meant discontent with what you're doing—if it could make you do better.

JACK. I'm a pretty old leopard to get nervous about my spots.

HELEN. Why are you blue?

JACK. You.

HELEN. In what way?

[3] Thomas, Augustus, *The Witching Hour,* in Dickinson, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Mrs. Augustus Thomas.

JACK. I had hoped that twenty years of charitable deeds had made you also charitable in your judgment.

HELEN. I hope it has.

JACK. Don't seem to ease up on my specialty.

HELEN. You called your conduct "wild oats" twenty years ago.

JACK. It was—but I found such an excellent market for my wild oats that I had to stay in that branch of the grain business. Besides, it has been partly your fault, you know.

[HELEN *plays with the ivory paper-knife, balancing it on the front edge of the table.*]

HELEN. Mine?

JACK. Your throwing me over for my wild oats—put it up to me to prove that they were a better thing than you thought.

HELEN. Well—having demonstrated that—

JACK. Here we are—

HELEN. Yes—here we are.

JACK. Back in the old town. Don't you think it would be rather a pretty finish, Helen, if despite all my—my leopard's spots—and despite that—[*Pause.*]—that Philadelphia episode of yours—

HELEN. You call twenty years of marriage episodic?

JACK. I call any departure from the main story episodic.

HELEN. And the main story is—

JACK. You and I—

HELEN. Oh—

[*Paper-knife falls to floor*—JACK *rises and picks it up, stands in front of table left hand on* HELEN'S—*his right gesticulating with paper-knife.*]

JACK. Wouldn't it be a pretty finish if you took my hand and I could walk right up to the camera and say, "I told you so"—? You know I always felt that you were coming back.

HELEN. Oh, did you?

JACK. [*Playfully, and going right center.*] Had a candle burning in the window every night.

HELEN. You're sure it wasn't a red light?

JACK. [*Remonstrating.*] Dear Helen! have some poetry in your composition. Literally "red light" of course—but the red flame was here—[*Hand on breast*]—a flickering hope that somewhere—somehow—somewhen I should be at rest—with the proud Helen that loved and—rode away.

Pointing-Up Action

Significant action of a character must be pointed-up to be seen The many interesting things taking place on stage cause the attention of the audience to shift from the speaking character to the setting, to costumes, to entrances, to movements, and back again to the character. Unless the important action is *pointed-up* to force attention on it, half of the audience may not see it.

The dramatist can force the audience to hear important ideas by repeating them twice or a number of times, but pointing action must be done by the actor. He is responsible for it, not so that the few exceptionally alert and observant members of the audience will *see* it, but so that nobody can *miss seeing* it.

EXERCISE 4

(ONE MAN; TWO WOMEN.)

[MRS. SIMMS-VANE *is a helpless invalid in a wheel chair. She can turn her head to neither the right nor the left. While some of the servants are away, others have planned to steal her valuable diamond necklace which they know she keeps hidden in a certain room.* MILLER *and* LUCILLE *are searching the room looking for the jewels.* MRS. SIMMS-VANE, *sitting very calmly in her chair, has been commanded to be quiet. She, however, has a plan to catch them both and is leading* MILLER *into her net.* LUCILLE *has gone out for some milk.*[4]]

MILLER. How you going to put her off the scent?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Leave that to me. If you are the gentleman I think you are, you will have her give me the milk.

MILLER. Well; but how will you fix her?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Just continue your search.

MILLER. But I've finished this room!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then try the next; but leave the girl to me.

MILLER [*takes out the diamonds, looks at them a moment*]. All right. [*Walks away.*] But don't you play any tricks on me.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Sir, that will depend upon you. [*He misses her*

[4] Pillot, Eugene, *Two Crooks and a Lady,* in Baker, George P. (editor), *Harvard Plays,* First Series. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1918. Reprinted by special permission of the publishers. Permission for amateur or professional performances of any kind must first be obtained from The 47 Workshop, New Haven, Connecticut.

inference and starts going through the drawers again. Suddenly, MRS. SIMMS-VANE *hears him stop. Reflected in the mirror in the wall before her she sees him reach for the gold stamp box on the desk, slowly grasp, and put it in his pocket. She sighs and closes her eyes.* LUCILLE *appears in the doorway, carrying a tray which holds a tall glass of hot milk.*]

MILLER [*seeing* LUCILLE]. You got the milk, huh?

LUCILLE. Yes, but the cook wanted to bring it in herself.

MILLER. Well, I've frisked the room all over again.

LUCILLE. What'd you find?

MILLER. No luck. The old lady's done us.

LUCILLE. Look some more. We got lots more time.

The following exercise from Susan Glaspell's remarkable play, *Trifles,* affords generous opportunity for projecting voice, facial expression, and action. Emotion runs high in the latter part of the play.

EXERCISE 5

(THREE MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*While the county attorney and the sheriff search the house and surroundings for some reason for the murder of John Wright, their wives find a dead canary which they both think, but will not admit even to themselves, was the motive for the murder. They sympathize with Mrs. Wright, who is held for the crime, and both intend to keep the discovery from their husbands who are looking for a clue.*[5]]

MRS. HALE. I wish you'd seen Minnie Foster when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons and stood up there in the choir and sang. [*A look around the room.*] Oh, I wish I'd come over here once in a while! That was a crime! That was a crime! Who's going to punish that?

MRS. PETERS. [Looking upstairs.] We mustn't—take on.

MRS. HALE. I might have known she needed help! I know how things can be—for women. I tell you, it's queer, Mrs. Peters. We live close together and we live far apart. We all go through the same things—it's all just a different kind of the same thing. [*She brushes her eyes, noticing the bottle of fruit, reaches out for it.*] If I was you

[5] Glaspell, Susan, *Trifles,* in Phillips and Johnson, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

I wouldn't tell her, her fruit was gone. Tell her it ain't. Tell her it's all right. Take this in to prove it to her. She—she may never know whether it was broke or not.

MRS. PETERS. [*Takes bottle, looks for something to wrap it in; takes petticoat from the clothes brought from the other room, very nervously begins winding this around the bottle. In a false voice.*] My, it's a good thing the men couldn't hear us. Wouldn't they just laugh! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a—dead canary. As if that could have anything to do with—with—wouldn't they *laugh!* [*The men are heard coming downstairs.*]

MRS. HALE. [*Under her breath.*] Maybe they would—maybe they wouldn't.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. No, Peters, it's all perfectly clear except a reason for doing it. But you know juries when it comes to women. If there was some definite thing. Something to show—something to make a story about—a thing that would connect up with this strange way of doing it—[*The women's eyes meet for an instant.* HALE *enters from outer door.*]

HALE. Well, I've got the team around. Pretty cold out there.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. I'm going to stay here awhile by myself. [*To the* SHERIFF.] You can send Frank out for me, can't you? I want to go over everything. I'm not satisfied that we can't do better.

SHERIFF. Do you want to see what Mrs. Peters is going to take in? [*The* ATTORNEY *goes to the table, picks up the apron, laughs.*]

COUNTY ATTORNEY. Oh, I guess they're not very dangerous things the ladies have picked out. [*Moves a few things about, disturbing the quilt pieces which cover the box. Steps back.*] No, Mrs. Peters doesn't need supervising. For that matter, a sheriff's wife is married to the law. Ever think of it that way, Mrs. Peters?

MRS. PETERS. Not—just that way.

SHERIFF [*chuckling*]. Married to the law. [*He moves toward the other room.*] I just want you to come in here a minute, George. We ought to take a look at these windows.

COUNTY ATTORNEY [*scoffingly*]. Oh, windows!

SHERIFF. We'll be right out, Mr. Hale. [HALE *goes outside.* SHERIFF *follows* ATTORNEY *into other room.* MRS. HALE *rises, hands tight together, looking intently at* MRS. PETERS, *whose eyes make a slow turn, finally meeting hers. A moment* MRS. HALE *holds her, then her own eyes point the way to where the box is concealed. Suddenly* MRS. PETERS *throws back quilt pieces and tries to put the box in the bag*

she is wearing. It is too big. She opens box, starts to take bird out, cannot touch it, goes to pieces, stands there helpless. Sound of a knob turning in the other room. MRS. HALE *snatches the box and puts it in the pocket of her big coat. Enter* ATTORNEY *and* SHERIFF.]

COUNTY ATTORNEY [*facetiously*]. Well, Henry, at least we found out that she was not going to quilt it. She was going to—what is it you call it, ladies?

MRS. HALE. [*Her hand against her pocket.*] We call it—knot it, Mr. Henderson.

Pointing-Up Comedy

Comedy may be broad or it may be subtle. It may be present in the words themselves or it may come as the result of pantomime and characterization. No matter what means the author uses to supply it, the players should strive to project *just the right amount* to the audience. Do not get the idea that comedies are to be made funny all the way through or that laughs are an indication of a play's success. Laughs should not come where they do not belong.

Broad comedy—such as gags, wise cracks, and funny lines—is foolproof. It brings laughs without thought or effort on the part of the actor. However, even broad comedy effects can be enhanced by applying technique to point them up to the fullest. The more subtle the comedy, the more pointing it needs.

Comedy may be of many types. The broadest comedy is *slapstick*. In this, we cruelly laugh at someone's misfortunes. Charlie Chaplin's big shoes cause him to stumble and fall flat. We laugh lustily. Few people can play slapstick because the right facial expression is extremely important for it. *Burlesque* is often rowdy. In it the individual may be ridiculed. Or burlesque may result from greatly exaggerated actions, business, or characteristics.

Farce usually employs an exaggerated situation. It makes no serious attempt to depict characters realistically. Persons and actions are unnatural and manners false. Many good comedies are ruined by farcing them.

Light comedy is more realistic than farce but broader than

comedy of manners. Light comedy, common in modern plays, often results from the humorous actions of a character or from quick, clever lines. Light comedy may be overplayed; it may be farced somewhat with rapid broad actions. It should be held in tow enough, however, to resemble life.

Comedy of manners is not broad comedy. The lines are subtle, often witty satire. It is sometimes known as drawing-room comedy. In it the lines must be pointed-up in order to project the comedy ideas.

Response of the audience plays a greater part in the playing of comedy than in any other phase of acting. Audience response will change from minute to minute, thus making it necessary for actors to sense the changes and to adapt their playing to them.

Comedy needs most careful *timing.* The general pace for light comedy is fast, staccato, clipped. Precision of speech and accuracy of phrasing must be employed to make sure that all lines can be heard. Since lines are spoken fast, the thinking must also be fast. The actor will seem alert, keen, alive, animated, with his thoughts ahead of his lines.

Comedy points or thoughts must be set apart. Authors sometimes place comedy point after comedy point in rapid succession. If the audience is to be given an opportunity to appreciate them, the thoughts must be separated and time for laughs given between them.

Each audience will need to be considered individually. Some audiences laugh loudly; others, equally as appreciative, are more quiet. A Monday audience may be entirely different from a Tuesday audience. The player must be able to sense the character of the audience and allow time according to its needs.

Actors use different devices—that is, techniques—to point-up comedy. Since comedy is difficult to play, the actor needs to try different means of projecting it in order to play it most skillfully. Keep the following helps clearly in mind.

Variety in rendition must be used to make comedy effective. A character in a play may seem very funny in the first act and

grow stale in the third act, even though he is playing just as well as he was earlier. The very thing that seems humorous to the audience, at first, grows old after a short time or with a few repetitions. The funny man in vaudeville is often very successful; but he would be a failure in the theater because he does not have the variety to interest his audience for more than half an hour.

Comedy can often be projected through *characterization.* A little piece of comedy business can make an audience laugh uproariously. The same piece of business, if not executed well, may be completely lost to the audience. The voice of a character can also create laughs. It can take on peculiar inflections or an unusual quality which the audience will greatly enjoy; however, the player *must be sure* that he does not resort to such means of provoking laughs unless the action *is in keeping* with the theme and mood of the play and with his character. Such acting may approach burlesque, and must, therefore, be used carefully. One player must not infringe upon the work of other characters by stealing a scene that is not rightfully his. A characterization must appear natural and appropriate.

Comedy is often projected by the *reaction of a character* to whom the line is spoken. Since in such cases not the speaker's but the listener's face is of special interest, the latter should face the audience.

When two characters are working for comedy effects the results are surer. One can give the line while the other secures the laugh by his reaction to it. Either of them may *feed* a laugh, prolonging it and enlarging it by pieces of business. The listener's eyes may widen, or roll, or blink, or wince. In one farce, for example, a young woman player fed a laugh with a whistle and by rocking a chair rapidly back and forth. This was done when someone suddenly appeared trying to find the young man whom the actress was hiding. She, in trying to appear at ease, whistled and rocked the chair. The harder she whistled and rocked, the greater the laughter. This would be suitable for farce but not for comedy because the latter must seem more nearly true to life.

A character may employ the same sort of trick by toying with his hat or puffing on his cigar, or by innumerable other actions to show himself nervous. Such business can be carried through a laugh, *feeding* it until it grows and is prolonged. The laugh should not extend too long, however, or the play, as a whole, suffers.

Comedy lines can be spoken downstage and thus *directed toward the house.* This is helpful because the audience can get the full effect of the expressions on the actor's face, and any movement that he makes to point-up the comedy can be seen. Furthermore, the audience is more interested in the actor holding the most prominent and unusual position on the stage. Speaking comedy lines directly front, however, was used oftener in former times than it is now. Players of the present day put comedy lines across by pointing them both vocally and mentally.

A pause immediately before the comedy idea will point it up. The pause commands attention and prepares all minds for the comedy idea. See what the pause does to these lines:

1. MR. NORTH *wonders what part of a car his wife can be talking about.* NORTH. "What would it be—the flipper?" (*Mr. and Mrs. North* by Owen Davis.)

2. The MAN *describes a peculiar-looking individual.* MAN. There were his legs. I noticed they looked like—nothing at all. (*Escape* by John Galsworthy.)

3. MAGGIE *is telling her boss,* MR. WHITESIDE, *what's what!* MAGGIE. That's my message to *you,* Big Lord Fauntleroy. (*The Man Who Came to Dinner* by Kaufman and Hart.)

It is most essential that all actors *hold the picture—"hold everything"*—when a laugh is started and before it has finished. Lines must not be spoken during this time, because the various members of the audience cannot hear them, and if they see that they are losing what is being said they will stop laughing.

However—and this is important—the actor should pick up the line again when the laugh has largely died away but has not completely stopped. Laughs begin with a sudden outburst; they

then diminish gradually. When the laugh has decreased sufficiently for the actor to be heard, he should pick up the line and continue it.

People go to the theater to enjoy themselves. They like to thrill, they like to cry, but most of all they like to laugh. However, they often refrain from laughing, unless they are led on and into it. Nowhere is the law of "like begets like" more true than in the matter of laughing. A laugh is contagious. When an actor laughs loud, heartily, uproariously, soon the members of the audience will follow suit and begin to enjoy themselves completely.

Few people, nowadays, laugh with zest and gusto. This is regrettable, for it must be remembered that such laughs are infectious. A good, contagious laugh starts dozens of others laughing. These, in turn, infect others, until the entire audience is imbued with the spirit of laughter which was started by one person. Every actor should acquire the ability to project a hearty laugh.

The technique of projecting comedy effectively may be summed up more clearly by stressing what not to do than by stressing what to do. When pointing-up comedy:

Don't stop upstage.
Don't drop the humor-provoking words.
Don't kill the laugh at its inception.
Don't move.
Don't face away from the audience.
Don't drop the end of the line.
Don't emphasize the wrong words.
Don't stop acting.
Don't get out of character during a laugh.
Don't speak while the audience is laughing heartily.
Don't wait for a laugh to die completely before again picking up the line.

Above the many principles that help to project humor across the footlights stands the greatest factor of all—*personality*. Some people have the natural gift of being funny. They have ability to make things funny with less application of the technique. If an actor has the knack of provoking humor and, in addition, applies all the laws for the production of comedy effects, he possesses boundless possibilities for successfully projecting laughs. On the other hand, there are those who cannot be funny, technique or no technique. Such persons had best play only serious roles.

EXERCISE 6

(TWO MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[*While traveling in England,* MR. *and* MRS. RANDOLPH *accept an invitation to visit relatives for a week end. The* RANDOLPHS *find, greatly to their surprise, that these relatives are very wealthy, live in a spacious palace, and that they employ a retinue of servants. The* RANDOLPHS *have just arrived and have been conducted to the guest quarters. They are alone for a few minutes.*[6]]

VIRGINIA. To think, we were so obtuse not to guess!

BILL. [*Unpacking his traveling case and putting his clothes in place.*] Guess? Guess that I—I had wealthy relatives?

VIRGINIA. [*Walking about in a queenly manner.*] I feel like a duchess. I feel that I should be sitting in one of the great chairs, with a ramrod-down-back posture.

BILL. I feel like I need some state-road markers to find my way about these rooms. Does a man dress up for tea?

VIRGINIA. [*There is a rap on the door.* VIRGINIA *starts, looks at her watch.*] They said tea at five. [*She looks relieved.*] Only four. [BILL *goes to the door and opens it.* REYNOLDS, *a man servant, tall, solemn, grave is standing there.*]

BILL. Good afternoon.

REYNOLDS. Yes, sir. Good afternoon, sir. I am to valet you, sir.

BILL. [*Haltingly, not knowing what to say.*] Do you wish to—ah—do it now?

REYNOLDS. Your boxes, sir. May I unpack you, sir?

[6] *Being Valeted.*

BILL. You—why— [*Assuming a careless attitude.*] Yes, yes, of course. Come back in about three minutes, will you?

REYNOLDS. Very good, sir. Thank you, sir. [*Exit.*]

BILL. [*Closing the hall door and turning bewilderedly to* VIRGINIA.] He wants to "unpack me, sir."

VIRGINIA. But, didn't you unpack?

BILL. [*Turns to the door quickly and locks it.*] I did. But—I'm not! [*He hurriedly gathers shoes, ties, collars, etc., and puts them back into his bag. He then folds his suits carelessly and drops them in.*] What does a valet do to you?

VIRGINIA. Oh, he helps you, and dresses you, and brushes you.

BILL. Dresses me? How does he go about it? Do I just lie limp and let him fit me into each piece? Or could I help a little?

VIRGINIA. I don't know. Think of stories you've read.

BILL. I can't think. How can a person think just before an oncoming valet.

VIRGINIA. Katie's coming at 4:30 to do my hair. Just think! Tea in the blue drawing room! And a personal maid to fix me for it. [*She stands at the tall French window, looking out.*] Oh look! The gardens!

BILL. You look. I'm gardening with this bag. [*A rap on the hall door.* BILL *looks at it, frightened. He drops the lid and locks the case hurriedly; then he unlocks the door, sees* REYNOLDS *and feigns surprise.*] Oh, yes, yes, the unpacking. Come in.

REYNOLDS. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

VIRGINIA. I'm going in to dress. [*Exit, through door leading to her room.*]

BILL. My bag. It's there. [*He takes the keys from his pocket and carelessly tosses them to* REYNOLDS. BILL *thrusts his hands into his pockets, puckers his lips into a whistle, and strolls about the room. He eyes* REYNOLDS *wonderingly, suspiciously.*]

REYNOLDS. [*Opening the closet door he sees* BILL's *vest to his tuxedo which he neglected to repack.*] Here is a waistcoat, sir. [*Pronounces it "wes'cut." He holds it up.*]

BILL. Ahem. That's strange, very strange.

REYNOLDS. Isn't it yours, sir?

BILL. [*Looks away to hide his embarrassment.*] Somebody must have left it.

REYNOLDS. [*Looking in* BILL's *case.*] But, sir, I don't find yours here, sir.

BILL. Oh, no, no. You see I never wear a vest. [*Buttons his coat to try to hide the one he is wearing.*]

REYNOLDS. But this waistcoat is American made, sir—

BILL. Oh, yes, yes— We're famous for our waistcoats.

Pointing-Up Emotions

Every play is built about emotions. These must be projected to the audience if it, too, is to experience the sense of joy, excitement, embarrassment or fear along with the players.

Emotions may be shown through different avenues. The voice tells of feelings. Muscular movements, even though slight, telegraph cues to the audience which, if spoken, would be less impressive. The face is indispensable for showing emotion. It need not be twisted or screwed up to show depth of feeling, nor does it need to go through a series of gymnastics. Slight changes around eyes, mouth, and jaw register volumes which the audience grasps quickly. These muscular changes must, however, not be too slight. They must be magnified and made to *point-up* the emotion of the character.

Expressions of the eye are extremely important. The muscles of the face will help the eye in its work. The diligent student will learn skillfully to adjust the expressions of his face to the size of the auditorium and to the excellence of the lighting. Cultivate the "tell-tale face" for use in the theater. "The eye is the window of the soul." The soul is the home of emotion. The audience will be able to see the emotion largely through the expressive eyes of the actor.

EXERCISE 7

(THREE MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*The artistic friends of the newly rich* WILLIE SMITH *subtly make fun of his former hometown girl,* MINNIE, *who does not understand the insinuations.*[7]]

GEORGE [*discovering* MINNIE]. Shut up, Dolly. You're not the only person in the room, you know.

[7] Crothers, Rachel, *Expressing Willie.* New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1924. Reprinted by special permission of the publishers.

MINNIE [*smiling bravely and coming forward*]. My name is Minnie.

DOLLY [*looking at her and laughing*]. Oh, is it really? How do you do?

MINNIE. I mean Whitcomb. Minnie isn't my name at all. I don't know why I said that.

TALIAFERRO. No, it couldn't be. Minnie's much too mincing for you. I seem to see you on a large scale somehow. Minerva—possibly yes.

MINNIE. Oh that is my real name.

TALIAFERRO. Ah yes—I got that.

DOLLY. I notice you get most things after you've been told, old dear.

TALIAFERRO. Well, that's more than most people do, at that.

DOLLY [*laughing again*]. That's so all right—my friend. Do you see yourself on a large scale? [*Smiling impertinently at* MINNIE.]

MINNIE [*not quite sure whether she's being laughed at or treated with very kind attention*]. Oh, dear, no. Oh no, no.

TALIAFERRO. She doesn't see herself at all. She doesn't know anything about herself.

MINNIE. I only know I'm not what I'd like to be.

DOLLY. And what would you like to be?

WILLIE [*rushing in and down the steps*]. So sorry. I didn't know you were here. [*He gives a sharp questioning look at* MINNIE *which sends her back into shyness again.*] How are you, Cadwalader? Awfully glad to see you. How are you, Mrs. Cadwalader? [*He shakes hands with great dash.*]

DOLLY. I'm mad about the house. It looks just like you. I could have told it was yours with my eyes shut.

WILLIE. Think so? I'm glad to hear you say that. I've tried to keep it simple and homelike.

DOLLY. Yes, it's about as homelike as the Metropolitan Museum. Come, come, don't be swanky. You know you're bursting with pride and I'm so envious I simply can't bear it. Life's too dreadful. George is so magnificently clever and nobody knows it. Speak up, George, and tell this great man how clever you are.

GEORGE. Shut up, Dolly. It's hot—don't you think?

DOLLIE. George thinks it's hot. Do you think it's hot? Yes, we all think it's hot. Well—that's that.

WILLIE [*with great pride in his guests*]. It certainly is great to see you here.

[TALIAFERRO *is talking to* MINNIE *and* GEORGE *has gone over to them.*]

✣ *Pointing-Up Stage Pictures* ✣

The stage should appear as a picture to the members of the audience when they view it from a distance. Light is focused upon those parts to which attention should be directed, and shade surrounds the light, thus heightening the effect. Around this entire picture is a frame, the proscenium arch, which sets the picture apart from the auditorium.

Pictures in the theater are comparable to pictures painted on canvas. In both, the artist seeks to lend aesthetic pleasure through the eye. The paintings of the old Dutch master, Pieter de Hooch, do not lend merely the weak, trivial, ordinary pleasure to the eye that is often signified by the word *beauty;* rather they lend to the eye the deeper, the more profound beauty—that beauty which comes from life and truth. In the theater, also, the aesthetic pleasure experienced is often caused by the portrayal of the plain and homely as well as the gay and bright.

In forming the stage picture, whether it be gay or sad, many of the elements of painting are used: line, mass, space, color, light, and shade; but, in addition, there is movement.

It must be borne in mind that the actors alone do not form the stage picture; rather the properties, scenery, furniture, and actors combine in a composite whole. Actors are concerned only with their parts in the picture. We shall, therefore, leave the other elements to be taken care of by the director and shall discuss here a few ways in which each player may help to improve the stage picture.

In considering this subject, the student must remember that theatrical styles change from time to time. Length of plays, kinds of plays, styles of acting, styles of settings, costumes, and other elements vary with the years. The style of acting used by any group of players will be largely chosen by the director, who has in mind, more or less, the demands of the audience. If the director prefers realism, he and his actors will work largely for realism. If he prefers symbolic treatment of plays, he and his

actors may work in harmony with the great spirit of experimentation that has been molding the theater during the last few decades. If the director is interested in creating pleasing sights, his group will probably enjoy experimenting, with the hope of building what he has imagined.

Stage pictures are of two kinds—still and moving. The moving pictures will continue in a single position for only a moment. The larger picture then is made up of many movement-by-movement pictures. Mass of characters, space between them, colors, and all will keep changing.

Arrangement of characters in pictures should emphasize the thought. Attitudes and feelings toward one another and among groups will be pointed out by places the actors hold. The picture should tell the story so that a person who does not understand the language in which the play is given can understand it.

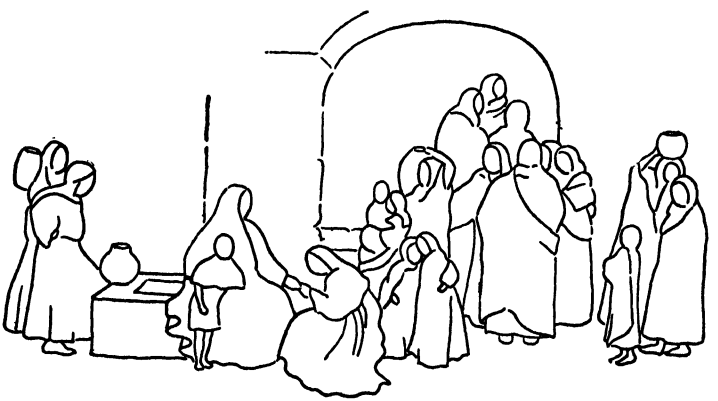
Now, let us consider, briefly, each of the elements—*mass, space, color, light, line,* and *movement*—that combine to make stage pictures. Over these elements the actor exercises his share of control.

The director will place his characters so that *mass* in the picture will contribute to the final pleasing effect. The actors will be placed in groups, in pairs, and singly, giving balance to the whole by either symmetrical or nonsymmetrical arrangement. Remember, *balance* means balance of interest rather than balance of mass. The player will need to move, to speak, to act and to react, to work at all times to retain the effective arrangements of mass in the stage picture. Actors must not disarrange the plan by distributing it wrongly while changing positions.

Between the actors—groups, pairs, and individuals—and pieces of property, there will be *spaces.* The player must never destroy these spaces by stepping into them before the opportune time. Spaces are as necessary to enhance the effectiveness of a scene as of a painting.

Color in the picture is an element planned largely by the director. Here, again, the player can see that the plans are effectively

When some characters are standing, others seated, heads and shoulders will be irregular.



By maintaining spaces between groups, thus keeping each segment of the larger picture distinct and clear-cut, variety in mass will be secured.

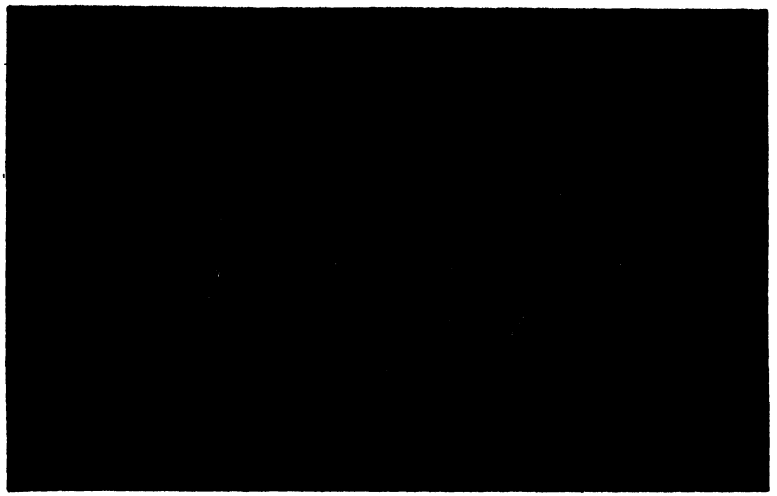
carried out. The color he wears must at one time stand out boldly in evidence and at other times be partially hidden; but at

all times it must maintain the proper relationship to other colors in the picture. Colors have a great psychological effect upon the audience. They are of greatest importance in emphasizing or subduing characters. They also create effective contrasts. In Maeterlinck's *The Intruder,* the three sisters, dressed alike in white, lend contrast to the old grandfather in his somber gray shawl and black skullcap.

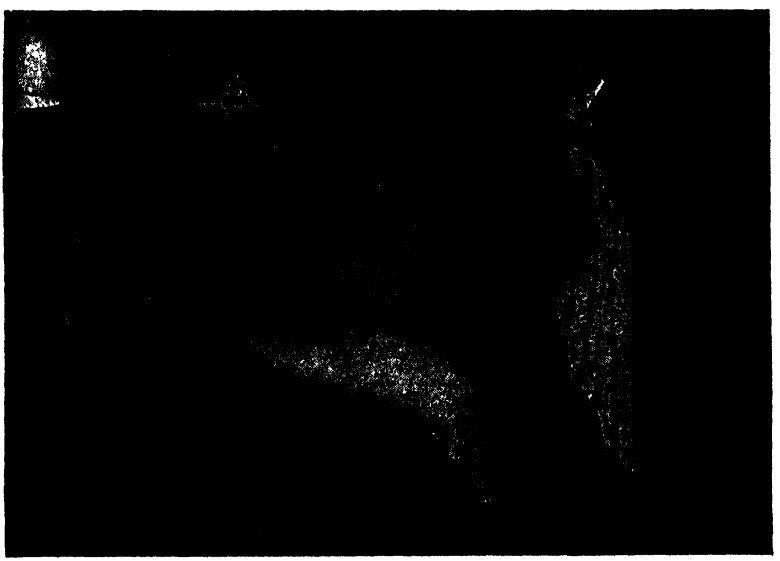
A stage having different levels offers opportunity for pictorial effects.

There are a few inexperienced players who do not willingly co-operate with the director in the matter of colors in their own dress. Since they can see nothing in the picture but themselves, they wish to wear only those things that they most enjoy wearing or those colors that are most becoming to them. They lack the vision, sense of unity, and harmony necessary to dress so that the effect of the play as a whole may be heightened.

Light has a great effect in the stage picture, just as it has in a painting. An actor is often supposed to play in a spotlight. In



Hippolytus, by Euripides, as it was presented by Department of Drama, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The use of levels lends greater opportunity for pictorial grouping.



Death Takes a Holiday, by Walter Ferris, as presented by Grove City College, Grove City, Pennsylvania. Triangular effects are pleasing to the eye.

that case he must keep the position of the spot in mind. If, on the other hand, he is to play in the shadows, he should stay in them.

Line is that element over which the actor has greatest control and which he should, therefore, strive most diligently to form correctly. The student of acting will do well to become line-conscious early in his work. As actors stand diagonally across stage, the line should be regular; but if one player steps forward or backward, it will become irregular.

Since the triangle is more pictorial than the straight line, varied triangular forms are worked into most stage pictures. The director, for the most part, will plan these forms, but the actors must be continually conscious of lines and angles and must keep them exact in shape. The actor must guard against the straight, horizontal line and also must avoid the semicircle.

Untrained players invariably maneuver into straight lines across stage. This looks very bad. Try to be careful to avoid straight lines and semicircles. The triangle is valuable but should not be used to excess. Those in the audience should not have their attention called to triangles. Triangles are used only to make interesting groupings.

In the pointing up of stage pictures, still other matters should be guarded against. Players should not stand equal distances apart; rather they should work in groups. This arrangement does not cramp the actor, but it dresses the stage pleasingly. A stage that has different levels presents much greater opportunity to secure pictorial effects than does a flat stage. Actors should school themselves to be continually conscious of line.

Movement must be rhythmic. It will change as the mode of the play changes. Sometimes it will be fast, at other times slow, varying from little to much, broad to narrow, ensemble to single. One character will occasionally have much or solo movement, while others have very little. The many form an accompaniment, so to speak, for the one. In *The Green Pastures*, the rhythmic

movement of the players was remarkable. In *You Can't Take It with You,* the constant confusion of movement heightened the rhythmic confusion in the play as a whole.

Movement more than any other element affects the stage pictures. As often as characters take different places on stage there will be change in stage arrangement, grouping, and pictorial effect. You need to learn to visualize stage appearance. Be conscious of *line, namely* the edge, of each small group that is a segment of the larger, full-stage picture. When only one group is arranged on stage, the task is quite as important but less difficult.

You will wish to work out variety in stage positions. When some characters are standing, others seated, and still others on arms of chairs or on stools, the line of heads and shoulders will be irregular. When several small groups are on stage and each of these differs in arrangement from every other there will be variety in form. By maintaining spaces between groups, thus keeping each segment of the larger picture distinct and clear-cut, variety in mass will be secured.

However, mere variety and change are not enough to secure pictorial effects. The arrangement might still give a cluttered and jumbled appearance. Some pictorial effects will be striking in appearance; others will be merely good to look upon. It is the actor's task to become conscious of those elements which bring out the pictorial effect—whether they be rhythmic movement, light and shade effects, or color patterns—and to strive to heighten

the emotional effect desired. He should become sensitive to slight changes caused by the movement of characters—changes in the color pattern and changes resulting from lowering or bringing up the lights—and make the adjustment necessary for the pictorial effect.

The director may already have visualized and planned the stage picture with its mass, line, color, light, and movement in appropriate proportions; or it may be necessary for him to secure the effects he desires, after much experimentation. In either case, the student will greatly enjoy helping to obtain good results. It is interesting to work out effective stage pictures and to blend the elements forming them so thoroughly into the theme, mood, and dialogue that nothing protrudes to strike a discordant note.

Book II

THE PLAYER TRAINS PHYSICALLY

Topics and Exercises

5

VISIBLE SPEECH

A. THE AUDIENCE FEELS-IN

B. POSTURE

C. PHYSICAL ATTITUDE

D. LISTENING

E. GESTURE

5

VISIBLE SPEECH

THERE IS something in all of us that makes us like to eavesdrop. We try to school ourselves against listening in; it is not polite, we say. Nevertheless, there is something exciting about listening in on others. We like it. Party-line telephones all too often become eavesdropping devices. Letters arouse curiosity. When old letters—even the most private ones—of famous people are published, we all feel that we have a right to chuckle over their most intimate secrets. The sales on the fascinating *World's Famous Letters* proved that.

Watching a play satisfies something of this universal desire to eavesdrop. Radio plays have become more and more popular. Screen plays call out millions daily to listen in on other people's stories. The legitimate stage furnishes an opportunity for more satisfactory eavesdropping than does either radio or cinema, because on the stage we can see and hear at first hand what the characters say and thus come to know what they think, what they feel, and what their problems are. A stage play also satisfies us because in it real people are living and talking directly before us about what seem to be their problems, their joys, and their sorrows.

These, then, are the chief differences between the stage play and the motion picture. In spite of the wonderful screen productions that have been given during the past few years, the stage endures on its own account. If the legitimate theater could compete with the movies in price as well as in excellence of production, we should have more theater fans than we could take care of.

The Audience Feels-In

The seeing of real people dealing with real problems, then, draws people to the theater. Acting will not attract the audience unless it appeals to the senses and emotions of its members. The audience wants a play to stimulate its own feeling through seeing, and hearing, thus arousing its emotions as the play comes alive. "There cannot be rich thought without adequate sensation." The reason for this sensation must be produced by the actor.

To make the audience feel, to make it sense the play, we try to make the audience *feel-in.*

But just what is *feeling-in?*

To *feel-in* is to get something of the same sensation as the person you are watching.

If the player successfully entertains the members of his audience, they will tend to adopt his physical attitude. His smile begets their smile; his frown begets their frown. They, too, will cringe before the villain's blow. As his muscles tighten and relax, theirs will respond. How often we, all unknowingly, tend to accept the muscular attitude of others about us! Smiles, frowns, and yawns are most contagious. Others gay make us gay; others cross make us cross; others yawning make us yawn. If a tennis player stretches for a ball, we, too, unconsciously stretch for it. If a basketball player falls, we tighten every muscle in sympathy. If we see a person walking in a very straight and well-poised manner, we also straighten our shoulders. While riding in the

back seat of a car, we often unconsciously turn the steering wheel or push the brake. This muscular imitation is called feeling-in or *empathy*. The player will seek to lead his audience into these *empathic* responses. When he seems to be frightened, he will wish them also to feel the muscular tension of fright. He will lead them into a joyful mood with his joy, into sadness with his sorrow, and into love with his love.

Man possesses a keen sense of movement. He loves activity. Because he himself likes to move and to act, he loves to see others acting. As he watches them, he seems to feel that he, too, is moving and speaking; that he is living the part as they are living it. He takes part, in his imagination, along with the actors. He feels a certain satisfaction as the play quickens his senses.

The response of each member of the audience in *feeling-in* will depend upon his or her own past experiences. Someone who has known the suffocating heat of the south will again feel it acutely when he sees an actor seem to suffer in such an atmosphere on stage. Another person who knows the humid heat of Chicago will sense it, and a middle westerner will feel a dry burning heat. Those in the house not only see what takes place on the stage but also they *feel-in* with the players, if the play is successful.

Stage settings, lights, and costumes heighten this *feeling-in* process. When you see a glorious sunset, you are filled with a sense of awe. When you see on stage a tall arch set against blue moonlight, you are affected emotionally. The same *feeling-in* response comes, although perhaps to a lesser degree, from effective lights, settings, and costumes as well as from acting.

It is the actor's task, then, to make the members of his audience *feel-in* as they watch him act. But how can he do this? The actor's body through its posture, its sensitive muscular responses and its movement is the most important instrument for accomplishing this task. Drama is action, and action is the substance of drama. Not necessarily a great deal of action, but action full of feeling.

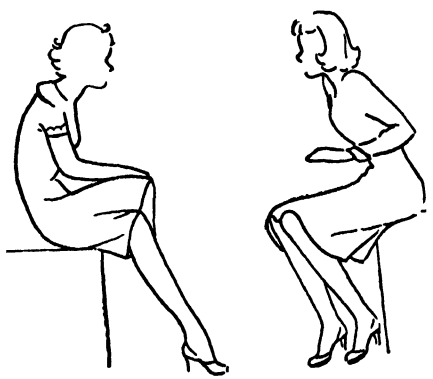
Posture

First think of your *posture* and your poise. When you walk do so with your head held high, *standing tall.* Let your chin lead, not your stomach. Don't bend backward, merely *hold yourself up.*

An actor must become conscious of his profile. Droopy shoulders belong only to droopy people. When leaning forward, lean from the ankle. In some plays, particularly the classics, an actor often needs to lean well toward another when arguing or excited. When you need to take this position, place the upstage foot well forward, bending the forward knee and keeping the backward knee straight.

When leaning forward, lean from the ankle with upstage foot well forward, knee bent. Downstage knee should be straight.

Those who have the habit of standing in a well-poised position are fortunate. However, only a few people in this day develop good posture. Ours is an age of casualness and comfort — shorts, necktieless men, sandals, soft girdles. We are inclined to carry over to the stage this tendency of wanting to be comfortable regardless of anything else.



You do not need to curve your spine in order to be comfortable.

You can learn to be comfortable while poised.

You do not need, in order to be comfortable, to curve your spine, rest one foot on the other knee, lean upon the table, or allow your shoulders, hips, or knees to slouch lazily. The young actor must discipline his own body in poise along with other body control.

Since the spine is the laziest part of the body, it should be trained harshly until it habitually holds up. The body will then seem alert and alive although not rigid. Keep thinking "stand tall." Keep a feeling of *aliveness* about you. Seem to be alert even when quiet. Look ready for action. You can relax, but hold, while relaxed, a poise that shows you ready for movement and business.

Try these exercises:

1. Find five people who are well poised and relaxed. Watch them.
2. Walk as though carrying a book on your head. Be seated, still thinking of the book.
3. Sit down in a chair, lean back so that the shoulder blades and hips, but not the small of the back, touch the chair-back.
4. Place one foot back and with weight on this foot sit down in a chair. In the same manner rise from the chair, your weight on your backward foot. Now, just to see and feel the difference, place both feet together, then sit down. Keeping the feet still side by side, rise from the chair. The profile may look worse than the movement feels.

These simple exercises or reminders will help you to achieve a more graceful carriage. Always, when on stage, sit, rise, and walk so that these actions look to be easy. Avoid all curves while sitting down, rising, or walking. Dancing and fencing are both particularly helpful exercises to train a person in posture and carriage.

✣ *Physical Attitude* ✣

Some positions of the body show more strength than do others. Not all of the actors in a play are supposed to show strength, however; nor do the "weighty" characters want to make all of

their scenes powerful. Occasionally the strong actors must show weakness.

You will recall that full-front positions are strongest, one-quarter turned are less strong, profile positions are still less strong, and three-quarters turned away are weak. Full back toward the audience is semistrong.

A position near the footlights is stronger than one upstage, and a position right stage is stronger than one left.

Holding an attitude can be as strong in body expression as a pause can be in vocal speech. Both add power to the lines. Unvaried activity, on the other hand, defeats its own purpose. There should be a rhythmic pattern in visible speech as well as in audible speech: rests in both, movement in both, colorless spots in both, to contrast with the brilliant spots of the play. All aspects of the body's acting, its tempo, rhythm, volume, and force, will coordinate into the actor's visual speech.

The position of the actor's head and shoulders will tell his state of mind. Head back and shoulders back may speak defiance. Head and shoulders bowed tell of sorrow, depression, or submission.

Try many different attitudes. Find distinctive attitudes for:

Happy surprise.	Fear.	Disgust.
Delight.	Expectation.	Hopelessness.
Horror.	Animation.	Despair.

Sitting with the knees crossed or with arms folded gives a quiet, restful, satisfied appearance. Hands on the hips is the proverbial position for the Irish washerwoman. Walking with the hands clasped behind the back makes a man seem thoughtful or, sometimes, worried. Looking quietly into space with hands clasped behind the head, or around one knee, or cupped and holding the chin, makes one seem thoughtful.

Listening

Visible speech is communication through the eyes, face, and movements of the body. It is important not only for the character

speaking but also for the character listening. It is harder to listen than to speak. If, when you act, you seem to be interested only when speaking your lines, the illusion of the play will soon be broken. You must both listen and register your thoughts throughout the play. As long as you are in sight of the audience, you must continue to be a part of the play. You must listen, register, and react even when you are apart from the group carrying the dialogue. Even when you are playing so minor a role that the audience has little interest in you, you must still help to keep the play building. Your part may be small, but you are nevertheless a part of a pattern that will be less perfect if all are not in accord with the scene.

When you are to speak after listening, be all set and ready. Pick up your cue promptly as the speaking character finishes or is finishing. This picking up of a cue is often a body response just before the words are spoken. You may toss your head, say, "I don't care," or point off and ask, "A mile farther?" Body response is of the greatest importance in building an artistic performance.

✣ *Gesture* ✣

Since the actor must use his whole body as a means of expression, he will work for complete bodily control. His every gesture should be free and full of meaning. The word *gesture,* from the Latin, means *to act* or *to perform.* Many students will discover that what seem to be simple gestures for one person will be quite difficult for another.

Good acting always looks easy to those beyond the footlights; anybody can act, a good many of them think. Perhaps they are right; maybe everybody can act. So can everybody sing, but who wants to listen to everybody trying to?

One can learn acting by taking part in plays, but the process is slow and confusing. Most young people when beginning are inclined to *underact.* They mean well, but are timid, overly con-

scious of being watched, afraid of their own voices, confused, and apologetic. These young people need to step-up their acting, overdo everything for a while—notice, only for *a while,* that is, while they are learning!

A smaller number of young people are inclined to *overact.* They stalk about the stage, say their lines with bravado, wave their arms with each gesture, and attract attention in general. This is overacting, a situation that is harder to cope with than underacting. Too often those who overact are completely satisfied with themselves. They can make themselves conspicious on stage and can often "make" the unskillful onlooker laugh. Such individuals, although they may be well meaning, have forgotten the play in their desire to show off. What they need to do is to tone down their acting and to play with restraint; to press the lid down tighter upon it and let the steam escape through planned channels. (Turn to page 155 and study carefully what Shakespeare said about those who overact.)

The parts of the body that are perhaps hardest for the beginning player to control are the hands. Players usually find that their hands feel particularly heavy and clumsy when they try to gesture. If an actor thinks of his hands, he may be sure that they *will* feel awkward and will appear so to his audience. If, then, he cannot make them do what he wishes in the way he wishes, what is he to do? The answer is, *use* his hands. By continued use, the difficulty will soon be overcome. Use them *more than enough* in the exercises that follow. Use them and keep using them until they cease to be a torment and can be controlled easily.

Since this study is for you as a beginner, you will wish to practice all of the exercises that will help you. To free your body is a hard task. For this reason, you will need to strive continually for abandoned bodily action. Exaggerate and exaggerate. Use an abundance of action.

Someone may say that too much action and poorly executed gestures do not make for artistic acting; but that criticism is of

small consequence at this stage of the game. What each embryo actor is working for now is an opportunity to improve. He must, then, first of all, gain full control of his physical being; he must train it to do what he wills. There is only one way for him to become fully free, and that is to work for abandonment; to use an excess of free bodily movements now while he is learning.

Tradition sets down some rules for gesture. These rules are to be obeyed most of the time, but may be broken occasionally. One must use good judgment and disregard rules sometimes.

1. A gesture should be graceful and easy. This does not mean that graceful gestures must be flowery; rather that they should be free and unconstrained. However, in a finished production they should appear to be natural to the character portrayed. If a part demands an awkward or stiff gesture, the actor must use it. Let all other gestures, however, be smooth, easy, free bodily movements.

2. A gesture should be broader and bigger than we customarily make it in real life.

3. The arm movements should come from the shoulder, the wrist should be limber, and the fingers lithe. You must guard against the elbows clinging closely to your sides. Make arm movements broad, often the full arm length. Force your arms to move out from your sides.

Try this exercise: Raise your arm out straight, then say "Off there," and point. A tendency on the part of many young people is to try to gesture with forearm alone, with no swing from the shoulder.

4. A gesture should not cross the body. If a character stands facing *L.*, talking with another actor whom he is to direct, he will say "Off there" and point to the door at *L.* with his left hand. He will not use his right hand because it would have to cross his body in pointing. If he is to hand something to another actor, he does so with his upstage hand even if it is his left hand.

5. If you are to make a striking gesture, don't speak while

making it. The line will probably be an important one, but it can be held up until after the gesture; or the speech can be cut, making the gesture in the middle, then completing the speech.

6. Do not slow up the play with too many gestures or by using movement that is not essential.

Bodily movement should not be indulged in to the point of distraction. Movement of a character, especially if the audience has been enjoying him, can easily attract all attention; all eyes will be focused on him instead of on the point of interest in the play.

We are all interested in moving things. The barber pole, which rotates, attracts attention. The blinking lights before a theater demand our notice. The girl demonstrating an electric sweeper in a show window soon has an audience. The moving actor on the stage also has all eyes upon him. Students must see to it that movement and gestures do not detract from the point of central interest.

7. An actor should be able to use graceful gestures. If he can control his arms and hands so that their movements are smooth, he will have no trouble controlling them for an awkward, slouchy, nervous, or brutal character. A real artist will have complete bodily control. First of all, then, the student should work for abandonment of gesture. Grace and ease will follow in due time.

8. Should gestures be flowery? Yes, sometimes. Plays of certain periods and some peculiar characters need flowery gestures. These should seem to belong in the play, however; otherwise, they are taboo. All significant movement, whether it be graceful, awkward, arrogant, forceful, or gracious, should lend aesthetic pleasure to the audience.

Try the following exercises for freedom of action. You may "mouth" speech for characters if you wish. That is, use neither whisper nor voice, but, to make the telling easier, move the lips and jaw when necessary as you pantomime speaking, and carefully enunciate the words.

1. Explain to a girl how to change a tire on her car.
2. Show a boy how a finger wave is made.
3. Describe the arrangement of rooms and furniture in one floor of your home.
4. Teach a dog to stand up and ask for a bone.
5. Direct a tourist to the best place to eat and then back to his highway by way of a short cut.
6. Show and explain to your young brother how he should shake out the clothes and pin them on the line as he helps you with the family washing.
7. Stand before a mirror and comb your unruly hair. Pantomime talking to your roommate as you do so.
8. Saw boards and nail together a box. Explain to a small boy what you are doing as you work.

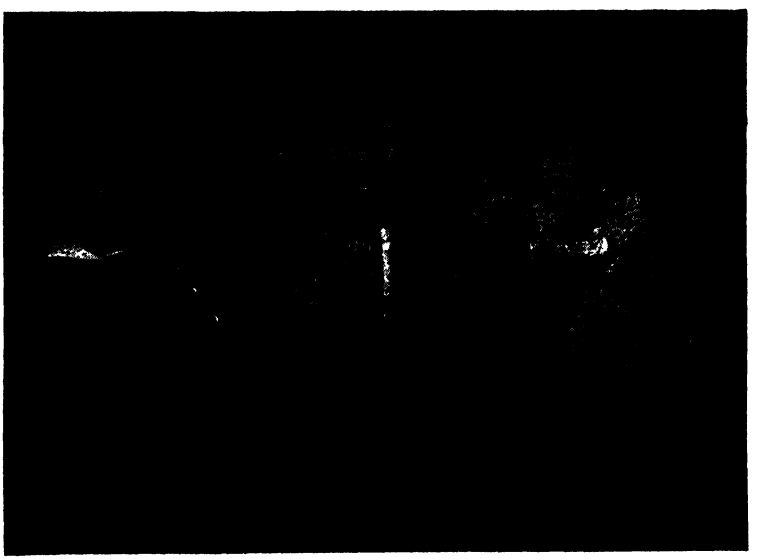
Now let us think of the gestures of the accomplished actor. We have been thinking so far only of the normal beginner. We hope that some time you beginners too will become proficient.

When a scene in a play has natural power and appeal, the accomplished actor can make it more effective if he uses restraint in his work. If he underacts, he may produce a more artistic piece of work.

Simple gestures bring deep feeling through suggestion. The members of the audience complete the acting by letting their emotions play as they will. In *There Shall be no Night,* Alfred Lunt's walk across stage when he learned of the death of his son was much more beautifully effective than any cry of sorrow could have been. However, few college actors can show heart-rending sorrow by a walk across stage. Inexperienced players, then, will use an abundance of action to train their muscles and emotional responsiveness. After fully schooling themselves in abandon and freedom, they are ready to work for restraint.

No rule can be laid down for gesture; only such principles as those upon which any art is built. The kind, the duration, and the movement of each gesture will depend upon the characterization and the situation at hand. The student should try out

The Black Flamingo, by Sam Janney. Produced by Grove City College, Grove City, Pennsylvania. Physical attitude is essential in portraying character.



Twelfth Night, by Shakespeare. A scene from the production in Westminster College, New Wilmington, Pennsylvania. Action is the essence of drama.

different positions of the body in order to find that position most appropriate to the lines.

Sometimes the gesture comes before the line, sometimes on the line, and sometimes after it; however, it usually comes on the line just before the word to which it relates. This technique arouses anticipation for the thought to be brought out. Ordinarily follow this order—*thought, look, gesture,* and *word.*

Gestures on the stage are larger than in real life. If the arms swing from the shoulder in an open, full movement there will be no difficulty about the elbows clinging closely to the sides.

Topics and Exercises

6

FREEING THE BODY

A. EXERCISES FOR UNRESTRAINED ACTION

B. EXERCISES FOR SENSING TOUCH AND FEELING

C. EXERCISES IN REACTING TO EMOTION

FEAR
JOY
SORROW
ANGER
DESPAIR

D. LIFE STUDIES

TO DEVELOP PRECISION

EXERCISES 1-6

TO DEVELOP GRACE AND AGILITY

EXERCISES 7-12

TO DEVELOP FEELING

EXERCISES 13-18

E. DETAILED PANTOMIME

EXERCISE 19: *The Dress*

EXERCISE 20: *Janice's Mother*

EXERCISE 21: *Wanted—A Pencil*

EXERCISE 22: *The Birthday Present*

EXERCISE 23: *Time to Get Up*

F. ABANDONED MOVEMENT

EXERCISE 24: from *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen

G. MOVEMENT IN FARCE

EXERCISE 25: from *Gammer Gurton's Needle*

6

FREEING THE BODY

ON STAGE speak with your feet, head, hands, and torso. You do so in real life. Almost everybody talks with more than his voice. It is better for most actors to encourage rather than to suppress physical speech. Some few may need to restrain their inclination to overdo, but most players need to step-up their work.

Bodily activity is the earliest response in life. Different ages, sexes, nationalities, and races speak this universal language. A baby seeing another spoonful of carrots thrust at him cannot refuse politely by saying, "Not any more today, thank you," but he can speak plainly in sign language. His fat hand simply knocks it away. His language is fully understood. A college man may be asked how he enjoys psychology. His answer may not be verbal; it may simply be a shrug or a thumb pointed downward. His answer is understood. A girl, in relating an incident, constantly twitches her fingers at her side and tells others that she is nervous or uncertain. Her bodily movements speak what her voice may not. Many primitive people gesticulate a great deal with their hands, heads, and shoulders. The actor must first learn the actor's language—to speak with the body as well as with the voice and face.

Bodily activity on the stage must tell even more than it does in real life about one's characteristics. The audience has only two or three hours in which to learn to know a character. It is necessary, then, that everything which reveals his life must move fast. The character's actions set him down as shy, forward, haughty, gay, or reserved. All bodily control speaks from the rise of the curtain, although words may come later. David Warfield once said, "First look the part, then act it." By careful study of the play and the role that you are to act, you will be able to decide the type and to visualize the character somewhat. However, this is not enough. The diligent student will go out; he will, if possible, find a model and note carefully how that person reveals himself. He will observe the movements, the gestures, and the characteristics of the person. These he will incorporate into his own being, practicing them until he perfects them.

But the outer movements are not enough. The actor will also feel inwardly—to a certain extent. Students of acting almost universally accept the James-Lange theory. According to this theory, we human beings build our own *inner* emotions by putting on the cloak of their *outer* actions. For example, someone hears of the death of a very dear friend; she restrains her feelings until she calls at the home of her dead friend, and then she has a good cry. As she cries, her sadness increases until she may wear herself down to the point of exhaustion. The fact that she gives way to tears increases her inner feeling.

Another example of the James-Lange theory may be given. The Junior Prom comes just at the end of a series of mid-semester exams. You have sat up and crammed night after night until, as the last exam period is finished, you feel exhausted. You have looked forward to the Prom, but now you wish that you did not have to go. While dressing you try to pull yourself together enough to be civil to your date. Arriving at the hall you are convinced that the orchestra really is the best of the season. The hall and everybody in it are dressed up beautifully. Everything bolsters you up. You conclude the evening by confessing that you have

had the time of your college life. The reason? You took on the outer attributes—the dress, companions, music, movement, and atmosphere—of happiness and these combined to buoy up your inner feelings and thoroughly to rejuvenate you.

You may wonder how this theory can relate particularly to acting. It does. On the stage, as the actor puts on the outward movement, actions, and demonstrations of an inner feeling, he will establish and develop the inner feeling. The James-Lange theory should become much more than theory. It should become a portion of the actor's diet by means of which he grows and develops.

Action and gesture, then, are first of all necessary to the player in order that he can do his best work. They are also helpful to the audience. They embellish words and say what spoken language cannot.

An action is sometimes enough to express a feeling or an idea; or a word may be sufficient. But the use of activity will supplement a word. One may say, "Don't do that again." It will mean just that. If, however, he should say it with a doubled fist, it would be more emphatic.

In real life we have no trouble in embellishing what we say with bodily movement, because we are expressing our own feelings. On the stage, however, it is a more difficult matter. There, the player must express for the character. The amateur often does not feel his character clearly enough; he needs to *live* and *think* him more.

The student will profit by trying not only one bodily expression for a line, but many different ones, and then by making a selection. Try out different bodily expressions in all the earlier rehearsals. New ones should not be tried out late in the rehearsal of a role. Decide early upon the bodily activity most appropriate and *memorize it with the lines.* Then, use exactly the same action at every rehearsal. It is a part of the play and must be practiced for perfection just as the lines are practiced.

Countless small movements depict characters and express meanings. Find the best. Different bodily expression can entirely

change the meaning of the line, just as vocal expression can change it. Sense, for example, the delicate muscular changes that one should find in rendering Edwin Markham's *Lincoln, the Man of the People.* There are definite sensitive changes between "laughter" and "serious stuff"; "tender" and "tragic"; "allhusht" and "mountains."

LINCOLN, THE MAN OF THE PEOPLE[1]

When the Norn Mother saw the Whirlwind Hour
Greatening and darkening as it hurried on,
She left the Heaven of Heroes and came down
To make a man to meet the mortal need.
She took the tried clay of the common road—
Clay warm yet with the genial heat of Earth,
Dasht through it all a strain of prophecy;
Tempered the heap with thrill of human tears;
Then mixt a laughter with the serious stuff.
Into the shape she breathed a flame to light
That tender, tragic, ever-changing face;
And laid on him a sense of the Mystic Powers,
Moving—all hush't—behind the mortal veil.
Here was a man to hold against the world,
A man to match the mountains and the sea.

The color of the ground was in him, the red earth;
The smack and tang of elemental things:
The rectitude and patience of the cliff;
The good-will of the rain that loves all leaves;
The friendly welcome of the wayside well;
The courage of the bird that dares the sea;
The gladness of the wind that shakes the corn;
The pity of the snow that hides all scars;
The secrecy of streams that make their way
Under the mountain to the rifted rock;
The tolerance and equity of light
That gives as freely to the shrinking flower
As to the great oak flaring to the wind—

[1] Markham, Edwin, *Lincoln, the Man of the People.* Reprinted by permission.

To the grave's low hill as to the Matterhorn
That shoulders out the sky. Sprung from the West,
He drank the valorous youth of a new world.
The strength of virgin forests braced his mind,
The hush of spacious prairies stilled his soul.
His words were oaks in acorns; and his thoughts
Were roots that firmly grip't the granite truth.

Action is the backbone of drama. A play must have it to stand. People want to *see* plays, not *hear* them. Bodily action is the basic substance upon which dramatic production rests. The audience wants action to stimulate them; they feel, through the action of players, a sense of it in themselves. The theater is man's imaginative world in which he performs fantastic, bold, noble, daring feats. He hears himself speaking the lines. He sees himself living the people's lives. The players' actions become his own and through them he is lifted.

All members of the audience respond to movement they see before them. However, they should never be conscious of any particular bodily movements. They should not know what an actor has done with head, hands, feet, and shoulders. If a gesture calls attention to itself, its purpose is defeated. Bodily movement is used to express a thought or a feeling and should be as unobtrusive as a word used for the same purpose. The actor will wish to be sure that he stimulates rather than destroys the illusion by his voice, face, gesture, and walk.

In order that your actions may become free and stimulating, you will work to make your muscles do your will. The muscles need to be exercised to become agile.

We say that the actor is to work for grace; but this does not mean that a big, stalwart fellow is to develop delicate and weak movements. *Grace* means body control. The football man exercises to get body control for the gridiron. His movements are graceful because he can make his muscles do his will.

The muscles must first of all relax. Some players feel awkward because they have not learned how to relax. Forget about awk-

wardness. It is all in your mind. Instead, go right ahead and practice whatever action is outlined. In time your muscles will respond as they should and you will have control.

Muscles of the torso should have first consideration; they are of first importance. Children and primitive peoples bend, lean, rear back, twist, turn, bow, and sway with their feelings. But cultivated peoples have schooled themselves against showing feelings or being in any way demonstrative. As a result, although they were free and unrestrained in childhood, they have lost control. When working on stage, then, the player's body often fails to turn when he turns his head to speak or to listen. The body should do the turning from the hips or from the ankles.

The kinds of action will depend upon the effect desired. A specific rhythm underlies every good play. It is imbedded in the characters and the story. *Green Pastures* combines gayety, coarseness, glibness, friendliness, broad actions, and loud laughter into the tone of Negro life. All action, movement, and speech combine into rhythm.

Each character contributes his small part in creating this rhythm. The importance of each player acting his role artistically is obvious. His body must be fully co-ordinated. His face, hands, legs, and torso should reveal unified feeling. This can be more easily accomplished by the player's getting set for the part and into the mood of it *before* he comes on stage. He should *think* the character, get the *feel* of it, just as a basketball player gets set and warmed up before the whistle blows.

Acting requires enthusiasm, vitality, a love of life, particularly for the beginner. The trained actor has little difficulty in "suiting the action to the word" because he has already acquired body control. He may play with beautiful restraint, using only half the movement that the unskilled actor uses. The beginner, in order to become skilled, must have this schooling. He will, in his early training, use greater animation and enthusiasm in order that later he may use restraint. Keep this in mind, then, that you are striving to become proficient in *restrained* action by first training your

body to be physically free through the use of broad, abandoned, unrestrained action.

Large movements belong to most plays of modern life, for this is an athletic age. Woman has joined man in freedom of activities—swimming, golfing, tennis, building camp, and skating. She has followed man also with ease and comfort in her dress. The modern woman's movements do not fit the rhythm of the past century with its dainty smiles, steps, and voices. But whether actions are large or small, the stage should all be used. Gestures can cover it in spite of the fact that a player does not walk all over it. Glances and turns will include it so that every part of the stage is drawn into the dramatic scene.

When actions are small they may have great emotional power by being intense. As soon as you can effectively use strength and bigness of action, work for *intensity* of action. Intense scenes are usually more impressive than forceful ones.

No rule can be laid down for the amount of stage action; the player must judge for himself. No definite rule can be formulated for carriage or walk; no two characters are alike. You can be advised, however, to avoid constant movement, and also to avoid no movement. Consider the character at all times, and do what would be natural for that living person—not what is natural for yourself; then enlarge that action proportionally to fit the need of the theater.

Every student will wish to memorize, word for word, Hamlet's advice to the players. That brief speech is so packed with sound advice that more than a mere reading is essential to digest and profit by it.

First, Shakespeare had Hamlet advise the players to pay heed to their voices and diction.

> Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines.

Then Shakespeare turned his attention to action that should accompany the lines.

Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. . . .

After this he reminded them of the reason for acting. Shakespeare evidently had trouble with some players acting lifelessly, and others burlesquing, just as some directors today have that difficulty.

Be not too tame, neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action: with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as t'were, the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

These players who wanted to overplay and burlesque likely were influenced more by the "haw-haw boys" in the audience than they were by those with saner judgment. Shakespeare did not want his players to work for laughs when these came at the expense of poor acting. He wanted them to work for the approval of the judicious spectators.

Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve: the censure of the which one must, in your allowance, o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. . . .

Exercises follow to help you become sensitive to delicate changes in feelings. Some of these will help to train your different senses; others will appeal more definitely to your emotions.

Exercises for Unrestrained Action

1. Reach up and dust above an imaginary window. Still reaching, adjust the fixture for the window shade.
2. Wash the hood and top of a car. Feel the water.
3. Bridle and saddle a riding pony.
4. Run a dust mop over the floor under a bed.

5. Push the lawn mower through grass which is too long.
6. Swat flies roosting on the ceiling of a low-ceilinged shack.
7. Pull up tall grass which is tightly rooted in the ground.
8. Spread over and smooth out a tablecloth which is long enough to cover the twelve-foot table.

Exercises for Sensing Touch and Feeling

1. Take off your raincoat which is dripping with water.
2. Retrieve your two books and scattered papers from the sloppy sidewalk.
3. Take your seat, adjust your instrument, and lightly pluck the strings of a golden harp. A cello.
4. Weave through underbrush and gather an armload of sticks for a fire.
5. Lay a chiffon wedding gown out on a bed; fold it and place it in a trunk.
6. You are blind. A friend brings two fluffy kittens for you to pet.

Exercises in Reacting to Emotion

Fear:

1. Sit on the ground, lean against a tree trunk, and relax. Feel something crawling on your leg. It is an enormous spider.
2. You are alone at night in a deserted cabin. You hear footsteps outside.
3. Three small children are playing on a railroad track. You see an express train nearing them.
4. Angry clouds cover the sky. While you are studying the sky, lightning strikes a tree a hundred yards from you.

Joy:

1. You have been in Brazil three months. You receive your first letter from home.
2. Present a lovely book to a very dear friend.
3. Receive a telegram offering you a coveted position.
4. The moon is nearly full, the lake is smooth, you are canoeing with a friend.
5. The sun has been parching the dry earth for weeks. A heavy rain is falling.

Sorrow:

1. You are reading a newspaper. An item catches your eye which tells of the death of a young friend in an auto accident.
2. Your best friend snaps back an angry reply to your question.
3. Your doctor tells you there is no hope for your recovery from a long illness.
4. Your dog comes helplessly to you dragging a hind leg that has been badly broken.
5. A ten-year-old boy chokes back his sobs as he tells you that he received no Christmas present.

Anger:

1. An acquaintance has angrily pushed your book off your desk and onto the floor.
2. A debtor bluntly refuses to repay you the five dollars he borrowed.
3. You see a man whipping his horse.
4. A friend has borrowed your best coat. He returns it wrinkled and badly soiled.

Despair:

1. An instructor ridicules a paper you have taken great care in preparing.
2. After the third try to pass your driver's test you are told that you have again failed.
3. Your father, who has pledged "never to touch another drop," comes home drunk.
4. Three times you have saved till you have had almost enough money for the new rug. Each time a relative has needed and borrowed it, or disaster has forced you to use it.

✣ *Life Studies* ✣

To develop precision. Pantomime requires more precision of action, on the part of the player, than would be necessary in real life. The following exercises will develop presence of mind and powers of observation. Many people do not visualize clearly. In the exercises, the student should make a diligent effort to free his imagination, visualizing clearly the exact location of each article, its weight, smell, shape, and surface, dealing with it each time in

exactly the same way. He should work, constantly, for freedom of bodily parts. Pantomime practice in the portrayal of character will awaken responsiveness of all these parts.

EXERCISE 1

You are in your library looking for the story of a particular author's life. You take down one book after another from the shelves, sometimes looking through the index, sometimes leafing through the pages.

Be sure to take all books from particular shelves, replacing each in exactly the same place. Keep the size and weight of the book clearly in mind. Register your thoughts as you search.

EXERCISE 2

It is early spring. You, a college student, have gone home for a week end. You are delighted to go out and help plant seeds for the vegetable garden. The earth is fresh and cool. You like to sift it through your fingers. In fact, you spend more time playing in the clean soil than in planting seeds and covering them.

After playing the part of the student, assume the characteristics of the parent. Be much more businesslike; draw straight rows with a string and hoe handle; plant seeds carefully, then sprinkle or spread earth over them.

Be sure that you keep the rows straight, that you do not waste the seeds, and that the earth is cool and fresh to your touch. Differentiate between the two ages and attitudes.

EXERCISE 3

Paint a picture in oils. You are copying a famous painting in a gallery. Your easel stands near the original. Be sure that you keep working on the same part of the picture, that you follow the coloring of the original, and that your brush and palette rest lightly in your hand.

EXERCISE 4

Gather a bouquet from the rose garden. The stems are prickly—be careful. Since you should gather no buds, some of the stems may need to be short. You like the roses; in fact you rather hate to pluck the loveliest ones.

You are gathering flowers again, but this time you are in the cool spring woods with dozens of purple violets about you. You soon think you have enough, but there are so many lovely ones that you can't resist them.

Now you are out getting a bouquet of lilacs. The lilac tree is tall and loaded with sprays of the delightfully fragrant spring blossoms. Since they break off easily it takes only one hand to gather them, and the other arm is free to hold the blossoms. Keep the size of the tree in mind, the fragrance, the wealth of blossoms and—oh yes, there is a honeybee that comes to help you.

EXERCISE 5

It is July 4, in the evening. You are young and not quite brave with the firecrackers. When you light a cracker, you throw it and run away quickly; perhaps you put your hands over your ears. Some of them do not crack, so, after waiting a time, you cautiously slip up on them to see why. You also have some Roman candles, some sparklers, and a skyrocket which must be placed carefully in a trough. They all give you a panicky feeling, but you like it.

Now imagine yourself the big, brave, fifteen-year-old brother. You must show the younger member of the family how it is really done by professionals; anyway, you enjoy shooting off the firecrackers yourself, for all of yours have been used up. You will show how it is done by an expert. Keep in mind the size of each piece as you work with it. Your actions, in handling large and small firecrackers, will be different. Be sure the match lights and that it is not extinguished before the cracker begins to fizz. Be sure to watch the Roman candle when acting the older brother; you may duck your head when you are younger. Make all movements with precision.

EXERCISE 6

You are setting the dining-room table for lunch. You are sixteen and old enough to set it carefully and neatly.

Set it again, this time as the mother would do it. It is time for the children to eat and go back to school, so you are hurrying.

Now imagine yourself twelve years old. You don't like to set tables, and it is provoking that you should have been called from jumping rope outside with the others to come and set the table. There are so many other things of more interest.

This time, set the table as an old lady would. As the old, almost-feeble grandmother you insist that you can help Nellie by doing that much for her. It takes a long time; you forget some things, and you are not very particular. When it is nearly finished, you discover that there is an extra place set.

To develop grace and agility. All players will need to use grace of movement. In acquiring this they should make an effort to conserve energy. Although some movement may be full of bodily activity, it must appear to be effected with ease.

The most graceful lines are those with curves. Straight lines are forceful, exacting, hard to follow. One may assume un ungraceful position by sitting up stiff and straight in a chair. On the other hand, a graceful position may need the head tilted, one arm curved downward, the other up or supporting one's weight as it rests on the seat, and the feet in different positions which avoid straight lines. All this must be done carefully, avoiding the appearance of laziness. It requires effort for a listless, lazy person to move. Graceful movements always appear to be taken with ease.

In the following exercises, work constantly for grace of line and movement, whether you take them slowly or rapidly.

EXERCISE 7

It is a beautiful fall day. You and your friends have taken a sudden notion to eat your lunch out in the open. You are now gathering sticks and arranging them for the campfires. Some of the heavier sticks are rather hard to break. You are successful in getting the fire lighted with a single match, and that pleases you. Other members of the party are bringing more fuel. A butterfly is flitting about, and you decide to catch it. It leads you a chase, back and forth, up and down, high and low. You think you have it once and peer carefully into your cupped hands; however, it isn't there. It has flown away while you were looking into your hands. Work for grace in chasing and catching it.

EXERCISE 8

Arrange a bouquet of roses and forget-me-nots in a lovely bowl. Place them carefully, because you are the chairman of the decorating

committee, and they must look just right. There are bits of fern to place in the bouquet, and a few pussy willows. After they are artistically arranged in the bouquet, you will place them on the stage in a location that will show them to best advantage.

EXERCISE 9

Some friends have dropped in to call. You pride yourself on being the perfect hostess. As the friends converse, you arrange the tea table and prepare and serve them with tea and cakes. You listen and enjoy their conversation as you arrange cups and serve. You will not need to speak as you serve, because they are busy chattering.

EXERCISE 10

You are in the midst of a delightful tennis game. The ball very accommodatingly comes within a few feet of you each time. However, you succeed in missing it a part of the time, and other times you have to reach up, out, or under to get it. Then you serve. Enjoy it when your opponent misses a good serve. You are even more pleased when, as he serves again, you are good enough to get some very high and very low ones.

EXERCISE 11

It is a summer evening and you have just finished a delicious picnic lunch. There are some remaining buns; you take them to the edge of the lagoon and break off bits to feed the many greedy fish. There is a big fellow who seems to rob the little ones, so you try to lead him astray by tossing crumbs away from him. You enjoy seeing the fish scramble for the bread.

EXERCISE 12

It is apple-picking time. You don't really mind picking apples, especially when you have such a pleasant companion as the one with you just now. The basket on your arm grows heavier as you place the big, red beauties in it. When the partner is up on the ladder and you are sure she isn't looking, you slip over and take a few from her basket—just to tease. Anyhow, you had wanted to let her stay on the ground, but she insisted upon climbing the ladder; now you want to show her what she has missed by picking only from the higher limbs. To be sure, some of the fruit does hang a little high for her to

reach. You yourself have to reach your highest to get some of the choice ones.

To develop feeling. Feeling is expressed in varying degrees. When emotion is most deeply felt, it is sometimes least outwardly shown. This is true because, in such a situation, the senses are often affected almost to the point of numbness, or to the point of not realizing. However, such cases are rare. As the student becomes more adept in portraying emotions, he will be able to sense, more accurately, the degree to which they should be expressed.

In the following exercises it is necessary to express the emotion fully through changes of facial expression as well as through changes of bodily expression.

The time element is important in showing changes of feeling. The student will school himself to use abundant time in expressing these feelings.

EXERCISE 13

After your day's work you come home tired. It has been a hot day and the walk home was exhausting. You drop into an easy chair, wipe your face and neck with your handkerchief, pick up a folded newspaper, and fan yourself with it.

As you become more comfortable, you fold the paper to another page and glance at the headlines. Something catches your eye. Your muscles become suddenly tense and you sit upright. You read it eagerly; a smile comes over your face; it becomes broader and finally you break into a hearty laugh. Again you drop back into the chair, this time laughing uproariously.

EXERCISE 14

Times have been hard for you for quite a while. You have tried to find work, but in vain. As you come in from out-of-doors you notice a peculiar odor. You glance about, sniff, try to decide what it is, then go to the table and examine the two bottles upon it; but you find the peculiar odor does not come from them. By this time you are growing accustomed to it, and you dismiss the thought from your mind. Going to place your hat on the rack, you smell it more strongly.

You look about, sniffing, then reach your hand into the pocket of your wife's (husband's) coat which hangs there. A small bottle is wrapped; you unwrap it interestedly. You open the bottle and an odor emerges which frightens you. You look at the label. It is marked "carbolic acid." Because of your wife's (husband's) recent despondency, a horrible thought strikes you. You are dumfounded. While standing with the open bottle and trying to reason this, you hear her (him) coming. You hurriedly cork, wrap, and replace the bottle, then assume an attitude of unusual gaiety as you go toward the door.

EXERCISE 15

You walk into the bank and go straight to the counter where you make out a deposit slip. It is dreadfully cold outside and the warm building feels good. You place the deposit slip between the pages of your bankbook; then you unfold your wallet to get the one hundred dollars in cash, which you planned to deposit. It is not there. You try to think where it is, when you last had it, and what could have become of it. You are not convinced that it is gone. Again and again you search your pockets, parcels, and purse. You are bewildered; you don't know how to go about finding it. You and your family were planning your summer vacation trip on that money. After some time you gather up your parcels and leave the bank.

EXERCISE 16

You are a teacher in your classroom. The importance of your position weighs heavily upon you. You would not deign to be found off your dignity. The class is in the midst of a written test. You walk about the front of the room, occasionally glancing out, as you near the window. As you do so your attention is attracted to two robins on the ground; they are struggling over a splendid, fat worm. Each bird seems to think it belongs to him. As you watch, you become interested and would like to root for the younger bird. You begin to feel yourself mentally helping in the struggle. Then suddenly and most unintentionally a little squeal emerges from your throat. It startles you and brings you back to the present circumstance. You are perturbed and glance hurriedly over the class to see how many have been watching you. You try to cover the mistake by clearing your throat vehemently.

EXERCISE 17

The snowstorm is a blinding one, accompanied by a cold, piercing wind. You are on a country road with still another mile to walk. The snow is so deep and soft underfoot that you have to wade it, taking high steps in order to raise your foot, each time, above the 18-inch level. Your breath comes hard; you start to breathe through your mouth; but the air is so frigid that it hurts your lungs. You try to take air through your nostrils again, but in your exhausted state it seems impossible to get enough. You finally turn your back on the blizzard and stop to rest a little. You are chilled to the bone, your fingers ache, and you are exhausted. After a minute's rest you turn and continue the struggle.

Similarly, imagine yourself facing a blinding rain. You duck your head to shield your face from the storm. You are carrying a borrowed book which you try to protect by carrying it under your coat.

Also, move through an intensely blinding fog. In the foregoing scenes your eyes will be squinting, but in this they should be wide open, staring, as you warily move forward.

EXERCISE 18

You, as a student, are not accustomed to receiving telegrams. When the maid hands you the message at the door of your room, you are somewhat frightened. You hastily open it and reveal the contents.

First, show pleasure as a friend wires you congratulations and good wishes before the contest which you are soon to enter.

Next show your feeling toward acquaintances who wire that, since they are to be near, they will plan to spend a few days with you.

Then, portray your feelings as you read the announcement of the death of a very close friend.

✣ *Detailed Pantomime* ✣

In the following pantomimes a complete story is told through the activity of the body. It is essential that every movement tell what it should, by sufficient activity, appropriate activity, and uniform activity. Abundant time should be allowed for the action and for the changes of mood. The student should plan and prac-

tice, painstakingly, the expressions of different parts of the body—the hands, feet, face, and torso.

Pantomimes, in themselves, can be made very entertaining. However, very few people are capable of acting them sufficiently well to make them entertaining.

EXERCISE 19

The Dress

Rosalie is just past eighteen. She sits in the living room engrossed in a magazine story. Something amuses her; she smiles pleasantly as her eyes skim the lines. She hears someone come up on the front porch; the screen door opens, but the doorbell does not ring. She listens, looks puzzled, then, magazine in hand, she goes to a window nearest the entrance and peers out. The window faces the east; the door, the south; so she must assume a strained position as she presses her cheek against the windowpane to catch a glimpse of the person who may now be going back toward the street from the front door.

In the street, at the front of the house, she suddenly sees the delivery wagon from the store at which she has purchased her new formal dress. She drops the magazine into a chair, rushes to the door, flings it open, and darts out. Soon she returns with the box. First, she tries to slip the string over the corner of the box. It is too tight. She pulls it, trying to break the string. It cuts her hands. She loosens her hold. Shaking the hurt hand, she looks at the wounded portion and puts it into her mouth. She looks about the room for scissors but finds none. Next, she decides to untie the string. She drops into a chair, the box on her knee, and struggles with the taut knot. Fingers, teeth, and bobby-pin assist in untying it. Then comes the smile, as she daintily removes the folded tissue wrappings and takes out the lovely gown, admiring in turn the design, the lines, the material. She holds it close-up, and at arm's length. Perhaps there will be time to put it on. Her wrist watch advises otherwise. She feels almost tempted to try it anyhow. Instead, she holds it up to her and admires it as she trips about the room. It is beautiful and just what she wants. She discovers that the belt is missing, so goes to the box, finds it, and notices the enclosed bill. Something on it catches her eye: the price marked there is too high. There is some mistake. It astonishes her. After scrutinizing it carefully and being sure of the price marked on the bill, she finds the tag on the dress. Ah, this is more like it! "I

knew it wasn't!" she thinks, "and yet, is that an eight instead of a three?" It truly is. Oh! What shall she do! The dress was on sale; will the store take it back? What will Father say? To be sure, it wasn't really her fault—the eight looked just like a three. Still, she mustn't pay that much for a dress. She decides to take it back at once. She lifts it carefully to fold it. Again she sees its loveliness. She must hold it up against her once more. Wearing this, she could be the belle of the ball. Again she takes smooth, graceful dance steps around the room as she looks down on its loveliness. The doorbell rings. That must be Father! Quickly she folds the dress and lays it in the box. She tucks the thin papers rapidly about it with deft fingers and puts the lid on the box. Then, assuming her calmest, coldest manner, she goes to answer the bell.

EXERCISE 20

Janice's Mother

Since her mother fell and hurt herself four weeks ago, Janice has been caring for her. Janice was out last night for her first gay evening since her mother's accident. Now, as she stands coaxing the curls about her face into place, she recounts the happy events to her mother who sits listening, interestedly, in an easy chair close by. Janice is describing the rush they had in order to get the last trolley home. Suddenly she notices that her mother's head has dropped forward as if she had fallen asleep. Janice speaks to her quietly, "Mother!" There is no reply. Again Janice speaks, a worried tone in her voice. "Mother!" No reply comes. Janice goes to her and shakes her by the shoulder. Her voice quavers as she fearfully speaks, "Mother!" Her fears are realized. Dropping upon her knees beside the chair she gently shakes her mother with both hands; her voice is quavering with fear and emotion as again she cries, plaintively, "Mother!" When no reply comes she draws back quickly, fearfully, jumps to her feet and gives a frightened scream. Then, looking toward a door in the corner of the room, she calls, "Mack! Mack!"

EXERCISE 21

Wanted—A Pencil

Phil, a fifteen-year-old boy, comes into the dining room with a rush. Leaving the door wide open, he strides to the middle of the room before he can put on the brakes. He is surprised at seeing no

preparation for dinner. He leans back awkwardly, looking into the kitchen—"Mom, where's dinner?" He is told to wait a little while until it is set in the sun parlor. "Okay by me, sun parlor, kitchen, any old place. Only, I'm hungry!" He pushes his cap off over the back of his head and takes careful aim with it toward a knob on the top of a dining-room chair across the room. The cap falls on the floor. He recovers it, goes back to the original spot, and, aiming again, throws it toward the knob of the chair. This time it hangs. "Atta baby!" he exclaims with satisfaction.

Phil then goes in search of amusement. He picks up the newspaper from the table, looks through it for the funnies, does not find them, shows disappointment. He begins searching the room, beneath the radio stand, in the magazine rack, under papers on the table; he looks toward the kitchen door and calls, "Mom, where's the funnies?" After listening a moment for the reply which does not come, he again picks up the paper, leafs through it, and finds a crossword puzzle. Again "Atta baby!" is heard. Now for a pencil! He claws through the jumble of papers before him—no pencil. Then his eyes scan the room and focus upon the fruit dish on the buffet. Of course a pencil can be found in it. Two steps and he is there. He burrows into it but comes out disappointed. He carries the bowl over to the table, pushes aside papers, and dumps the contents of the bowl onto the table. Again he paws the contents, but no pencil. "Mom, where's a pencil?" he calls over his should. No answer. He doesn't bother to replace the things he has disturbed, but scans the room for more territory to explore.

The telephone stand sometimes houses a pencil. He hurries to look all about the stand, even under the cover, but no pencil. He then realizes that there is another place to look—in the pewter pitcher that ornaments the top of the radio. He lingers there, picks up the pitcher, squints into it, and, by painfully pushing his two fingers down the long neck of it, he clutches a pencil stub and pulls it out. He now picks up the crosswork puzzle from the table, drops into a chair, slides down onto his backbone, and drops his head as near his stomach as possible. His face reveals study, disgust, surprise, and pleasure at varying intervals. His mother calls. He answers with a dull "Ye-e-es." He is too engrossed to look up. Again he is called, and he hears the word *dinner*. This time he looks up, all attention. "Dinner, didja say?" He hears an affirmative reply. Then, "Atta baby," and he leaps toward the door, dropping paper and pencil as he goes.

Phil's father, C. W. MacIntyre, bursts into the house. He seems to have blown in. He probably has, as is suggested when he turns to push the door shut and says, "Some wind!" His eyes scan the room, a suggestion of surprise at seeing no signs of a meal. Then he looks toward the kitchen as he calls, "Dinner ready?" "In a little bit; I'll call you," comes the reply. "All right. I'm starved." He hangs his hat on the nearest chair knob, picks up the morning paper from the table, and drops into an easy chair. He rubs his eyes, closing them tightly and screwing up his face as he does so. One would guess that they burn and smart. After automatically taking his spectacle case from his coat pocket, he takes out a pair of rimmed glasses and adjusts them to his eyes. He unfolds the paper to the sporting page and reads, wincing and blinking his eyes as he does so. He removes the glasses with one hand, again rubbing the smarting eyes. After replacing his glasses he again attempts to read, but with the same painful result. He folds the paper to lay it aside, when his eye spies the crossword puzzle. He feels his pockets for a pencil but there seems to be none. His eyes scan the table. He gets up, moves some papers on it, and looks more carefully. He glances about the room, then looks back toward the kitchen and calls, "Margaret, do you happen to know where I'll find a pencil?" There is no reply. Again he feels through his pockets; again he pushes papers about on the table—still no pencil. He scowls as he hesitates a moment, then glances toward the kitchen. He has an impulse to call again but on second thought decides otherwise, then spies the fruit dish on the buffet, goes to it and pushes and rolls the varied contents from side to side, but no pencil. Still holding the crossword-puzzle section under his arm, he looks down at it disgruntledly. Dogged persistence is his, however, so again he feels his pockets, glances over the table and around the room until he spies the telephone stand. His face brightens, and he hurries to it.

The pencil is just where it belongs, in the drawer. He takes it over to the big chair, drops down, adjusts himself to a comfortable position, head leaning back, one foot over the other knee, and paper held up. Contentedly he taps the chair arm with the pencil and studies the puzzle until he hears "Dinner!" He grunts a reply and continues with the puzzle. He gets a word and hastily writes it in. Again he studies it until "Char-r-les, din-ner-r-r!" is called. Reluctantly, he tosses it onto the table, rises, and puts the glasses into their case as he goes into the dining room.

Phil's grandfather is a man of eighty. We find him coming into the same room for the same purpose—dinner. He is muttering to himself as he half-shuffles in from the out-of-doors. The wind is not blowing, but he turns all the way around to close the door, using three steps in the turn. He pushes his hat back on his head and goes to the table where he picks up the newspaper and holds it close to his eyes to see the date. However, he cannot read it. He lays it carefully down again, unbuttons his coat, and holds out the left side of it as he peers into the inner pocket. With his right hand he takes out the spectacle case and uses both hands to open it. He carefully places the side pieces behind both ears, adjusting the glasses to his eyes, then carefully closes the lid of the spectacle case and puts it back into his pocket. Again he picks up the paper, holds it at some distance this time as he tilts his head at the correct angle to see, and reads aloud "Saturday, May 12th." He does not feel hungry, so he says nothing about dinner, but calls to his daughter to ask about a pencil. "Margie, oh Margie, where you 'spose I'll find a pencil?" He doesn't give time for her to answer before he begins his search over the dining table. He mumbles and talks considerably to himself as he hunts. His movements are slow and methodical as he hunts over, first, the table, then the buffet, and peers into the fruit bowl.

"I vum, I never see such a place to find things." He moves things about in the bowl. "Not a pencil in the house. Margie! I say, where's a man to find a pencil?" His voice is only a good loud mumble when he calls "Margie," so of course she doesn't hear. "Might jest as well look fer a needle in a haystack as fer anything in that 'ere flower dish. Bet if I ever do find a—might be as I'd have one—" He feels in each pocket, one at a time. Thoughtfully he stands in the middle of the room, rubs the back of his neck with one hand and holds onto the crossword newspaper section with the other. "Looks like a body might have a pencil when he wants it—leastwise a stub of a one." Then he sees the pencil on the telephone stand. He hastily procures it and goes over to the easy chair. It is with great care that he lets himself down into it, enjoying a grunt at the finish. He holds the paper up and out; he adjusts his glasses, raises his chin, and squints somewhat as he studies the puzzle. He is just nicely settled when he is called. However, he is too absorbed to hear until the second and louder call comes. "Grandpa, come now, dinner!" He looks off to the kitchen as he says, "Well, I vum!" and begins the slow process of folding the paper, removing his glasses, and encasing them. He then

looks at the pencil in his hand, from it to the stand whence it came, then at his pocket. With a sneaking smile he puts it into his pocket. Another call: "Grandpa! we're waiting." He tries to hurry as he lifts himself heavily from the chair and shuffles toward the kitchen, still wearing his hat on the back of his head.

EXERCISE 22

The Birthday Present

Tomorrow will be Ruth Hudson's birthday. It has been the custom in the family to present birthday gifts at breakfast. However, Ruth has been invited to spend the night before her birthday with a girl friend, and is going, even though it is a disappointment to her mother. Mrs. Hudson holds the center of attention.

For a month, Mrs. Hudson has been secretly working all of her spare moments knitting a sweater for Ruth. Now, since Ruth is to be away, she plans to give it to her the day before, so that Ruth may take it along and wear it on her birthday. Ruth is just starting to the grocery on an errand which Mrs. Hudson has devised so that she will have an opportunity to wrap the dainty sweater and give it to her when she returns. We find Mrs. Hudson peeping out the window, smiling, as she watches her daughter's departure. As soon as Mrs. Hudson is sure that Ruth is safely away, she turns and hurriedly takes a bundle from behind a row of books in the bookcase. A few stitches are still to be taken down one side seam. She takes the sewing basket from beneath the radio cabinet, finds a needle, and hurriedly threads it after biting off a short thread. She smiles, even laughs a little, pleased laugh, as she works on the lovely blue sweater. The few stitches are soon taken, the needle safely stuck in the front of her dress, and the sweater laid carefully on the table with the cloth that has been holding it. From the table drawer she takes the piece of tissue paper which she has been saving for it. She smooths it out carefully and folds the sweater on it before wrapping it. She has only kitchen cord for tying, but Ruth will understand. After it is tied, Mrs. Hudson goes to the writing cabinet and takes a pretty picture from a pigeonhole. It was on a calendar, the picture of a lovely young girl and her mother, and is so much like the two of them—Mrs. Hudson thought—that she saved it to use. Ruth will get the significance, she feels sure. Now for a birthday greeting—what shall it be? She holds the opened pen in her hand and stares off, trying to think of one. Time is passing rapidly; she must hurry. It will mean

much more if it is simple, she decides, so she writes: "To Ruth, with your Mother's deepest love, for this—your eighteenth birthday." She reads it aloud after she has finished writing and says, "That's nicest, anyway." She almost runs back to the table, glancing out of the window as she goes. Yes, there Ruth comes! She slips the picture under the cord, picks up the package and glances about for a place to lay it, so that Ruth will find it first thing. Quickly she pushes a chair up near and facing the door that Ruth will enter. A smothered laugh emerges as she carefully lays the package on it. Then she slips behind the window drapery at the rear to watch the fun.

Ruth comes in, see the package, smiles as she picks it up. She tears away the paper, not glancing at the card before it falls on the floor. The smile on Mrs. Hudson's face changes to an expression of anxiety. "What if Ruth doesn't like it!" she thinks. Then deep disappointment comes over her face as Ruth holds up the sweater and says, "Oh darn! I wanted some perfume." She decides she will not let Ruth know she is there so she keeps quiet until Ruth tosses the sweater to a chair and runs upstairs to dress. Mrs. Hudson slowly comes out of hiding, picks up the gift, and stands thinking. She gathers up the torn tissue and the lovely picture card. "Too bad Ruth didn't see that," she thinks. She places the articles in the cloth that had held them before. She looks toward the door through which Ruth has gone and says, "You shall have some perfume, dearie, just as soon as I can sell some more cakes."

EXERCISE 23

Time to Get Up

The alarm clock has just rung. The sleeping man begins to stir in his comfortable bed (three chairs). He blinks his eyes, screws up his face, squints at the clock, sees the time, and drops back on his pillow. His eyes involuntarily close. With effort he opens them, rubs them, then throws back the covers and pulls himself to a sitting position on the edge of the bed. His eyes are closed as he wriggles, rubs, and scratches his arms and then his back. With his eyes still closed, he kicks around for his slippers under the edge of the bed. He finds them, slips his feet into them, and pulls himself to a standing position. Now he begins to stretch—all over. Muscles seem to harden and bones crack as he enjoys stretching and yawning. A sudden collapse comes at the end of the yawn.

He picks up his bathrobe and finds his way into it. He buttons one

button and fumbles for the other, but it seems to be missing. He looks down at the place; sure enough, it is gone. He sees it on the floor. He then goes to the bottom of the dresser drawer and finds his needle and a spool of thread where they are carefully tucked away. As he holds the needle between his lips he pulls out a full arm-length thread, then another, and breaks it off. He has great difficulty in getting the thread through the needle's eye. With both hands he carefully ties a knot in the end of the thread.

Before he has really started sewing the button on, he gets a tangle in his thread, making it necessary for him to sit down in order to take it out. Eventually the button is sewed on, and with a razor blade he cuts the thread. He doesn't know where to put the needle, but decides to stick it in the bed beside him for the present. After reaching over for his socks he sits back on the bed, but alas, not in the same spot! Hastily he jumps up, takes the needle and its trailing thread, and puts it back in the dresser drawer.

++ *Abandoned Movement* ++

In working the "Nora" exercise from *A Doll's House,* it is not necessary to use a piano. Music might restrain the freedom of some students. Nor is it necessary to be a dancer in order to throw oneself into rhythmic movement giving vent to an emotion.

EXERCISE 24

(TWO MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[NORA, *the wife of* HELMER, *is in serious trouble. She knows there is a letter in the box, upon which her future depends. She is sick with fear, and, to give vent to her feelings, she throws herself into wildly practicing the tarantella, a dance which she is soon to perform.*[2]]

NORA. No, no one shall see me in my glory till tomorrow evening.

HELMER. Why, Nora dear, you look so tired. Have you been practising too hard?

NORA. No, I haven't practised at all yet.

HELMER. But you'll have to—

NORA. Oh, yes, I must, I must. But, Torvald, I can't get on without your help. I've forgotten everything.

[2] Ibsen, Henrik, *A Doll's House,* in *The Works of Henrik Ibsen.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912.

HELMER. Oh, we'll soon freshen it up again.

NORA. Yes, do help me, Torvald. You must promise me—Oh, I'm so nervous about it. Before so many people— This evening you must give yourself up entirely to me. You mustn't do a stroke of work! Now promise, Torvald dear!

HELMER. I promise. All this evening I'll be your slave. Little helpless thing—! But, by the bye, I must first—[*Going to hall door.*]

NORA. What do you want there?

HELMER. Only to see if there are any letters.

NORA. No, no don't do that, Torvald.

HELMER. Why not?

NORA. Torvald, I beg you not to. There are none there.

HELMER. Let me just see. [*Is going.* NORA, *at the piano, plays the first bars of the Tarantella.* HELMER, *at the door, stops.*] Aha!

NORA. I can't dance tomorrow if I don't rehearse with you first.

HELMER [*going to her*]. Are you really so nervous, dear Nora?

NORA. Yes, dreadfully! Let me rehearse at once. We have time before dinner. Oh! do sit down and accompany me, Torvald dear; direct me as you used to do.

HELMER. With all the pleasure in life, if you wish it. [*Sits at piano.* NORA *snatches the tambourine out of the box, and hurriedly drapes herself in a long parti-colored shawl; then, with a bound, stands in the middle of the floor.*]

NORA. Now play for me! Now I'll dance! [HELMER *plays and* NORA *dances.* RANK *stands at the piano behind* HELMER *and looks on.*]

HELMER [*playing*]. Slower! Slower!

NORA. I can't do it slower!

HELMER. Not so violently, Nora.

NORA. I must! I must!

HELMER [*stops*]. Nora—that'll never do.

NORA [*laughs and swings her tambourine*]. Didn't I tell you so!

RANK. Let me accompany her.

HELMER [*rising*]. Yes, do—then I can direct her better. [RANK *sits down to the piano and plays;* NORA *dances more and more wildly.* HELMER *stands by the stove and addresses frequent corrections to her; she seems not to hear. Her hair breaks loose, and falls over her shoulders. She does not notice it, but goes on dancing. . . .*] Why Nora dear, you're dancing as if it were a matter of life and death.

NORA. So it is.

HELMER. Rank, stop! This is the merest madness. Stop, I say!

[RANK *stops playing, and* NORA *comes to a sudden standstill. He goes toward her.*] I couldn't have believed it. You've positively forgotten all I taught you.

NORA [*throws tambourine away*]. You see for yourself.

HELMER. You really do want teaching.

NORA. Yes, you see how much I need it. You must practise with me up to the last moment. Will you promise me, Torvald?

HELMER. Certainly, certainly.

NORA. Neither today nor tomorrow must you think of anything but me. You mustn't open a single letter—mustn't look at the letter-box!

HELMER. Ah, you're still afraid of that man—

NORA. Oh yes, yes, I am.

HELMER. Nora, I can see it in your face—there's a letter from him in the box.

NORA. I don't know, I believe so. But you're not to read anything now; nothing must come between us until all is over.

RANK [*softly to* HELMER]. You mustn't contradict her.

HELMER [*putting his arm around her*]. The child shall have her own way. But tomorrow night, when the dance is over—

NORA. Then you will be free.

Movement in Farce

Light comedy and farce call for excess of bodily action. Farce is not intended to be realistic; it is fun resulting from exaggeration. Situations are exaggerated, lines are absurd, and actions are overabundant.

Lights and setting play a large part in farce and burlesque. Lights may be bright, setting may be vivid, or lopsided, or gruesome.

In acting it is appropriate in burlesque and some farces to crane one's neck, take very long strides or mincing, short steps, speak in a piping or gutteral voice, fall flat on the floor, or whirl into place. Broad gestures, and many of them, are in keeping with the spirit of farce. This sort of thing would be abominable overacting for a realistic or a serious play, but it is good taste in most farce.

You must play farce fast. Lines come, one overlapping another,

with pauses held for the laughs. Stay in character during a laugh, *feed* it, hold the pause until the laugh is *beginning to die,* then pick up the lines and proceed. During the laugh, actors will keep in character. They may hold the picture through a laugh or may move slightly. Do not allow movement to kill the laugh.

Make the following scene farcical by an abundance of broad action and movement, by rapid tempo and exaggerated reactions. That was the style of early English acting.

EXERCISE 25

(TWO MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*Gammer Gurton's Needle*[3] *is a famous old piece of English literature.* GAMMER *has lost her needle and cannot mend the tear in* HODGE'S *trousers until it can be found. She, her servant* HODGE, *maid* TIB, *and boy* COCK *are combing every inch of ground near the house in their search.*]

GAMMER. Oh, Hodge, Hodge, if I could find my needle I'd sew it with good, strong, double thread!

HODGE. Four of you sit idle at home—your needle to keep. What the devil had you else to do? Four useless sheep!

GAMMER. I lost it, Hodge, trying to save the milk which our cat, Gib, was wasting.

HODGE. Where have you been fidgeting since your needle got lost?

GAMMER. Within the house, near the door, sitting at my post.
Where I have been looking for a long hour—before you came here,
But, alas! All was in vain, my needle is nowhere near!

HODGE. Get me a candle! I shall seek for it!

GAMMER. [*Calling.*] Cock, come hither! Cock, I say!

COCK. [*Entering from the house.*] You called me, Gammer?

GAMMER. Go grope behind the old brass pan.
There you will find an old shoe, wherein, if you look well,
You will find an inch or so of white tallow candle;
Light it and bring it as fast as you can.

COCK. All right, Gammer. [*He goes back into the house.*]

GAMMER [*to Hodge, who is down on his hands and knees, before the door, searching for the needle*]. Wait, Hodge, till we have a light, then we can see better.

[3] *Gammer Gurton's Needle.*

HODGE [*looking in at the door*]. Hurry, you worthless boy! Are you asleep?

COCK [*from within*]. I can't get the candle lighted.

There is almost no fire.

HODGE [*rising*]. Are you deaf, stupid boy? Cock, I say, can't you hear?

I'll bet you a penny I'll make you come if I get hold of your ear.

GAMMER. Do not beat him, Hodge, but help him find the candle. [HODGE *goes into the house.* TIB *comes running in from the left.*] Have you found it, Tib?

TIB [*shaking her head*]. I've tossed and tumbled over yonder heap to find your needle.

GAMMER [*wringing her hands*]. Alas! Alas!

TIB. 'Twas all in vain, without success, your needlee is—where it was!

GAMMER. Alas, my needle! We shall never meet! Adieu! Adieu for aye!

TIB. Not so, Gammer, we might find it—if we knew where it lay.

[COCK, *doubled over with laughter, enters from the house.*]

COCK. Gog's sock, Gammer! If you will laugh look in at the door
And see how Hodge lies tumbling and tossing around the floor,
Raking there some fire to find among the ashes dead,
When there's not a spark even as big as a pin's head.
At last in a dark corner two sparks he thinks he spies
Which were, indeed, nothing but the cat, Gib's, two eyes!
"Puff," blows Hodge, thinking thereby to have fire without doubt;
With that Gib shut her two eyes—and so the fire was out!

GAMMER. No!

COCK [*still chuckling*]. At last Gib hopped up the stairs, among the posts and bins.

Hodge running after her till broke were both his shins!

[*He lies down and rolls with laughter.* HODGE'S *head appears at an upper window.*]

HODGE. Come up! Come up and help! Gib in her tail has fire
And it like to burn all if she gets any higher!

GAMMER. Where are you? Come down, Hodge, and let the cat alone!

HODGE. Come down, you say? Nay, I'll watch that it don't catch;
The house comes down on your heads if fire gets in the thatch!

GAMMER. It's the cat's eyes, fool, that shine in the dark!

HODGE. Do you think that the cat has in every eye a spark?

GAMMER. No, but they shine like fire—as any man can see.

HODGE. But Gammer, if she burns the house you'll put the blame on me!

GAMMER. Come down, and help to see that my needle is found
Down, Tib, on your knees I say! Down, Cock, to the ground.

Topics and Exercises

7

THE PROBLEM OF HANDS

A. USE ONE HAND MORE THAN THE OTHER

B. USE THE HANDS EQUALLY

C. LET THE WRISTS LEAD

D. SUITING THE ACTION TO THE WORD

7

THE PROBLEM OF HANDS

ARE YOUR hands helping you? They are always available, free and obligated. But are they willing? And are they capable? If you were the play's electrician, they would help. They would drag in a ladder and set it up—that is, if your theater does not have a catwalk. They would help you scale the ladder, adjust and focus the spots, place the gelatin, and tighten the set screws. Your hands would not feel clumsy in performing these tasks; they would be accustomed to handling ladders, gelatins, and set screws.

If playwriting were your special interest, your hands would work in a different way. Pushing a pencil or pecking the keys of a typewriter is easy—after you've learned how. Although, if you recall, you didn't feel much at home with either a pencil or a typewriter the first time you used one.

But since you are an actor, what about your hands? Are you one of those who can recite lines convincingly but who finds his Waterloo in acting the character while he recites? Your head is unresponsive; your shoulders are stiff; your feet and legs are inert; but perhaps the greatest torment and the least response comes from those dangling appendages, your hands. For the pres-

ent forget about how the rest of the body acts—or does not act—and consider only your hands.

If your line is "M'lord, the carriage waits," you can be most convincing with head held stiffly erect and hands hanging unabashed at your sides. But most lines are spoken while the whole body projects the feeling, and for this the actor's hands are his greatest helpers.

I do not mean to suggest that the player's hands should constantly wave through the air or be clutched or wrung in the style of the 1890's—unless of course, you are doing a clawing-the-scenery act. But the hands should be alive, vital, awake to every change of thought and feeling.

It makes little difference whether you are speaking the line yourself or listening to another character; your body, if you are good, will respond to the thought and emotion.

Before executing gestures in the following exercises, experiment to find what gesture best expresses the thought.

Use one hand more than the other:

Just keep your seats—stay where you are.

Let me take those books.

I declare, I think it was the happiest day of my life.

The side of the gallery was covered with lovely paintings.

How many more times must I tell you that we must leave at seven. We can't stay longer.

Use the hands equally:

People filled the lobby, the colonnade, the music room, the dining room; in fact, the whole place.

I'm so delighted, so happy. Now, nothing in the world can stop me.

Wait! stop! I want to tell you something. [*Pause.*] All my life I've looked forward to a bright, happy home, lovely flowers, blue skies, birds, sunshine, happiness; I have only this—this ugliness, grief, dirt, and continual unhappiness.

I just want a chance, Mr. Cokeson. I've paid for that job a thousand times and more. I have, sir. No one knows. They say I weighed more when I came out than when I went in. They couldn't weigh me here [*He touches his head*], or here. [*He touches his heart, and gives a*

Mary Rose, by James M. Barrie. A scene from the production by Pasadena Community Playhouse. Effective use of hands adds heavily to a performance.

Across the Board of Tomorrow Morning, by William Saroyan A Pasadena Community Playhouse production.

sort of laugh.] Till last night I'd have thought there was nothing in here at all.

[*Justice*—Galsworthy.]

Quick, hide the bottles, plates, and baskets!
Let us show nothing! [*To Ragueneau.*]
Get back on your box!
Is all well hidden?

[*Cyrano de Bergerac*—Rostand.]

In the interpretation of a character part, it may be necessary to work for awkward, unsteady gestures lacking in grace. However, straight parts usually call for easy, smooth movements with grace of line. To secure these, the wrist should lead in hand movements, but be careful not to make these movements weak and simpering. Gestures of hands and arms often move in curves for grace of line. Above all, the movements must be simple.

Practice moving the arms up and down and in and out, several times, with wrist always leading. The student must be sure that the gesture does not appear affected and insincere. Practice will be necessary to blend the gestures and words adroitly.

In the following gestures let the wrist lead:

Take your things over there by the door, then sit down and wait.
In all this whole wide world there is no one who can help.
You see the door, yonder. Go!
We climbed first to the top of that sycamore. From there we could see all over the town.
All this trash on the floor, this pile of toys, and these broken dishes were here yesterday? You're sure?

A player will wish to decide early about the *amount of gesturing* his character should do. The beginner will need constant warning against using too few gestures. In addition, one should work for a *variety of gestures,* with no two exactly alike unless they are so planned for purposes of character delineation.

The bones of our bodies are covered with threads of muscles. Their tiny, almost invisible movements tell far more about each of us than we realize. They pass out hints from which judgments

may be formed. The hands alone have dozens of these tiny muscles which constantly react. The invisible muscles in your fingers, in the backs of your hands, in your wrists, in your arms, will tighten or relax as you show emotion or feeling. The larger muscles are those which cause positions to change and which move the hands in gestures. The player whose hands respond to his will can demand much of these muscles.

Suppose you are *He* saying,

> For heaven's sake—for heaven's sake—this does not exist, but was lost long ago; it is just a check for an old hat. I pray you to forget as I have. I am He Who Gets Slapped—nothing else.

You could neither speak nor listen to this speech effectively without showing the feeling in your hands and face. The convert muscular action says with *He's* words that his real name must remain a secret.

Or you may be playing Juliet. She is alone when she says,

> I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins,
> That almost freezes up the heat of life.

Juliet is wrapped in fear at the moment. Her fingers and hands will probably make only the slightest movements on those lines. However, the muscles will be tense, and every inch of Juliet's being will tighten with her fear.

In almost every play there are moments when several players must listen intently to one person speaking. Although these characters have no lines to speak, their bodies will be suffused with interest, perhaps with anxiety. Small muscular responses of hands, arms, head, and feet speak for the voice.

A good play has comparatively few scenes in which the actors, whether speaking or listening, do not need to respond to the changes of thought. It has few scenes in which actors may be in complete repose, with bodies inert, relaxed, and unresponsive. The invisible muscles in fingers, backs of hands, wrists, and arms can and will speak the lines along with the actor if he but calls them to duty.

But the hands of many players *refuse* to act. They feel awk-

ward, clumsy, unwieldy, thus making gestures almost impossible. That is not unusual. You are lucky if you have none of that feeling, but you are also exceptional. Most beginning players have a difficult time with getting the hands to act. Since it is a commonplace feeling, it must be overcome with a commonplace remedy. *Action.* Lots of hand action.

This awkward feeling of hands can be overcome by making the hands gesture and gesture and gesture. More than enough! As you force your hands to gesture, even throughout the rehearsals of a single play, they will readily adjust themselves to the new work. They learn surprisingly fast under training, rather like they learned to drive a car. The first weeks of driving probably found you jerking the breath out of passengers as you changed from low to intermediate to high. But you soon got the feel and changed gears smoothly.

It is often possible to hold something in your hands while on stage: a book, a pencil, a magazine, a cane, some needlework, or a vanity. Toying or working with an object relieves strain, nor are these objects in the way of using small gestures. Sometimes they suggest action for the player, as twirling a cane, toying with a fan, rolling and unrolling a folded newspaper. Pockets are handy for the men. In a realistic play, when the occasion is informal, there is no reason why a man may not keep one of his hands in a pocket. Do not use both pockets at the same time—that is, not often; some characters, however, might need such a position.

If a man or woman is dressed in uniform or period costume, the problem of hands increases. The character must use only such movements or toy with only such props as a person living in that period might have used. Swords, buttons, plumes, and spears are often useful. Grand, pompous gestures belong to certain eighteenth and nineteenth century plays. Deep bows, kowtows, and hands clasped over the chest with little gesturing go with a Chinese character, whereas a member of some more demonstrative nationality group uses broad actions with full arm-sweeps.

A hand gesture can become emphatic if it is staid into an attitude. To do this the actor executes the gesture up to its strongest point then stops and holds the position for effect.

The feet and legs should also have careful training. Although their duties on stage seem less difficult to perform, nevertheless the appearance of the feet is important. State of mind is shown through steps as well as in the feet when idle. The way a man steps shows him as tired or alert, happy or sad, young or old.

Age brings on stiffened joints in knees, ankles, and hips. Nervousness may cause one to move about with short, aimless steps. The rubbing of one foot against another suggests embarrassment. The feet indicate relaxation when crossed and alertness when set solidly on the floor.

The body's weight well forward over one bent knee, the other leg held rigidly straight to the floor just behind, is a foot position used by players of some period plays to designate anxiety, unrest, or earnestness.

Different kinds of steps speak of background, nationality, mood, or many other phases of characterization. Do not underestimate the importance of the feet and legs. Make them help you.

✣ *Suiting the Action to the Word* ✣

We say that hand gestures should come from *inner* impulses. Then we declare the reverse! We say that the hands should act abundantly regardless of inner impulse; that hand movements should start from *without* and that the inner feeling will follow; that one must use the hands whether he feels like it or not. Rather contradictory, we agree! Yet, those statements are both true. Hand and body action stimulates inner feeling which in turn generates the impulse for movement. We find that the body soon begins to respond of its own volition. Hand and body action naturally arises from a stirred-up state of the individual's emotions; from enthusiasm, excitement, and so on. The action itself helps to gen-

erate the emotion which in its turn generates more convincing action.

The electrician probably had some difficulty the first few times he turned screws. The typist undoubtedly felt a bit awkward when he began his work. If either of these workers now were merely pantomiming the action, he would find himself in the same kind of difficulty as does the actor. The player needs practice and more practice in getting the emotion of his role. When he gets into the "feel," he will respond with his hands and body as well as he responds with his voice. A little more practice in pushing the feeling from outside to inside, and inside to outside, will make the player as sure of his movements as are the men of a rowing crew. How will hand action aid these speeches?

1. From *Johnny Johnson* by Paul Green:

JOHNNY. . . . The more you fight and kill the worse it gets. You may conquer your enemy for a while but he or his friends only wait to grow strong again to come back at you. That's human nature. And what I can't understand about Wilson is—why all of a sudden he's willing to go out and kill a lot of people for some idea about freedom of the seas.

2. From *Dead End* by Sidney Kingsley:

GIMPTY. . . . Martin was a killer, he was bad, he deserved to die, true! But I knew him when we were kids. He had a lot of fine stuff. He was strong. He had courage. He was a born leader. He even had a sense of fair play. But living in the streets kept him bad. . . . Then he was sent to reform school. Well, they reformed him all right! They taught him the ropes. He came out tough and hard and mean, with all the tricks of the trade.

3. From *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder:

MRS. WEBB. [*Xes and sets down oatmeal for both children.*] Children! Now I won't have it. Breakfast is just as good as any other meal and I won't have you gobblin' like wolves. It'll stunt your growth, that's a fact. Wally, put away your book!

4. From *Family Portrait* by Lenore Coffee and William Joyce Cowen:

MAGDALEN. [*Gets R. stool—moves it R. of Mary—sits.*] He's like that now. Works until he drops. He has so much he wants to say—he seems almost afraid he won't have time to say it. [*She quickly covers this ominous note by adding.*] The other day while he was talking it grew dark without his even knowing—and the people stayed on and listened—way into the night.

5. From *Three Men on a Horse* by George Abbott and J. C. Holm:

PATSY. Say, what's the matter with you guys? You got a yellow streak all of a sudden? He should be tickled to death. We're giving him a break. Suppose Leo's crowd had ever discovered him? He'd never see his wife again. They'd take him from track to track like a horse.

6. From *Mourning Becomes Electra* by Eugene O'Neill:

LAVINIA. I realize only too well! You and I, who are innocent, would suffer a worse punishment than the guilty—for we'd have to live on! It would mean that Father's memory and that of all the honorable Mannon dead would be dragged through the horror of a murder trial! But I'd rather suffer that than let the murder of our father go unpunished!

7. From *End of Summer* by S. N. Behrman:

WILL. I am loyal. But you go around all day job-hunting. You find that you're not wanted. It's reassuring after that to find a shoulder to lean on, sort of haven where you are wanted. Even the public library closes at ten. You have to go somewhere. If I'm ever Mayor of New York, I'll have the public libraries kept open all night . . . the flophouses of the intellectuals!

8. PHEBE'S *condescending admonition to her spurned suitor:*

Silvius, the time was that I hated thee,
And yet it is not that I bear thee love;
But since that thou canst talk of love so well,
Thy company, which erst was irksome to me,
I will endure, and I'll employ thee too:
But do not look for further recompense
Than thine own gladness that thou art employ'd.

—*As You Like It.*

9. MARIA'S *invitation to* SIR TOBY *to witness the effects of the joke played upon the conceited* MALVOLIO:

If you will then see the fruits of the sport, mark his first approach

before my lady: he will come to her in yellow stockings, and 'tis a colour she abhors, and cross-garter'd, a fashion she detests; and he will smile upon her, which will now be so unsuitable to her disposition, being addicted to a melancholy as she is, that it cannot but turn him into a notable contempt. If you will see it, follow me.

—*Twelfth Night.*

10. *The* NURSE'S *complaint of her reward for undertaking* JULIET'S *mission to* ROMEO:

Lord! how my head aches; what a head have I!
It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces.
My back o' t'other side; O! my back, my back.
Beshrew your heart for sending me about,
To catch my death with jaunting up and down.

—*Romeo and Juliet.*

11. JULIET'S *terrified preparation to take the* FRIAR'S *poison:*

Farewell! God knows when we shall meet again.
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins,
That almost freezes up the heat of life:
I'll call them back again to comfort me;
Nurse? What should she do here?
My dismal scene I needs must act alone.
Come, vial.
What if this mixture do not work at all?
Shall I be married then tomorrow morning?
No, no; this shall forbid it: lie thou there.

—*Romeo and Juliet.*

Topics and Exercises

8

THE FACE REGISTERS

A. PAYING ATTENTION

EXERCISE 1: from *'Lijah* by Edgar V. Smith

EXERCISE 2: from *Mourning Becomes Electra* by Eugene O'Neill

B. REACTION

EXERCISE 3: from *Candida* by George Bernard Shaw

EXERCISE 4: from *Excursion* by Victor Wolfson

C. THINKING

EXERCISE 5: from *In Hospital* by Thomas H. Dickinson

D. THE ILLUSION OF THE FIRST TIME

EXERCISE 6: from *The Man Who Came to Dinner* by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart

EXERCISE 7: from *He Who Gets Slapped* by Leonid Andreyev

E. REGISTERING SENSATION

EXERCISES 8-28

8

THE FACE REGISTERS

MANY of the elocution books published toward the end of the nineteenth and around the beginning of the twentieth century bore illustrations of figures striking poses. These poses were planned to show how different emotions were expressed. The emotions—as hate, love, sorrow, fear, loneliness—were pictured as the actor interpreted them. Although the characters looked weak and insincere, both their faces and their bodies were always shown harmoniously expressing the same feeling. Styles of interpretation and acting have changed greatly since those books were published, but the principles remain unchanged. The face and body tell others one's thoughts and feelings, and they must tell the same thought or feeling. Work in pantomime is of the greatest possible aid in co-ordinating members of the body. In the silent movies it was necessary for the actors to develop their facial muscles and to use them to such an extent that the story was told largely by the expressions on their faces.

As people become more cultivated, they are inclined to become, also, less demonstrative. They pride themselves upon their ability to hide feelings—to be "poker-faced." The result, for actors, is serious. If we repress our feelings for long, our facial muscles lose

their ability to move. Some players may find it impossible to use the facial expressions that they know they should use for showing the feelings demanded by the speeches listed here.

In "The American Way," by Kaufman and Hart, *golden wedding guests of the Gunthers crowd near the radio to listen to the voice of one of their former neighbors.*

THE VOICE OF TOMMY NELSON. Good evening, folks. This is Tommy Nelson speaking. Before we continue I would like to send a special greeting to two friends of mine back in my home town—To Mr. and Mrs. Gunther, of Mapleton, Ohio, I wish I could be with you tonight.

. . . . . .

In "Escape," by John Galsworthy, MATT DENANT, *an escaped convict, in borrowed clothing stops to ask his way of some Cockney picnickers.* MATT *carries a fishing rod and basket with fish in it.*

CAPTAIN. Had any sport, Sir?

MATT. [*Opening the basket.*] Eight, rather small.

WIFE. My! Don't they look nice! Such good eatin', too.

MATT. Would you like them, Ma'am?

WIFE. [*With affected restraint.*] I'm sure it's very good of you.

CAPTAIN. Don't you miss the chance, Mrs. Pinkem; nothing like moor trout, with a moor appetite.

. . . . . .

In "Mr. and Mrs. North," by Owen Davis, MR. *and* MRS. NORTH *return to their apartment after being away overnight.* [*The downstairs buzzer sounds.*]

PAM. [*Pushing the ticker.*] I'll get it, dear.

NORTH. Compact. [*He holds it out to her.*]

PAM. What, dear?

NORTH. Compact. [*He holds it out to her.*]

PAM. Why, Jerry, it's a very pretty one. [*Goes right to him.*]

NORTH. All the more reason for not leaving it on the floor.

PAM. But I didn't, Jerry. I never saw it before!

. . . . . .

In "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," by Sir Arthur Wing Pinero, AUBREY TANQUERAY *is entertaining some of his friends at dinner.*

AUBREY. Ah, but I shan't be alone, and that's what I wanted to tell you. I'm going to be married.

JAYNE. Going to be married?

MISQUITH. Married?

AUBREY. Yes--tomorrow.

JAYNE. Tomorrow?

MISQUITH. You take my breath away! My dear fellow, I—I—of course congratulate you.

JAYNE. And—and—so do I—heartily.

AUBREY. Thanks—thanks. [*There is a moment or two of embarrassment.*]

MISQUITH. Er--ah—this is an excellent cigar.

JAYNE. Ah—um—your coffee is remarkable.

. . . . .

In "Men In White," by Sidney Kingsley, DR. FERGUSON *forgets to take a precaution.*

MICHAELSON [*entering*]. That D'Andrea fellow is still unconscious. Seems to be something the matter with his lower jaw.

DR. HOCHBERG. What!

MICHAELSON. Protruding—somewhat rigid. Thought it might be tetanus.

DR. HOCHBERG. No! Not so soon! Anyway, you gave him antitoxin, didn't you?

MICHAELSON. Why—er— [*He shoots a quick glance at* FERGUSON.] No!

DR. HOCHBERG. What? [*Angrily.*] Don't you know yet that T.A.T. is routine in this hospital?

MICHAELSON. Yes, sir— But I thought— [*To* FERGUSON.] You didn't tell me. I thought you gave it!

DR. HOCHBERG [*to* FERGUSON]. Doctor Ferguson!

FERGUSON. I intended to . . . to mention it to him. I guess—I—forgot——

When striving to achieve artistic acting through the muscles of the face, the player seldom works deeply enough. Moving only the muscles about the eyes and face gives a superficial impression. The expression of the face does not seem convincing when it works alone. This is where the James-Lange theory comes in good stead. To remind you:

First: Put on the outward bodily reaction and facial expression.
Second: Your inner feelings will begin to respond.

Eva the Fifth, by K. Nicholson and J. Golden. A University of Kansas production. Facial expression tells much of the story.

Fashion, by A. C. Mowatt. Production by Westminster College, New Wilmington, Pennsylvania. It is an art to be a good listener while acting.

Third: These, in turn, will furnish more genuine outer expressing.

Fourth: The inner self is buoyed up still more.

Fifth: The outward bodily reaction and the inner feelings are built up and work in harmony. You then find yourself doing your best work.

The face must also portray response to other characters in the scene, never ceasing to register and characterize. The face is expressing ideas when the character himself is speaking; it is accepting ideas when another character has the stage. When a player's face responds while listening, the character speaking is greatly helped. He can act better, feel his part more keenly, and express ideas more effectively. Furthermore, when actors register ideas clearly, they are improving their own acting.

Muscles are developed in relation to the amount of use they are given. The muscles in the arm of a baseball pitcher are hard, strong, and sinewy. The muscles in the arm of a bank clerk are flabby, soft, and developed very little through his work. The fingers of a pianist are strong; they respond instantly to the wishes of their master. No argument is needed to persuade the intelligent student that the muscles in the face develop in the same way. If the baseball pitcher should bind up his arm, making it useless for a few weeks, it would become weak and worthless to him. Likewise the person with a face in which the muscles have lain dormant for a long time has little control over his facial muscles. He cannot make it register hate, sorrow, fear, anger, joy, or excitement at a moment's notice, no matter how hard he tries. He must put those muscles through a course of strenuous training for weeks and months in order to develop them and become able to control them. The muscles about the mouth, about the eyes, in the forehead, and around the nose must be free and ready to respond to the actor's most exacting need. The student whose real desire is to improve will work his facial muscles until they respond to his every desire.

Paying Attention

If you are the average beginner, you probably do not listen, and therefore do not really hear what other characters are saying. If you are not listening to what is said, how can you answer? If you learn your lines and know your cues, and also make it your task to pay attention, to actually listen all of the time you are on stage, you can react more convincingly.

Paying attention does not call for the continual nodding or shaking of the head or for a display of facial gymnastics. It means paying *visible* attention to what is said, keeping your eyes on the speaker, and giving an occasional nod or smile as the thought invites. It is not necessary to hold a rigid position. Positions of the body can be shifted, occasionally, when the dialogue is commonplace enough to permit it.

When several characters are listening they may react less definitely than when the responsibility rests only upon one. In the latter case, attention is focused upon the speaker and the one listener, whereas when there are several listeners, attention is more widely divided.

When characters listen in an interested way, the audience, too, focuses attention upon the player who is speaking. They want to miss nothing. Players must be sure that faces which hold interest are in easy view of the audience.

EXERCISE 1

(THREE MEN.)

[*An old Southern gentleman is entertaining two* STRANGERS *in his home. He likes to relive his life's experiences by relating them to others. The two men sit entranced, listening to the fascinating stories of the* JUDGE.[1]]

FIRST STRANGER. [*He has turned about from the window.*] And you, Judge? You've never felt any urge to leave the plantation yourself?

[1] Smith, Edgar V., *'Lijah*, in Phillips and Johnson, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

JUDGE HOLMSTED. Not the least, suh. We Holmsteds have always been lovers of the land and have always lived close to it. Maybe we were a little more firmly rooted in the soil than some of the others were. . . . Ye-e-s . . . things are different. Take the river, for one thing. Once we had an average of two steamboats a day on the 'Bigbee. Now . . . there's one a week. Then we always went to Mobile by boat. Those were great days, gentlemen! *Great* days! There was always a crowd of niggers on board with their fiddles and guitars. And dances! Many a time I've danced the polka and schottish until daybreak on a boat in midstream, gentlemen, with the fairest partners to be found in the world! [SECOND STRANGER *is leaning forward in his chair interestedly.* FIRST STRANGER *has faced about from the window again and is drinking in every word. Continuing.*] And the races between the different boats! Why, gentlemen, I've seen two of them pass our landin' here in the night, neck and neck, with their smokestacks flamin' red from top to bottom! You could see the niggers on the lower decks, stripped to the waist, the sweat pourin' from their brown bodies, as they fed the fat lightwood to the furnaces. I was a passenger on the *Nettie Belle* in seventy, when she beat the *Clay Johnson* in that famous race from Mobile to Demopolis by two hours, with a ten-foot rise in the 'Bigbee. And more than once, gentlemen—more than once! —I've seen a boat pull to the bank for two hot-headed young bloods to go ashore and settle their differences accordin' to the code!

FIRST STRANGER. With pistols, Judge?

JUDGE HOLMSTED. Yes, suh! In those days, gentlemen fought like gentlemen. And once . . . I saw a boat burned to the water's edge . . . not a half mile from our landin'. Ye-e-e-s . . . things were different, then. Goin' down in the fall, we'd stop at every landin' to load cotton, the boats racin' each other to see which could take in the biggest cargo. And I've seen fights—blood fights, gentlemen!—between cap'ns of different boats over the right to load cotton at landin's. [*He checks himself, suddenly embarrassed.*] But . . . pshaw! I'm becomin' garrulous. An old man, grievin' of the departed glories of his youth!

SECOND STRANGER. Not at all, Judge! Not at all! Go on!

JUDGE HOLMSTED. Some other time, gentlemen—if you please. Some other time. I'm monopolizin' the conversation.

Lavinia's reaction is unusual in the scene from *Mourning Becomes Electra.* She responds with an accusing expression on her face. In this play the author has inserted minute and expert direc-

tions for the playing of Lavinia's role. Since authors seldom do this so carefully, it is necessary that the actor study out for himself the appropriate reactions.

EXERCISE 2

(TWO WOMEN.)

[CHRISTINE MANNON *killed her husband, by poisoning him, because she loved another man. Her daughter* LAVINIA, *who has always hated her, knows of it. Now* CHRISTINE'S *son comes home from the war, and each woman, insanely jealous of the other, tries to turn him against the other.*[2]]

ORIN. Mother! [*She runs down the steps and flings her arms around him.*]

CHRISTINE. My boy! My baby! [*She kisses him.*]

ORIN [*melting, all his suspicion forgotten*]. Mother! God, it's good to see you! [*Then almost roughly, pushing her back and staring at her.*] But you're different! What's happened to you?

CHRISTINE [*forcing a smile*]. I? Different? I don't think so, dear. Certainly I hope not—to you! [*Touching the bandage on his head—tenderly*] Your head! Does it pain dreadfully? You poor darling, how you must have suffered! [*She kisses him.*] But it's all over now, thank God. I've got you back again! [*Keeping her arm around him, she leads him up the steps.*] Let's go in. There's someone else waiting who will be so glad to see you.

LAVINIA [*who has come to the foot of the steps—harshly*]. Remember, Orin! [CHRISTINE *turns around to look down at her. A look of hate flashes between mother and daughter.* ORIN *glances at his mother suspiciously and draws away from her.*]

CHRISTINE [*immediately recovers her poise—to* ORIN, *as if* LAVINIA *hadn't spoken*]. Come on in, dear. It's chilly. Your poor head— [*She takes his hand and leads him through the door and closes it behind them.* LAVINIA *remains by the foot of the steps, staring after them. Then the door is suddenly opened again and* CHRISTINE *comes out, closing it behind her, and walks to the head of the steps. For a moment mother and daughter stare into each other's eyes. Then*]

CHRISTINE [*begins haltingly in a tone she vainly tries to make kindly*]. Vinnie, I—I must speak with you a moment—now Orin is

[2] O'Neill, Eugene, *Mourning Becomes Electra.* New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1931. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

here. I appreciate your grief has made you—not quite normal—and I make allowances. But I cannot understand your attitude toward me. Why do you keep following me everywhere—and stare at me like that? I had been a good wife to him for twenty-three years—until I met Adam. I was guilty then, I admit. But I repented and put him out of my life. I would have been a good wife again as long as your father had lived. After all, Vinnie, I am your mother. I brought you into the world. You ought to have some feeling for me. [*She pauses.* LAVANIA *stares at her, frozen and silent. Fear creeps into* CHRISTINE'S *tone.*] Don't stare like that! What are you thinking? Surely you can't still have that insane suspicion—that I— [*Then guiltily.*] What did you do that night after I fainted? I—I've missed something—some medicine I take to put me to sleep— [*Something like a grim smile of satisfaction forms on* LAVINIA'S *lips.* CHRISTINE *exclaims frightenedly.*] Oh, you did—you found—and I suppose you connect that—but don't you see how insane—to suspect—when Doctor Blake knows he died of—! [*Then angrily.*] I know what you've been waiting for—to tell Orin your lies and get him to go to the police! You don't dare do that on your own responsibility—but if you can make Orin—Isn't that it? Isn't that what you've been planning the last two days? Tell me! [*Then, as* LAVINIA *remains silent,* CHRISTINE *gives way to fury and rushes down the steps and grabs her by the arm and shakes her.*] Answer me when I speak to you! What are you plotting? What are you going to do? Tell me! [LAVINIA *keeps her body rigid, her eyes staring into her mother's.* CHRISTINE *lets go and steps away from her. Then* LAVINIA, *turning her back, walks slowly and woodenly off. . . .* CHRISTINE *stares after her, her strength seems to leave her, she trembles with dread. From inside the house comes the sound of* ORIN'S *voice calling sharply* "Mother! where are you?" CHRISTINE *starts and by an effort of will regains control over herself. She hurries up the steps and opens the door. She speaks to* ORIN *and her voice is tensely quiet and normal.*] Here I am, dear! [*She shuts the door behind her.*]

✣ *Reaction* ✣

The listening character should always react somewhat. This reaction however may be very slight. Some scenes call for greater reaction than do others. A smile, or a nod, or eyes focused on the speaker may not be enough. Perhaps the listener makes several

attempts to speak; he may whisper to a companion, or he may register disgust then turn and walk away.

A listening player's reaction, however, *must not* attract attention away from the character upon whom it should be centered. Each actor needs to study the lines of other actors in a scene so that he can be sure of the reaction needed; thus he will be less likely to direct attention away from the center of interest.

The speaking player needs full response from his associate. They communicate to each other through eyes and actions. The speaker can play his scene better if other players co-operate fully.

In reaction that immediately precedes the listener's own lines, he must take a breath, he may lean forward, his hands may move, all in preparation for his speech which is to be given on cue.

EXERCISE 3

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[REV. MORELL'S *secretary,* PROSERPINE, *is unwillingly holding a conversation with the very candid and sensitive poet who is the guest in the house. He is trying to talk with her about her actual feelings, but she is too conventional to reply other than indifferently. He remarks that poets tire of talking to themselves. He often wishes other people would talk to him.*[3]]

PROSERPINE [*suddenly rising with her hand pressed on her heart*]. Oh, it's no use trying to work while you talk like that. [*She leaves her little table and sits on the sofa. Her feelings are evidently strongly worked on.*] It's no business of yours, whether my heart cries or not; but I have a mind to tell you, for all that.

MARCHBANKS. You needn't. I know already that it must.

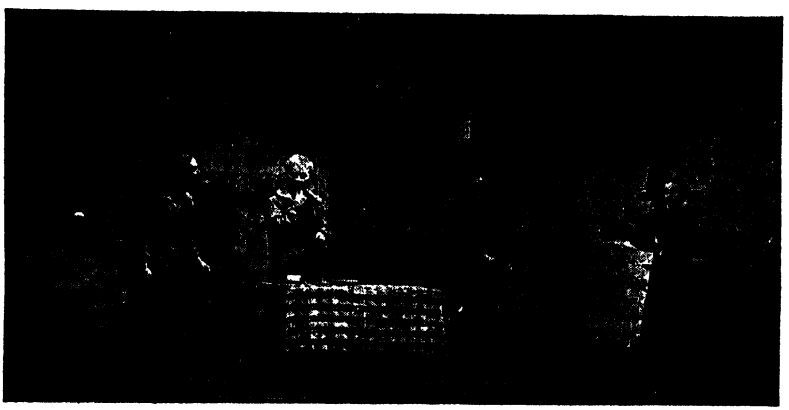
PROSERPINE. But mind: if you ever say I said so, I'll deny it.

MARCHBANKS [*compassionately*]. Yes, I know. And so you haven't the courage to tell him?

PROSERPINE [*bouncing up*]. Him! Who?

MARCHBANKS. Whoever he is. The man you love. It might be anybody. The curate, Mr. Mill, perhaps.

[3] Shaw, George Bernard. *Candida,* in Shaw, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of the author.



The Star Wagon, by Maxwell Anderson, University of Michigan.
The Black Flamingo, by Sam Janney, Grove City College.
Ethan Frome, by Owen and Donald Davis, University of Michigan.
Reacting of listening characters is highly important.

PROSERPINE [*with disdain*]. Mr. Mill!!! A fine man to break my heart about, indeed! I'd rather have you than Mr. Mill.

MARCHBANKS [*recoiling*]. No, really—I'm very sorry; but you musn't think of that. I—

PROSERPINE [*testily, crossing to the fire and standing at it with her back to him*]. Oh, don't be frightened: it's not you. It's not any one particular person.

MARCHBANKS. I know. You feel that you could love anybody that offered—

PROSERPINE [*exasperated*]. Anybody that offered! No, I do not. What do you take me for?

MARCHBANKS [*discouraged*]. No use. You won't make me real answers—only those things that everybody says. [*He strays to the sofa and sits down disconsolately.*]

PROSERPINE [*nettled at what she takes to be a disparagement of her manners by an aristocrat*]. Oh, well, if you want original conversation, you'd better go and talk to yourself.

MARCHBANKS. That is what all poets do: they talk to themselves out loud; and the world overhears them. But it's horribly lonely not to hear someone else talk sometimes.

PROSERPINE. Wait until Mr. Morell comes. He'll talk to you. [MARCHBANKS *shudders.*] Oh, you needn't make wry faces over him: he can talk better than you. [*With temper.*] He'd talk your little head off. [*She is going back angrily to her place, when, suddenly enlightened, he springs up and stops her.*]

MARCHBANKS. Ah, I understand now!

PROSERPINE [*reddening*]. What do you understand?

MARCHBANKS. Your secret. Tell me: is it really and truly possible for a woman to love him?

PROSERPINE [*as if this were beyond all bounds*]. Well!!!

MARCHBANKS. [*Passionately.*] No, answer me. I want to know: I must know. I can't understand it. I can see nothing in him but words, pious resolutions, what people call goodness. You can't love that.

PROSERPINE [*attempting to snub him by an air of cool propriety*]. I simply don't know what you're talking about. I don't understand you.

MARCHBANKS [*vehemently*]. You do. You lie—

PROSERPINE. Oh!

MARCHBANKS You do understand; and you know. [*Determined to have an answer.*] Is it possible for a woman to love him?

PROSERPINE [*looking him straight in the face*]. Yes. [*He covers his face with his hands.*] Whatever is the matter with you! [*He takes down his hands and looks at her. Frightened at the tragic mask presented to her, she hurries past him at the utmost possible distance, keeping her eyes on his face until he turns from her and goes to the child's chair beside the hearth, where he sits in the deepest dejection. As she approaches the door, it opens and* BURGESS *enters. On seeing him, she ejaculates*] Praise heaven, here's somebody! [*and sits down, reassured, at her table.*]

EXERCISE 4

(THREE MEN; THREE WOMEN; EXTRAS.)

[*A large crowd of tired New Yorkers are taking a Sunday excursion on the S. S. Happiness.* OBADIAH RICH, *the captain, has a special surprise trip in store for the passengers. He has planned it to please them. The passengers, realizing the boat is off its course, show their disapproval as* OBADIAH *tries to explain to them. The passengers will do a great deal of ad libbing, creating a loud murmur. What* OBADIAH *says must be heard above this confusion.*[4]]

OBADIAH. Aye, we're swinging wide of the channel tonight, m'friends. That's what I've come down to talk to you about. But first, I want you to know my brother Jonathan, 'cause he's a good sailor, a mighty fine sailor.

JONATHAN. Howdy, shipmates.

PASSENGERS. Hello.

MAGOON. Say, what the hell is all this?

OBADIAH. We don't allow swearing on this boat, mister, if you don't mind. Now then, m'friends, let's get down to the hull of it, as Zenas Hopkins used to say. You got Jonathan here to thank, mates. He thinks you should have an explanation now. Oh, I was going to tell you too, only not so soon, that's all.

MAGOON. What the hell are you driving at?

OBADIAH. I'm sorry mister, but if you insist on swearing, I'll just have to ask you to take yourself down to the men's smoking room. Well, seeing as you and me is going to be partners on this here venture—

[4] Wolfson, Victor, *Excursion.* New York: Random House, 1937. Reprinted by special permission of Random House. This play in its entirety is published and leased by the Dramatist Play Service, Inc., 6 East 39th Street, New York City, without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given.

RICHARD. Venture, Obadiah?

OBADIAH. That's right, son. Jonathan, here, and me, we got up—now how shall I put it?— Say a little more excursion for you folks.

JONATHAN. Aye, that's it.

TESSIE. Oh, Captain, that's wonderful. I was so worried. A moonlight cruise. Oh, he's sweet.

OBADIAH. Moonlight cruise? Yes, yes, in a way. You know, I been watching you folks go on excursions for years, and I've seen how you've been fooled, 'cause Coney Island's not a real happy island, you know that, and I been noticing how you hated to go back to the things you had to go back to— Well, me mates, passengers, friends, we're all on our way now to a real happy island where we can be really happy. [*The foghorn blows.*]

TESSIE. Oh, Captain, what are you making such speeches for? Where's the island? I'll bet it's that one near City Island, Martha.

MARTHA. You mean near the Bronx there? Why, that's practically in my back yard, Captain.

OBADIAH. I don't happen to know the island you're talking of, girls, but the one I'm thinking of is [*He takes out a little piece of paper on which he has jotted down some information*] 1650 nautical miles sou', sou'east of Cape Hatteras.

TESSIE. What!

OBADIAH. Latitude 8 point 9, longitude 53 point . . .

MARTHA. 1650?

MAGOON. He's crazy, I tell you!

RICHARD. Sit down, you!

MAGOON. What are you all standing here listening to him for?

LEE. Sit down, and let him finish!

MAGOON. And let him talk a lot of halfwits into taking this boat God knows where? Can'tcha see what he's driving at? He's nuts!

MRS. GEASLING. He's right. I don't know what's got into you, Captain Rich.

OBADIAH. Now, hear me, hear me.

JONATHAN. Now, take it easy, miss.

MRS. GEASLING. Don't "miss" me. I'm married. You got to get me home right away, do you hear? I got to get Mike off to school in the morning. I can't go to no fancy island.

OBADIAH. Now hear me, hear me; if you don't want to go, you don't have to go.

MAGOON. Well, here's one that don't want to go.

MRS. GEASLING. Nor me.

MRS. BOOMER. I should say not.

MR. BOOMER. Now, mother, don't fly off the handle. } together

MISS DOWDIE. I'm far enough from Dakota right now.

OBADIAH. Now, hear me! Hear me! Now, as I told you, mates, those that don't want to go, I can put ashore at Norfolk.

✣ *Thinking* ✣

To keep an audience interested in watching someone who is alone on stage is a problem. The following scene has little action; its success depends upon registered thoughts and emotions. The silence in it is eloquent. After the wife leaves, the husband must hold the interest of the audience through his projected concern for her safety.

EXERCISE 5

(TWO MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*The* WIFE *is just ready to go on the operating table for a very serious operation. Both she and her* HUSBAND *make a great effort to be brave and keep cheerful. When the* NURSE *comes and takes her, the* HUSBAND *waits alone in the agony of his suspense.*[5]]

WIFE. There, there. And Grumbler, listen. I've never been so happy in my life. And I haven't any pain, now. Isn't that strange? And isn't that the way it should be? Think how promising it is. [*Steps are heard at the right.*] And we're both ready, aren't we? [*She smiles up at him bravely. There slowly breaks over his heavy face a smile no less brave and quiet than hers.*]

HUSBAND. Yes. [*The door at right opens.*]

INTERNE. [*Speaking off the stage to the* NURSE.] Tell your patient we are ready. [NURSE *comes out the right door.*]

WIFE. [*Turning steadily.*] Do you want me now?

NURSE. [*Coming to support her.*] Yes, . . . all ready . . . do you want my help?

[5] Dickinson, Thomas H., *In Hospital,* in Dickinson, Thomas H. (editor), *Wisconsin Plays,* First Series. New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1914. Reprinted by special permission of Viking Press, Inc.

WIFE. Oh, no. I can walk perfectly. [*Over her shoulder lightly.*] By by, Grumbler.

HUSBAND. So long, PET. [WIFE *and* NURSE *walk to the door and go out.* NURSE *closes the door.* HUSBAND *stands in the middle of the room watching until they have disappeared. Then he walks to the door and stands near it as if looking and listening. The room is very quiet. After a moment he backs away from the door to the centre of the room and there seats himself in the chair in which she had sat. His face, which is cast straight to the front with drawn lustreless eyes, is blank and impassive. He is waiting. The sunbeams begin to fall on the wall near the door. But he does not see them. His hands are drawn together until his fists are taut knobs.*

Now and again he turns with a vacant stare and an immobile face toward the door. Nothing enlightened, he turns again and rests his eyes on a space, waiting for news. Now and then his mouth twitches. His lips become dry and he moistens them with his tongue. The right side of his jaw sinks, pulling his mouth down until it becomes an irregular line cutting his gaunt features. Then he draws his features back into control again and the expression of vacant pain returns to his face.

Thirty seconds pass, representing a long space of time in the operating room on the right. The beams of the sun fall steadily in a diagonal line toward the door. Then suddenly he first sees the beam. His eyes light with understanding, the vacant expression leaves his face. From this time on he follows the course of the sun-ray with deep attention. He leans forward, his feet drawn close under him, his hands clasping the arms of his chair. Once he rises and backs off that he may better watch the ray of light. He gives all his attention to the quiet room toward which the sunbeam is moving. A minute has passed on the stage; a minute and a half. Perhaps three or four minutes elapse on the stage before the symbolism of the long period of time in the operating room on the right can be considered complete. During this time he sits in absolute silence, a silence made more profound by the sense of significance which his attitude attaches to it.

As time goes on he becomes quieter, whether with resignation or strength. No sound pierces the dense quiet of the room in which time moves forward on the limpid rails of light. The man's attitude is so tense that it seems as if he fears to break the steady course of the sunbeam. As time goes on he seems, if possible, to watch the door more closely. Now the beam of light, becoming broader, breaks over the

stand by the wall and throws a spot of light over the door of the operating room.

In another moment the whole side of the wall is alight. The hour is complete. As the time for which he was to wait passes, the attitude of the man changes again. He springs from his chair and paces twice across the room with soft steps. Then he suddenly stops and leans against a chair, and as second follows second, his head sinks.

There are sounds of motion in the room on the right. The door opens and the NURSE *comes hurriedly out.*]

HUSBAND. Is there anything—?

NURSE. Do not stop me now. [*She goes out by the centre door.* HUSBAND *watches the door through which she has gone.* NURSE *returns leaving the doors open.*]

HUSBAND [*with greater strength*]. I beg you—

NURSE [*impatiently*]. Please! You must wait!

The "Illusion of the First Time"

The *illusion of the first time* is akin to surprise. Any idea that strikes the character as new will be registered so: a new person in the scene, a new piece of clothing or furniture or equipment, a new idea, pleasure, fear, or reaction, are all registered as though sensed for the *first time.* Unskilled players often anticipate the new feeling, thus destroying the illusion of the first time. Be careful of anticipating. You know what's coming, yes. But don't let anybody *see* that you know.

When you hear your cue on stage you must strive to look and act as though you had never heard it before. To be sure, everybody knows that it is not new; that you have been rehearsing the cue and lines for six weeks. But this is the land of make-believe. Every simple action, every sensation, every response must be made to look as though you are experiencing it for the first time.

An actor may grow stale in his role after weeks of rehearsal, but when the first night before the audience finally arrives he is rejuvenated. His work *comes alive.* He will do better than he has ever done before. That is the reason that the first night of a Broadway production is the biggest. People who attend the theater a great deal prefer to see the first performance of a play because

in it the illusion of the first time is more nearly perfect than it will ever be again.

The same principle holds true in amateur shows. If a play is in the pink of perfection when it opens and all goes well on the first night, a let-down will most likely follow on the second night, and probably the play will pick up again on the third night. However, all too often an amateur play is not in tip-top shape when it opens. When this is true, the first performance is not tops. When late cues, misplaced properties, forgotten business, the wrong clothes, show a play to be not quite set, the second performance will probably be better than the first. Adjustments, then, will have been made, the actors will become surer of themselves, and the performance will be more artistic.

EXERCISE 6

(TWO MEN; TWO WOMEN; EXTRAS.)

[MR. WHITESIDE *fell on the steps of the Stanley home and broke his hip. Although confined to his wheel chair, he expects to carry on his business from this home.*[6]]

STANLEY. How do you do, Mr. Whiteside? I hope that you are better.

WHITESIDE. Thank you. I am suing you for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

STANLEY. How's that? What?

WHITESIDE. I said I am suing you for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

MRS. STANLEY. You mean—because you fell on our steps, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE. Samuel J. Liebowitz will explain it to you in court. . . . Who are those two harpies standing there like the kiss of death?

[MRS. MCCUTCHEON, *with a little gasp, drops the calf's-foot jelly. It smashes on the floor.*]

MRS. MCCUTCHEON. Oh, dear! My calf's-foot jelly.

[6] Kaufman, George S., and Hart, Moss, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, New York: Random House, 1939. Reprinted by special permission of Random House. This play in its entirety is published and leased by the Dramatist Play Service, Inc., 6 East 39th Street, New York City, without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given.

WHITESIDE. Made from your own foot, I have no doubt. And now, Mrs. Stanley, I have a few small matters to take up with you. Since this corner druggist at my elbow tells me that I shall be confined in this mouldy mortuary for at least another ten days, due entirely to your stupidity and negligence, I shall have to carry on my activities as best I can. I shall require the exclusive use of this room, as well as that drafty sewer which you call the library. I want no one to come in or out while I am in this room.

STANLEY. What do you mean, sir?

MRS. STANLEY [*stunned*]. But we have to go up the stairs to get to our rooms, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE. Isn't there a back entrance?

MRS. STANLEY. Why—yes.

WHITESIDE. Then use that. I shall also require a room for my secretary, Miss Cutler. I shall have a great many incoming and outgoing calls, so please use the telephone as little as possible. I sleep until noon and require quiet through the house until that hour. There will be five for lunch today. Where is the cook?

MR. STANLEY. Mr. Whiteside, if I may interrupt for a moment—

WHITESIDE. You may not, sir. . . . Will you take your clammy hand off my chair? [*This last to nurse.*] . . . And now will you all quietly leave, or must I ask Miss Cutler to pass among you with a baseball bat?

[MRS. DEXTER *and* MRS. MCCUTCHEON *are beating a hasty retreat, their gifts still in hand.*]

MRS. MCCUTCHEON. Well—goodbye, Daisy. We'll call you— Oh, no, we mustn't use the phone. Well—we'll see you [*and they are gone*].

STANLEY. [*Boldly.*] Now look here, Mr. Whiteside—

WHITESIDE. There is nothing to discuss, sir. Considering the damage I have suffered at your hands, I am asking very little. Good day.

STANLEY. [*Controlling himself.*] I'll call you from the office later, Daisy.

WHITESIDE. Not on this phone, please.

EXERCISE 7

(TWO MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[*A stranger has entered* PAPA BRIQUET'S *circus. His past is a mystery. Everyone in the circus wonders who he is and where he came from. He asks to be a clown called* HE WHO GETS SLAPPED. *But* PAPA

BRIQUET *and his helpmate,* ZINIDA, *are once more trying to learn his identity.*[7]]

HE. Why can't you imagine that I have no name? Can't I lose it as I might lose my hat? Or let someone else take it by mistake? When a stray dog comes to you, you don't ask his name—you simply give him another. Let me be that dog. [*Laughing.*] He,—the Dog!

ZINIDA. Why don't you tell us your name, just the two of us. Nobody else need know it. Unless you should break your neck—

HE. [*Hesitates.*] Honestly?

[ZINIDA *shrugs her shoulders.*]

BRIQUET. Where people are honest, their word is good. One sees you come from *out there.*

HE. All right. But please, don't be surprised. [*Gives* ZINIDA *his card. She looks at it, then hands it to* BRIQUET, *then both look at* HE.]

BRIQUET. If it is true, sir, that you are really what is written here—

HE. For heaven's sake—for heaven's sake—this does not exist, but was lost long ago; it is just a check for an old hat. I pray you to forget it, as I have. I am He Who Gets Slapped—nothing else. [*Silence.*]

BRIQUET. I beg your pardon, sir, but I must ask you again, I must humbly ask you—are you not drunk, sir? There is something in your eye—something—

HE. No, no. I am He Who Gets Slapped. Since when do you speak to me like this, Papa Briquet? You offend me.

ZINIDA. After all, it's his business, Briquet. [*She hides the card.*] Truly you are a strange man. [*Smiles.*]

Registering Sensation

Sensation is registered and projected to the audiences through physical behavior. This will not be natural for many of you. Some give few outward signs of taste, smell, sight, or hearing; nor do they show much reaction to the emotions of fear, love, anger, or joy. The successful actor must learn to show signs—sometimes mere hints—of such sensations. No two actors will react in exactly the same way to these sensations, but they must be registered physically.

[7] Andreyev, Leonid, *He Who Gets Slapped,* in *Theatre Guild Anthology.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1936. Reprinted by permission of The Theatre Guild, Inc.

EXERCISES 8-28

8. You are standing in the safety zone waiting for your street car. Just as an automobile passes the zone, a truck swerves out to pass it and lumbers into the zone, forcing you onto the street-car tracks in front of the approaching trolley car. Show the shock.

9. It is late at night. You are hungry. You have just dropped into a small restaurant for a sandwich and coffee. A repulsive half-drunk sits down opposite you. Show disgust.

10. You have just returned from college. A swindler who has succeeded in taking what belonged to your father has come to your home again, this time to claim the last of your father's possessions. Show hate.

11. The director is telling you how to take position for a "clinch" in a play. You say jokingly—"To think that *you* should show *us!*" You then realize how it sounds. Show embarrassment.

12. Your tiny sister has just asked you please to go into the dark room with her to get her dolly. Show adoration.

13. The fellows are ganging in your room on the evening before your final examination in French. They insist that you enter into the conversation. Show annoyance.

14. You dislike city life, but are forced to endure it. You are in a lovely, secluded spot for your vacation. Show contentment.

15. Your boss has accused you of something you did not do. You tell him he is mistaken. He says with a sneer, "Don't lie, now." Show anger.

16. You are poor, but proud. Business misfortunes and sickness have made you almost penniless. The mortgage holder has just come to take over your house and furnishings. Show dejection.

17. You are with a friend when a messenger hands her a telegram telling of the death of a little sister. Show sympathy.

18. You have read your class theme to an acquaintance. When the instructor calls on him to read his in class you hear him reading what is essentially your theme. Show resentment.

19. A pal thinks that your girl is very attractive. He shows her undue attention to which she responds. Show jealousy.

20. You are attending a convention. A long-lost friend steps up and taps you on the shoulder. Show surprise.

21. Your friends, almost to a man, are going over to see the season's biggest football game. You will be busy until after all cars have gone. A friend decides to withstand the thrill of seeing the kick-off and to wait to take you with him. Show appreciation.

22. You are spending the night in a hotel. You are awakened by the smell of wood smoke. You sit up in bed and see flames leaping past your window sill. Show fright.

23. A little boy has thrown his ball too far. It has rolled into the middle of the street. As he runs after it, a speeding automobile strikes and runs over him. Show horror.

24. You are deeply in love with and engaged to be married to a college friend. The friend decided to attend another University. As the year continues, letters come less often. You then receive the letter which tells you that the friend has fallen in love with another. Show the hurt.

25. Your son has been a staunch Christian worker and very influential with his associates. His college roommate, an atheist, influences him to throw over his early religious beliefs and join the ranks of atheism. Your son tells you his decision. Show sorrow.

26. You are picnicking. Your small children are sitting on the grass near a clump of bushes. You see a large rattlesnake back of them just ready to strike. Show terror.

27. Your young brother has hoarded his every penny, for months, to take him to the national Scout convention in June. Floods sweep the country. He rushes his money off to the flood sufferers. Show pride.

28. You are waiting on the wharf to greet your mother who is returning, after a year, from abroad. You watch the faces of those coming down the gangplank. Show eagerness.

Topics and Exercises

9

THE EYES SPEAK

A. PAYING ATTENTION

EXERCISE 1: from *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* by Sir Arthur Wing Pinero

B. SECURING ATTENTION

C. DIRECTING ATTENTION

TO CHARACTERS

EXERCISE 2: from *The Intruder* by Maurice Maeterlinck

TO OBJECTS

EXERCISE 3. from *The Mollusc* by H. H. Davies

TO ENTRANCES

EXERCISE 4: from *The Man Who Came to Dinner* by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart

D. FINDING THE OBJECTIVE

EXERCISE 5: from *The Blue Bird* by Maurice Maeterlinck

E. SECRECY AND LISTENING

EXERCISE 6: from *Escape* by John Galsworthy

9

THE EYES SPEAK

THE WORK of the eyes and the face cannot be separated. One is part of the other, and therefore they must work together. However, because the eyes need special consideration and additional rehearsal, exercises are included for their training.

The expression of the eyes makes a character appear glad or sad, noble or ignoble, austere or cowering, interesting or dull, alive or dead. The player's eyes tell much of the story; without their expressions we do not have artistic stage acting.

Since some eyes are small, they can be made to appear larger by make-up. It is more important, however, that the player keep his eyes well open and his face partially front so that the audience can see expression in them.

Thoughts are revealed through the eyes. We read our friends' thoughts through the expressions in their eyes. Feelings also come to the surface in the eyes. When thoughts and feelings both come to life there, the eyes are more interesting.

You will need to stand with head up and eyes ahead so that the audience can see your eyes. Too often when a player is thinking or at ease he looks at the floor. Do not look down, look ahead. The people cannot see your eyes when you gaze at the floor.

The student will strive to control the movements of his eyes. He must be able to hold them steady, when necessary, with his gaze fixed upon a single small space. He must learn to look into space—seeing nothing, looking nowhere. He should cultivate a dreamy eye, a flashing eye, a stealthy eye, a questioning eye, an angry eye, a laughing eye, and dozens of other eye expressions.

"The eye is the window of the soul." It always has been and always will be. Radio plays are interesting and entertaining, but they can never take the place of a real flesh-and-blood play, in which actors thrill their hearers by the combined work of trained faces, eyes, and bodies.

Very young people sometimes succumb to the temptation of looking into the audience. Curiosity simply gets the better of them. This is bad taste. It is more than bad taste; it destroys the illusion. The audience watches a play with the feeling that they are let in on secrets of another world. They lose themselves and their own life problems in watching it. When a player drops out of character or looks out and sees the people in the house, the members of the audience notice him. They are jerked back from the land of make-believe to their own environment again. For the moment the illusion is destroyed. Never be guilty of this mistake.

✣ *Paying Attention* ✣

Many college players are inclined to look into the face of the character to whom they are speaking throughout each speech or scene. This is a wrong impulse. In real life we look toward the listener, then away, then back toward him. When, however, the topic of conversation is of particular interest or is exciting, the speaker may fasten his gaze on the listener. This problem will be taken up more fully in the chapter, *Directing Speech.*

But how about the listener? Where does he look? He fastens his attention on the speaker. He looks at him most, though not all, of the time. His gaze will not be constant but it will be so nearly so that he will direct the attention of the audience to the

speaker. They see the character *paying attention* and they are led to do likewise. This principle is observed almost universally by actors on the stage.

Since it is desirable that attention be directed to Paula in Exercise 1, both Drummle and Aubrey will pay attention to her by looking intently at her. Paula, on the other hand, will avert her eyes much of the time.

EXERCISE 1

(TWO MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[PAULA *has recently married* AUBREY TANQUERAY, *a widower with a daughter,* ELLEAN. PAULA *finds herself becoming jealous because of the attention her husband pays his daughter.* PAULA *and* CAYLEY DRUMMLE, *the debonair friend of* AUBREY, *have wandered aside from the dance.*[1]]

PAULA. No, no, you don't understand. What do you think I've done?

DRUMMLE. Done! What, *since* you invited the Orreyeds?

PAULA. Yes; I must tell you—

DRUMMLE. Perhaps you'd better not.

PAULA. Look here! I've intercepted some letters from Mrs. Cortelyon and Ellean to—him. [*Producing three unopened letters from the bodice of her dress.*] There are the accursed things! From Paris—two from the Cortelyon woman, the other from Ellean!

DRUMMLE. But why—why?

PAULA. I don't know. Yes, I do! I saw letters coming from Ellean to her father; not a line to me—not a line. And one morning it happened I was downstairs before he was, and I spied this one lying with his heap on the breakfast table, and I slipped it into my pocket—out of malice, Cayley, pure deviltry! And a day or two afterwards I met Elwes the postman at the Lodge, and took the letters from him, and found these others amongst 'em. I felt simply fiendish when I saw them—fiendish! [*Returning the letters to her bodice.*] And now I carry them about with me, and they're scorching me like a mustard plaster!

DRUMMLE. Oh, this accounts for Aubrey not hearing from Paris lately!

[1] Pinero, Sir Arthur Wing, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* in Dickinson, Thomas H. (editor), *Chief Contemporary Dramatists.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921 Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

PAULA. That's an ingenious conclusion to arrive at! Of course it does! [*With a hysterical laugh.*] Ha, ha!

DRUMMLE. Well, well! [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, ha!

PAULA [*turning upon him*]. I suppose it is amusing!

DRUMMLE. I beg pardon.

PAULA. Heaven knows I've little enough to brag about! I'm a bad lot, but not in mean tricks of this sort. In all my life this is the most caddish thing I've done. How am I to get rid of these letters—that's what I want to know? How am I to get rid of them?

DRUMMLE. If I were you I should take Aubrey aside and put them in his hands as soon as possible.

PAULA. What! and tell him to his face that I—! No, thank you. I suppose *you* wouldn't like to—

DRUMMLE. No, no; I won't touch 'em!

PAULA. And you call yourself my friend?

DRUMMLE [*good-humoredly*]. No, I don't!

PAULA. Perhaps I'll tie them together and give them to his man in the morning.

DRUMMLE. That won't avoid an explanation.

PAULA [*recklessly*]. Oh, then he must miss them—

DRUMMLE. And trace them.

PAULA [*throwing herself upon the ottoman*]. I don't care!

DRUMMLE. I know you don't; but let me send him to you now, may I?

PAULA. Now! What do you think a woman's made of? I couldn't stand it, Cayley. I haven't slept for nights; and last night was thunder, too! I believe I've got the horrors.

DRUMMLE [*taking the little hand-mirror from the table*]. You'll sleep well enough when you deliver those letters. Come, come, Mrs. Aubrey—a good night's rest! [*Holding the mirror before her face.*] It's quite time. [*She looks at herself for a moment, then snatches the mirror from him.*]

PAULA. You brute, Cayley, to show me that!

DRUMMLE. Then—may I? Be guided by a fr— a poor old woman! May I?

PAULA. You'll kill me, amongst you!

DRUMMLE. What do you say?

PAULA [*after a pause*]. Very well. [*He nods and goes out rapidly. She looks after him for a moment, and calls "Cayley! Cayley!" Then she again produces the letters, deliberately, one by one, fingering them*

with aversion. Suddenly she starts, turning her head towards the door.] Ah! [AUBREY *enters quickly.*]

AUBREY. Paula!

PAULA [*handing him the letters, her face averted*]. There! [*He examines letters, looks at her enquiringly.*] They are many days old. I stole them, I suppose to make you anxious and unhappy. [*He looks at them again, then lays them aside on the table.*]

AUBREY [*gently*]. Paula, dear, it doesn't matter.

Securing Attention

Many unfair tricks are used by actors to attract attention to themselves when interest should be centered upon another player. Such tricks are definitely condemned by high-grade theater workers. However, the actor must understand how, when necessary, to shift attention to the action or person that is entitled to it.

For example, a star performer may attract so much interest that it should be shifted away from him. If this star has held the center of attention throughout an act, the audience will invariably watch him while he is on stage. A comedian often holds the interest even though he tries to be inconspicuous when not sharing in the dialogue.

When it is desirable thus to draw interest away, the actor may turn his face away from the audience or step into a place where he is partially hidden. He will try to make himself as uninteresting as possible.

The one upon whom attention should center must be emphasized. He may occupy a conspicuous place, upstage center with interest focused on him, or downstage with interest directed from above him. He may be placed on a higher level or in the apex of a triangle, or he may be dressed in striking contrast to others.

An actor may secure attention if he is adept in using his eyes. Some actors have large eyes; others widen their eyes with make-up. Comedians often roll their eyes to get effects. Some of our very funny men are delightfully crosseyed. All actors need to be

able to use their eyes well, but the comedian should be particularly skillful in acting with his eyes.

In general we may say that whatever is in contrast attracts attention: the actor moving in a group of quiet players; a bright color among somber shades; a single person standing apart from a group; someone on a higher or a lower plane; a character paying no attention to the conversation in which others are taking part. All of these means may be used to attract attention to an actor or a particular piece of business.

Directing Attention

Attention of the spectators can be directed to anything that the player's eyes indicate to be important. Pointedly looking at something, whether it be a character, an object, or an entrance, adds interest to it.

There should always be a center of interest. It may be a character, a group of characters, or occasionally a location on stage. The players make this center of interest the focal point of their attention.

The eye sometimes has to glance about to find the object of interest. When it is located, the player's eyes will focus on it; the attention of the audience will then be drawn to the spot.

Look before you move or speak.

See the piano, then go to it.

Look at the door, then exit.

Glance at the desk, then cross and pick up the letter.

Look up at an entering character then cross to him as you speak.

See the disheveled room, then begin straightening it.

Your glance directs attention to the place. Not only that, it is the natural procedure; we do that in real life. *Do not neglect this; it is important.* Remember this order: the *look*, the *action*, the *line*.

Directing Attention to Characters

In the exercise from *The Intruder* other characters will keep casting questioning glances toward the Grandfather. Slight gestures may accompany the lines or immediately precede them.

EXERCISE 2

(THREE MEN; THREE WOMEN.)

[*In the dimly lighted room of an old house are the* GRANDFATHER, *the* FATHER, *the* UNCLE, *and the* THREE SISTERS. *The old, blind* GRANDFATHER *feels the presence of someone near them. His daughter, the mother of the* THREE SISTERS, *lies very ill in the next room. The family is awaiting the coming of a nun. As the night creeps on, an air of mystery prevails. This is increased by the* GRANDFATHER'S *frequent questionings about another person whom he feels to be present. The* THREE SISTERS *keep always near each other.*[2]]

THE GRANDFATHER. No one has come into the room?

THE FATHER. No; no one has come in.

GRANDFATHER. And your sister is not here?

THE UNCLE. Our sister has not come.

GRANDFATHER. You want to deceive me.

UNCLE. Deceive you?

GRANDFATHER. Ursula, tell me the truth, for the love of God!

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. Grandfather! Grandfather! What is the matter with you?

GRANDFATHER. Something has happened! I am sure my daughter is worse! . . .

UNCLE. Are you dreaming?

GRANDFATHER. You do not want to tell me! . . . I can see quite well there is something . . .

UNCLE. In that case you can see better than we can.

GRANDFATHER. Ursula, tell me the truth!

DAUGHTER. But we have told you the truth, grandfather!

GRANDFATHER. You do not speak in your ordinary voice.

FATHER. That is because you frighten her.

GRANDFATHER. Your voice is changed too.

[2] Maeterlinck, Maurice, *The Intruder,* in Shay and Loving, (editors), *Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays.* New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1921.

FATHER. You are going mad! [*He and the* UNCLE *make signs to each other to signify the* GRANDFATHER *has lost his reason.*]

GRANDFATHER. I can hear quite well that you are afraid.

FATHER. But what should I be afraid of?

GRANDFATHER. Why do you want to deceive me?

UNCLE. Who is thinking of deceiving you?

GRANDFATHER. Why have you put out the light?

UNCLE. But the light has not been put out; there is as much light as there was before.

DAUGHTER. It seems to me that the lamp has gone down.

FATHER. I see as well now as ever.

GRANDFATHER. I have millstones on my eyes! Tell me, girls, what is going on here! Tell me, for the love of God, you who can see! I am here, all alone, in darkness without end! I do not know who seats himself beside me. I do not know what is happening a yard from me! . . . Why were you talking under your breath just now?

FATHER. No one was talking under his breath.

GRANDFATHER. You did talk in a low voice at the door.

FATHER. You heard all I said.

GRANDFATHER. You brought someone into the room!

FATHER. But I tell you no one has come in!

GRANDFATHER. Is it your sister or a priest?—You should not try to deceive me.—Ursula, who was it that came in?

DAUGHTER. No one, grandfather.

GRANDFATHER. You must not try to deceive me; I know what I know.—How many of us are there here?

DAUGHTER. There are six of us around the table, grandfather.

GRANDFATHER. You are all around the table?

DAUGHTER. Yes, grandfather.

✣ *Directing Attention to Objects* ✣

Attention will be directed to an object as the one speaking looks in the direction of and speaks of it. The eyes of the audience tend to follow the speaker's eyes unless he seems to be dreaming or thinking as he looks out, seeing nothing.

In the exercise from *The Mollusc,* Mrs. Baxter will look about, see what she wants, then speak of it. Mr. Baxter or Miss Roberts will follow with their eyes, then move toward the object. The eye always leads the way.

EXERCISE 3

(ONE MAN; TWO WOMEN.)

[MISS ROBERTS, *the governess of the two daughters of* MR. *and* MRS. BAXTER, *wishes to leave. She explains to* MR. BAXTER *that it is time the girls should have a governess with more education than she has.* MISS ROBERTS *says that she has tried to give* MRS. BAXTER *notice several times, but that she will not listen. Now* MISS ROBERTS *wishes to notify her while* MR. BAXTER *is present to help.*[3]]

MISS ROBERTS. I think I hear Mrs. Baxter coming. [MRS. BAXTER *enters. She is a pretty woman about thirty-five, vague in her movements and manner of speaking. She comes down the room as she speaks.*]

MRS. BAXTER. I've been wondering where *Scribner's Magazine* is.

MR. BAXTER. I have it. Have you been looking for it?

MRS. BAXTER. No—not looking—only wondering.

MR. BAXTER. Do you want it?

MRS. BAXTER [*pleasantly*]. Not if you are reading it—though I was just halfway through a story.

MR. BAXTER. Do take it.

MRS. BAXTER [*taking magazine*]. Don't you really want it? [*She looks about, selecting the most comfortable chair.*]

MR. BAXTER. It doesn't matter.

MRS. BAXTER [*smiling*]. Thank you. [*She sits.*] Oh, Miss Roberts, I wonder if you could get me the cushion out of that chair? [*Pointing to chair near window.*]

MISS ROBERTS. Certainly. [*She brings cushion to* MRS. BAXTER *and places it behind her back.*]

MRS. BAXTER [*settling herself*]. Thank you. Now I'm quite comfortable—unless I had a footstool.

MISS ROBERTS. A footstool? [*She gets a footstool, brings it to* MRS. BAXTER *and places it under her feet.*]

MRS. BAXTER [*without any attempt to move while* MISS ROBERTS *is doing this*]. Don't trouble, Miss Roberts. I didn't mean you to do that. I could have done it. [*When* MISS ROBERTS *has placed the footstool.*] Oh, how kind of you, but you ought not to wait on me like this. [*Smiles sweetly.*] The paper-knife, please. Who knows where it is? [MISS ROBERTS *takes the paper-knife from* MR. BAXTER *and gives*

[3] Davies, H. H., *The Mollusc.* Boston: Walter H. Baker Company, 1914. Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

it to MRS. BAXTER. *To* MR. BAXTER.] I didn't see you were using it, dear, or I wouldn't have asked for it. [*To* MISS ROBERTS.] As you're doing nothing, would you mind cutting some of these pages. I find there are still a few uncut. [*She gives magazine and paper-knife to* MISS ROBERTS, *then says, smiling sweetly.*] Your fingers are so much cleverer than mine. [MISS ROBERTS *begins cutting magazine.* MRS. BAXTER *leans back comfortably in chair and says to* MR. BAXTER.] Why don't you get something to do?

MR. BAXTER [*rising*]. I'm going to my room to have a smoke. [MISS ROBERTS *puts the magazine on table and goes to* MR. BAXTER *with the paper-knife in hand.*]

MISS ROBERTS. No, Mr. Baxter, please, I want you to help me out. I want you to stay while I tell Mrs. Baxter.

MRS. BAXTER. What's all this mystery? [*Seriously.*] Take care you don't snap that paper-knife in two, Miss Roberts. [MR. BAXTER *sits down again.*]

MISS ROBERTS. I was telling Mr. Baxter before you came into the room—

MRS. BAXTER [*holding out her hand*]. Give me the paper-knife. [MISS ROBERTS *gives her the knife, which she examines carefully.*]

MISS ROBERTS. I told you at the beginning of the term, and several times since—

MRS. BAXTER. It would have been a pity if that paper-knife had been snapped in two. [*She looks up pleasantly.*] Yes, Miss Roberts?

MISS ROBERTS. I was saying that I thought— [MRS. BAXTER *drops the paper-knife accidentally on the floor.*]

MRS. BAXTER. Oh, don't trouble to pick it up. [MISS ROBERTS *picks it up and holds it in her hand.*] Oh, thank you, I didn't mean you to do that.

MISS ROBERTS. I was saying—

MRS. BAXTER. It isn't chipped, is it?

MISS ROBERTS [*nearly losing her temper*]. No. [*She marches down and lays the knife on table*].

MRS. BAXTER. It would have been a pity if that paper-knife had been chipped.

Directing Attention to Entrances

The following exercise from *The Man Who Came to Dinner* is an excellent example of ways in which attention may be directed to the entrance of a leading character.

EXERCISE 4

(ONE MAN; TWO WOMEN; EXTRAS.)

[*The* STANLEY FAMILY *and* FRIENDS *are awaiting anxiously* MR. WHITESIDE *who is to emerge from his room for the first time since his fall.*[4]]

MRS. STANLEY. Well, of course I felt terrible about it. He just never goes to dinner anywhere, and he finally agreed to come here, and then *this* had to happen. Poor Mr. Whiteside! But it's going to be so wonderful having him with us, even for a little while. Just think of it! We'll sit around in the evening and discuss books and plays, all the great people he's known. And he'll talk in that wonderful way of his. He may even read *Good-bye, Mr. Chips* to us.

[MR. STANLEY, *solid, substantial—the American business man—is descending the stairs.*]

STANLEY. Daisy, I can't wait any longer. If—ah, good morning, ladies.

MRS. STANLEY. Ernest, he's coming out any minute, and H. G. Wells telephoned from London, and we're in *Time*. Look!

STANLEY. [*Taking the magazine.*] I don't like this kind of publicity at all, Daisy. When do you suppose he's going to leave?

MRS. STANLEY. Well, he's only getting up this morning—after all, he's had quite a shock, and he's been in bed for two full weeks. He'll certainly have to rest a few days, Ernest.

STANLEY. Well, I'm sure it's a great honor, his being in the house, but it *is* a little upsetting—phone going all the time, bells ringing, messenger boys running in and out—

[*Out of the sick room comes a business-like-looking young woman about thirty. Her name is* MARGARET CUTLER—MAGGIE *to her friends.*]

MAGGIE. Pardon me, Mrs. Stanley—have the cigarettes come yet?

MRS. STANLEY. They're on the way, Miss Cutler. My son went for them.

MAGGIE. Thank you.

MRS. STANLEY. Ah—this is Miss Cutler, Mr. Whiteside's secretary.

[*An exchange of "How do you do's?"*]

[4] Kaufman, George S., and Hart, Moss, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. New York: Random House, 1939. Reprinted by special permission of Random House. The play in its entirety is published and leased by the Dramatist Play Service, Inc., 6 East 39th Street, New York City, without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given.

MAGGIE. May I move this chair?

MRS. STANLEY. [*All eagerness.*] You mean he's—coming out now?

MAGGIE. [*Quietly.*] He is indeed.

MRS. STANLEY. Ernest, call June. June! June! Mr. Whiteside is coming out!

[JOHN, *visible in the dining room, summons* SARAH *to attend the excitement. "Sarah! Sarah!"*]

[SARAH *and* JOHN *appear in the dining-room entrance,* JUNE *on the stairs.* MRS. STANLEY *and the two other ladies are keenly expectant; even* MR. STANLEY *is on the qui vive.*]

[*The double doors are opened once more, and* DR. BRADLEY *appears, bag in hand. He has taken a good deal of punishment, and speaks with a rather false heartiness.*]

DR. BRADLEY. Well, here we are, merry and bright. Good morning, good morning. Bring our little patient out, Miss Preen.

Finding the Objective

The eye must often look around to find something, and, when it is found, the eye must visibly focus on it. Try this experiment. Let someone drop a coin on the floor. He looks about trying to locate it as he hears it roll; then when he sees it, notice that you can see his eyes focus on it. Also, visibly focus in this exercise.

EXERCISE 5

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN; ONE BOY; ONE GIRL.)

[*The children,* MYTYL *and* TYLTYL, *have been wandering through the great forest searching for The Bluebird. When they come into the Land of Memory, they find themselves to be again in the home of* GAFFER TYL *and* GRANNY TYL.[5]]

TYLTYL [*looking first at his* GRANDMOTHER *and then at his* GRANDFATHER]. You haven't changed, Grandad, not a bit, not a bit. . . . And Granny hasn't changed a bit either. . . . But you're better-looking. . . .

GAFFER TYL. Well, we feel all right. . . . We have stopped growing older. . . . But you, how tall you're growing! . . . Yes, you're shoot-

[5] Maeterlinck, Maurice, *The Blue Bird.*

ing up finely. . . . Look, over there, on the door, is the mark of last time. . . . That was on All-hallows. . . . Now then, stand up straight. . . . [TYLTYL *stands up against the door.*] Four fingers! . . . That's immense! . . . [MYTYL *also stands against the door.*] And Mytyl, four and a half! . . . Aha, ill weeds wax apace! . . . How they've grown, how they're grown! . . .

TYLTYL [*looking around him with delight*]. Nothing is changed, everything is in its old place! . . . Only everything is prettier! . . . There is the clock with the big hand which I broke the point off . . .

GAFFER TYL. And here is the soup-tureen you chipped a corner off. . . .

TYLTYL. And here is the hole which I made in the door, the day I found the gimlet. . . .

GAFFER TYL. Yes, you've done some damage in your time! . . . And here is the plum-tree in which you were so fond of climbing, when I wasn't looking. . . . It still has those fine red plums. . . .

TYLTYL. Why they're finer than ever! . . .

MYTYL. And here is the old blackbird! . . . Does he still sing? . . . [*The blackbird wakes and begins to sing at the top of his voice.*]

GRANNY TYL. You see. . . . As soon as one thinks of him.

TYLTYL [*observing with amazement that the blackbird is quite blue*]. But he's blue! . . . Why, that's the bird, the Blue Bird which I am to take back to the Fairy . . . And you never told us that you had him here! . . . Oh, he's blue, blue, blue as a blue glass marble! [*Entreatingly.*] Grandad, Granny, will you give him to me? . . .

GAFFER TYL. Yes, perhaps, perhaps. . . . What do you think, Granny Tyl? . . .

GRANNY TYL. Certainly, certainly. . . . What use is he to us? . . . He does nothing but sleep. . . . We never hear him sing. . . .

TYLTYL. I will put him in my cage. . . . I say where is my cage? . . . Oh, I know, I left it behind the big tree. . . . [*He runs to the tree, fetches the cage and puts the blackbird into it.*] So, really, you've really given him to me? . . . How pleased the Fairy will be! . . . And Light too! . . .

GAFFER TYL. Mind you, I won't answer for the bird. . . . I'm afraid that he will never get used again to the restless life up there and that he'll come back here by the first wind that blows. . . . However, we shall see. . . . Leave him there, for the present, and come and look at the cow. . . .

TYLTYL [*noticing the hives*]. And how are the bees getting on?

GAFFER TYL. Oh, pretty well. . . . They are no longer alive, as you call it up there; but they work steadily. . . .

TYLTYL [*going up to the hives*]. Oh, yes! . . . I can smell the honey! . . . How heavy the hives must be! . . . All the flowers are so beautiful! . . . And my little dead sisters, are they here too? . . .

Secrecy and Listening

The movement of the eyes can suggest either or both secrecy and listening. In bringing out either idea, they are turned far to the right or the left and held there for a moment. They may then be turned to the opposite direction, or held steady while leaning and listening.

In listening the ear is "cocked" in the direction of the sound; the brows and muscles about the eyes may be slightly drawn, and the body held rigidly.

While absorbed in listening to something beautiful, the eyes are relaxed, and sometimes closed. The body also rests and the head may be thrown up or back during the listening.

When a character is on stage, he is of course paying attention or listening most of the time. In the discussion here we are working for the appearance of listening intently to sound.

EXERCISE 6

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[MATT DENANT, *a man fleeing from prison, slips into shelter through a hotel window and sleeps under a bed. In the morning he discovers it is a lady's room. She scarcely knows whether to turn him in or to help him to escape.*[6]]

MATT. You've been most awfully kind and I don't want to impose on you; but I shall never get out of here as I am.

LADY. Why not?

MATT. [*Jerking his head towards the window.*] They're too thoughtful. There's a picket out there.

[6] Galsworthy, John, *Escape*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936. Reprinted by special permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

[*The* LADY *turns to the window and looks out; then she turns to* MATT *and finds him smiling.*]

MATT. Oh! No, I wasn't scared. One doesn't give one's own kind away.

LADY. I don't know that. Go and try some of those other rooms. Try the couple next door to me.

[*A knock on the door.* BOTH *stand alert.*]

LADY. Yes?

VOICE OF MAID. [*Off.*] The bath water's hot now, Madam.

LADY. All right. Thank you. [*Her finger is on her lips.*] Do you think she could hear us?

MATT. Hope not. [*Going close.*] Thanks most awfully. You don't know how decent it's been after a year in there, to talk to a lady. I won't leave any traces.

LADY. What are you going to do?

MATT. Wait till he's looking the other way, sneak along the balcony, drop at the end, and bolt for it again.

LADY. Are you still a good runner?

MATT. Pretty fair, if I wasn't so stiff.

LADY. [*After a long look at him.*] No! Look here! When I go to my bath I'll make sure there's no one. If I don't come back, slip down the stairs, they're almost opposite. In the hall, hanging, you'll find my husband's old Burberry and fishing basket, rod, and fishing hat; a long brown Burberry with stains, and flies in the hat. Put them on and go out of the front door; the river's down to the left. Can you fish? [*At his nod.*] You'd better, then. The bathroom's not that side, so I shan't see you. But—whistle "Lady, be good," if you know it.

MATT. Rather! It's the only tune that's got into prison. Well, I can't thank you—you're just a brick! [*He holds out his hand.*]

LADY. [*Taking it.*] Good luck! [*She passes him to the door.*] Wait a second! [*Getting a flask from drawer.*] Take this. If you see anyone looking at you—drink! Nothing gives one more confidence in a man than to see him drinking.

MATT. Splendid! What are you going to say to your husband?

LADY. Um! Yes! He comes to-night. Well, if he doesn't like it, he'll have to lump it. Oh! And these two pounds. It's all I've got here. [*She has taken two pounds out of her bag lying on the dressing-table.*]

MATT. [*Moved.*] By George! I think you're sublime!

LADY. I'm afraid I doubt it.

MATT. If I'm caught, I shall say I pinched everything, of course; and if I get clear, I'll——

LADY. Oh! Don't bother about that! Get behind the door now. [MATT *gets behind the door, and she opens it and goes out. After a moment she returns.*]

LADY. All clear!

Topics and Exercises

10

SPEAK THE SPEECH

A. SLOVENLY DICTION

B. CHOICE DICTION

C. BUILD

D. VOCAL TONE

Domestic Tone

Exercise 1: from *The Star Wagon* by Maxwell Anderson

Social Tone

Exercise 2: from *Lady Windermere's Fan* by Oscar Wilde

Business Tone

Exercise 3: from *Arms and the Man* by George Bernard Shaw

Solemn Tone

Exercise 4: from *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder

E. VOCAL PITCH

High Pitch

Exercise 5: from *The Grand Cham's Diamond* by Allen Monkhouse

Low Pitch

Exercise 6: from *The Finger of God* by Percival Wilde

F. VOCAL MELODY

Rising and Falling Inflections

Exercise 7: from *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare

Circumflex Inflection

Exercise 8: from *Othello* by William Shakespeare

G. VOCAL ENERGY

Stage Whisper

Exercise 9: from *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand

Exercise 10: from *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare

10

SPEAK THE SPEECH

Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Thus, Shakespeare explained vocal technique.

The word *technique,* harmless enough in itself, often seems to take into its embrace some terrorizing and indefinable aspects. Because of its elusiveness we are often inclined, when we see a piece of work poorly done, to raise an eyebrow, affect a knowing look, and blame "technique."

Technique is your helper. All of the *learning how* steps make up technique. These devices are to be learned, put into use, absorbed, and then forgotten. At some time each of us has had to learn how to walk. Now we walk without thinking how. We have conquered the technique of walking. The same process should be gone through in learning how to act. Learn to act, step by step; put what you have learned into practice; cultivate good habits; then forget the technique of acting—just act.

You will wish to become acquainted with all phases of the technique of acting that affect your work. If an actor does not quite please when you listen to and watch him on the stage,

you will want to be able to give the reason. Perhaps his voice lacks inflection or is pitched too high. His gestures may be stiff, or perhaps he uses too many of them. Faults such as these are usually blamed on technique.

You have been studying principles and then putting them into practice in the handling of your bodies. Now, you begin the study of that part of your equipment that works as the body's teammate, the voice. Tones of the voice and activity of the body must never be considered as two distinct and separate agents of communication. They must work together. A rigid body makes a rigid voice; a relaxed body forces the voice also to relax. Rapid speaking must be accompanied by rapid playing. Action and dialogue are always harmonious.

Since emotions are expressed by both voice and body, this team will pull together better when the feeling for an emotion comes from within. Put the James-Lange theory to work. It will aid in co-ordinating the work of the team.

Some voices are naturally interesting; others are not. *Lack of variety* in inflection, force, or rate is the most serious handicap to making a voice interesting. Speech is attractive only when it is varied. It must be flexible, colorful, and impressive. Some players need time to develop good voices; others have little difficulty because their voices are naturally filled with personality. A pleasing voice cannot be developed quickly. To exercise in proper breathing and vocal manipulation takes time.

✣ *Slovenly Diction* ✣

Careless enunciation is the Waterloo of many players; this bad habit is hard to break. Americans are notoriously careless in precision of speech. Everywhere and all the time we are faced by careless speakers, but in real life we can and do ask twice. On the stage we cannot do that.

Poor enunciation is bad not only because the audience cannot understand what is said but also because it marks the player as

uncultured. We have learned through our universal use of motion picture and radio to connect slovenly speech with slovenly people and to expect the use of refined speech from all others. Our audiences for amateur plays expect good enunciation of the players they watch.

Among the careless traits of enunciation are:

1. Lazy lips. Many people do not round the lips for *who, lose, use,* and similar words; do not force the lips to take two distinct positions for *out, boy,* and *few;* fail to stretch the lips for *see, cat,* and *hill.*

2. Immovable lower jaw. Men especially are careless. They do not drop their jaws in saying *hay, can, long,* and similar words.

3. Flabby tongue. Some people speak in the backs of their mouths instead of forward and with the tips of their tongues. Get the feel when saying, "The tip of the tongue, the tip of the tongue, the tip of the tongue." Then bring other sounds forward in the mouth.

Among the results of careless traits of enunciation are:

1. Final consonants and middle syllables ending the consonants are slurred—ed, d, f, g, k, t, th, ing. How they are slashed! "'F yer goin' t' take 't t' differn' store I 'auta' go 'lon'."

2. Wrong sounds are substituted for right ones. *For* becomes *fer, no* becomes *nah, if* becomes *uf, there* becomes *thur, get* becomes *gid.*

3. Vowels and diphthongs are cut off.

Try the following experiment:

1. First, moving your jaw and lips as little as possible, repeat the alphabet.

2. Next, manipulating the jaw and lips excessively, again repeat the alphabet.

3. Now repeat the alphabet, using the medium, or correct, amount of movement.

In correcting careless enunciation, however, be careful not to overdo lest your speech become overprecise and pedantic. Articles,

pronouns, conjunctions, and prepositions are supposed to be lightened, to be used in their weak forms. We do *not* say:

> It was thE lark, thE herald oF thE morn,
> No nightIngale: look, love, what envious streaks
> Do lace thE severed clouds In yonder east:
> Night's candles are burnt out, And jocund day
> Stands tiptoe On thE misty mountain tops:
> I mUst be gone And live, Or stay And die.

Rather we say:

> It w's th' lark, th' herald of th' morn,
> No nightengale: look, love, what envious streaks
> Do lace th' severed clouds 'n yonder east:
> Night's candles are burnt out, 'nd jocund day
> Stands tiptoe on th' misty mountain tops:
> I m'st be gone 'nd live, or stay 'nd die.

Choice Diction

The diction of all people needs to be accurate, giving full value to thought-carrying words and emphasizing the most important.

Diction must be considered from two angles—voice and speech. *Voice* is the sound as it comes from the vocal cords; *speech* is that sound formed into words. A clear, well-placed voice is easy to listen to. It relaxes the listeners. It places them in an attentive frame of mind. *Tone*—that is voice—can make audiences laugh, or cry, or listen breathlessly through every scene. It can, on the other hand, cause them to be careless and indifferent about the outcome of the play. Tone engenders fear, or pride, or sorrow, or joy. A high tone brings on a feeling of alarm or danger; a soft tone soothes, relaxes, reassures.

Breathiness is unpleasant in voice. Most people use more breath than they need. Some use far too much so that in expelling the air we hear it along with the words.

Vocal speech is the sounds or voice formed into words and sentences. Slovenly, uncultured speech may come from beautiful voices, or delightful speech from unpleasant voices. The amateur

player will do well to attempt no high-flown speech style that is unfamiliar to him. If he uses the highest-grade speech of those living in his own locality he will do well. In Georgia use the speech of the refined Georgian; in Kansas speak as a cultured Kansan; in Vermont talk as the educated Vermonter; in Idaho use the language of cultivated Idaho citizens.

In any part of our broad land the best speech is clear and distinct. Final syllable-ends and consonants are enunciated clearly but without making speech seem artificial. Our attention should be drawn not to the way one speaks but to what he says.

✣ *Build* ✣

In learning the actor's technique, however, additional items concerning speech are important. The actor cannot successfully follow the speech of his companions if he begins and ends sentences on the same level. Instead, the player's first words should *top* his cue, and then, as he progresses, his speech should come to a rounded end, with the speech of the next player in turn topping his, and so on.

Topping does not mean that the new speech must be started louder or pitched higher. It may be spoken softly but with intensity, or it may top by being started slowly after a rapid speech or fast after a slow speech, or by raising or lowering the pitch. Topping may result from almost any contrast that makes the words stand out.

Players often have long, important speeches which should build as they are spoken. By speaking the first part low, the next a little higher, thus building gradually, the actor's speech may be made to reach a climactic finish with greater volume, higher pitch, and richer tone. Or the actor may begin high with force and volume and drop, finishing on a low key. If the speech is unusually long and important he may begin high, drop, go higher, again drop, then go highest for a finish. The emotion will help in securing variety.

Usually the most important words of a speech are the ones at the beginning of the thought and those at the end. However, this is not always true. Special attention must be given to verbs, nouns, pronouns and adjectives all the way through. The player should learn to subordinate unimportant ideas. He will need to subordinate many of the conjunctions, adverbs, prepositions, parenthetical phrases, and sometimes the nouns and pronouns.

In the following speech taken from the play about Ancient China, "The Yellow Jacket," by Hazelton and Benrimo, Due Jung Fah speaks with disdain of the other wife of her husband. Pronouns in this speech are particularly important.

DUE JUNG FAH. [*Bows.*] Gentle listeners, here in my garden, with ceremonial bow [*Bows*], I tell you I am Due Jung Fah, most unhappy of ladies. [*Music dies away.*] I am the second wife of Wu Sin Yin, the Great. There would be music in my heart if it were not for the first wife. The butterflies and bees and the humming birds do not come to my garden. They fly to make hers beautiful. The goldfish die in my lily ponds, and swim sun-kissed in Chee Moo's across the wall. The hyacinths bloom, and the white jasmine fill the air with fragrance for her painted nostrils. Even the lanterns in her evening walk brighten her path, while mine fade and stumble. [*Stops* Tso *who would speak.*] Tell me not. My mind is crowded with thoughts of her crippled monster-child, for my soul has not given forth a child-seed. The air is filled with the approach of someone. Let us depart.

If one would become an accomplished actor, it is essential to be able to build climactically. The actor must sense the various climaxes throughout the play. Many speeches are written so that their climaxes are apparent. Authors who have a real dramatic sense write a gradual build to each act and a large build toward the final climax of the play. Speeches themselves—the longer ones—move in their written form toward climaxes. It is the actor's duty to find the builds in the writing, then to work to enhance these in delivering the lines. Although authors do not often indicate the climaxes, Channing Pollock points out in his stage directions for *The Fool* what he wishes the actor to work for:

[*In the beginning of this act, there should be three distinct stages of menace to* GILCHRIST, *each somewhat higher than the one preceding it. This conversation between* MRS. TICE *and* DR. WADHAM *is the first step. The second—bringing still more sense of danger—is the conversation between* GOODKIND *and* DR. WADHAM. *The third and greatest comes with the entrance of* BENFIELD. *These three in succession lead up to the climax of* GILCHRIST'S *dismissal from the Church of the Nativity, and they must be directed as steps to that climax.*]

The following are good examples of climactic speeches. Notice how, in the writing, each speech builds toward a climax.

KAARLO *in "There Shall Be No Night" by* ROBERT E. SHERWOOD *is earnestly pleading with his wife,* MIRANDA, *to leave Finland, now that the Russians are attacking, and to go back to her own people in America.*

KAARLO. I have suddenly realized what and where I am. I am a man working in the apparent security of a laboratory. I am working on a theory so sensitive that it may take hundreds of years of research, and generations of workers to prove it. I am trying to defeat insanity—degeneration of the human race. And then—a band of pyromaniacs enters the building in which I work. And that building is the world—the whole planet—not just Finland. They set fire to it. What can I do? Until that fire is put out, there can be no peace—no freedom from fear—no hope of progress of mankind. [*Despairing.*] Every day that we hold them off—will only serve to increase the terror of the vengeance which must surely descend upon us. All the pathetic survivors of this war will have to pay in torture for the heroism of the dead. And it isn't just this one little breed that wants to be free. This is a war for everybody—yes—even for the scientists who thought themselves immune behind their test tubes. [*He looks into her eyes again.*] Darling! I can stand this ordeal if I know it is only for myself. I can stand it if I know you are safe—that you are beyond their reach. . . . I love you. That is the only reality left to me. I love you. [*They are in each other's arms. For a moment they are silent.*]

* * * * *

In "Idiot's Delight" by ROBERT E. SHERWOOD, QUILLERY *is trying to arouse indifferent hotel guests to the reality of war.*

QUILLERY. For the love of God—listen to me! While you sit here eating and drinking, tonight, Italian planes dropped twenty thousand

kilos of bombs on Paris. God knows how many they've killed. God knows how much of life and beauty is forever destroyed! And you sit here, drinking, laughing, with them—the murderers. [*Points to the flyers, who ask each other, in Italian, what the hell he is talking about.*] They did it! It was their planes, from that field down there. Assassins! [*The officers make a move toward* QUILLERY—*one of them arming himself with a champagne bottle.*]

* * * * *

In "End of Summer" by S. N. BEHRMAN, WILL *has been listening to* KENNETH *explain his ideas on fortune hunters in marriage. When* KENNETH *goes out* WILL *says:*

WILL. I can't stand him—not from the moment I saw him—because he's incapable of disinterestedness himself he can't imagine it in others. He's the kind of cynical, sneering—He's a marauder. The adventurer with the cure-all. This is just the moment for him. And this is just the place.

Tone

Quality of the voice is its tone. This is controlled by the vocal resonators. No matter how a voice is normally pitched, it has many different qualities within the pitch range. Many of these qualities at our disposal are needed very little in real life, yet we find numerous people who habitually use one of their ugliest qualities, such as a throaty tone, a nasal twang, or a buzz-saw crack.

Quality of the voice, or tone, may be classified for the actor into the following categories:

1. The *domestic* tone, which is intimate, matter-of-fact, uncurbed. We use this with our friends and our relatives in common everyday speech.

2. The *social* tone, which has curves, is soft and courteous, and is never hurried. We use it when we are hiding behind a social mask. Some people use too little social tone; some, too much.

3. The *business* tone, which is most direct and is usually spoken for a reason or as the result of an issue. It is straightforward, forceful. When we employ the business tone, we have little time to waste.

4. The *solemn* tone, which is low with few inflections. It is used in very personal matters, as to express reverence and the feelings that accompany deep emotion.

Domestic Tone

The domestic tone is our most commonly used tone. It hints of no lurking shadows or deep thoughts. A good rapid tempo and animation helps the beginner to make this commonplace tone interesting. It is free, unrestrained, unaffected, and wholesome. We use the domestic tone in most of our everyday speech with our friends.

EXERCISE I

(TWO MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[STEPHEN *and* HANUS *have just completed an invention that makes possible people living over again what is past. The men have set the machine for the year* 1902 *back in the old bicycle shop.*[1]]

HANUS. I never thought I'd see the old bicycle shop again.

STEPHEN. No.—I thought it was larger.

HANUS. So did I.—Gee, it's a peach of a little shop. [*The lights come up full, and they are revealed as young men.*] That's big Minnie's bicycle. She ran into a hydrant and bent the front fork. I'm supposed to be working on it.

STEPHEN. Now I'll tell you what I think, Hanus. When we let go the handles we'll go right back into the old groove. —So we better figure what we're going to do.

HANUS. Jeez, it scares you.—Look in that mirror, Steve.

STEPHEN. What's the matter?

HANUS. Look.

STEPHEN. [*Gazing.*] Who is it? Did I look like that?

HANUS. And look at me. No wonder I never got married.

STEPHEN. Maybe it'll be different this time.

HANUS. What are you going to do—now you're back here, Steve?

STEPHEN. I'm going to change everything. Martha can marry the

[1] Anderson, Maxwell, *The Star Wagon*. Washington, D. C.: Anderson House, 1937 Reprinted by special permission of the author and Anderson House.

celluloid collar boy, the way she wanted to. I'm going to marry the other one.

HANUS. Do you think you can do it?

STEPHEN. I'm going to try.

HANUS. Did you remember there was a whip socket on the dashboard?

STEPHEN. Sure, That's so if the engine stops and you have to use a horse you'll have a whip to drive with.

HANUS. Isn't that the prettiest little car you ever saw?

STEPHEN. I never liked any other car as much as that one.

MARTHA. [*Outside.*] Stephen—Stephen—will you pump up a tire for me?

STEPHEN. It's Martha. Sure, Martha. [STEPHEN *and* HANUS *leave the machine and come forward.* MARTHA, *a young girl in black bloomers, wheels her bicycle into the shop.*] Oh, oh—oh oh—what the— [HANUS *takes the bicycle from* MARTHA.]

MARTHA. How do you like them? [*She turns about.*]

STEVE. Fine—fine.

MARTHA. No you don't.

STEVE. I never thought I'd see you in things like that.

MARTHA. We're all going to get them—all the girls in the choir. Don't you think they're nice, Steve?

STEVE. Well—they—they—they don't leave much to the imagination, do they?

MARTHA. You're horrid! You're perfectly horrible. [*She sidles behind a chair, blushing.*]

STEVE. [*Fascinated in spite of himself.*] No, they're all right. They're very fetching.

MARTHA. I thought you'd like them anyway. They're just to ride a bicycle in.

STEVE. I know. [HANUS *is busy pumping up the tire.*]

MARTHA. And if people want to look, they can just look.

STEVE. They'll certainly look, all right.

MARTHA. I'd better go, I guess—

STEVE. I mean, a fellow's pretty funny if he doesn't look at you, no matter what you've got on.

MARTHA. Stupid. [*But she smiles.*]

STEVE. Did I say something wrong?

MARTHA. If I stood here all day, and waited, you'd never think of the right thing to say.

STEVE. I like you just as much as if I did. Maybe more.

✣ *Social Tone* ✣

The social tone demands a touch of special care and attention. Words are chosen for it with greater care, voice becomes softer, and general tone seems slightly artificial. People use the social tone when they are not quite at ease, when they are speaking with strangers whom they admire or respect, and when they are "putting the best foot forward." This tone has curves and delicate inflections, is accompanied by a suggested smile. It seems very polite.

EXERCISE 2

(FOUR MEN; FIVE WOMEN; EXTRAS.)

[LORD *and* LADY WINDERMERE *are giving a ball. It has been the talk of the town that* MRS. ERLYNNE, *with whom gossip says* LORD WINDERMERE *is having an affair, is to be present. The guests are now arriving.*[2]]

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. [*Up C.*] So strange Lord Windermere isn't here. Mr. Hopper is very late, too. You have kept those five dances for him, Agatha! [*comes down*].

LADY AGATHA. Yes, Mamma.

DUCHESS [*sitting on sofa*]. Just let me see your card. I'm so glad Lady Windermere has revived cards. They're a mother's only safeguard. You dear simple little thing! [*Scratches out two names.*] No nice girl should ever waltz with such particularly younger sons! It looks so fast! The last two dances you must pass on the terrace with Mr. Hopper.

[*Enter* MR. DUMBY *and* LADY PLYMDALE.]

AGATHA. Yes, Mamma.

DUCHESS [*fanning herself*]. The air is so pleasant there.

PARKER. Mrs. Cowper-Cowper. Lady Stutfield. Sir James Royston. Mr. Guy Berkeley. [*These people enter as announced.*]

DUMBY. Good evening, Lady Stutfield. I suppose this will be the last ball of the season?

LADY STUTFIELD. I suppose so, Mr. Dumby. It's been a delightful season, hasn't it?

[2] Wilde, Oscar, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, in Dickinson, *op. cit.*

DUMBY. Quite delightful! Good evening, Duchess. I suppose this will be the last ball of the season?

DUCHESS. I suppose so, Mr. Dumby. It has been a very dull season, hasn't it?

DUMBY. Dreadfully dull! Dreadfully dull!

MRS. COWPER-COWPER. Good evening, Mr. Dumby. I suppose this will be the last ball of the season?

DUMBY. Oh, I think not. There'll probably be two more.

PARKER. Mr. Rufford. Lady Jedburgh and Miss Graham. Mr. Hopper. [*These people enter as announced.*]

HOPPER. How do you do, Lady Windermere? How do you do, Duchess? [*Bows to* LADY AGATHA.]

DUCHESS. Dear Mr. Hopper, how nice of you to come so early. We all know how you are run after in London.

HOPPER. Capital place, London! They are not nearly so exclusive in London as they are in Sydney.

DUCHESS. Ah! we know your value, Mr. Hopper. We wish there were more like you. It would make life so much easier. Do you know, Mr. Hopper, dear Agatha and I are so much interested in Australia. It must be so pretty with all the dear little kangaroos flying about. Agatha has found it on the map. What a curious shape it is! Just like a large packing-case. However, it is a very young country, isn't it?

HOPPER. Wasn't it made at the same time as the others, Duchess?

DUCHESS. How clever you are, Mr. Hopper. You have a cleverness quite of your own. Now I mustn't keep you.

HOPPER. But I should like to dance with Lady Agatha, Duchess.

DUCHESS. Well, I *hope* she has a dance left. Have you got a dance left, Agatha?

AGATHA. Yes, Mamma.

DUCHESS. The next one?

AGATHA. Yes, Mamma.

HOPPER. May I have the pleasure.

DUCHESS. Mind you take great care of my little chatterbox, Mr. Hopper. [LADY AGATHA *and* MR. HOPPER *pass into ballroom.*]

[*Enter* LORD WINDERMERE *C.*]

LORD WINDERMERE. Margaret, I want to speak to you.

LADY WINDERMERE. In a moment.

PARKER. Lord Augustus Lorton. [*Enter* LORD AUGUSTUS.]

LORD AUGUSTUS. Good evening, Lady Windermere.

DUCHESS. Sir James, will you take me into the ballroom? Augustus has been dining with us tonight. I really have had quite enough of dear Augustus for the moment. [SIR JAMES *gives the* DUCHESS *his arm and escorts her into the ballroom.*]

PARKER. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bowden. Lord and Lady Paisley. Lord Darlington. [*These people enter as announced.*]

LORD AUGUSTUS. Want to speak to you particularly, dear boy. [*To* LORD WINDERMERE.] I'm worn to a shadow. Know I don't look it. None of us men do look what we really are. Demmed good thing, too. What I want to know is this. Who is she? Where does she come from? Why hasn't she got any demmed relations? Demmed nuisance, relations! But they make one so demmed respectable.

LORD WINDERMERE. You are talking of Mrs. Erlynne, I suppose? I only met her six months ago. Till then I never knew of her existence.

Business Tone

The business tone is matter-of-fact, straight-forward, and forceful. Speech is terse and to-the-point. The voice suggests abruptness although the tone may be friendly. No time or words are wasted when matters of importance are at stake.

EXERCISE 3

(FOUR MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*While her father and her lover,* SERGIUS, *were away at war,* RAINA *and her mother sheltered one night an escaped soldier of the other side. He was starving and* RAINA *fed him the only available food, some chocolate creams, thus giving him the name of "the chocolate cream soldier." Now, the war over, the soldier, named* BLUNTSCHLI, *has come back to return the coat* MRS. PETKOFF *loaned him to escape.* MRS. PETKOFF, *terrified lest her husband and* SERGIUS *find out, has received him in the back yard, ordering his bag brought there. But* PETROFF *comes out and welcomes him, since he is at peace with the enemy soldiers.*[3]]

BLUNTSCHLI. I think I can shew you how to manage that.

SERGIUS. Invaluable man! Come along! [*Towering over* BLUNTSCHLI

[3] Shaw, George Bernard, *Arms and the Man,* in Shaw, George Bernard, *Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant.* New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1905. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

he puts his hand on his shoulder and takes him to the steps, PETKOFF *following. As* BLUNTSCHLI *puts his foot on the first step,* RAINA *comes out of the house.*]

RAINA [*completely losing her presence of mind*]. Oh, the chocolate cream soldier! [BLUNTSCHLI *stands rigid.* SERGIUS, *amazed, looks at* RAINA, *then at* PETKOFF, *who looks back at him and then at his wife.*]

CATHERINE [*with commanding presence of mind*]. My dear RAINA, don't you see that we have a guest here—Captain Bluntchli, one of our new Servian friends? [RAINA *bows;* BLUNTSCHLI *bows.*]

RAINA. How silly of me! [*She comes down into the center of the group, between* BLUNTSCHLI *and* PETKOFF.] I made a beautiful ornament this morning for the ice pudding; and that stupid Nicola has just put down a pile of plates on it and spoiled it. [*To* BLUNTSCHLI, *winningly.*] I hope you didn't think that you were the chocolate cream soldier, Captain Bluntschli.

BLUNTSCHLI. [*Laughing.*] I assure you I did. [*Stealing a whimsical glance at her.*] Your explanation was a relief.

PETKOFF. [*Suspiciously.*] And since when, pray, have you taken to cooking?

CATHERINE. Oh, whilst you were away. It is her latest fancy.

PETKOFF. [*Testily.*] And has Nicola taken to drinking? He used to be careful enough. First he shews Captain Bluntschli out here when he knew quite well I was in the—hum!—library; and then he goes downstairs and breaks Raina's chocolate soldier. He must—[*At this moment* NICOLA *appears at the top of the steps with a carpet bag. He descends; places it respectfully before* BLUNTSCHLI; *and awaits for further orders. General amazement.* NICOLA, *unconscious of the effect he is producing, looks perfectly satisfied with himself. When* PETKOFF *recovers his power of speech, he breaks out at him with*] Are you mad, Nicola?

NICOLA [*taken back*]. Sir?

Solemn Tone

The solemn tone suggests reverence, or seriousness, or fear. It may be used to voice one's deep feelings and emotions. It may be inspired by the supernatural or result from deep sorrow, love, or disappointment. The tone is usually low and uses little inflection.

EXERCISE 4

(TWO WOMEN; ONE MAN; EXTRAS.)

[*The scene takes place among the dead in a cemetery.* EMILY, *a young woman, has just been buried. Next to her is her mother-in-law,* MRS. GIBBS. EMILY'S *tone will be less serious than the others.*[4]]

EMILY. Mother Gibbs, when does this feeling go away?— Of being one of *them?* How long does it—

MRS. GIBBS. Sh! dear. Just wait and be patient.

[DR. GIBBS *kneels to take flowers from grave, slowly rises and crosses to face* MRS. GIBBS.]

EMILY. [*Looking off* L., *calmly.*] I know— Look, they're finished. They're going.

MRS. GIBBS. Sh-h-h!

EMILY. [*Lovingly.*] Look! Father Gibbs is bringing some of my flowers to you. [*As he passes, surprised.*] He looks just like George, doesn't he? [DR. GIBBS *lays flowers at wife's feet and stands, head bowed, and sighs.*] [*All sympathy.*] Oh, Mother Gibbs, I never realized before how troubled and how—how in the dark live persons are. Look at him. I loved him so. [*Long pause.* DR GIBBS *exits slowly* L., *gradually raising head. When he is two-thirds off, and putting on his hat*] From morning till night, that's all they are—troubled.

1ST DEAD MAN. [*Colloquially.*] Little cooler than it was.

1ST DEAD WOMAN. Aya, that rain's cooled it off a little.

1ST DEAD MAN. Those northeast winds always do the same thing, don't they? If 'tain't a rain, it's a three-day blow.

EMILY. [*Sitting up abruptly, her* L. *hand hugging her waist, both fists clenched.*] But Mother Gibbs, one can go back; one can go back there again—into living! I feel it! I know it! Why just then for a moment I was thinking about—about the farm—and for a minute I was *there* [*Looking at her lap a moment*] and my baby was on my lap as plain as day!

MRS. GIBBS. Yes, of course you can.

EMILY. [*Excited.*] I can go back there and live all those days over again—why not?

MRS. GIBBS. All I can say is, Emily, don't. [STAGE MANAGER *enters down*-R. *and stands hands behind him, looking out.*]

EMILY. [*To* STAGE MANAGER, *but only half facing him.*] But it's true, isn't it? I can go and live—back there—again.

[4] Wilder, Thornton, *Our Town.* New York: Coward-McCann, Inc. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

STAGE MANAGER. [*Quietly.*] Yes, some have tried, but they soon come back here.

MRS. GIBBS. [*Gently.*] Don't do it, Emily.

MRS. SOAMES. [*Pleading.*] Emily, don't. It's not what you think it'd be.

EMILY. [*Eagerly.*] But I won't live over a sad day. I'll choose a happy one—I'll choose the day I first knew that I loved George! [*Leans forward as in pain, pressing* L. *arm to side.*] Oh no, no! Why should that be painful?

STAGE MANAGER. You not only live it; but you watch yourself living it.

EMILY. [*Head up, still leaning forward.*] Yes?

STAGE MANAGER. And as you watch it, you see the thing that they —down there—never know. You see the future. You know what's going to happen afterwards.

EMILY. [*Sitting up.*] But is that—painful? Why?

MRS. GIBBS. That's not the only reason why you shouldn't do it, Emily. When you've been here longer you'll see that—our life here is to forget all that—[EMILY *shakes her head*] and think only of what is ahead—and be ready for what is ahead. When you've been here longer you'll understand.

EMILY. But, Mother Gibbs, how can I *ever* forget *that* life! It's all I know! It's all I had!

MRS. SOAMES. Oh, Emily! It isn't wise. Really, it isn't.

EMILY. [*Insistent.*] But it's a thing I must know for myself! I'll choose a happy day, anyway.

MRS. GIBBS. [*Sharply.*] No! [*Calmly.*] At least, choose an unimportant day. Choose the least important day in your life. It will be important enough.

EMILY. [*To herself.*] Then it can't be since I was married; or since the baby was born. [*To* STAGE MANAGER *eagerly.*] I can choose a birthday at least, can't I?—I choose my twelfth birthday.

STAGE MANAGER. All right. It's February 11th, 1899. A Tuesday. Do you want any special time of day?

EMILY. Oh, I want the whole day!

Pitch

The student of acting needs a wide speaking range. Only when the voice moves up and down the scale—from key to key in

speech—can the most delicate shades of meaning be expressed. Some voices are naturally pitched in a high key; they are often decidedly musical. However, a melodious, low-speaking voice is more desirable. A person can train his voice to be flexible in speech, just as a singer can develop the range of his voice by practicing on higher and lower notes in music. If little variation in pitch is employed, the speech will be meaningless and dull.

Pitch is dependent upon the length, thickness, and tension of the vocal bands, but *range* depends only upon the flexibility. The variations in pitch occur according to the frequency of the vibrations of the vocal bands. Stretch a rubber band and pluck it. Notice that the tone lowers as the rapidity of vibration decreases. Stretch it again, this time more tightly. Pluck it again. The tone now is higher. A change has occurred when both the length of the band and the frequency of its vibration have been changed. If another rubber band is stretched—a heavier one—that tone will be different. It will be deeper in accordance with the thickness of the band. Men have deeper voices because their vocal bands are both longer and thicker. But they can use variety of pitch because the tension changes. With exercise, tension can be tightened or slackened, thus making possible more varied inflection even though length and thickness of bands do not change.

We naturally use different keys for our various emotional states. Great joy, deep sorrow, awe, despair, controlled hate, sincerity, earnestness are shown through low pitch. Pleasure, delight, bold anger, excitement, and usually fear are shown through high pitch. In most cases, activity calls for high pitch and quietness for low pitch.

Try the following exercises, using appropriate pitch and inflection for them. (Opinions may differ about what is "most appropriate.")

Oh, please! I couldn't help it!
That's the story. I've told everything.
Don't let him! Tell him he must'nt!
Wasn't it an experience!

Most wonderful!
Dearest!
He's gone.
Well, he's gone.
Get out of here, both of you.

EXERCISE 5

(ONE MAN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*It is the home of the Perkins, an ordinary middle-class family of London. It is some time after the evening meal, and* MR. PERKINS *is reading to his* WIFE *and* DAUGHTER *about the theft of an enormous diamond.* MR. PERKINS *has returned to his paper, his daughter is more or less intent on her work, and* MRS. PERKINS *darns and yawns.* MR. PERKINS *snores gently.*[5]]

MRS. PERKINS. Might as well all be asleep.

MISS PERKINS. Listen, Ma!

MRS. PERKINS. Somebody runnin'. Seem in an 'urry.

[*Something crashes through the window and falls with broken glass upon the floor.*]

MISS PERKINS. Good gracious!

MRS. PERKINS. Mercy on us!

MR. PERKINS. [*Waking up.*] Fire! Where is it?

MRS. PERKINS. Nonsense, Pa! It's them boys. Out arter 'em.

MR. PERKINS. What! Where?

MISS PERKINS. No. Don't go. Don't leave us. It can't be boys.

MR. PERKINS. [*Seeing the broken window.*] This is very careless, Polly.

MISS PERKINS. It wasn't me. It's a stone, I think.

MRS. PERKINS. They're far enough now. Where is it?

MISS PERKINS. I'm all of a tremble.

MRS. PERKINS. You ought to 'ave run right out, Pa, and you might 'ave caught 'em. I never did see such a thing.

MR. PERKINS. It's an outrage, this is. Did y' see anybody?

MRS. PERKINS. We 'eard somebody runnin'.

MISS PERKINS. I thought I 'eard somebody passing after that. Quietly like. Runnin' very light.

MR. PERKINS. Nonsense, Polly. Better put that blind up now.

[5] Monkhouse, Allen, *The Grand Cham's Diamond,* in Tucker, *pp. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

MISS PERKINS. You put it up.

MR. PERKINS. Do as I tell you.

MISS PERKINS. I don't like.

MRS. PERKINS. 'Ere, 'ere. Give it me. [*She puts it up and peers out into the street.*]

MISS PERKINS. Come away, Ma.

MR. PERKINS. Where's the stone? [*They all look about the floor.*]

MISS PERKINS. Here it is. Here's something. [*She picks it up.*] Why! it's a lump of glass.

MR. PERKINS. Let's look!

MRS. PERKINS. Let me see. [*They crowd around.*]

MR. PERKINS. I say!

MISS PERKINS. What is it? What is it?

MRS. PERKINS. Give it me, Polly. [*She grabs it.*]

MR. PERKINS. Hold it up to the light.

MISS PERKINS Why! What can it be?

MRS. PERKINS. [*Relinquishing it to her husband.*] Nonsense! Nonsense! [*She goes back to her chair and begins to fumble with her darning. She is greatly agitated.*]

MR. PERKINS. It's a rum thing, this is.

MISS PERKINS. Eh! Isn't it beautiful?

MR. PERKINS. It might be a—

MISS PERKINS. Diamond?

MR. PERKIN. Nonsense!

MRS. PERKINS. [*Rushing forward.*] Hide it! [*She seizes the diamond and looks about the room.*]

MISS PERKINS. Why! What d' y' mean, Ma?

MRS. PERKINS. It's it.

MR. PERKINS. [*Feebly.*] What's it?

MRS. PERKINS. You know.

MR. PERKINS. What—what—what rubbish! The idea!

MRS. PERKINS. [*Looking at it in her palm.*] It's the Grand Cham's diamond.

MR. PERKINS. Then it's dangerous.

MRS. PERKINS. Never mind that.

MISS PERKINS. What shall we do? [*She begins to whimper.*]

MRS. PERKINS. Stop that, Polly.

MR. PERKINS. P'raps we'd better look out for a policeman.

MRS. PERKINS. No.

MR. PERKINS. If it is it we're not safe,

MRS. PERKINS. I don't care.

MR. PERKINS. But what d' y' want to do?

MRS. PERKINS. Here! Let's put it inside the clock. [*She opens the back of the clock and crams it in.*] Now!

MR. PERKINS. What are y' up to, Ma?

MISS PERKINS. I wish you'd throw it out in the street again.

MRS. PERKINS. No, no.

MR. PERKINS. But what *are* y' up to?

MRS. PERKINS. It's come to us, this 'as. We'll stick to it if we can.

Low Pitch

Low, mellow tones are produced by relaxed throat and jaw muscles. The vibration of a violin string makes a lower tone until it is stretched. The sound from a violin string becomes higher as it is stretched tighter. The same is true of vocal tones. As the vocal cords are stretched tighter, the tone grows higher.

EXERCISE 6

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[STEVENS, *under the assumed name of* STRICKLAND, *a professional swindler, receives a call from one of his young office girls just before he is to go into hiding with money he has stolen. Their discussion of honesty changes his attitude. He tells her his own life story as though it were someone else's.*[6]]

STRICKLAND. He had been honest so long,—he had made other people think that he was honest so long, that he had made *himself* think that he was honest!

THE GIRL. Was he wrong, Mr. Strickland?

STRICKLAND. [*Looking into her eyes; very quietly.*] Stevens, please. [*There is a long pause.*] I don't know what sent you: who sent you: but you've come here tonight as I am running away. You're too late. You can't stop me. Not even the finger of God Himself could stop me! I've gone too far. [*He goes on in a voice which is low, but terrible in its earnestness.*] Here is money! [*He pulls out his pocket-*

[6] Wilde, Percival, *The Finger of God,* in Wilde, Percival, *Dawn, and Other One-Act Plays.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1924. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

book.] Hundreds of thousands of it, not a cent of it mine! And I'm stealing it, do you understand me? *Stealing* it! To-morrow the firm will be bankrupt, and there'll be a reward out for me. [*He smiles grimly, and bows.*] Here, if you please, is your honest man! What have you to say to him?

GIRL [*very quietly*]. The man who has been honest so long that he has made *himself* think that he is honest *can't* steal.

STRICKLAND. You believe *that?* [*Hoarsely.*]

GIRL [*opening her bag again*]. I was left a little money this week: only a few hundred dollars, hardly enough to bother you with. Will you take care of it for me—Alfred Stevens?

STRICKLAND. Good God! [*And utterly unnerved he collapses to a chair. There is a long pause.*]

GIRL [*crossing slowly to the window, and drawing aside the curtain*]. Look! What a beautiful night! The thousands of sleeping houses! The millions of shining stars! And the lights beneath! And in the distance, how the stars and the lights meet! So that one cannot say: "Here God ends; Here Man begins." [*The telephone rings, harshly, and shrilly.* STRICKLAND *goes to the receiver.*]

STRICKLAND [*quietly*]. Yes? . . . You're afraid I'm going to miss the train? . . . Yes? Well, I'm *going* to miss the train! . . . I'm going to stay and face the music! [*Hysterically.*] I'm an honest man, d'ye hear me? I'm an honest man. [*And furiously, he pitches the telephone to the floor, and stands panting, shivering, on the spot. From the window a soft radiance beckons, and trembling in every limb, putting out his hands as if to ward off some unseen obstacle, he moves there slowly.*] Did you hear what I told him? I'm going to make good. I'm going to face the music! Because I'm an honest man! An honest man! [*He gasps, stops abruptly, and in a sudden panic-stricken movement, tears the curtains down. The window is closed—has never been opened—but the girl has vanished.*]

✣ *Vocal Melody* ✣

Melody of voice is the result of a combination of pitch changes. It is the movement of the voice up and down the scale, bringing into use slides, steps, and varying inflections. Melody is the *tune* of speech that not only brings out the thought but tells much about the person and his feelings as well.

Primitive peoples use a superabundance of high and low, loud and soft, rapid and slow voice movement in their speech. Their inflections are wide and pronounced. Music helps to communicate man's feelings, and the closer to the primitive we are the greater the part it plays.

Melody is a combination of inflections. Inflections are of three kinds: rising, falling, and circumflex. Occasionally, however, the player will need to use little or no inflection.

Rising inflection is used when the thought is unfinished—in other words, suspended. The beginning actor often uses too few rising and too many falling inflections. Rising inflections create suspense and anticipation. They make the audience listen. Yet, the player too often uses two or three *downward* pushes in a sentence and no upward. *Keep the inflections rising, the idea suspended.* Get the habit of using many rising inflections. Careful study of the role and the practicing of different inflections will help the player to find the appropriate melody. The thought will usually help him to decide upon appropriate inflections. Questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no" customarily end with a rising inflection. If the question, on the other hand, must be answered with a sentence, a falling inflection is better.

Falling inflections are used to express finality and decision and to stress an important thought. Too many falling inflections tend to make the speeches overemphatic.

We often need *no inflection* at the end of a speech. This requires more skill than to use either rising or falling inflections. It is often employed for indecision, or it can be used when a person halts to think before uttering the next word or thought.

Use imagination all through your work. Step out of the realm of reality. Go to extremes in inflections, in facial expression, in emotional expression, and in gesturing. *Come alive.* Then, when you have *pushed up* your lines, giving them too much *umph* or force, you can restrain your feelings. Nobody, however, can set down definite levels for actors to use; too many considerations are involved. But when you have built your role with *too much*

emotional fervor, you can, by using *restraint,* bring it down to the best level.

Melody should vary with the thought. Actors need a "true ear" to hear melody accurately. Some are unfortunate in being unable to distinguish between rising and falling inflections. Other actors can hear the changes in the speech of someone else, but they cannot hear the melody in their own speech; and still others cannot change even though they hear the wrong inflection on a word.

In the following exercise try using different inflections. Select those which seem to give the richest, fullest meaning.

EXERCISE 7

(ONE MAN; TWO WOMEN.)

[ROSALIND *loves* ORLANDO, *but, when forced to flee from her court home, expects never to see him again. Living in the forest masqueraded as a boy, however, she not only sees him, but becomes his friend and counselor. He tells her of his love for* ROSALIND *and she agrees to pretend to be* ROSALIND *in order to teach him how to woo her.*[7]]

ORLANDO. Good day and happiness, dear Rosalind!

ROSALIND. . . . —Why, how now, Orlando! Where have you been all this while? You a lover! And you serve me such another trick, never come in my sight more.

ORLANDO. My fair Rosalind, I come within an hour of my promise.

ROSALIND. Break an hour's promise in love! He that will divide a minute into a thousand parts, and break but a part of the thousandth part of a minute in the affairs of love, it may be said of him that Cupid hath clapped him o' th' shoulder, but I'll warrant him heart-whole.

ORLANDO. Pardon me, dear Rosalind.

ROSALIND. Nay, and you be so tardy, come no more in my sight: I had as lief be wooed of a snail.

ORLANDO. Of a snail!

ROSALIND. Ay, of a snail; for though he comes slowly, he carries his house on his head; a better jointure, I think, than you make a woman: besides, he brings his destiny with him. . . . Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday humour and like enough to con-

[7] Shakespeare, William, *As You Like It.*

sent. What would you say to me now, and I were your very, very Rosalind?

ORLANDO. I would kiss before I spoke.

ROSALIND. Nay, you were better speak first, and when you were gravelled for lack of matter, you might take occasion to kiss.

ORLANDO. How if the kiss be denied?

ROSALIND. Then she puts you to entreaty, and there begins new matter.

ORLANDO. Who could be out, being before his beloved mistress?

ROSALIND. Marry, that should you, if I were your mistress; or I should think my honesty ranker than my wit.

ORLANDO. What, of my suit?

ROSALIND. Not out of your apparel, and yet out of your suit. Am I not your Rosalind?

ORLANDO. I take some joy to say you are, because I would be talking of her.

ROSALIND. Well, in her person I say I will not have you.

ORLANDO. Then in mine own person I die.

ROSALIND. No, faith, die by attorney. The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, . . . in a love-cause . . . men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love.

ORLANDO. I would not have my right Rosalind of this mind; for, I protest, her frown might kill me.

ROSALIND. By this hand, it will not kill a fly. But come, now I will be your Rosalind in a more coming-on disposition; and ask me what you will, I will grant it.

ORLANDO. Then love me, Rosalind.

ROSALIND. Yes, faith, will I, Fridays and Saturdays and all.

ORLANDO. And wilt thou have me?

ROSALIND. Ay, and twenty such.

ORLANDO. What sayest thou?

ROSALIND. Are you not good?

ORLANDO. I hope so.

ROSALIND. Why then, can one desire too much of a good thing?—Come, sister, you shall be the priest and marry us.—Give me your hand, Orlando. What do you say, sister?

ORLANDO. Pray thee, marry us.

CELIA. I cannot say the words.

ROSALIND. You must begin,—"Will you, Orlando,"—

CELIA. Go to.—Will you, Orlando, have to wife this Rosalind?
ORLANDO. I will.
ROSALIND. Ay, but when?
ORLANDO. Why now; as fast as she can marry us.

Circumflex inflection is a glide from high pitch to low and, perhaps, to high again. It has a curve in movement indicating a curve in thought. It signifies doubt, uncertainty, or evasion of the issue. The words often say one thing and mean another. One may ask another "Do you like her?" The answer is "Oh, ye-e-s-s," with decided curves in the word signifying, "I like her with certain reservations."

In Iago's famous scene he is implying volumes through the inflection in his voice. He convinces Othello that Desdemona has been untrue to him. This famous speech of Iago, the last in the next exercise, is quoted by millions because it contains a high moral truth. Nevertheless, it was spoken by one of the greatest villains in literature. His smooth tongue in this scene brought disaster to his prey, Othello. Unless the actor playing Iago uses curves in his voice he cannot bring out the implications intended.

EXERCISE 8

(TWO MEN.)

[OTHELLO *has given* CASSIO *a promotion which should have been* IAGO'S. *In revenge,* IAGO *sets out to make* OTHELLO *believe that his wife is false to him for* CASSIO. OTHELLO, *loving his wife very much, will at first not believe the hints.*[8]]

IAGO. My noble lord—
OTHELLO. What dost thou say, Iago?
IAGO. Did Michael Cassio, when you wooed my lady,
Know of your love?
OTHELLO. He did, from first to last: why dost thou ask?
IAGO. But for a satisfaction of my thought;
No further harm.
OTHELLO. Why of thy thought, Iago?
IAGO. I did not think he had been acquainted with her,

[8] Shakespeare, William, *Othello*.

OTHELLO. O, yes; and went between us very oft.
IAGO. Indeed!
OTHELLO. Indeed, ay, indeed; discern'st thou aught
In that? Is he not honest?
IAGO. Honest, my lord?
OTHELLO. Honest! ay, honest.
IAGO. My lord, for aught I know.
OTHELLO. What dost thou think?
IAGO. Think, my lord!
OTHELLO. Think, my lord!
By heaven, he echoes me,
As if there were some monster in his thought
Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something:
I heard thee say but now, thou likedst not that,
When Cassio left my wife; what didst not like?
And, when I told thee he was of my counsel
In my whole course of wooing, thou criedest "Indeed!"
And didst contract and purse thy brow together,
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain
Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me,
Show me thy thought.
IAGO. My lord, you know I love you.
OTHELLO. I think thou dost;
And, for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,
And weigh'st thy words before you giv'st them breath,
Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more;
For such things in a false disloyal knave
Are tricks of custom, but in a man that's just
They are close delations, working from the heart
That passion cannot rule.

. . . . .

IAGO. I do beseech you,
Though I perchance am vicious in my guess—
As I confess, it is my nature's plague
To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
Shapes faults that are not—that your wisdom yet,
From one that so imperfectly conceits,
Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble
Out of his scattering and unsure observance.
It were not for your quiet nor your good,

Nor for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom,
To let you know my thoughts.

OTHELLO. What dost thou mean?

IAGO. Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

Vocal Energy

The *energy* of voice may vary from a murmur to a roar. The power for voice comes from its engine, the diaphragm. This power cannot be acquired on short notice. If it has not been developed by years of daily use, it must come through weeks of diligent practice. The student needs to work not only for volume of tone but also for intensity, vigor, and push behind his words. If he is to whisper a line, he will use enough energy to send it to the last row in the theater. If, on the other hand, he is to speak in a loud voice to a mob, he will use energy behind his words, giving the *effect* of a very loud voice without shouting or yelling.

To give the *effect* of a loud voice, you need not really use a loud voice. But you do need to use an energized voice. The push is from the diaphragm with always a supply of unused energy in reserve. Never use your voice to the limit of its power; keep some in reserve. But you need not yell; your support comes from deep breathing.

Even though the *stage whisper* must of necessity be low, it can be projected. The audience must hear; they want to feel that they are eavesdropping on a secret. The stage whisper, even though it is loud enough to be heard over the whole house, will give the impression of quiet. Attack of each word is important to project a stage whisper.

Along with energy the player often uses a high pitch and a

rapid tempo. These seem to belong together when working for a feeling of excitement.

Speech on the stage is not natural speech. It must be regulated, and the right technique must be used to produce the desired effect. It should be pleasing just as any great rhythmic piece of music is pleasing. There will be repeatedly surge, swell, and retardation, along with the constant heightening of scene and act. Suspense grows, lulls, and grows again as the act progresses. Force and energy, when applied artistically, help to supply this rhythmic movement.

EXERCISE 9

(THREE MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[CHRISTIAN *and* CYRANO *both love* ROXANE, *but* CHRISTIAN *is unable to win her because he cannot say poetic things to her.* CYRANO, *knowing that because of an affliction his case is hopeless with her, offers to help* CHRISTIAN. *In this scene the two are in her garden;* ROXANE *stands on the balcony above.* CYRANO *is hidden beneath the balcony, telling* CHRISTIAN *what words to speak to her.*[9]]

ROXANE. Who?
CHRISTIAN. Christian.
ROXANE. You again?
CHRISTIAN. I had to tell you—
CYRANO. [*Under the balcony.*] Good— Keep your voice down.
ROXANE. No. Go away. You tell me nothing.
CHRISTIAN. Please!—
ROXANE. You do not love me any more—
CHRISTIAN. [*To whom* CYRANO *whispers his words.*] No—no—
Not any more—I love you . . . evermore . . .
And ever . . . more and more!
ROXANE. [*About to close the window—pauses.*] A little better . .
CHRISTIAN. [*Same business.*]
Love grows and struggles like . . . an angry child . . .
Breaking my heart . . . his cradle . . .
ROXANE. [*Coming out on the balcany.*] Better still—
But . . . such a babe is dangerous; why not

[9] Rostand, Edmond, *Cyrano de Bergerac.* Reprinted by permission of Brian Hooker, the translator.

Have smothered it new-born?
CHRISTIAN. [*Same business.*] And so I do . . .
And yet he lives . . . I found . . . as you shall find . . .
This new-born babe . . . an infant . . . Hercules'
ROXANE. [*Going forward.*] Good!—
CHRISTIAN. [*Same business.*] Strong enough . . . at birth . . . to strangle those
Two serpents—Doubt and . . . Pride.
ROXANE. [*Leans over balcony.*] Why, very well!
Tell me now why you speak so haltingly—
Has your imagination gone lame?
CYRANO. [*Thrusts* CHRISTIAN *under the balcony, and stands in his place.*] Here—
This grows too difficult!
ROXANE. Your words to-night
Hesitate. Why?

For the *loud* voice, the actor needs to use a vigorous push of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles. By using a calling tone with controlled energy behind the words, the semblance of a loud voice may be very effectively given without deafening those near at hand.

EXERCISE 10

(FOUR MEN; EXTRAS.)

[*It is a day of great excitement in Rome, as the play opens. We see a street full of people.* FLAVIUS *and* MARULLUS, TRIBUNES, *enter.* MARULLUS *is rebuking crowds for forgetting Pompey so soon.*[10]]

MARULLUS. Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?
What tributaries follow him to Rome,
To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels?
You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!
O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,
To tow'rs and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The livelong day, with patient expectation,

[10] Shakespeare, William, *Julius Caesar.*

To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:
And, when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made an universal shout,
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks,
To hear the replication of your sounds
Made in her concave shores?
And do you now put on your best attire?
And do you now call out a holiday?
And do you now strew flowers in his way,
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?
Be gone!
Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
That needs must light on this ingratitude.

FLAVIUS. Go, go good countrymen, and, for this fault
Assemble all the poor men of your sort;
Draw them to Tiber banks, and weep your tears
Into the channel, till the lowest stream
Do kiss the most exalted shores of all.

Topics and Exercises

11

CREATING A CHARACTER

EXERCISE 1: from *The Kelly Kid* by Kathleen Norris and Dan Totheroh

A. JUVENILE

EXERCISE 2: from *Playing With Fire* by Percival Wilde

B. MIDDLE AGED

C. PAST MIDDLE AGED

EXERCISE 3: from *The American Way* by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart

D. AGED

EXERCISE 4: from *The Intruder* by Maurice Maeterlinck

EXERCISE 5: from *Joint Owners in Spain* by Alice Brown

E. DISTINCTIVE PERSONALITIES

EXERCISE 6: from *Sun Up* by Lulu Volmer

EXERCISE 7: from *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare

11

CREATING A CHARACTER

EVERY PLAY is a character play. We are told that some plays are built around plot and others around a character; but in reality, all are plays of character. About these image-people the plot weaves, and the audience hovers to listen.

Few college players take great enough care in creating their characters. If you are one of these careless folk, wake up to your job. You need time to meet and to become fully acquainted with the one whose life you are to depict for others. You need to know all of his traits, mannerisms, peculiarities, likes and dislikes, and even his secret thoughts.

In real life we do not really notice how we express ourselves. Because our mannerisms and peculiarities have become well-formed habits, we are not aware of them, even though we do express our own feelings through them. On the stage, however, the task of simulating another's personality is more difficult. There, the player must act like the other character. The amateur often does not feel his character clearly enough; he needs to *think* him and *live* him more and more.

Two methods may be followed in creating a character. These may be used either separately or in combination to form a third method.

1. Build your character entirely through your recollections and your imagination. Your own background will help you in this. If you have been observant, have learned to know people and their characteristics, you can make up your character from your mind. Your imagination will create and add to that which you have stored away.

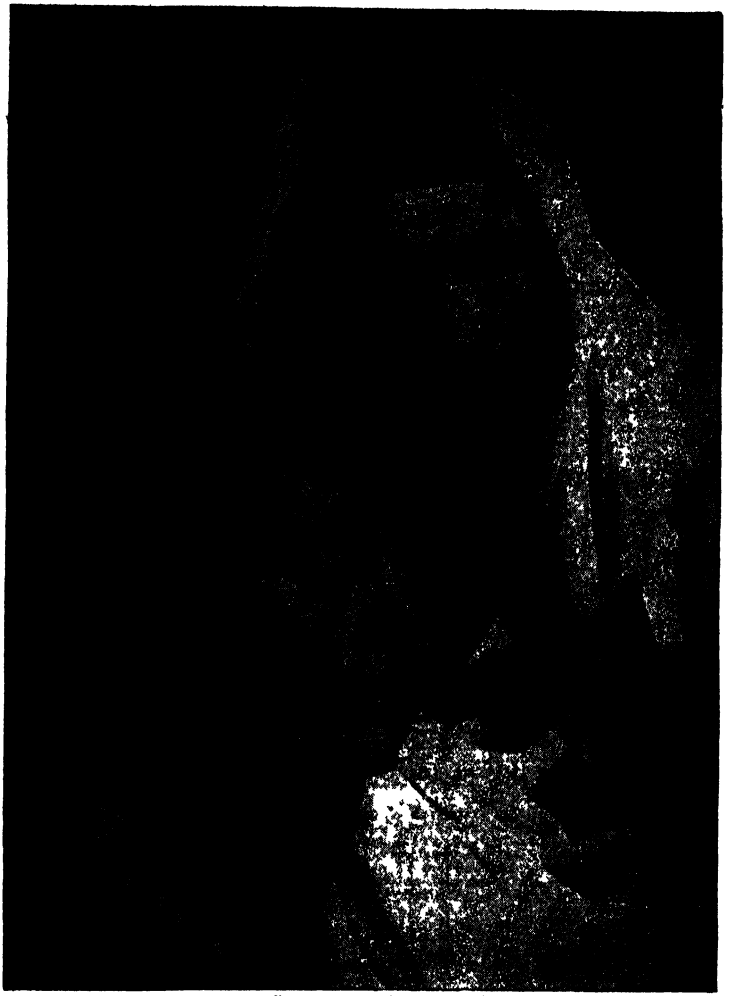
2. Draw your character from life. Go out, search, and find a person who is similar to the one conceived by the author. Borrow his walk, talk, movements, peculiarities, traits of character, and mannerisms. Incorporate these into your own conception of the character.

3. This method, which is a combination of the other two, is probably the best method for the beginner to use. It involves using your recollections as far as is practical then adding to and enriching these memories by observing the actions of those who resemble the individual you are to portray.

Whatever method you use, your character must stand out vividly as an individual. It is a good idea to list all of the different characteristic actions you plan to use, then to decide which you will put into the early part of the play, which later, and which toward the end. Your character must build. It must grow more interesting as the play progresses. If you use all of your bag of tricks at the very first, your acting of the role will become flat and dull as the play moves. Save some points about the disposition—perhaps selfishness or a tendency to be easily annoyed—and bring these out in the second act or later.

All action that you use will carry a meaning to the audience. It may, contrary to your intentions, tell them that you are trying to act a part for which you are not prepared. It should, however, reveal the age, disposition, education, mood, feelings, background, and tendencies of the person you represent. A particular action may help one player but be entirely out of place for another playing the same role. Work out your own actions to suit your particular abilities and needs.

Do not, however, plan too many actions. Remember that you



Courtesy of "Stage" Alfredo Valente, photographer

Marie Ouspenskaya, as Polymnia, and Elnora Mendellssohn, as Klytaimnestra, in *Daughters of Atreus,* by Robert Turney Characterizations should be convincingly complete in the expressions of the body, the mind, and the emotions

are representing only one person. And do not use characteristics which might detract from the effectiveness of the whole play or of other players. The character's movements, vocal expressions, mannerisms, tempo, thoughts, looks must all synchronize into

that one person's likeness. If you do not guard carefully against such mistakes, you may generate the same kind of feeling in your hearers as does "My Old Kentucky Home" when sung to the tune of "Yankee Doodle."

You will want your characterization to *ring true*. You can make it do so only by mastering the characterization *before* applying make-up and dressing for the part. You must put life into it; the personality, even though it is created only for the stage, will differ from every other personality in the world, just as one blade of grass differs from every other. The physical make-up, the carriage, the movements must be so well executed that they will reveal the emotions, the thinking, and the life within as belonging to only this one character.

Handprops are useful in conveying character. Decide early what properties will be suitable for your portrayal: fans, vanities, handbags, pipes, newspapers, eyeglasses, hats, toothpicks, nail files, and so on.

An audience does not take much notice of such props unless careless actors draw attention to them by handling them too much or in the wrong way. A moving object attracts attention easily; this fact makes it important that the player use his properties unobtrusively. Blowing smoke rings, twirling a cane, or fanning will catch the eye when interest should be centered upon some other part of the stage.

Firearms, weapons, and the like, seize interest instantly and must therefore be covered until time for them to be noticed.

Sometimes, however, properties must be made conspicuous because they relate to the plot. When this is the case, the actor may toy with or in some other way point or *plant* the article in order to make it noticeable. Lady Windermere's fan in the play by the same name must be planted. The paper knife in the *Witching Hour* must be planted early in order to make it important later.

All action with a prop should weave smoothly in with the dialogue. It should blend into the picture of the whole scene. Whatever action with properties is to be used should be panto-

mimed at many rehearsals. It is a good idea actually to handle something that represents the property. A stick may be an umbrella or a notebook a newspaper.

When using reading matter, as magazines, newspapers, and books, it is easier to keep one's mind on the play if the print is held upside down. However, when actually before an audience, be sure that they cannot see that what you are reading is wrong-side up. People in the house do notice!

The prop must never become a hindrance to the acting. If it is in your way, lay it aside occasionally or discard it entirely. Work for a variety of actions to make all seem natural. You may twist the corner of a handkerchief, use it as a fan, fold it, or move your fingers about its edge. The property should not be used unless it adds to the picture. Working with a handkerchief may seem to be the work of the actor rather than the character, unless it is made an interesting part of the characterization.

The best way to go about creating a character is to begin at the surface.

1. Read your part several times thoughtfully, imaginatively, to get the *feel* of it.

2. Visualize the person you are representing. Hear him talk. See him move. How does he work or relax or hurry?

3. Stand as you see him stand. Walk, stand, talk, doze, wake up, kill time, and work, all as you imagine the character would.

4. While memorizing lines, move through the action, take on the traits, pantomime the business. The external characteristics should be fully mastered so that you act him subconsciously before you attempt to assume the character's inner life.

5. Use your properties. Work for variety in handling them and weave them into your impersonation. Work out pantomimes for the following characterizations. Hand to your instructor before class a list of the points of characterization you have planned for each. Try to assume for each of the seven a different personality.

(a) At a bargain necktie counter.

(b) In a bus depot.

(c) On a park bench of a large city in hot summer.

(d) Aboard a crowded streetcar.

(e) Trying to find a swatter to get an annoying fly.

(f) Driving a car on a side road; a rear tire goes flat.

(g) A week before Christmas, and with arms full of bundles your shoestring comes untied.

6. Now that the outer character has been assumed, the inner will grow more rapidly. Again you will work to apply the James-Lange theory. Too often amateur actors think only of the physical or outer part of a characterization. They do not realize the importance of assuming the character's thinking, disposition, and emotional responses.

7. Guard against making a peculiar character ridiculous in his action. When portraying such a character, you had better underact than overact. Although, as we have said before, in order to loosen up and get in condition, it is best for overrestrained players to overact at first.

Assume the character before coming on stage. Take ten or twelve steps in character before each of your entrances. If you are a delivery boy, be one for ten steps before entering. If you are the town gossip, or a singing teacher, or a butcher, get in character well before entering.

Characterization, then, does not come all at once; it grows. It may never be perfected, but every diligent player will perfect it as nearly as possible, first, by attaining the physical appearance and movement of the character; second, by taking on the thinking that the author intended for him; and, finally, by portraying his emotions.

Plan and practice actions that are appropriate to various individuals. People of different nationalities walk and gesture differently. English, Swedes, Germans, Negroes, and Jews each have more or less characteristic actions. Within these general classes, however, individual disposition, education, background, and environment must all be considered.

EXERCISE 1

(TWO MEN; FOUR WOMEN.)

[*In the plain, simple kitchen of the* MURPHY'S *are three women neighbors and a girl,* ELLEN MURPHY. ELLEN *is ironing while the three women are sipping their tea. The calmness is broken by* ROBBIE KELLY, *the bad boy of the neighborhood, who rushes in to hide from the police. The women discuss the charge against him.*[1]]

MRS. CALLAHAN [*thoughtfully*]. I could go with ye to the Judge, Robbie, but I think he'll send ye up—the third time. I declare if your mother wouldn't rather see you in your grave.

KELLY KID [*beginning to cry*]. I tell you I never done it.

MRS. CAHILL. You've done enough, God knows!

KELLY KID. But I never done that! And if he takes me and sends me to jail, I'll tell him I never done it! He can send me to the chair—because he's a big liar, but I'll tell the Judge that if my mother had lived I'd tell her the same thing—and if I was dying I'd tell it—[*His voice dies away in sobs.*]

ELLEN. [*Taking a frail blue handkerchief from her waist and holding it out to him.*] Here, use this on your nose. [*He is about to take it, when he hears something and whirls about.*]

MRS. CAHILL. [*Who has been looking through the window.*] *Whisht!* There's a cop in the yard!

MRS. CALLAHAN. Saints in the heavens!

MRS. CAHILL. It's Hamilton!

KELLY KID. Don't let him take me! I never done it!

ELLEN. Quick. Come with me— [*She takes the boy by the shoulder and leads him into the bedroom, closing the door.*]

MRS. MURPHY. What's she going to do with him?

MRS. CALLAHAN. I don't know. Come—let's us be sittin' natural. That's it, Mrs. Cahill! Be pourin' us some fresh tea, Mrs. Murphy.

MRS. CALLAHAN [*calmly*]. And what was that you was sayin', Mrs. Murphy?

MRS. MURPHY. I was sayin'— [*A rap comes on the back door.*] Now who could *that* be, Mrs. Callahan? [*She goes to the door, opening it.*] Well, God bless us, it's Officer Hamilton. Will ye step in? [OFFICER HAMILTON *steps in, sending a quick glance around the room, and smiles at the ladies.*]

[1] Norris, Kathleen, and Totheroh, Dan, *The Kelly Kid,* in Phillips and Johnson, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

OFFICER HAMILTON. Thanks, Mrs. Murphy.

MRS. MURPHY. Won't you sit down, sir? [OFFICER HAMILTON *sits on edge of chair, twirling his cap in his hands, still looking about the room.*] Mrs. Callahan you know, and me friend Mrs. Cahill. I misdoubt ye don't know the whole pack of us here abouts. [*Down to table.*] You wouldn't have a cup of tea while you'd be talkin'? And now what is it—it isn't the Fourth of July barbecue yet awhile?

OFFICER HAMILTON. [*Looking from one to the other with a slow smile.*] Come now—come now—

MRS. CAHILL. [*Exchanging surprised glances with* MRS. CALLAHAN.] Well—whatever is it?—All this is very strange—

MRS. MURPHY. Did ye see me ould father out in the yard that we had anointed awhile back?

OFFICER HAMILTON [*still smiling*]. Yes, I seen Mr. Florence, and lookin' extremely well and hearty, too. [*Pausing and twirling his cap.*] I'm after the Kelly Kid. Where is he?

MRS. CALLAHAN. [*Utterly surprised.*] After—? Is it young Robbie Kelly you mean?

It would be impossible to plan definite movements for use with different ages, because many of the same movements characterize all ages. The characterization will depend upon the personality the player wishes to portray. However, characteristics do exist that generally distinguish individuals of certain ages. The most important thing, however, is to acquire bodily freedom. Only after one has gained control of all his muscles can he command them, with some assurance that they will respond. When a player has perfect bodily control he can represent many different types.

Juvenile

A youth is full of life, pep, grace of action. He moves without reflection; his legs and arms are ready for new positions, for plenty of movement. He will probably not remain quiet for long at a time. His gestures will be free, open, broad, and unrestrained. Youthful roles should be full of grace, sparkle, and charm.

EXERCISE 2

(TWO WOMEN.)

[MADGE *is a bright young girl, bubbling over with life. "She is too old to be called a child: in fact, she would resent it, and she is decidedly too young to be considered a woman. And to her tingling astonishment—and delight—the persons of the opposite sex who are now introduced to her address her as 'Miss,' instead of the old-time 'Madge,' and she is correspondingly elated—and dignified—and confused—and self-conscious—and uncomfortable—and altogether happy.*

"As the curtain rises MADGE *is occupied at the kitchen table.* NORA, *the cook, placidly admiring the colored supplement of a Sunday newspaper, is serenely unconscious of her existence. . . ."* [2]]

MADGE. Danny's coming! Danny's coming! [*The cook turns a page with a sympathetic grunt.*] Aren't you glad, Nora?

NORA. Of course I'm glad.

MADGE. Then why don't you say so?

NORA. [*Putting down the paper with a patient smile.*] He was here only yesterday, darlint. An' I've told ye eight times already.

MADGE. Tell me again, Nora.

NORA. [*Resignedly.*] Well, he's a fine little lad, is Danny—

MADGE. [*Interrupting.*] He's a man, Nora.

NORA. [*Accepting the correction.*] A man. Straight, an' strong, an'—an' pretty—

MADGE. Handsome.

NORA. Handsome. An'—an'— [*She is running out of adjectives.*]

MADGE. Brave.

NORA. Of course he's brave! Why shouldn't he be?

MADGE. [*Speaking fondly, after a pause.*] He loves me, Nora!

NORA. [*Philosophically.*] Yes. An' he's putting me out of my own kitchen to tell ye so.

MADGE. You don't mind, do you, Nora?

NORA. [*Thoughtfully.*] Well—

MADGE [*indignantly*]. They make fun of us upstairs! Uncle John—and Harry—and Cynthia: Cynthia's the worst! She doesn't say a word: she just sits there and laughs—*laughs.*

[2] Wilde, Percival, *Playing with Fire,* in Wilde, Percival, *Dawn, and Other One-Act Plays.* Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1924. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

NORA. Don't mind her, darlint.

MADGE. I don't! I won't! But I can't help it! [*With crushing contempt.*] Just because she's married! Ugh!

NORA. Never ye mind, dearie, never ye mind! *You'll* have the chance to laugh at *her* some day!

MADGE. Do you think so, Nora? [*Eagerly.*]

NORA. Honest!

MADGE. Cross your heart?

NORA. [*Fervently.*] Hope to die! Just think, when you an' Danny come ridin' up in your big automobile, honkin' the horn, an' sittin' there dressed up in furs, an' laces, an' kid gloves, an' paten' leather shoes: *won't* they be mad!

MADGE [*ecstatically*]. Gee!

Middle Aged

Young players representing characters of middle age often overact. In portraying the older person, the young actor must remember to keep his actions from becoming too vivacious; he must, however, keep them steady, often forceful. Make-up and dress, not deliberate and calculating movements, must show the age of a person of fifty.

Past Middle Aged

The age of sixty-five brings on a change in bodily movements. The joints are beginning to stiffen, making the walk slightly stiff and hand movement less graceful. More effort is required to let oneself down into a chair and to get up from it. The shoulders often are slightly stooped and, instead of a person turning his head and trunk easily from side to side, he may turn the whole body by change of foot position. There is less spring in the walk, knees are not bent easily when walking, and arms move more from the shoulder, with stiffer elbows and wrists. Again, take heed: *Do not overact.*

EXERCISE 3

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[MARTIN *and* IRMA GUNTHER *who came to America from Germany as immigrants have become loyal American citizens. They are celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. As guests go into the dining room* MARTIN *holds* IRMA *back.*[3]]

MARTIN. [*Stopping* IRMA.] Irma Liebchen, wait a minute. [*She turns and faces him.*] Can you believe it? We have been married fifty years?

IRMA. No, Martin. I cannot believe it. To me it seems just a little while.

MARTIN. Me too, Irma.

IRMA. I remember so well—that day you came to my father's house and told him your prospects—and that you wanted to marry me.

MARTIN. Yah . . . Yah . . .

IRMA. I listened outside my father's door—I can see myself now. And then I went upstairs and waited for you to propose. Two days I waited, Martin.

MARTIN. It took me two days to get up my courage.

IRMA. It seems such a little while ago, Martin. And now it is fifty years.

MARTIN. [*Nods.*] Tell me, Liebchen, would you do it over again?

IRMA. You know I would, Martin. [*They kiss. From the dining room come cries of "Martin! Irma! Come on! Where are you?"*]

MARTIN. We're coming. [*They go into the dining room. A great cheer greets them; then voices are lifted once more in the "Wedding March." A burst of laughter, another cheer. The clink of glasses lifted in a toast.*]

Aged

Feebleness comes late in life. Eighty years may bring it, although it may come later. The aged person moves slowly and jerkily. Grace has gone. The feet are picked up and set down flat

[3] Kaufman, George S., and Hart, Moss, *The American Way.* New York: Random House 1939. Reprinted by special permission of Random House. This play in its entirety is published and leased by the Dramatist Play Service Inc., 6 East 39th Street, New York City, without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given.

on the floor. There is very little movement in the knees; the movement comes from the hips. Instead of turning at the neck and the waist, the old person turns by steps, moving his whole body. He thinks slowly. There must be time for the thoughts to register. The hands lack vitality; they fall limply, and fingers hang droopingly from the knuckles. Great effort is required to sit down in, or rise from, a chair. All movements of an aged person are calculating and slow.

EXERCISE 4

(THREE MEN; FOUR WOMEN.)

[*It is night. The family is sitting about waiting for a* SISTER *who has been summoned to come. The wife lies at the point of death in an adjoining room. The feeble, old, blind* GRANDFATHER *has been very nervous all evening. He hears and feels strange things—Death—near, which the others do not. His fear has made them all afraid and nervous. He believes the family is withholding something.*[4]]

GRANDFATHER [*shuddering with peculiar horror*]. Who is that who got up?

UNCLE. No one got up!

FATHER. I did not get up!

THE THREE DAUGHTERS. Nor I!—Nor I!—Nor I!

GRANDFATHER. Someone got up from the table!

UNCLE. Light the lamp! [*Cries of terror are suddenly heard from the child's room on the right; these cries continue, with gradations of horror, until the end of the scene.*]

FATHER. Listen to the child!

UNCLE. He has never cried before!

FATHER. Let us go and see him!

UNCLE. The light! The light! [*At this moment, quick and heavy steps are heard in the room on the left.—Then a deathly silence. They listen in mute terror, until the door of the room opens slowly; the light from it is cast into the room where they are sitting, and the* SISTER OF MERCY *appears on the threshold, in her black garments, and bows as she makes the sign of the cross, to announce the death of the wife. They understand, and, after a moment of hesitation and fright,*

[4] Maeterlinck, Maurice, *The Intruder*, in Shay and Loving (editors), *Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays*. New York; D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1921.

silently enter the chamber of death, while THE UNCLE *politely steps aside on the threshold to let the three girls pass. The blind man, left alone, gets up, agitated, and feels his way round the table in the darkness.*]

GRANDFATHER. Where are you going,—Where are you going?—The girls have left me all alone!

EXERCISE 5

(THREE WOMEN.)

[*In an old-ladies' home, changes of roommates are made necessary by certain inmates who are hard to live with. The matron,* MRS. MITCHELL, *is helping the feeble* MRS. FULLERTON *move from her room to another. Her roommate, who cries all the time, sits by, complaining.*[5]]

MRS. MITCHELL. Come, Mrs. Fullerton, come, come.

MRS. FULLERTON [*quavering*]. Have I got all my things? It's a terrible piece o' work to move from one room to another. I'd most as lieves take a journey by stage.

MISS DYER [*trembling and injured*]. If anybody's goin' to move, I say it an' I'd say it with the last breath I had to draw, it ought to be me. Here she's had her dinner brought up to her on a waiter, an' now she's flauntin' off into a room where the sun lays the year round, an' here I be in this room I ain't left a night sence I moved in.

MRS. FULLERTON [*dazed, and turning round and round in her efforts to accomplish her departure*]. Have I got my apurns?

MRS. MITCHELL. Yes. I packed them myself.

MRS. FULLERTON. Have I got my bunnit?

MRS. MITCHELL. Yes. Here 'tis in your hand.

MRS. FULLERTON. Have I got my flannel nightgownd?

MRS. MITCHELL [*encouragingly*]. Yes. I took that over my arm. You'll find it hanging on the bed-post. Come, I want you to get all settled before dark.

Try the following exercises:

1. You are walking along gazing ahead at an automobile, an old timer, when you stub your toe. React as a person of ten, fourteen, nineteen, forty, sixty, eighty.

[5] Brown, Alice, *Joint Owners in Spain*. Boston: Walter H. Baker Company, 1925. Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

2. In a dark room hunt for your hat as you would if you were seven, eleven, sixteen, twenty-one, fifty, eighty.

3. A band is playing as it approaches. You go out of doors to listen as a person of five, nine, fifteen, twenty, sixty, eighty-five.

4. Work to unscrew a balky jar lid. The jar contains your favorite preserves. Try as a person of ten, fourteen, twenty, forty, sixty-five, eighty.

5. While on the street, you notice someone standing and looking about in a bewildered way. She asks you the way to the post office. Explain as you would to a person of five, eight, thirteen, eighteen, thirty, seventy.

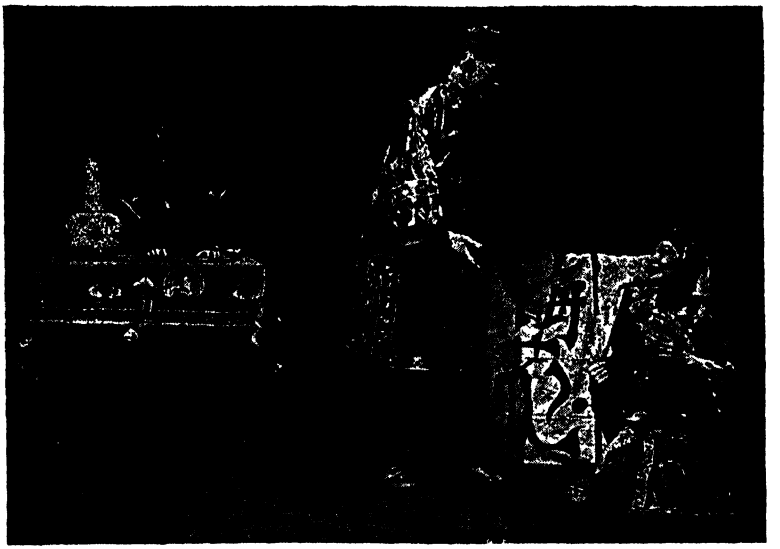
Pantomime the walk and carriage of the literary characters in:
Markham's "The Man With the Hoe."
Frost's "The Hired Man."
Robinson's "Miniver Cheevy."
Robinson's "Richard Cory."
Sandburg's "Gone."

✣ *Distinctive Personality* ✣

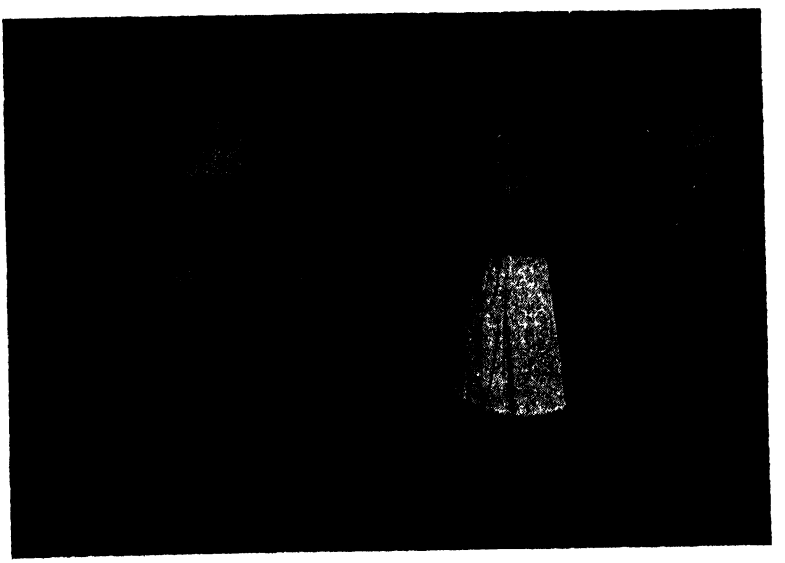
Personality—the intangible! Yet, not only is personality a part of everyone's make-up, but there are different types of it which may be easily recognized. These types may be likened to masks, which, when the player wills to put them on, reveal varying, impeccable portraits from life.

Many noted actors are unable to mask their own personalities. The audience hears and sees the actor rather than the character. The student should work diligently to appear as the character rather than as himself; to make each characterization individual. In life we may have a thousand acquaintances, no two of whom resemble each other in speech, movement, manners, or tastes. Each has his own personality. Some are commonplace individuals, while others are distinctive.

The student has now had some opportunity to train and test himself in representing characters of different ages; he will next wish to add to these characterizations various distinctive personalities. His first step in building the desired mask is to study the



The Yellow Jacket, by Hazelton and Benrimo. A production by Grove City College, Grove City, Pennsylvania.



Sun-Up, by Lulu Vollmer. A production by Albion College, Albion, Michigan.

Unusual characters call for carefully worked-out movements.

play and the author until he knows what was intended for the character.

Next, he should locate some person of the particular type needed and study him. The player should regard, painstakingly, every move that person makes, every word he speaks; in short, his every reaction. Sometimes, however, this step in preparing a characterization is impracticable.

Correct gesture, carriage, and speech are essential to character portrayal. The simplest gesture may be either in keeping or out of keeping with the character. A woman may rest her hand on her hip in various ways, the knuckles, the palm, or the fingertips touching the hip. Thus she may reveal her nationality, her personality, or her personal background.

What does the person do while sitting? How does he hold his feet, hands, head, neck, and shoulders? How does he respond to those about him? How does he move, talk, and laugh? What mannerisms are his? In other words, what makes him what he is?

Finally, the student will begin mechanically, but very definitely, to work himself into the part. Polished acting, like genius, comes from taking pains. When he has taken on the outward appearance and manner of the character, the inner feelings will begin to present themselves. Only after he becomes intimate with his character, knowing perfectly both inner feeling and outward appearance, can he hope to portray—through himself—a convincing resemblance for the audience. This sympathetic understanding will reveal itself after diligent and continued association with the personality he is to portray.

EXERCISE 6

(THREE MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[MRS. CAGLE *is one of the outstanding characters of modern drama. She is a daughter of the hills. Disciplined by the sorrow and disappointments of her drab life, she has become as stoic as a bronze statue.*

World War I is in progress. The SHERIFF *has come to tell* RUFE, *her son, that he must register. The mountaineer folk have heard very little about the war and do not understand.*[6]]

SHERIFF. Well, Huns, that's jest a nickname they call 'em. Yes, they done passed a law that every man between twenty-one and thirty-one has got to register, and today is the day.

MRS. CAGLE. Register? Whut ye mean?

SHERIFF. Why, sign his name, and tell the Government whar he lives.

TODD. They didn't do that in sixty-three.

MRS. CAGLE. Whut fer?

SHERIFF. So they can know whar to find 'em when they get ready for them to fight. They've got to do it today, too. [*Turning toward* RUFE.] Rufe, you and Bud will both have to register. [RUFE *rises.*]

MRS. CAGLE. No, they won't. That's all tommyrot.

SHERIFF. Yes, they will. It's the law, and if they don't register, the Government will deal with them. Shoot 'em down, I reckon, like deserters.

BUD [*frightened*]. Shoot me? Whut I got to do to keep from gittin' shot?

MRS. CAGLE. Nothin', Bud, nothin'.

SHERIFF. Yes, Bud, you got to go to town today, in the hall jest this side the depot, and give 'em your name, your age, and tell 'em whar you live. [BUD *looks from one to the other.*]

MRS. CAGLE. No, ye don't, Bud. Ye stay right here, and plant yo' corn. Whut's the law got to do with you and Rufe?

RUFE. But Mom—

MRS. CAGLE. Ye got a gun, ain't ye? That's as much as the law's got.

SHERIFF. But Mis' Cagle, the country is at war. You ferget they owe the Government something.

MRS. CAGLE [*springing up*]. Whut does Rufe or Bud owe the Gov'ment? The Guv'ment kept Bud's daddy in jail for twenty years 'cause he tried to make an honest livin' outen the corn he planted and raised. Whut did the Guv'ment do to Rufe's Pap? Shot him dead. Shot him in the back while he wuz protectin' his own property. Fight? Well, I reckon if either one of them boys fights, hit will be their own fight, and agin not fer the Guv'ment.

[6] Vollmer, Lulu, *Sun-up,* in Quinn, A. H. (editor), *Representative American Plays.* New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1928. Reprinted by special permission of Coward-McCann, Inc. Permission for amateur or professional performances of any kind must first be obtained from Longmans, Green and Company,

RUFE [*coming forward*]. Mom, ye air right as far as ye go. Whut ye say is true, but Pap Todd, and my pap too, wuz a doin' whut the Government told them not to do. They wuz a breakin' the law.

MRS. CAGLE. Whut right has the Guv'ment to tell us mountain folks whut to do or whut not to do. Air we beholdin' to them? Air they doin' anything fer us but runnin' up the prices of bread and meat till hit's all we kin do to keep body and soul together!

RUFE. Well, Mom, that ain't the Government's fault.

EXERCISE 7

(TWO WOMEN.)

[*Here is Shakespeare's delightful* NURSE. *Garrulous, yet kind, sympathetic, devoted, she is* JULIET'S *confidante.* JULIET'S *mood, in this most vivacious, refreshing scene of hers, is one of bubbling, childish enthusiasm. At the first of the scene she had sent the* NURSE *to consult* ROMEO *concerning the marriage plans.* JULIET *is now impatiently awaiting her return.*[7]]

JULIET. The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse;
In half an hour she promised to return.
Perchance she cannot meet him: that's not so.
O! she is lame: love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams,
Driving back shadows over lowering hills:
Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw Love,
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.
Now is the sun upon the highmost hill
Of this day's journey, and from nine till twelve,
Is three long hours, yet she is not come.
Had she affections, and warm youthful blood,
She'd be as swift in motion as a ball;
My words would bandy her to my sweet love,
And his to me:
But old folks, many feign as they were dead;
Unwieldy, slow, heavy and pale as lead.
[*Enter* NURSE *and* PETER.]
O God! she comes. O honey nurse! what news?
Hast thou met with him? Send thy man away.

NURSE. Peter, stay at the gate. [*Exit* PETER.]

[7] Shakespeare, William, *Romeo and Juliet.*

JULIET. Now, good sweet nurse; O Lord! why look'st thou sad?
Though news be sad, yet tell them merrily:
If good, thou sham'st the music of sweet news
By playing it to me with so sour a face.

NURSE. I am aweary, give me leave awhile:
Fie, how my bones ache! What a jaunt have I had!

JULIET. I would thou hadst my bones, and I thy news.
Nay, come, I pray thee, speak; good, good nurse, speak.

NURSE. Jesu! what haste? can you not stay awhile?
Do you not see that I am out of breath?

JULIET. How art thou out of breath when thou hast breath
To say to me that thou art out of breath?
The excuse that thou dost make in this delay
Is longer than the tale thou dost excuse.
Is thy news good, or bad? answer to that;
Say either, and I'll stay the circumstance:
Let me be satisfied, is't good or bad?

NURSE. Well, you have made a simple choice; you know not how to choose a man: Romeo! no, not he; though his face be better than any man's, yet his leg excels all men's; and for a hand, and a foot, and a body, though they be not to be talked on, yet they are past compare. He is not the flower of courtesy, but, I'll warrant him, as gentle as a lamb. Go thy ways, wench; serve God. What! have you dined at home?

JULIET. No, no: but all this did I know before.
What says he of our marriage? what of that?

NURSE. Lord! how my head aches; what a head have I!
It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces,
My back o' t'other side; O! my back, my back.
Beshrew your heart for sending me about,
To catch my death with jauncing up and down.

JULIET. I' faith, I am sorry that thou art not well.
Sweet, sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what says my love?

NURSE. Your love says, like an honest gentleman, and a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome, and, I warrant, a virtuous,—where is your mother?

JULIET. Where is my mother? why, she is within;
Where should she be? How oddly thou repliest:
'Your love says, like an honest gentleman,
Where is your mother?'

NURSE. O! God's lady dear.
Are you so hot? Marry, come up, I trow;
Is this the poultice for my aching bones?
Henceforward do your messages yourself.
JULIET. Here's such a coil! come, what says Romeo?
NURSE. Have you got leave to go to shrift to-day?
JULIET. I have.
NURSE. Then hie you hence to Friar Laurence' cell;
There stays a husband to make you a wife:
Now comes the wanton blood up in your cheeks,
They'll be in scarlet straight at any news.
Hie you to church; I must another way,
To fetch a ladder, by the which your love
Must climb a bird's nest soon when it is dark;
I am the drudge and toil in your delight,
But you shall bear the burden soon at night.
Go; I'll to dinner: hie you to the cell.
JULIET. Hie to high fortune! Honest nurse, farewell.

Topics and Exercises

12

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

A. FALLING

EXERCISE 1: from *Cappy Ricks* by Edward E. Rose

B. FAINTING

EXERCISE 2: from *The Royal Family* by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber

C. BOWING, KNEELING, CURTSYING

EXERCISE 3: from *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith

D. AD LIBBING

E. DRINKING TEA

EXERCISE 4: from *Expressing Willie* by Rachel Crothers

F. EATING

EXERCISE 5: from *Miss Lulu Bett* by Zona Gale

G. SMOKING

EXERCISE 6: from *The Butter and Egg Man* by George S. Kaufman

H. EMBRACING

EXERCISE 7: from *Death Takes a Holiday* by Walter Ferris

EXERCISE 8: from *His Return* by Percival Wilde

I. STRUGGLING AND FIGHTING

EXERCISE 9: from *Escape* by John Galsworthy

J. SLEEPINESS

EXERCISE 10: from *Arms and the Man* by George Bernard Shaw

K. DRUNKENNESS

EXERCISE 11: from *Journey's End* by R. C. Sherriff

L. DYING

EXERCISE 12: from *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand

12

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

ACTING looks simple and easy to the fellow out front. To him, it is only a matter of walking about, getting up and sitting down, talking, laughing; in short, "acting natural." Those in the audience do not realize that even the most talented and trained actor must go through countless rehearsals in order to prepare a single scene for public performance. Every move and word must be timed and rehearsed repeatedly; must be built stronger, more convincing, more moving. Strange as it may seem, things that look simplest are the most troublesome. Since we dare not just "act natural," we must strive to make the *unnatural seem natural.* For example, when, in real life, we eat and talk at a dinner table, we time our conversation to fit our eating. The player must do just the opposite. He must time his eating to fit his conversation. This is not natural, but it should appear to be natural to those beyond the footlights.

Some of the good effects of a scene, an act, or a play are the result of applying definite technique; others are a matter of timing. Some of the business most often called for may be rehearsed in the following exercises. The student should practice them until he can perform them easily and comfortably.

Falling

A severe fall can be taken easily if properly done. It should be taken a little at a time to lessen the shock. Usually the player can fall on his side, letting the body fall from ankle, to knee, to hip, to shoulder. When this is done rapidly, the fall appears natural.

There are times when he must fall forward or backward. In falling forward it is best to crumple down, breaking the fall by knees and hands and shoulder. In falling backward, one foot may support the body as it drops to the hips and on down. Any fall must be taken rapidly enough to hide the technique used.

There is no danger of injury if the right technique is used. Until you learn how to fall, however, it may be well to practice with a pillow. If a piece of furniture is near—a chair, cot, or table —you may fall against it to break the force of the fall. Plan to fall so that your head is downstage. This position hides your face from the audience and also makes it easier for others working about you to face the audience.

After being stabbed, a victim does not fall immediately. He may stagger a few steps, then crumple to the ground. A character who has been shot may throw up his hands and head, then fall.

EXERCISE 1

(TWO MEN.)

[CECIL PERICLES BERNARD *and* MATT PEASLEY *meet in* CAPPY RICKS' *shipping office.* CECIL *has gone there to meet his fiancée. He and* MATT *find themselves in love with what seems to be the same girl.*[1]]

MATT. Want to see old Ricks?

CECIL. No, indeed. I know what he looks like and I'm satisfied. But I'm waiting around here to see someone else.

MATT. Oh!

CECIL. [*With a flourish.*] The best, the sweetest, the most divine—

[1] Rose, Edward E., *Cappy Ricks.* New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1923. Reprinted by special permission of the publishers. *Caution:* This selection is fully protected by copyright laws. No performance, either amateur or professional, may be given without first securing permission of Samuel French, Inc.

the most beautiful creature in the world. [*Suddenly looks into house—runs to steps.*] By Jove, she just crossed the hall!

MATT. [*Startled.*] Who?

CECIL. My soul's delight—the one creature who is dearer to me than all else—the woman of my dreams!

MATT. She's there in the house?

CECIL. Yes, she works for old Ricks.

MATT. What's her name?

CECIL. [*Goes back C.—sighs.*] Goldie Glake!

[MATT *shows he is hit, but restrains himself.*]

MATT. [*After pause.*] Does she know that you care for her?

CECIL. Of course she knows it. She has pledged herself to me. I've held her in my arms and I've kissed her and she's mine—all mine!

MATT. [*Springs at him.*] You'll eat that lie, damn you! [*Seizes* CECIL *by the throat, shakes him.*]

CECIL. [*Terrified.*] Oh, I say!

MATT. Say that you've lied!

CECIL. But I haven't, you know. I love her and she loves me. We are to be married to-morrow if we can arrange it. [*Takes letter from pocket.*] See, I'll prove it to you. Here's a letter I got from her this morning! [CECIL *reads.*] "With eternal and undying devotion. Your little sweetheart, Goldie Glake." [*Indicating signature.*] See there!

MATT. [*Without looking at signature.*] You damned whelp! [*Throws* CECIL *from him, rushes up to L.U. and exits gate to L. After* MATT *exits,* CECIL *sits up and looks around dazed.*]

CECIL. [*Rubs himself.*] By Jove—rough party!

Fainting

A person in a faint is fully relaxed. When muscles are relaxed, the head, arms, hands, eyelids, jaw, and all parts of the body drop of their own weight. You should practice in the setting to be used so that you can adjust yourself to it.

If a fainting person is to be caught or carried by another, the relaxed body should fall into different positions as it is moved. A fainting player may have an impulse to try to make himself lighter when lifted. This cannot be done, so do not destroy the illusion by trying.

EXERCISE 2

(THREE WOMEN; EXTRAS.)

[FANNY CAVENDISH *has, with her husband, spent her life on the stage. Her children,* TONY *and* JULIA, *are actors, and the grandchildren are beginning stage careers.* FANNY *has been a sturdy woman, living for her art, and has plans made for taking up another play as soon as she is able. In this scene,* JULIA *and* FANNY *are trying to persuade* JULIA'S *daughter* GWEN *that she can marry and still have a stage career.* FANNY *is explaining how the stage life grips her.*[2]]

FANNY. Yes, yes! That's it! Every night when I'm sitting here alone I'm really down there at the theatre. Seven-thirty, and they're going in the stage door. Good evening to the doorman. Taking down their keys and looking in the mail rack. Eight o'clock! The stage hands are setting up. [*Raps with her cane.*] Half-hour, Miss Cavendish! Grease paint, rouge, mascara. Fifteen minutes, Miss Cavendish! My costume. . . . More rouge. . . . Where's the rabbit's foot! . . . Overture! . . . Good evening, everybody. . . . How's the house tonight? The curtain's up! . . . Props! . . . Cue. . . . Enter. [*Rises.*] That's all that's kept me alive these two years. If you weren't down there for me, I wouldn't want to live. . . . I couldn't live. You . . . down there . . . for me . . . going on . . . going on . . . going on. . . . [*The excitement and strain are too much for her. Suddenly she goes limp, topples, crumples.* JULIE *and* GWEN, *standing near her, catch her as she is about to fall, and place her in the chair from which she has risen. She is briefly unconscious.*]

JULIE. Mother! Mother, what's the matter!

GWEN. Grandma! Grandma!

JULIE. Jo! Tony! Della! Quick!

GWEN. [*At* FANNY'S *side, frantic and remorseful.*] It's all right, Grandma. I'll do it. I will. I will! Grandma! I'll do it. [Jo *and* DELLA *enter.* Jo *picks up* FANNY, *places her on the sofa.*]

⟷ *Bowing, Kneeling, Curtsying* ⟷

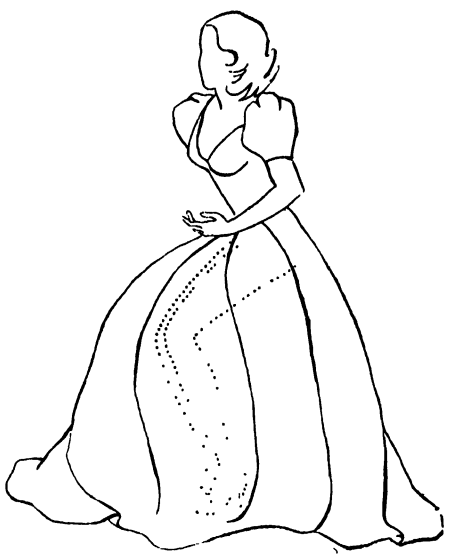
A bow may be courtly or it may be servile. It may be stiff, such as a butler might make, or it may be free and simple. When a

[2] Kaufman, George S., and Ferber, Edna, *The Royal Family.* New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1929. Reprinted by special permission of the publishers. *Caution:* This selection is fully protected by copyright laws. No performance, either amateur or professional, may be given without first securing permission of Samuel French, Inc.

genteel bow is taken, the body should bend at the hips, with the back held straight and the head held carefully in line. A very humble bow is taken with relaxed muscles. The head will drop forward, the shoulders and back droop and double down in front. The player will need to decide about the depth of the bow after he has studied the character.

If a man stoops to kiss a lady's hand, it is best for him to bend well over. He should not lift her hand more than waist-high.

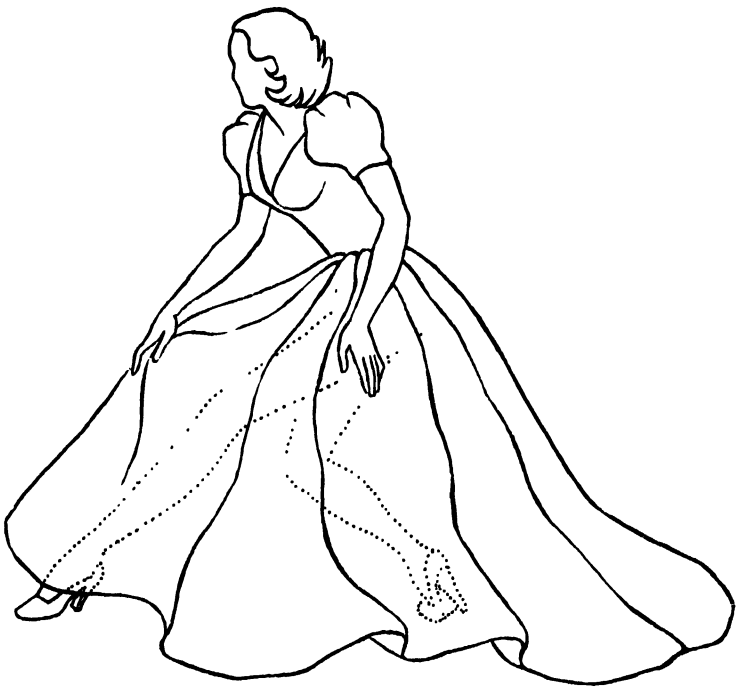
Bows are in order on many occasions in our normal everyday life. A man receiving an introduction to a woman bows slightly either from hips or head. Be sure to bend neither your back nor your shoulders. An actor or actress may need to lean over to shake hands with a seated person, or to look at a book on a table, or to whisper to someone. When you do, take care to bend from below the waist and to keep your shoulders straight.



Bob curtsy.

Curtsies are of different kinds. The *bob curtsy* is made by a quick bend of knees and a bob of the head. This is used in servants' parts and in humble surroundings. It suggests respect, or gratefulness, or obedience. The *court curtsy,* used by ladies of the court, is more difficult to perform. The lady places one foot well forward, keeping that knee straight, and points the toe slightly out as she lowers herself over the supporting foot. Her fingers will probably hold out the sides of her full skirt and she will

bend forward from the hips. Her back, head, and neck must be held rigidly straight as she bows. If the lady wishes to give a very low curtsy, she may cross her feet, then bow as she sinks almost to the floor over her two bent knees.



Court curtsy.

Plenty of time should be allowed for the movement. If a curtsy is to be given on a line, the actress should start it soon enough to complete it comfortably at the right moment without hurrying.

When kneeling, bend the downstage knee to the floor and rest your weight upon it. Bend the other knee at right angles, setting that foot flat on the floor. It is easy both to kneel and to rise from this position.

EXERCISE 3

(THREE MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[HARDCASTLE *and* SIR CHARLES *have hidden themselves behind a screen when they see* SIR CHARLES' *son,* MARLOW, *and* MISS HARDCASTLE, *whom he is to marry, coming. She is tormenting him.*[3]]

MARLOW. By heavens, madam, fortune was ever my smallest consideration. Your beauty at first caught my eye; for who could see that without emotion? [*Bowing.*] But every moment that I converse with you, steals in some new grace, heightens the picture, and gives it stronger expression.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Do you think I could ever relish that happiness, which was acquired by lessening yours?

MARLOW. By all that's good, I can have no happiness but what's in your power to grant me. [*Bowing.*] Nor shall I ever feel repentance, but in not having seen your merits before. I will stay, even contrary to your wishes; and though you should persist to shun me, I will make my respectful assiduities atone for the levity of my past conduct.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Sir, I must entreat you'll desist. As your acquaintance began, so let it end, in indifference. I might have given an hour or two to levity; but, seriously, Mr. Marlow, do you think I could ever submit to a connection, where I must appear mercenary, and you imprudent? Do you think I could ever catch at the confident addresses of a secure admirer?

MARLOW [*kneeling*]. Does this look like security? Does this look like confidence? No, madam, every moment that shows me your merit, only serves to increase my diffidence and confusion. Here let me continue—

SIR CHARLES. I can hold it no longer. Charles, Charles, how hast thou deceived me! Is this your indifference, your uninteresting conversation?

HARDCASTLE. Your cold contempt! your formal interview! What have you to say now?

MARLOW. That I'm all amazement! What can it mean?

HARDCASTLE. It means that you can say and unsay things at pleasure. That you can address a lady in private, and deny it in public; that you have one story for us, and another for my daughter!

MARLOW. Daughter!—this lady your daughter!

[3] Goldsmith, Oliver, *She Stoops to Conquer,* in Dickinson, Thomas (ed.), *Plays by Oliver Goldsmith.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908.

HARDCASTLE. Yes, sir, my only daughter. My Kate, whose else should she be?

MARLOW. Oh, the devil!

MISS HARDCASTLE. Yes, sir, that very identical tall squinting lady you were pleased to take me for. [*Curtsying.*] She that you addressed as the mild, modest, sentimental man of gravity, and the bold, forward, agreeable Rattle of the Ladies' Club: Ha, ha, ha!

MARLOW. Zounds, there's no bearing this; it's worse than death!

Ad Libbing

Ad lib is an abbreviation for the Latin *ad libitum* meaning "at liberty." On the stage it indicates that the actor is free to compose his own lines. When a number of characters are on stage it is often necessary to *ad lib* in order to make scenes seem natural. This is used either as background for the planned dialogue or to make the scene come alive, as when a number of characters speak at the same time in answer to another.

For example, a group of young people go to the home of one of the girls after a hike. The parents greet them as they enter. Those in the group respond with *ad lib* lines: "How nice to come into this cozy room." "Mrs. Norton, I haven't seen you for weeks." "Good evening Mrs. Norton, Mr. Norton." "Oh, what a lovely open fire." "Whee! this is great after those zephyrs." "Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. Norton." Lines given together thus will not all be distinguishable because they must be spoken almost simultaneously; nevertheless they are needed.

Use a natural tone of voice—neither a whisper nor low quiet speech; just a normal tone. Speak up, but not so loud that the main speaker's words cannot top yours. Important dialogue must be understood above the prattle of the group.

Sometimes you will strive to create the effect of a murmur or of confusion of voices. When this is the purpose, those taking part must work for the effect of a jumble. However, this does not mean that you can jabber just anything. You will want to choose carefully a few words, phrases, or sentences with widely different

consonant sounds predominating. Some of the players, as we have said before, may repeat over and over the word *sassafras;* others may say *rhubarb,* and a third group, *kaleidoscope.* Or the words used may be *sunshine, Honolulu,* and *bombdivers.* Try to include many different consonants and vowels. Each player keeps repeating his assigned word, but as he does so he varies the inflection, emphasis, pauses, and emotional responses. The results can be surprisingly good.

Infinite care must be taken, first, to make the mumble merely a background for the dialogue; second, to stay in the mood of the scene; and third, to listen to the play in order to know when and how much to retard or build the confusion of voices.

Try the following exercises:

1. John and Mable are at the piano, one of them playing softly as they talk together about the week end that Mable has just spent on her uncle's farm. A number of others chatter gayly, making their conversation a background for the dialogue of the two.

2. Henry has just finished singing *On the Road to Mandalay* for the pleasure of his friends who are seated in the music room. When he finishes, they gather about him with words of praise and thanks.

3. The passengers of an excursion boat talk in groups. Helen and Julia stand apart trying to decide upon a way to make their fifty dollars cover all they must buy.

Drinking Tea

Drinking tea comfortably is an art. Along with teatime goes visiting time. One of the shortcomings of our generation is the lack of sociability with our neighbors. Although we are slaves to entertainment, few of us converse, visit, and become interested in others' interests. Since the good English custom of afternoon tea is often outlined as business in plays, the American player should practice until tea-drinking becomes easy for him. Lack of experience causes us to have difficulty in handling a cup of tea and a small cake. We feel awkward.

When a play contains a tea scene, those participating *must* ac-

tually *sip tea* and *eat* the cracker or cake. Nothing is harder to pantomime, effectively, than eating and drinking. What would you think of someone trying to pantomime smoking in a play? The player must eat the cakes and drink the tea, timing each bite so carefully that it in no way interferes with the scene's lines or business. Many rehearsals with full properties are essential for a successful tea-drinking scene.

In the exercise that follows, those in the party will *ad lib* appropriate lines during the dialogue.

EXERCISE 4

(FOUR MEN; THREE WOMEN.)

[WILLIE SMITH, *newly rich, entertains artistic guests in his palatial new home. Bent upon acquiring some of his wealth, they discuss their lofty visions while* MINNIE, WILLIE'S *hometown friend, stands by unnoticed.*[4]]

WILLIE [*as* SIMPSON AND REYNOLDS *appear*]. Here's the tea. Will you serve it, Mrs. Cadwalader, please? [*They forget* MINNIE *and turn their attention to the very magnificent tea.*]

DOLLY [*going to the tea table*]. I suppose you ask me because you think I'm older than Frances. I'm *not!* That's the worst of having a husband in evidence—a divorced woman seems so much younger.

FRANCES [*seating herself elaborately and then realizing that* MINNIE *is staring at her*]. What is it? Why do you look at me like that?

MINNIE. Because you are so beautiful.

DOLLY. How do you take your tea, dear?

FRANCES. Oh I don't know that I want anything so ordinary. I just want to sit and dream that I'm in Italy again.

DOLLY. Careful of your dreams, old dear. Here, give this to her. [*She fills a cup.*] How do you take your tea—Miss a—Minnie?

MINNIE. Oh, just—a—anyway—just anyway.

DOLLY [*trying not to laugh*]. I'm laughing at *you,* George. You look so funny to-day somehow.

GEORGE [*having given a cup to* FRANCES *and going back to the tea*

[4] Crothers, Rachel, *Expressing Willie.* New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1924. Reprinted by special permission of the publisher.

table]. Yes, I suppose I do—but control your mirth long enough to give her a lump of sugar.

DOLLY [*putting the sugar in the cup which is for* MINNIE]. And about four for you, I s'pose, Tollie? I wonder why men take so much sugar in their tea. Has anyone ever thought about it?

TALIAFERRO [*trying to be heard above the others as they all talk at once*]. Oh—yes. I have given it deep thought. But it's so profound a subject that I must deliberate further.

[GEORGE *strolls over to* MINNIE *with a cup of tea—munching a sandwich as he goes. He stands before her, about to give it to her, but becomes interested in what the others are saying and finally drinks the tea himself.* MINNIE *having reached for it timidly several times gives it up and she is forgotten as she sits watching wistfully.*]

FRANCES. How are you going to paint Mr. Smith, Tollie?

TALIAFERRO. I haven't decided yet.

FRANCES. I wish you didn't have to put him in ordinary clothes. I hope you'll bring out the romance of it all.

DOLLY. Oh—have you had a romance, Mr. Smith?

FRANCES. Don't be stupid, Dolly. I mean the romance of what he's done—of how he's created this great house and filled it with the feeling and tradition of the old world. It's so significant—such a symbol of his character! I seem to see you as a knight—riding with the spirit of *beauty* as your herald.

GEORGE [*chuckling and going for more tea*]. Put him on a horse, Tollie.

DOLLY. A *wingéd* horse.

SMITH. Don't kid me. I think Taliaferro will put me in a plain business suit as a plain, practical business man.

FRANCES. Horrors! *Never*. Tollie's too penetrating for that.

TALIAFERRO. It will be power, Smith—but not romantic.

DOLLY. You paint *souls*, don't you, Tollie darling?

FRANCES. Oh, I've just had the most inspiring experience of my whole life. You *must* go to this new man. He probed to the very depths of my being and *oh* the things we brought up out of my subconscious! I'm reborn. He's given me wings and flight. That's why this room affected me so—the space of it. I know what I've been reaching for all my life. Oh, what cowards we are not to tell the truth to ourselves! If we would only *use* our power, what Godlike creatures we could be!

Eating

The best method to use in acting an eating scene has never been agreed upon; but the one thing that is agreed upon is that acting in an eating scene is no fun. The actor cannot enjoy eating when hundreds of people are watching him take, chew, and swallow every bite. Nor can he relish what he eats when he has to time each movement and when he eats the same thing each night. However, it is the player's job to seem to be what he is not; to seem to enjoy what he does not; and to appear to wonder about what he really knows. He can, therefore, learn to *seem* to enjoy the food he detests.

In the first place, a person loses his appetite for the same food, served cold in the same way, and at the same time, day after day. In *The Family Upstairs,* spinach is a topic of conversation at the dinner table. Nothing else can be made to look enough like spinach to be substituted for it because the different members of the family dip the spinach from the vegetable bowl and the audience can see it.

However, other food can be on the plates when the scene opens. The actors can then take small bites of something more palatable than cold spinach. Raw apples can be cut into any shape and are not unpleasant to eat. A knife can be used to cut the small bites, if appropriate, and a fork can be used with apples. Bananas are also convenient since they are moist and can be easily chewed and swallowed.

Always take very small bites. Convention has decreed that we speak when our mouths are empty; it is well, therefore, to take bites that cannot interfere with the dialogue. Be careful, too, that you do not take a bite just before you are to speak. Time all eating very carefully with the dialogue in order to chew and swallow before your line.

Since your bites will be small, you must exaggerate the jaw movement, making it like one would use for a normal bite. The most important thing is to actually *take, chew,* and *swallow* the

food. Only a skilled actor can pantomime eating convincingly. Most people who pantomime eating make a dreadful botch of the acting.

Use nontransparent cups or glasses for drinks whenever possible. Water can be used for any drink if it cannot be seen. Coca cola, cold tea, coffee, grape juice, or chocolate milk may be used if the actor finds them more palatable than water. However, he must react to whatever he drinks in an appropriate manner. He may smack his lips, or screw up his face, or seem to be refreshed. The actor may sip tea, gulp cold water, or relish his coffee, as the play demands.

EXERCISE 5

(ONE MAN; THREE WOMEN; ONE CHILD.)

[*Having their dinner are* DWIGHT DEACON, *his wife* INA, *and their small daughter* MONONA. LULU BETT, INA DWIGHT'S *sister, is serving.*[5]]

DWIGHT. Where's your mother? Isn't she coming to supper?

INA. No. Tantrum.

DWIGHT. Oh ho, mama has a tantrum, eh? My dear Ina, your mother is getting old. She don't have as many clear-headed days as she did.

INA. Mama's mind is just as good as it ever was, sometimes.

DWIGHT. Hadn't I better call her up?

INA. You know how mama is.

[*Enter* LULU. *She takes flowerpot from table and throws it out the window. Exit* LULU.]

DWIGHT. I'd better see. [*Goes to door and opens it.*] MOTHER BETT! . . . Come and have some supper. . . . Looks to me Lulu's muffins go down pretty easy! Come on—I had something funny to tell you and Ina. . . . [*Returns*] No use. She's got a tall one on to-night, evidently. What's the matter with her?

INA. Well, I told Lulu to put the creamed salmon on the new blue platter, and mama thought I ought to use the old deep dish.

DWIGHT. You reminded her that you are mistress here in your own home. But gently, I hope?

[5] Gale, Zona, *Miss Lulu Bett,* in *Pulitzer Prize Plays,* New York, 1935. Reprinted by special permission of D. Appleton-Century Company, New York.

INA. Well—I reminded her. She said if I kept on using the best dishes I wouldn't have a cup left for my own wake.

DWIGHT. And my little puss insisted?

INA. Why of course. I wanted to have the table look nice for you, didn't I?

DWIGHT. My precious pussy.

INA. So then she walked off to her room. [MONONA *sings her terrible little* chant.] Quiet, pettie, quiet!

DWIGHT. Softly, softly, *softly,* SOFTLY! . . . Well, here we are, aren't we? I tell you people don't know what living is if they don't belong in a little family circle.

INA. That's what I always think.

DWIGHT. Just coming home here and sort of settling down—it's worth more than a tonic at a dollar the bottle. Look at this room. See this table. Could anything be pleasanter?

INA. Monona! Now, it's all over both ruffles. And mama does try so hard. . . .

DWIGHT. My dear. Can't you put your mind on the occasion?

INA. Well, but Monona *is* so messy.

DWIGHT. Women can*not* generalize. [*Clock strikes half hour.*] Curious how that clock loses. It must be fully quarter to. It is quarter to! I'm pretty good at guessing time.

INA. I've often noticed that.

DWIGHT. That clock is a terrible trial. Last night it was only twenty-three after when the half hour struck.

INA. Twenty-one, I thought.

DWIGHT. Twenty-three. My dear Ina, didn't I particularly notice? It was twenty-three.

MONONA. [*Like lightning.*] I want my milk toast, I want my milk toast, I want my milk toast.

INA. Do hurry, sister. She's going to get nervous.

[MONONA *chants her chant. Enter* LULU.]

LULU. I've got the toast here.

INA. Did you burn it?

LULU. Not black.

DWIGHT. There we are. Milk toast like a kuween. Where is our young lady daughter to-night?

INA. She's at Jenny Plows, at a teaparty.

DWIGHT. Oh ho, teaparty. Is it?

LULU. We told you that this noon.

DWIGHT [*frowning at* LULU]. How much is salmon the can now, Ina?

INA. How much is it, Lulu?

LULU. The large ones are forty, that used to be twenty-five. And the small ones that were ten, they're twenty-five. The butter's about all gone. Shall I wait for the butter woman or get some creamery?

DWIGHT. Not at meal time, if you please, Lulu. The conversation at my table must not deal with domestic matters.

LULU. I suppose salmon made me think of butter.

DWIGHT. There is not the remotest connection. Salmon comes from a river. Butter comes from a cow. A cow bears no relation to a river. A cow may drink from a river, she may do that, but I doubt if that was in your mind when you spoke—you're not that subtle.

LULU. No, that wasn't in my mind.

[*Enter* MOTHER BETT.]

DWIGHT. Well, Mama Bett, hungry now?

MRS. BETT. No, I'm not hungry.

INA. We put a potato in the oven for you, Mama.

MRS. BETT. No, I thank you.

DWIGHT. And a muffin, Mama Bett.

MRS. BETT. No, I thank you.

LULU. Mama, can't I fix you some fresh tea?

MRS. BETT. That's right, Lulie. You're a good girl. And see that you put in enough tea so as a body can taste tea part of the way down.

INA. Sit here with us, Mama.

MRS. BETT. No, I thank you. I'll stand and keep my figger.

DWIGHT. You know you look like a queen when you stand up, straight back, high head, a regular wonder for your years, you are.

MRS. BETT. Sometimes I think you try to flatter me.

[*Sits.*]

[*Doorbell.*]

✣ *Smoking* ✣

Another piece of business that must be timed with speeches is smoking. Whether the character is smoking a cigarette, a pipe, or a cigar, it is usually, although not always, removed while speaking. Men of less cultured classes are often heard talking while holding a pipe between their teeth. Rough, brusque men

may even chew their cigars as they speak. A sloth may let a cigarette hang from his lip during his dialogue. However, these tricks are dangerous for the actor. Since his lines are of greatest importance and must be understood, his speech dare not be impeded by a pipe, cigar, or cigarette. If the characterization demands that the pipe or cigar be held in the mouth while speaking, the player should rehearse it a sufficient number of times so that the speech will not be indistinct.

You must be careful to keep your pipe or cigar lighted. In order to do so it is necessary to draw frequently. This you can do between speeches or, in a slow, thoughtful scene, between thoughts within a speech.

A player who does not smoke off stage should not attempt it on stage. His acting would probably appear faulty to the audience. Seldom is it really necessary for a character to smoke. Some other piece of business may be substituted very satisfactorily.

EXERCISE 6

(TWO MEN.)

[*The scene is laid in the untidy and recently adapted office of two would-be producers,* JOE LEHMAN *and* JACK MCCLURE. *The two are not feeling enthusiastic over the fact that they have a play to produce without the necessary financial backing.*[6]]

[MAC *discovered in chair right of desk, lighting cigarette, straw hat on back of head.* LEHMAN *discovered sitting left of desk, feet up, cigar in mouth, derby over eyes.*]

LEHMAN [*pauses, rises, crosses up left; gets idea, snaps fingers, crosses to phone on upper end of desk, takes off receiver and jiggles receiver piece*]. Get me Sol David. [*Hangs up.*] He come through for that Jenny show last year.

MAC. Never got a nickel back. [*Tosses burnt match to ashtray on desk.*] I saw the statements.

[6] Kaufman, George S., *The Butter-and-Egg Man,* in Leverton, G. H. (editor), *Plays for the College Theatre.* New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1932. Reprinted by special permission of Liveright Publishing Corporation.

LEHMAN [*crosses down left*]. Anybody comes in on this trick'll clean up. I can do it for fifteen thousand. I'd take twelve.

MAC. You'd take one.

LEHMAN [*crosses to left of desk*]. You don't say? Let me tell you this, Sweetheart—there ain't going to be no bargains, not if I have to throw—[*Phone rings.*]—it in the ashcan. [*Picks up phone, takes off receiver, and holds mouthpiece against chest as he still talks to* MAC.] This show's a pipe, and any bird that comes in is going to make plenty. [*Speaks in phone.*] Hello! Right! Is Sol David there? —This is Joe Lehman talking. Oh—no. [*Hangs up.*] Bermuda. Beats hell how far away they can get when you're trying to raise coin. [*Crosses down left.*]

MAC. Here's a slant! Remember them income lists the papers published—taxes?

LEHMAN. We ain't got time to—[*Crosses up around desk to center.*] follow them up. I got to get a bankroll before morning or I can't rehearse no longer. [*Turns to* MAC *as he reaches center.*] Huh! That's Equity for you!

MAC. Tough luck they had to grab Ackerman just when they did.

LEHMAN. I woulda had his check this morning. [*Starts up around desk again to left.*] Then he has to go and get pinched with them four cases in the car—I don't link up with no more bootleggers. [*Crosses down left and hold.*]

MAC [*thoughtfully*]. There's a fellow makes lithographs. He sunk some coin in a two-for-one last year—Everson.

LEHMAN. A bowl of cherries. When you going to meet this other bird?

MAC. Lots of time—it's right downstairs. Anyway, he wants a musical—you know—girl stuff.

LEHMAN. Ten thousand, I could do this trick of mine for. [*Looking front.*]

MAC. Say—there was two fellows named Levi, in ladies' shirtwaists—

LEHMAN. They got bit. [*Crosses up left to end of desk.*] When I think the way—[*Leans over upper end of desk.*] them ham managers can go out and get bank accounts for bum shows—and here I got the best proposition in twenty years.

MAC [*still seated*]. You know what that downtown bunch got set back for half of Sid Ehrman's show? I got the inside on it—ninety grand.

✣ *Embracing* ✣

Love scenes and "clinches" are troublesome. The difficulty is often due to embarrassment caused by rehearsal before friends. Sometimes those most highly accomplished in the art in real life are least skilled on the stage. Players should rehearse love scenes in a businesslike way, as they do other scenes, trying different positions until the best results are obtained. Love scenes, the hardest parts in a play, are often rehearsed the least. To make them seem natural requires a double amount of attention.

Since love scenes, then, are difficult, they may be more successfully practiced if they are rehearsed when only the two participants and the director are present. The director will help the two to heighten effectiveness by working for romantic picturization. He, of course, will respect the sensitiveness of his players and will try to help them work for convincingness as well as pictorial beauty.

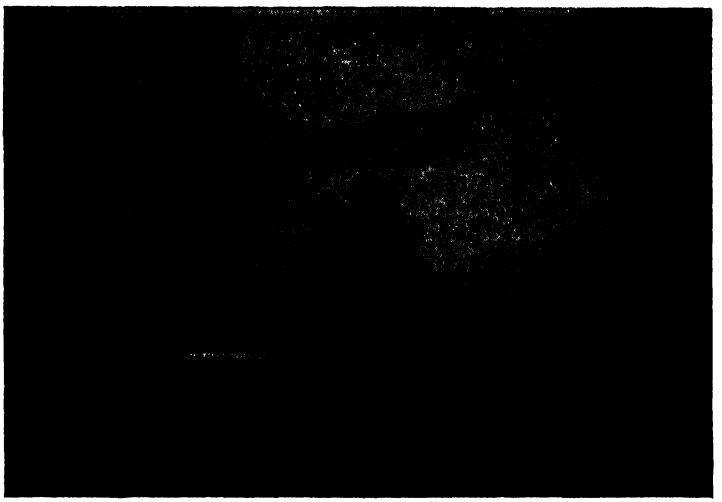
Play love scenes upstage, away from the audience. If the two are standing in the first part of the scene, they should be far enough apart to be able to come closer together as the scene progresses. Only at the end of it should they be close together. The embrace is usually the climax and should come only at the end of the scene.

In the early rehearsals, the "clinch" is not practiced. Players may merely hold their positions and announce "kiss over" then continue the rehearsal. When, however, the play is being whipped into shape, the couple may arrange a time with the director when the three can work the scene together, or they may work into it at regular rehearsals. The scene, however must be thoroughly practiced.

A covered kiss can be used in many plays. In it the man, who stands profile, holds the downstage position and the girl places her head on his upstage shoulder. He turns the girl's face away from the audience, masking the supposed kiss. The back of his own head covers, as he leans to kiss her. If the two are seated,

the man, who sits downstage, can easily mask the kiss with his head and shoulders.

When the two are standing, it is necesssary to place the arms in correct positions. The girl should place her upstage arm high on the man's shoulder or upper arm. It may rest there or around the man's neck, if he is not too tall, thus causing her face to be



The Moon of the Caribbees, by Eugene O'Neill, as staged by the University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado. Note the position of the arms and heads.

turned toward the audience. He may draw her close with his upstage arm. His downstage hand may be held in any one of many different positions worked out by the director for pictorial effect and convincingness. The couple *must stand close together.* Their feet should be placed in a position similar to that used by a couple when dancing.

Players should learn to gaze into each other's eyes. This is difficult, but it adds greatly to the scene. Much can be done to make a love scene highly effective if players both in and out of the scene will center all thought and interest in building it, rather than making it a point for amusement and embarrassment.

The length of time a kiss should be held will depend upon the situation and the type of characters in the scene. A kiss had better be too short than too long. If it is held beyond time, some audiences may forget the play as a whole and center attention on the kiss itself.

Work for beauty in love scenes. Lines of the body should be as graceful and actions as gentle as those seen in a beautiful movie. People, by the million, flock to see a lovely romantic picture. Rehearse and time carefully all love scenes, to build for effectiveness.

EXERCISE 7

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[SHADOW, *who is in reality* DEATH, *is taking a day's leave-of-absence from his duties. He is visiting the earth as a mortal man, experiencing man's loves, sorrows, joys, and pleasures. He comes to* GRAZIA, *who has fallen in love with him. She has been alone in the great hall just beside the garden.*[7]]

SHADOW. Why are you not with the guests? [*In a limpid, happy tone.*]

GRAZIA. For the same reason that you're not, I think.

SHADOW. You say that so simply, as though you knew.

GRAZIA. I do know.

SHADOW. It's strange. . . . We hardly need to speak, do we?

GRAZIA. Thoughts are so much clearer than words.

SHADOW. Then perhaps you can tell me what I've been doing in the garden?

GRAZIA. I think I can . . . almost.

SHADOW. Tell me. I want to hear it from your lips. [GRAZIA *speaks slowly with a curious clarity and simplicity of voice.*]

GRAZIA. I think you have been holding life in your hands, as I do sometimes. . . . I think you have been a little afraid of its beauty.

SHADOW. [*Trembling.*] Ah, you do know! You wonderful, exquisite child! [*He kneels and takes her hand.* GRAZIA *seems hardly breathing as she looks up into his face.*] I have been walking in a

[7] Ferris, Walter, *Death Takes a Holiday.* New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1930. Reprinted by special permission of Eric S. Pinker and Adrienne Morrison, Inc., literary agents of the author; and Walter Ferris.

garden that was full of you, and under the sky that sang of you. . . . Your laughter was in the wind that went by and touched my hair. . . . I knelt by a yellow flower, and out of its heart came a sound that was your voice. . . . I put my ear to the ground, and heard your footsteps moving toward me, across the world. And the earth was trembling under your feet. . . . I stood looking at the sky, and the night was illumined by the knowledge of you. . . . And I was *shaken.*

GRAZIA [*as though from a distance*]. And ever since I saw you, I have been shaken. . . . Oh, what is this that has happened? Who . . . are you?

SHADOW [*trembling*]. Sirki. . . .

GRAZIA [*shaking her head*]. I don't mean that. . . . You seem to come from a distant place. . . .

SHADOW. I do come from far away . . . but. . . .

GRAZIA. When I'm with you I see depths in your eyes that are like the worlds I visit in sleep. . . . And beneath your words there is a sound that I've heard in dreams, and sometimes when there is a storm in the mountains. . . . And when you leave me the light goes from the sky. [*She gives a little shaken laugh.*] You seem like the mystery that is just beyond sight and sound . . . always just beyond my reach. . . . Something that draws . . . and frightens me.

[*The* SHADOW *puts his arms about her. His voice is shaken with emotion.*]

SHADOW. Oh Grazia . . . Grazia . . . don't be afraid of me! . . . I am Sirki who loves you! . . . More than any man could love you! I am Sirki, who needs your warmth and your beauty more than any man could need them. I say your name over and over, until its music runs through all my being. . . . Your hands are white jasmine flowers in the sun. [*He covers her hands with kisses.* GRAZIA *is near to fainting.*] Grazia . . . listen to me. I am a great power, and I am humble before you. . . . And tonight I must go back to my . . . distant kingdom.

GRAZIA [*far away*]. Will you take me?

[*The impact of her words is startling. He rises as though shocked beyond speech.*]

SHADOW. Take . . . you. . . .

GRAZIA. Yes. I should be so unhappy, alone.

SHADOW. Take . . . you. . . . [*With sudden intensity.*] No . . . no! Don't tempt me! [*He lifts her and takes her in his arms.*] But Grazia, give me one hour of you! Let me hold you once, and feel

your life! You are the meaning of beauty that I must know. Grazia, let me hold you, and feel that last ecstasy . . . and know that I have lived!

GRAZIA. Oh, my love, my love!

SHADOW. My little love! [*He kisses her, a long kiss. Then they go off slowly, his arms about her.*]

EXERCISE 8

(ONE MAN; TWO WOMEN.)

[HARTLEY *has been wounded in the war and sent home.* HELEN, *his wife, is hurriedly dressing when he arrives. The* MAID *answers the door, then hurries back to help* HELEN *look her best before he comes in.*[8]]

MAID. But I thought—but I thought—

HELEN [*hysterically*]. That I was going to wear the other one? How absurd! What on earth made you think that? [THE MAID *stares at her simply dumfounded.*] Never mind. I'm so excited that I don't quite know what I'm saying. You can wear the other dress, can't you?

MAID [*incredulously*]. The blue and white?

HELEN. Yes.

MAID. Yes'm. I can wear it.

HELEN. Then take it. It's yours.

MAID. Oh, thank you, ma'am.

HELEN. Now—I'm ready. Show him in. [*The* MAID *goes off with the dress. Immediately she is out of sight,* HELEN *rushes off through the left-hand door. There is a pause. Then* HARTLEY *enters softly.*]

HARTLEY. Helen! Helen dear! [*He advances into the room.*] Where are you? Where are you, dear? [HELEN *re-enters. She has finished removing every vestige of paint and powder from her face. She has suddenly become herself—a beautiful woman.*] Helen! [*They rush into an embrace. Presently.*] Isn't it wonderful to be home again?

HELEN. John!

HARTLEY. To walk the streets of my own town! To stand under the roof of my own house!

HELEN. Is that all, John?

HARTLEY [*shaking his head with a smile*]. No; that isn't all.

HELEN. Say it, John! Say it!

[8] Wilde, Percival, *His Return*, in *Eight Comedies for Little Theatres*, by the same author. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1922. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

HARTLEY. To feel your arms around my neck! To feel your lips pressing mine! [*He kisses her.*] Do you realize what I've been through for three years?

HELEN. We'll try to forget that.

HARTLEY. We'll try! [*He holds her off at arm's length.*] And now!

HELEN. Now!

HARTLEY. Let me look at you!

HELEN [*in a strained voice, after a little pause*]. Well?

HARTLEY [*surprised at her tone*]. What is it?

HELEN [*excitedly*]. Tell me what I know already! Let me say it for you! That I've grown old, old, old! [*He tries to interrupt. She continues without a break.*] You are not the only one who suffered these three years! I suffered! God knows how I suffered! For any reason—for no reason—when your letters didn't come—when the newspapers told of heavy fighting—when I stayed awake all night, worrying my soul out, I suffered, I suffered too!

HARTLEY. My dear!

HELEN. Let me finish! These wrinkles—do you see them? These lines—they were not here three years ago—do you know why I have them? They are for you, you, you! It's not the men alone who go through hell! It's the women they leave behind them!

HARTLEY [*taking her in his arms violently*]. My dear, dear girl! How I should love every wrinkle in your face—if there were any! Only there aren't!

HELEN. John!

HARTLEY. You old? That is what comes of looking too much in your mirror. A woman is only as old as she looks in the eyes of her lover!

HELEN [*almost gasping*]. And I?

HARTLEY. I have never seen you look so young, so beautiful, so altogether charming!

HELEN [*presently*]. John!

HARTLEY. Yes?

HELEN. Look what I've found!

HARTLEY. What?

HELEN [*with childish delight*]. A gray hair—in your moustache!

HARTLEY [*laughing*]. I've grown old, haven't I? [*As they separate an instant a surprised look comes into his eyes.*] Helen!

HELEN. What is it?

HARTLEY [*clapping his hands together*]. By jove! What a fool I was not to see it!

HELEN. See what?

HARTLEY. And after the maid warned me that you had a surprise in store for me!

HELEN [*utterly bewildered*]. What is it, John?

HARTLEY [*triumphantly*]. You're wearing the same dress you wore the day you saw me off at the station! [*She falls into his arms, laughing happily.*]

✣ *Struggling and Fighting* ✣

To act either a struggle or a fight requires careful acting and good pantomime. In olden days plays called for more fighting than do modern plays, and the struggles in them continued longer. This fact made it necessary for the actors to feign fatigue gradually as the struggle continued.

Double the fist tightly for a fist fight. Make the blow forceful until just the instant it reaches its destination, then check it very suddenly and hold the fist against the other person for an instant longer. To the audience, it will seem to have been a real blow. For an added effect, someone backstage may strike a boxing glove with a stick on the instant that the blow is made and held.

When hitting the other person you may strike between his body and arm on his upstage side. In this way the blow is covered. When a sword is used, it, too, may pass between the arm and body on the upside. A killing may be covered by placing the killer upstage of the one being killed.

Struggles themselves are feigned when the participants seem to struggle, tensing the muscles in both body and face, but not actually using strength against each other. All rehearsal should go through, step by step, in *exactly the same manner.* Only thus can a struggle be perfected. Those who are struggling must know what to expect of each other at every instant.

Stabbing can and should be masked so that it is in no way

unpleasant to watch. It can often be executed behind a piece of furniture. When blank cartridges are used, the person shooting should stand downstage of the one shot. In this position, the gun is pointed away from the audience. There must be sufficient distance between the two taking part because the face and clothing may easily be burned from the shot.

Sometimes a slap on a character's face is called for. This can easily be faked. The person to be slapped simply claps his own hands together at the same instant he seems to receive a slap from the other. The one will *seem* to slap, the other will *seem* to be slapped. The palm of the hand of the former will fly to within an eighth of an inch of his companions face. There it stops with a jerk—as though it had hit the face. The recipient's head will be thrown aside as he "receives" the blow. Since the audience will undoubtedly be watching the action of slapping the character's face, it will not see the clapping of hands together even though the action is in full sight. However, it is often better to simply accept the slap.

Oparre, in Maxwell Anderson's *The Wingless Victory,* gives a hearty slap to Nathaniel:

OPARRE. Cry out, I say! I want to hear you cry! Are you iron or tin or bronze—to stand and say I'm to go—and let it go!

NATHANIEL. It's no use.

OPARRE. Cry out!
If you're not wood I'll make you cry with my hands!
With my hands! Do you hear me!

[*She strikes him across the face.*]

NATHANIEL. This is not worthy of you.

EXERCISE 9

(ONE WOMAN; TWO MEN.)

[*It is night in a park. A plain-clothes man attempts to arrest a young woman because she is using the park for unscrupulous purposes.* MATT DENANT *attempts to protect her.*[9]]

[9] Galsworthy, John, *Escape.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936. Reprinted by special permission of the publishers.

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. Now look here, I'm being very patient. But if you don't stop hindering me in the execution of my duty, I'll summon assistance and you'll *both* go to the station.

MATT. Don't lose your hair—I tell you, on my honour, this lady did not annoy me in the least. On the contrary—

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. She was carrying on her profession here, as she's done before; my orders are to prevent that, and she's going to be charged. This is the third night I've watched her.

GIRL. I've never seen your face before.

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. No, but I've seen yours—I've given you plenty of rope. That's enough, now— [*He puts his whistle in his mouth.*]

MATT. It's a rotten shame! Drop that girl's arm! [*He lays his hand on the* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN'S *arm. The* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN *blows his whistle, drops the* GIRL'S *arm and seizes* MATT.]

MATT. [*Breaking from him; to the* GIRL.] Run for it!

GIRL. Oh! no—don't fight! The police have got it on you all the time. I'll go with him.

MATT. [*With fists up, keeping the* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN *at arm's length.*] Run, I tell you. He'll have his work cut out with me.

[*But the* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN *is spryer than he thinks, runs in and catches him round the body.*]

GIRL. Oh! Oh!

MATT. No, you don't!

[*In the violent struggle the* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN'S *bowler hat falls off.* MATT *emerges at arm's length again, squaring up.*]

MATT. Come on, then, if you will have it!

[*The* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN *rushes in. He gets* MATT'S *right straight from the shoulder on the point of the jaw, topples back, and goes down like a log.*]

GIRL. Oh! Oh!

MATT. Run, you little idiot; run!

GIRL. [*Aghast.*] Oh! He hit his head—on the rail! I heard the crack. See, he don't move!

MATT. Well, of course. I knocked him out. [*He goes a step nearer, looking down.*] The rail—did he—?

GIRL. [*Kneeling and feeling the* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN'S *head.*] Feel!

MATT. My God! That was a wump. I say!

GIRL. I told you not to fight. What did you fight for?

MATT. [*Pulling open the* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN'S *coat, and diving*

for his heart.] I can't feel it. Curse! Now we can't leave him. [*Feeling for the heart.*] Good God!

GIRL. [*Bending and snatching at his arm.*] Quick! Before anybody comes. Across the grass back there. Who'd know?

MATT. [*Listening.*] I can't leave the poor devil like this. [*Looking round.*] Take his hat; go and get some water in it from the Serpentine.

[*The* GIRL *picks up the hat and stands undecided.*]

GIRL. [*Agonised.*] No, no! Come away! It's awful, this! Suppose—suppose he's dead! [*She pulls at him.*]

MATT. [*Shaking her off.*] Don't be a little fool! Go and get some water. Go on!

✣ *Sleepiness* ✣

Why should anyone have trouble in acting sleepy in plays? Certainly all of us experience the feeling out of plays often enough. The individual assigned to act the part of a tired or sleepy person often creates the impression that he is constantly *trying* to look sleepy rather than actually *looking* sleepy. When a person gets the habit of accurate observation, such simple actions will become easy.

In the following scene from Shaw's *Arms and the Man,* the Man is sleepy. All bodily parts must be relaxed; the shoulders, arms, hands, eyelids will fall of their own weight as he drops into a doze. When he is wakened or forces himself to rouse, the muscles will unwillingly become more tense. In a yawn, the muscles become suddenly very taut and then relax. The student will need to observe, carefully, just how people act when they are sleepy; then he must fit such actions into the character being portrayed.

EXERCISE 10

(ONE MAN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*A soldier has escaped the men who were hunting for him, by taking refuge in the room of* RAINA PETKOFF. *Although he is of the enemy, he has finally won* RAINA'S *sympathy, and she has promised*

him that because of the honor of her family, they will shelter him for the night and help him to escape in the morning.[10]]

MAN. Thanks, gracious young lady: I feel safe at last. And now would you mind breaking the news to your mother? I had better not stay here secretly longer than is necessary.

RAINA. If you will be so good as to keep perfectly still whilst I am away.

MAN. Certainly. [*He sits down on the ottoman.*]

[RAINA *goes to the bed and wraps herself in the fur cloak. His eyes close. She goes to the door, but on turning for a last look at him, sees that he is dropping off to sleep.*]

RAINA [*at the door*]. You are not going asleep, are you? [*He murmurs inarticulately: she runs to him and shakes him.*] Do you hear? Wake up: you are falling asleep.

MAN. Eh? Falling aslee—? Oh, no, not the least in the world; I was only thinking. It's all right: I'm wide awake.

RAINA. [*Severely.*] Will you please stand up while I am away. [*He rises reluctantly.*] All the time, mind.

MAN. [*Standing unsteadily.*] Certainly—certainly: you may depend on me. [RAINA *looks doubtfully at him. He smiles foolishly. She goes reluctantly, turning again at the door, and almost catching him in the act of yawning. She goes out.*]

MAN. [*Drowsily.*] Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, slee— [*The words trail off into a murmur. He wakes again with a shock on the point of falling.*] Where am I? That's what I want to know: where am I? Must keep awake. Nothing keeps me awake except danger—remember that— [*intently*] danger, danger, danger, dan— Where's danger? Must find it. [*He starts off vaguely around the room in search of it.*] What am I looking for? Sleep—danger—don't know. [*He stumbles against the bed.*] Ah, yes, now I know. All right now. I'm to go to bed, but not to sleep—be sure not to sleep—because of danger. Not to lie down, either, only sit down.

MAN. [*He sits on the bed. A blissful expression comes into his face.*] Ah! [*With a happy sigh he sinks back at full length; lifts his boots into the bed with a final effort; and falls fast asleep instantly.*]

[CATHERINE *comes in, followed by* RAINA.]

RAINA. [*Looking at the ottoman.*] He's gone! I left him here.

CATHERINE. Here! Then he must have climbed down from the—

[10] Shaw, George Bernard, *Arms and the Man*, in Shaw, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of the author.

RAINA. [*Seeing him.*] Oh! [*She points.*]

CATHERINE. [*Scandalized.*] Well! [*She strides to the left side of bed,* RAINA *following and standing opposite her on the right.*] He's fast asleep. The brute!

RAINA. [*Anxiously.*] Sh!

CATHERINE. [*Shaking him.*] Sir! [*Shaking him again, harder.*] Sir!! [*Vehemently. Shaking very hard.*] Sir!!!

RAINA. [*Catching her arm.*] Don't mamma: the poor dear is worn out. Let him sleep.

CATHERINE. [*Letting him go and turning amazed to* RAINA.] The poor dear! Raina!!! [*She looks sternly at her daughter. The man sleeps profoundly.*]

✣ *Drunkenness* ✣

When a player is to act the part of a drunken person, he will need to work to obtain the appearance of relaxed muscles and slow unsteady movements. Alcohol paralyzes brain cells temporarily so that one does not have the ability to control his movements. His body will be unwieldy and ponderous, his steps unsteady, his speech muffled and indistinct. Action must be slow. Some players make the error of using quick movements and a great deal of action. A drunken scene can be easily overacted with too much and too rapid movement, and the illusion is destroyed.

There are different stages of drunkenness. In the beginning there may be just a touch of exaggeration in the speech and actions. In the next stage the individual may become loud-mouthed, boastful, and quarrelsome. Next, he becomes unsteady in his movements, and later he is wabbly. His actions are blurred; his speech, however, must be clear enough to be understood.

EXERCISE 11

(TWO MEN.)

[STANHOPE *is a young British captain in command at the front. His reputation for bravery has been based upon the courage of alcohol; and he now fears that this will be made known at home by the*

younger brother of his fiancée, RALEIGH, *who has just come out. In a desperate fit of drunkenness, he confides his fears to* OSBORNE, *an older man and subordinate officer.*[11]]

STANHOPE. It's no good, Uncle. Didn't you see him sitting there at supper?—staring at me?—and wondering? He's up in those trenches now—still wondering—and beginning to understand. All these months he's wanted to be with me out here. Poor little devil!

OSBORNE. I believe Raleigh'll go on liking you—and looking up to you—through everything. There's something very deep and rather fine about hero-worship.

STANHOPE. Hero-worship be damned. [*He pauses, then goes on in a strange, high-pitched voice.*] You know, Uncle, I'm an awful fool. I'm captain of this company. What's that bloody little prig of a boy matter? D'you see? He's a little prig. Wants to write home and tell Madge all about me. Well, he won't; d'you see, Uncle? He won't write. Censorship! I censor his letters—cross out all he says about me.

OSBORNE. You can't read his letters!

STANHOPE [*dreamily*]. Cross out all he says about me. Then we all go west in the big attack—and she goes on thinking I'm a fine fellow forever—and ever—and ever. [*He pours out a drink, murmuring "Ever—and ever—and ever."*]

OSBORNE [*rising from his bed*]. It's not as bad as all that. Turn in and have a sleep.

STANHOPE. Sleep! Catch me wasting my time with sleep.

OSBORNE. [*Picking up* STANHOPE'S *pack and pulling out the blanket.*] Come along, old chap. You come and lie down here. [*He puts the pack as a pillow on* STANHOPE'S *bed, and spreads out the blanket.*]

STANHOPE [*with his chin in his hands*]. Little prig—that's what he is. Did I ask him to force his way into my company? No! I didn't. Very well, he'll pay for his damn cheek. [OSBORNE *lays his hand gently on* STANHOPE'S *shoulder to persuade him to lie down.*] Go away! [*He shakes* OSBORNE'S *hand off.*] What the hell are you trying to do?

OSBORNE. Come and lie down and go to sleep.

STANHOPE. Go sleep y'self. I censor his letters, d'you see, Uncle? You watch and see he doesn't smuggle any letters away.

[11] Sherriff, R. C., *Journey's End.* New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1929. Reprinted by special permission of the publishers. Permission for amateur performance of any kind must be obtained in writing from Samuel French, Inc.

OSBORNE. Righto. Now come and lie down. You've had a hard day of it.

STANHOPE. [*Looking up suddenly.*] Where's Hardy? D'you say he's gone?

OSBORNE. Yes. He's gone.

STANHOPE. Gone, has he? Y'know, I had a word to say to Master Hardy. He would go, the swine! Dirty trenches—everything dirty—I wanner tell him to keep his trenches clean.

OSBORNE [*standing beside* STANHOPE *and putting his hand gently on his shoulder again*]. We'll clean them up tomorrow.

[STANHOPE *looks up at* OSBORNE *and laughs gaily.*]

STANHOPE. Dear old Uncle! Clean trenches up—with little dust pan and brush. [*He laughs.*] Make you a little apron with lace on it.

OSBORNE. That'll be fine. Now then, come along, old chap. I'll see you get called at two o'clock. [*He firmly takes* STANHOPE *by the arm and draws him over to the bed.*] You must be tired.

STANHOPE [*in a dull voice*]. God, I'm bloody tired; ache—all over—feel sick— [OSBORNE *helps him on to the bed, takes the blanket and puts it over him*].

OSBORNE. You'll feel all right in a minute. How's that? Comfortable?

STANHOPE. Yes. Comfortable. [*He looks up into* OSBORNE'S *face and laughs again.*] Dear old Uncle. Tuck me up.

Dying

The illusion of dying may, of course, be attained in different ways. It should ordinarily be played slowly. The breath is short, the lines are broken; the voice becomes weaker and the body has no strength. All of this increases until the end. A dying person will sometimes put forth every effort to renew his strength and to talk; however, although his voice is weak, it must be carefully projected to reach over the house.

If death comes suddenly, there may be only a last struggle before the character assumes complete relaxation. A death can be made more effective by the atmosphere which the other characters on the stage create.

EXERCISE 12

(TWO MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[CYRANO, *who realizes that death is very near him, talks about leaving this life with* ROXANE, *whom he loves very dearly, and with* LE BRET. CYRANO'S *voice and body are very weak.*[12]]

CYRANO. Le Bret—I shall be up there presently
In the moon—without having to invent
Any flying-machines!
ROXANE. What are you saying? . . .
CYRANO. The moon—yes, that would be the place for me—
My kind of paradise! I shall find there
Those other souls who should be friends of mine—
Socrates—Galileo—
LE BRET. [*Revolting.*] No! No! No!
It is too idiotic—too unfair—
Such a friend—such a poet—such a man
To die so—to die so!—
CYRANO. [*Affectionately.*] There goes Le Bret,
Growling!
LE BRET. [*Breaks down.*] My friend!—
CYRANO. [*Half raises himself, his eye wanders.*]
The Cadets of Gascoyne,
The Defenders. . . . The elementary mass—
Ah—there's the point! Now, then . . .
LE BRET. Delirious!—
And all that learning—
CYRANO. On the other hand,
We have Copernicus—
ROXANE. Oh!
CYRANO [*more and more delirious*]. "Very well,
But what the devil was he doing there?—
What the devil was he doing there, up there?"—[*He declaims.*]
Philosopher and scientist,
Poet, musician, duellist—
He flew high, and fell back again!
A pretty wit—whose like we lack—

[12] Rostand, *op. cit.* Reprinted by permission of Brian Hooker, the translator.

A lover . . . not like other men . . .
Here lies Hercule-Savinien
De Cyrano de Bergerac—
Who was all things—and all in vain!
Well, I must go—pardon—I cannot stay!
My moonbeam comes to carry me away. . . . [*He falls back into the chair, half fainting. The sobbing of* ROXANE *recalls him to reality. Gradually his mind comes back to him. He looks at her, stroking the veil that hides her hair.*]
I would not have you mourn any the less
Than good, brave, noble Christian; but perhaps—
I ask you only this—when the great cold
Gathers around my bones, that you may give
A double meaning to your widow's weeds
And the tears you let fall for him may be
For a little—my tears. . . .
ROXANE. [*Sobbing.*] Oh, my love!
CYRANO. [*Suddenly shaken as with a fever fit, he raises himself erect and pushes her away.*] —Not here!—
Not lying down! . . . [*They spring forward to help him; he motions them back.*] Let no one help me—no one!—
Only the tree. . . . [*He sets his back against the trunk. Pause.*]
It is coming . . . I feel. . . .
Already shod with marble . . . gloved with lead . . . [*Joyously.*]
Let the old fellow come now! He shall find me
On my feet—sword in hand— [*Draws his sword.*]
LE BRET. Cyrano!—
ROXANE. [*Half fainting.*] Oh, Cyrano!
CYRANO. I can see him there—he grins—
He is looking at my nose—that skeleton
—What's that you say? Hopeless?—Why, very well!—
But a man does not fight merely to win!
No—no—better to know one fights in vain!
You there—Who are you? A hundred against one—
I know them now, my ancient enemies—
[*He lunges at the empty air.*]
Falsehood! . . . There! There! Prejudice—Compromise—
Cowardice— [*Thrusting.*] What's that? No! Surrender? No!
Never—never! . . . Ah, you too Vanity!

I knew you would overthrow me in the end—
No! I fight on! I fight on! I fight on!
[*He swings the blade in great circles, then pauses, gasping. When he speaks again, it is in another tone.*]
Yes, all my laurels you have given away
And all my roses; yet in spite of you,
There is one crown I bear away with me,
And to-night, when I enter before God,
My salute shall sweep all the stars away
From the blue threshold! One thing without stain,
Unspotted from the world, in spite of doom
Mine own!—[*He springs forward, his sword aloft.*]
And that is . . .
[*The sword escapes from his hand; he totters, and falls into the arms of* LE BRET and RAGUENEAU.]
ROXANE. [*Bends over him and kisses him on the forehead.*]
—That is . . .
CYRANO. [*Opens his eyes and smiles up at her.*]
My white plume. . . .

Book III

THE PLAYER TRAINS EMOTIONALLY

13

OUR EMOTIONS

ALTHOUGH THE patterns of art may vary, all art is subjected to principles of form. The syllables, words, and meter in Kipling's *If* take a form that differs from that of any other poem. The combination of musical notes, phrases, and rests in Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* differs from that of any other musical composition. Movement, line, and position in no two dances are alike. Every piece of art has a form and pattern peculiar to itself alone. All art, then, is subjected to principles of form; that is, it is controlled.

The art of the theater is all-inclusive. It incorporates all of the expressions of aesthetic beauty—line, color, music, movement, and grace—into a whole which is assimilated for the pleasure of the audience. In addition to these expressions, it also incorporates the most intangible of the arts—the art of expressing the human emotions.

Acting must have emotional expression—therein lies the very essence of it. When a play fails to arouse such emotions as joy, sadness, fear, love, embarrassment, anger, envy, affection, or happiness, it ceases to be a play. Emotional expression is the one chief requisite of drama, and it is the task of the players to bring it

out. The dramatist has written as much emotion as possible into the lines, into the characters themselves. With this, his share in the production ceases. For the heightening of these effects, responsibility rests upon the players.

To portray an emotion does not demand the actor's living it. The stage wants no man in the white heat of anger, no grief-stricken woman, no passionate murderer among its players. These emotions are *expressed for* the theater, but not *experienced for* it.

The player must, therefore, acquire a certain technique that will render the members of his audience subject to his desires. This technique will consist in the appropriate blending of the elements over which he has control and which will affect the senses of his audience. His voice, body, and face must work together harmoniously, mingling with the proper time element. Other factors over which he has no control will also affect his audience, such as the setting, costumes, lighting, mood of the play, co-operation of other actors, the reason for the presence of each individual in the audience, the season, and the weather. All that the player can hope to do, to arouse emotions in the audience, is to act his part for the best interests of the play as a whole.

In the theater, all players must, in several respects, be like children. Their language must be demonstrative, free, physical, and compelling. The theater has no place for the expressionless, stoic individual. Movement, by advancing and receding, builds constantly the pattern of the play Emotion involves muscular activity. Some of it is external and, therefore, visible; some is internal, hence, invisible. The actor will concern himself with the external. Throughout all acting the player will experience a normal amount of the outer physical activity, for only thus is the play expressed to the audience.

The audience, then, can be touched only by media of outer approach. Hearing and seeing are the only senses through which the spectator may receive the hope, love, joy, and surprise that players wish to send. It is not enough for the actor himself to feel a sense of the emotion; he must express it *physically*, and

externally, and *sufficiently.* All emotions have their appropriate outer signs of expression. Several different signs may be recognized as expressing fear, delight, or expectation. The actor must learn to choose the one most nearly fitting his needs.

Emotion will grow within you as you think it, and think it, and think it, and then as you exercise it. The ability to show an emotion outwardly dies if not used. Emotions must be exercised just as your muscles or mind must be exercised to be healthy. You may feel fear or sorrow, but unless you can express the feeling through voice, speech, looks, and action, you cannot impress those who come to see you act. You need to release and strengthen your emotional expressions through exercise, since the very soul of acting is the expression of emotions.

To express anger one will feel the clenched fist; tensed arm, leg, and neck muscles; set jaw; drawn muscles about the eye. As he acquires more skill, he will be able to express the emotion with more form and control, and with less physical experience of it. He should not, at any time, experience such inward physical changes as a rush of hot blood to the face and neck, increased rapidity in the heart-beat, and inactivity of the stomach in digestion—changes that are experienced in real anger.

At first, an actor may be exhausted after playing a scene of great anxiety or deep sorrow; but after it is well under his control, he will experience the true emotion less vividly and can take off and put on the semblance or mask of it at will, without undue physical strain.

You, as a beginner, should set about learning how you express your own emotions. You have probably never learned to notice when you are feeling them. What happens at a football game when the ball, by mere accident, slips into the possession of the beloved team and is carried down toward the goal line? Let each of you who reads this try to decide how your eyes felt, what happened to your jaw, how all your movements were taken, what muscles were tensed, and to what extent. In what position did you hold your knees, your feet, your arms? Just *how* did you

express that emotion of joyful excitement? Think, now, of a similar situation in which circumstances were reversed. The opponents got the ball that you thought was yours. How did you show the emotion of disappointment, of anxiety? How did your muscles feel? What did you do with your feet, head, neck, hands, jaw, and eyes this time? Try to recall an entirely different situation. All have, at some time, experienced great disappointment. What did you do with the different parts of your body when you felt this emotion? How did you feel? What movements did you make? How rapid were they, and so on?

The average beginning player has not learned to observe; therefore, it is a good idea for him to store away all observations that may be of help later on. For a further discussion of memory of emotions, the student may refer to Richard Boleslavski's *Acting*.[1]

Not only must the player know what he does when experiencing emotions, but he must also know what those whose temperaments differ from his own would do under similar circumstances. You as a player will need not only to observe but to learn to know many people, to visualize the world through their eyes, and to use imagination generously but carefully.

By such means you may come to know the emotion you wish to use in a play. However, you must spend tireless hours of practice on it before it is ready for display. You should work alone, in absolute solitude, practicing constantly. Perhaps the emotion does not fit the character; you must then practice and adjust it until it does fit. To some, this ability may come readily and easily; to others, it will not come until a great amount of time and effort is spent. Any artist must do, undo, and do again. Perfection is not reached by a simple, haphazard, hurried step. It is the result of tireless effort. The actor is no exception. After completing, step by step, the foregoing instructions, we will assume that you can satisfactorily portray a single, simple emotion. The

[1] Boleslavski, Richard, *Acting*. New York: Theatre Arts, Inc., 1933.

next step will be to consider some other features essential for artistic acting.

A character will often *change quickly from one emotion to another.* Above all, the change must be convincing and complete. A burglar at a safe may be filled with anxiety. A pistol pressed suddenly against his ribs will change his emotion to fear. In the pantomime, "Janice's Mother," in Chapter 6, when Janice realizes that her mother has died suddenly, her happiness disappears and sorrow fills her being. In many plays, sorrow may take the place of happiness, or anxiety may replace sorrow. You should be able to make this change in emotion quickly.

Another requisite of artistic acting is the ability to portray *different intensities* of emotion. In real life, emotions present themselves in varying degrees. The player must be able to gradate carefully in order to reproduce these degrees. The joy one experiences at receiving the weekly letter from home and the joy experienced when he suddenly realizes that a wandering brother has returned home, after years away, will vary widely in intensity and must be so expressed on the stage. The anger that is experienced when one discovers that his favorite book has been ruined by a careless borrower does not begin to equal the anger of an old man whose savings of a lifetime have been swindled from him through the sly workings of a dishonest associate. To get the varying degrees of emotions demands careful thought, study, and rehearsal.

A still more difficult task presents itself to the actor. It is not easy to shade the expressions of an emotion to the proper degree of intensity; but, to express *two widely different emotions simultaneously* is actually hard. Many occasions demand such acting, for love and anger, joy and sorrow, or fear and pleasure do sometimes come together. For example, think of a father angered by a son who refuses to co-operate with him to bring about a contemptible business deal. He may be angered at the son, but his love for the boy, because of his high standards, is increased.

A bride may be leaving her parents and her childhood sur-

roundings for a new home with her husband in far-off lands. She is torn between sorrow at leaving her family and joy in a life to be lived with her husband. She may shed tears, but she may smile through them.

A mother may experience fear for her son who starts away on an exploring expedition in the jungles. But, mingled with fear for him and sorrow at seeing him go is pride and joy that the honor has been bestowed upon him. The student who works for the portrayal of two emotions simultaneously will learn to blend the emotions. This practice will greatly enhance his ability to portray convincingly a single emotion consciously and exactly.

When the actor has developed his power to express feelings and emotions, his next task is to *dress* them properly for his particular play. An emotion inappropriately dressed is never used by an artist. By *dressing* is meant the fitting of an emotion or feeling to the play. Many considerations must come into this. First, the emotion must be dressed to fit the *age* of the character. Anxiety in a person at ten years, sixteen years, twenty-one years, thirty-five years, fifty years, seventy years, or ninety years would be expressed very differently. Be sure that each emotion carries with it conviction as to age.

The actor must also keep in mind the *type* of character when choosing appropriate clothes for his emotion. A dignified, poised, young girl will not express her delight at an invitation to the theater with her "secret passion" in the same way that a flighty young thing would. A genteel, reserved man will not show his disappointment in an election in the same manner as will a gruff, outspoken man. This is a matter of characterization, and the actor must at all times keep in character. He may not know how his character would react to the situation. It is his task to make this discovery before he can hope effectively to portray the emotion.

An emotion, then, must be dressed to fit the play. The expression of anger in a farce will differ greatly from that in a high tragedy. Think of a love scene in a farce and a love scene in a

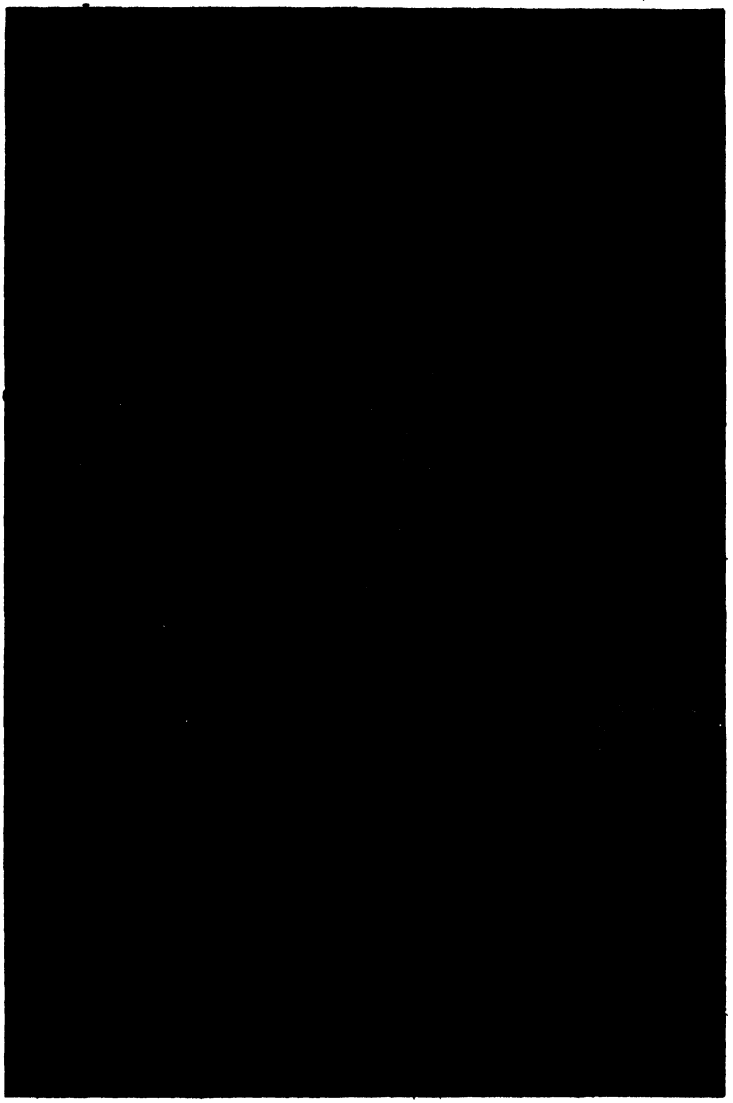
romantic comedy. The portrayal of love will vary considerably, depending on the moods of the different plays.

One may fear that an unending number of angles must be considered in the expressing of emotions. This is almost true. However, the actor has some things in his favor. He is aided in his stupendous task by broad living, deep thinking, wide reading, keen sensing, and vivid imagining. Conversations, books, newspapers, public addresses, all help him. Also of benefit to him are his pleasures in listening and losing himself in the mood of an opera, a concert, or a play. Let the actor then gain from all of his experiences a deepening of his sensibilities. When many and varied experiences become a part of the actor's working equipment, he can rely on them to aid him constantly in his task of acting.

In expressing an emotion you may find it helpful to estimate the degree by a suggestive number. Sobs, smiles, laughs, anger can all be played in relation to numbers. If, for example, the number *one* represents a very light sob, and *two, three,* and *four* represent heavier sobbing, then *seven* would signify a convulsive sob. Laughs can be gradated in the same manner. Directors often find such a method of suggestion helpful. The player himself can employ this method in working out the intensity of the emotion.

A very valuable aid in portraying one emotion is experience in having portrayed another. We are not able to experience or witness every emotion, but the planning, creating, and building of one aids in the imagining, planning, and creating of an entirely different one. The student, therefore, may take hope; the task is not insurmountable. Whatever part he is given to play, the true actor will do his best work every second. No matter how large the mob of which he is only a small part, no matter if he has but two minutes on stage, he will not slight his part because it is small. Stanislavski said, "There are no small parts, only small actors."

However. the aspirant must tuck some warnings carefully into



The Last Mile, by John Wexley. A scene from the production at the University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado. Emotion of an actor shows in every part of his body.

an available nook of his mind. He must bring them out often, exercise them, and keep them vitally alive.

First, *do not overact.* Use restraint in expressing emotions. Do not portray them as vividly as they are in real life. Leave something to the imagination of the audience. Use a generous supply of suggestion; it will be more effective. And again, exercise restraint, especially after you have worked at your emotional expression enough to have gained control. Most of you will need to put no reins on your acting of emotional scenes at first. Later, when you have your art under complete control, you may shade your interpretation, delicately using beautiful restraint in enacting feelings. A certain few of you will be inclined to overact. Those few must tone down. The player must not allow himself to overact even if some of those watching the play do say that "he was just wonderful."

Second, every player should *steel himself against praise.* As soon as a player begins to believe all the compliments he receives, his work begins to deteriorate. If he courteously responds with the expected thanks, but continues in his belief that his work can be improved if he keeps steadily at it, there is hope for him.

Third, you must begin the acting of your role in a way that will enable you to *build* as the play moves. The heightening should be gradual from scene to scene and from act to act, the strongest effects being reserved for later climaxes.

Again, the player should be reminded that the manifestation of the human emotions is a difficult task. The aspiring actor will set about the task of developing, painstakingly, the ability to express emotions, working, not toward mediocrity, but toward artistic rendition in expressing them. Unless he successfully portrays the manifestation of human emotions through the body, he cannot be a successful actor.

Before the curtain rises for any play, get into the *feel* of the opening scene. Swallow the mood whole; it will then begin to develop into emotions which will shine out through your face, fingers, and frame. Then, when the stage manager calls, "Places! Lights! Curtain!" you will have your emotions under control and will be ready to give your best to your role.

Topics and Exercises

14

ANGER

EXERCISE 1: from *An Ideal Husband* by Oscar Wilde

EXERCISE 2: from *Liliom* by Ferenc Molnar

EXERCISE 3: from *Beauty and the Jacobin* by Booth Tarkingtor

EXERCISE 4: from *He Who Gets Slapped* by Leonid Andreyev

EXERCISE 5: from *The Witching Hour* by Augustus Thomas

14

ANGER

ALTHOUGH everyone knows, through personal experience and through observation of others, something of the different emotions, nobody seems to be able adequately to describe feelings. Psychologists have told us something of the muscular and glandular activity that accompanies each emotion. They find, however, that a distinct line cannot be drawn between emotions. For example, nobody knows just where the line lies between love of a child and fear for it when in danger; between hope for a sunny wedding day and dread of a dreary one; between disgust at a drunken individual and hate of the evil of drink. For the very reason that emotions are so indescribable, many different emotions may be revealed in similar ways.

For the purpose of acting, however, it is not necessary to make an accurate classification of emotions. The art of acting adheres to principles, not rules. Because similar emotions are revealed in a wide variety of ways, and different emotions are revealed in similar ways, no patterns can be set forth to follow in expressing them. A simple expression may indicate varied feelings in different individuals. There is no one "right" movement nor any unique expression that must always accompany anger, or em-

barrassment, or admiration. Each of these may be shown in many ways. Yet, we all recognize a right expression for any of these when it is given.

In the field of acting, some emotions need more rehearsal than others. For such emotions, exercises for special practice will be given. The student will wish to learn the emotional language, which is a combination of expressive voice, gestures, and face. These must co-ordinate. They must work together when expressing for the same emotion.

In studying anger, varying degrees must be considered. Anger often moves from one step to another. Indignation may come first, then hurt pride, then resentment, and anger itself may increase from merely a warming up to a white heat.

Reaction will precede the words. It must be shown definitely through visible muscular reaction in face, body, and movement. For an actor to simply feel a sense of anger is not enough; he must show outer, muscular expression of it.

Breathing, an important element in revealing anger, may be shallow during a comparatively short period of concentrated attention; but as anger rises, sharp inhalation and forceful expiration is often present.

True anger is accompanied by certain glandular and internal muscular activity that will not be experienced by the actor in playing a part. In true anger, digestion ceases, perspiration breaks out, blood rushes to the face, and other uncontrollable activity takes place. The outward revelation of anger may or may not include dilated eyes and tensed muscles controlling the eyes, neck, torso, arms, legs, and other parts of the body. The tensed muscles in the jaw and throat affect the voice also.

The greater the intensity of the anger the more physical strain there will be in expressing it. Even if played with great restraint, the physical strain is intense and exhausting. As the intensity of anger changes to resentment, indignation, sullenness, rage, fury, disgust, loathing, or hate, the expressions will also change.

The player must keep many points already discussed con-

stantly in mind as he proceeds in the action of his part. First, keep the character true, fitting and dressing the emotion appropriately. Next, use suggestion liberally, thus leaving something to the imagination of the audience. Remember, always, the play as a whole. Build toward the climax, subduing when necessary, building when necessary, and working gradually toward the highest point of interest.

EXERCISE 1

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[LORD GORING *has been forced by* MRS. CHEVELEY *to make a promise much against his will. He devises a plan to trap her. He recognizes a brooch of hers as one which had been stolen from his cousin.*[1]]

MRS. CHEVELEY. Yes. I am so glad to get it back. It was . . . a present.

LORD GORING. Won't you wear it?

MRS. CHEVELEY. Certainly, if you pin it in. [LORD GORING *suddenly clasps it on her arm.*] Why do you put it on as a bracelet? I never knew it could be worn as a bracelet.

LORD GORING. Really?

MRS. CHEVELEY [*holding out her handsome arm*]. No; but it looks very well on me as a bracelet, doesn't it?

LORD GORING. Yes; much better than when I saw it last.

MRS. CHEVELEY. When did you see it last?

LORD GORING. Oh, ten years ago, on Lady Berkshire, from whom you stole it.

MRS. CHEVELEY [*starting*]. What do you mean?

LORD GORING. I mean that you stole that ornament from my cousin, Mary Berkshire, to whom I gave it when she was married. Suspicion fell on a wretched servant, who was sent away in disgrace. I recognized it last night. I determined to say nothing about it till I had found the thief. I have found the thief now, and I have heard her own confession.

MRS. CHEVELEY [*tossing her head*]. It is not true.

LORD GORING. You know it is true. Why, thief is written across your face at this moment.

[1] Wilde, Oscar, *An Ideal Husband,* in *The Best Known Works of Oscar Wilde,* Vol. IV. New York: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1927.

MRS. CHEVELEY. I will deny the whole affair from beginning to end. I will say that I have never seen this wretched thing, that it was never in my possession. [MRS. CHEVELEY *tries to get the bracelet off her arm, but fails.* LORD GORING *looks on amused. Her thin fingers tear at the jewel to no purpose. A curse breaks from her.*]

LORD GORING. The drawback of stealing a thing, Mrs. Cheveley, is that one never knows how wonderful the thing that one steals is. You can't get that bracelet off, unless you know where the spring is. It is rather difficult to find.

MRS. CHEVELEY. You brute! You coward! [*She tries again to unclasp the bracelet, but fails.*]

LORD GORING. Oh! don't use big words. They mean so little.

MRS. CHEVELEY [*again tears at the bracelet in a paroxysm of rage, with inarticulate sounds. Then stops, and looks at* LORD GORING]. What are you going to do?

LORD GORING. I am going to ring for my servant. He is an admirable servant. Always comes in the moment one rings for him. When he comes I will tell him to fetch the police.

MRS. CHEVELEY [*trembling*]. The police? What for?

LORD GORING. Tomorrow the Berkshires will prosecute you. That is what the police are for.

MRS. CHEVELEY [*is now in an agony of physical terror. Her face is distorted. Her mouth awry. A mask has fallen from her. She is, for the moment, dreadful to look at.*] Don't do that. I will do anything you want. Anything in the world you want.

LORD GORING. Give me Robert Chiltern's letter.

MRS. CHEVELEY. Stop! Stop! Let me have time to think.

LORD GORING. Give me Robert Chiltern's letter.

MRS. CHEVELEY. I have not got it with me. I will give it to you tomorrow.

LORD GORING You know you are lying. Give it to me at once. [MRS. CHEVELEY *pulls the letter out, and hands it to him. She is horribly pale.*] This is it?

MRS. CHEVELEY [*in a hoarse voice*]. Yes.

LORD GORING [*takes the letter, examines it, sighs, and burns it over the lamp*]. For so well-dressed a woman, Mrs. Cheveley, you have moments of admirable common sense. I congratulate you.

MRS. CHEVELEY [*catches sight of* LADY CHILTERN'S *letter, the cover of which is just showing from under the blotting-book*]. Please get me a glass of water.

LORD GORING. Certainly. [*Goes to the corner of the room and pours out a glass of water. While his back is turned* MRS. CHEVELEY *steals* LADY CHILTERN'S *letter. When* LORD GORING *returns with the glass she refuses it with a gesture.*]

MRS. CHEVELEY. Thank you. Will you help me on with my cloak?

LORD GORING. With pleasure. [*Puts her cloak on.*]

MRS. CHEVELEY. Thanks. I am never going to try to harm Robert Chiltern again.

LORD GORING. Fortunately you have not the chance, Mrs. Cheveley.

MRS. CHEVELEY. Well, if even I had the chance, I wouldn't. On the contrary, I am going to render him a great service.

LORD GORING. I am charmed to hear it. It is a reformation.

MRS. CHEVELEY. Yes. I can't bear so upright a gentleman, so honorable an English gentleman, being so shamefully deceived, and so—

LORD GORING. Well?

MRS. CHEVELEY. I find that somehow Getrude Chiltern's dying speech and confession has strayed into my pocket.

LORD GORING. What do you mean?

MRS. CHEVELEY [*with a bitter note of triumph in her voice*]. I mean that I am going to send Robert Chiltern the love letter his wife wrote to you tonight.

LORD GORING. Love letter?

MRS. CHEVELEY [*laughing*]. "I want you. I trust you. I am coming to you. Gertrude." [LORD GORING *rushes to the bureau and takes up the envelope, finds it empty, and turns around.*]

LORD GORING. You wretched woman, must you always be thieving? Give me back that letter. I'll take it from you by force. You shall not leave my room till I have got it. [*He rushes towards her, but* MRS. CHEVELEY *at once puts her hand on the electric bell that is on the table. The bell sounds with shrill reverberations, and* PHIPPS *enters.*]

MRS. CHEVELEY [*after a pause*]. Lord Goring merely rang that you should show me out. Goodnight, Lord Goring! [*Goes out, followed by* PHIPPS. *Her face is illumined with evil triumph. There is joy in her eyes. Youth seems to have come back to her. Her last glance is like a swift arrow.* LORD GORING *bites his lip, and lights a cigarette.*]

EXERCISE 2

(THREE WOMEN.)

[JULIE *and her friend* MARIE *have been enjoying the fun in the amusement park. The scene is laid in a quiet, pretty place in the*

park, not far from the merry-go-round. MARIE *enters quickly, pauses at center, and looks back.*[2]]

MARIE. Julie, Julie! [*There is no answer.*] Do you hear me, Julie? Let her be! Come on. Let her be. [*Starts to go back.* JULIE *enters, looks back angrily.*]

JULIE. Did you ever hear of such a thing? What's the matter with the woman anyway?

MARIE [*looking back again*]. Here she comes again.

JULIE. Let her come. I didn't do anything to her. All of a sudden she comes up to me and begins to raise a row.

MARIE. Here she is. Come on, let's run. [*Tries to urge her off.*]

JULIE. Run? I should say not. What would I want to run for? I'm not afraid of her.

MARIE. Oh, come on. She'll only start a fight.

JULIE. I'm going to stay right here. Let her *start* a fight.

MRS. MUSKAT [*entering*]. What do you want to run away for? [*To* JULIE.] Don't worry. I won't eat you. But there's one thing I want to tell you, my dear. Don't let me catch you in my carousel again. I stand for a whole lot, I have to in my business. It makes no difference to me whether my customers are ladies or the likes of you—as long as they pay their money. But when a girl misbehaves herself on my carousel—out she goes. Do you understand?

JULIE. Are you talking to me?

MRS. MUSKAT. Yes, you! You—chambermaid, you! In my carousel—

JULIE. Who did anything in your old carousel? I paid my fare and took my seat and never said a word, except to my friend here.

MARIE. No, she never opened her mouth. Liliom came over to her on his own accord.

MRS. MUSKAT. It's all the same. I'm not going to get in the trouble with the police, and lose my license on account of you—you shabby kitchen maid!

JULIE. Shabby yourself.

MRS. MUSKAT. You stay out of my carousel! Letting my barker fool with you! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

JULIE. What? What did you say?

MRS. MUSKAT. I suppose you think I have no eyes in my head. I see

[2] Molnar, Ferenc, *Liliom*, in Leverton, G. H. (editor), *Plays for the College Theatre*. New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1932. Reprinted by special permission of Liveright Publishing Corporation.

everything that goes on in my carousel. During the whole ride she let Liliom fool with her—the shameless hussy!

JULIE. He did not fool with me! I don't let any man fool with me!

MRS. MUSKAT. He leaned against you all through the ride!

JULIE. He leaned against the panther. He always leans against something, doesn't he? Everybody leans where he wants. I couldn't tell him not to lean, if he always leans, could I? But he didn't lay a hand on me.

MRS. MUSKAT. Oh, didn't he? And I suppose he didn't put his hand around your waist, either?

MARIE. And if he did? What of it?

MRS. MUSKAT. You hold your tongue! No one's asking you—just keep out of it.

JULIE. He put his arm around my waist—just the same as he does to all the girls. He always does that.

MRS. MUSKAT. I'll teach him not to do it any more, my dear. No carrying on in my carousel! If you are looking for that sort of thing, you'd better go to the circus! You'll find lots of soldiers there to carry on with!

JULIE. You keep your soldiers to yourself!

MRS. MUSKAT. Well, I only want to tell you this, my dear, so that we understand each other perfectly. If you ever stick your nose in my carousel again, you'll wish you hadn't! I'm not going to lose my license on account of the likes of you! People who don't know how to behave have got to stay out!

JULIE. You're wasting your breath. If I feel like riding on your carousel I'll pay my ten heller and I'll ride. I'd like to see anyone try to stop me!

MRS. MUSKAT. Just come and try it, my dear—just come and try it.

EXERCISE 3

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[VALSIN, *officer of the French Revolution, has been trailing a French noble, his sister, and his cousin, for some time. He has now forced his way into their hiding-place.*[3]]

ANNE. Old letters! [*She clutches at the papers in his grasp.*]

VALSIN [*easily fending her off*]. Doubtless! [*He shakes the "per-*

[3] Tarkington, Booth, *Beauty and the Jacobin*, in Cohen, Helen Louise (editor), *One-Act Plays*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1921. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

mit" open.] Oho! A permission to embark—and signed by three names of the highest celebrity. Alas, these unfortunate statesmen, Billaud Varennes, Carnot, and Robespierre! Each has lately suffered an injury to his right hand. What a misfortune for France! And what a coincidence! One has not heard the like since we closed the theatres.

ANNE [*furiously struggling to reach his hand*]. Give me my papers! Give me—

VALSIN [*holding them away from her*]. You see, these unlucky great men had their names signed for them by somebody else who must have been writing quite recently—less than half an hour ago, from the freshness of the ink—and in considerable haste; perhaps suffering considerable anguish of mind, Widow Balsage! [MADAME DE LASEYNE, *overwhelmed, sinks into a chair. He comes close to her, his manner changing startlingly.*]

VALSIN [*bending over with sudden menace, his voice loud and harsh*]. Widow Balsage, if you intend no journey, why have you this forged permission to embark on the *Jeune Pierrette?* Widow Balsage, *who* is the Citizen Balsage?

ANNE [*faintly*]. My brother.

VALSIN [*straightening up*]. Your first truth. [*Resuming his gaiety.*] Of course he is not in that room yonder with your niece.

ANNE [*brokenly*]. No, no, no; he is not! He is not here.

VALSIN [*commiseratingly*]. Poor woman! You have not even the pleasure to perceive how droll you are.

ANNE. I perceive that I am a fool! [*She dashes the tears from her eyes and springs to her feet.*] I also perceive that you have denounced us before the authorities here—

VALSIN. Pardon. In Boulogne it happens that I am the authority. I introduce myself for the third time: Valsin, Commissioner of the National Committee of Public Safety. Tallien was sent to Bordeaux; Collot to Lyons; I to Boulogne. Citizeness, were all of the august names on your permit genuine, you could no more leave this port without my counter-signature than you could take wing and fly over the Channel!

ANNE [*with a shrill laugh of triumph*]. You have over-reached yourself! You're an ordinary spy: you followed us from Paris—

VALSIN [*gaily*]. Oh, I intended you to notice that!

ANNE [*unheeding*]. You have claimed to be Commissioner of the highest power in France. We can prove that you are a common spy. You may go to the guillotine for that. Take care, Citizen! So! You

have denounced us; we denounce you. I'll have you arrested by your own soldiers. I'll call them— [*She makes a feint of running to the window. He watches her coolly, in silence; and she halts, chargrined.*]

VALSIN [*pleasantly*]. I was sure you would not force me to be premature. Remark it, Citizeness Laseyne: I am enjoying all this. I have waited a long time for it.

ANNE [*becoming hysterical*]. I am the Widow Balsage, I tell you! You do not know us—you followed us from Paris. [*Half sobbing.*] You're a spy—a hanger-on of the police. We will prove—

VALSIN. [*Stepping to the dismantled doorway.*] I left my assistant within hearing—a species of animal of mine. I may claim that he belongs to me. A worthy patriot, but skillful, who has had the honor of a slight acquaintance with you, I believe.

EXERCISE 4

(TWO MEN.)

[*A strange man joins a circus as a clown He is known to his associates only as* HE WHO GETS SLAPPED. *One day a former acquaintance learns of his whereabouts and comes to see* HE.[4]]

HE. You always keep within the limits of the law. You have been torturing yourself up to now because you are not married to my wife. A notary public is always present at your thefts. What is the use of this self-torture, my friend? Get married. I died. You are not satisfied with having taken only my wife? Let my glory remain in your possession. It is yours. Accept my ideas. Assume all the rights, my most lawful heir! I died! And when I was dying [*Making a stupidly pious face.*] I forgave thee! [*Bursts out laughing. The* GENTLEMAN *raises his head, and bending forward, looks straight into* HE's *eyes.*]

GENTLEMAN. And my pride?

HE. Have you any pride? [*The* GENTLEMAN *straightens up, and nods his head silently.*] Yes! But please stand off a little. I don't like to look at you. Think of it. There was a time when I loved you a little, even thought you a little gifted! You—my empty shadow.

GENTLEMAN. [*Nodding his head.*] I am your shadow. [HE *keeps*

[4] Andreyev, Leonid, *He Who Gets Slapped,* in *Theatre Guild Anthology, op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of The Theatre Guild, Inc.

on walking, and looks over his shoulder at the GENTLEMAN, *with a smile.*]

HE. Oh, you are marvellous! What a comedy! What a touching comedy! Listen. Tell me frankly if you can; do you hate me very much?

GENTLEMAN. Yes! With all the hate there is in the world! Sit down here.

HE. You order me?

GENTLEMAN. Sit down here. Thank you. [*Bows.*] I am respected and I am famous, yes? I have a wife and a son, yes. [*Laughs slowly.*] My wife still loves you: our favorite discussion is about your genius. She supposes you are a genius. We, I and she, love you even when we are in bed. Tss! It is I who must make faces. My son—yes he'll resemble you. And when, in order to have a little rest, I go to my desk, to my ink-pot, my books—there, too, I find you. Always you! Everywhere you! And I am never alone—never myself and alone. And when at night—you, sir, should understand this—when at night I go to my lonely thoughts, to my sleepless contemplations, even then I find your image in my head, in my unfortunate brain, your damned and hateful image! [*Silence. The* GENTLEMAN'S *eyes twitch.*]

HE. [*Speaking slowly.*] What a comedy! How marvellously everything is turned about in this world: the robbed proves to be a robber, and the robber is complaining of theft, and cursing! [*Laughs.*] Listen, I was mistaken. You are not my shadow. You are the crowd. If you live by my creations, you hate me; if you breathe my breath, you are choking with anger. And choking with anger, hating me, you still walk slowly on the trail of my ideas. But you are advancing backward, advancing backward, comrade! Oh, what a marvellous comedy! [*Walking and smiling.*] Tell me, would you be relieved if I really had died?

GENTLEMAN. Yes! I think so. Death augments distance and dulls the memory. Death reconciles. But you do not look like a man who—

HE. Yes, yes! Death, certainly!

GENTLEMAN. Sit down here.

HE. Your obedient servant. Yes?

GENTLEMEN. Certainly, I do not dare to ask you— [*makes a grimace*] to ask you to die, but tell me: you'll never come back there? No, don't laugh. If you want me to, I'll kiss your hand. Don't grimace! I would have done so if you had died.

HE. Get out, vermin! [*Slowly.*]

EXERCISE 5

(FIVE MEN.)

[*A number of acquaintances are gathered at* JACK BROOKFIELD'S. TOM DENNING, *who has been drinking too much, is annoying* CLAY *with a cat's-eye scarfpin.* CLAY *has a peculiar aversion to a cat's-eye.*[5]]

HARDMUTH. What was that?

TOM. My scarf-pin!

HARDMUTH. Scarf-pin?

TOM. Yes—he pushed me away from him and I said what's matter. He said I don't like your scarf-pin—ha, ha—I said don't? I don't like your face.

LEW. Very impolite with the ladies there.

HARDMUTH. Why should he criticize Tom's scarf-pin?

TOM. 'Zactly. I said I can change my scarf-pin—but I don't like your face.

[*Enter* CLAY *from dining-room, excitedly.*]

CLAY. Where's Jack?

LEW. Saying good-night to some old gentleman below.

TOM. [*Interposing as* CLAY *starts up left center.*] And I don't like your face.

CLAY. That's all right, Mr. Denning. [*Tries to pass.*] Excuse me.

TOM. [*With scarf-pin in hand.*] Excuse *me*. What's the matter with that scarf-pin?

CLAY. It's a cat's-eye and I don't like them, that's all—I don't like to look at them.

LEW. Let him alone, Tom.

TOM. Damn 'f 'ee ain't scared of it, ha, ha!

[*Pushing pin in front of* CLAY's *face.*]

CLAY. [*Greatly excited.*] Don't do that.

HARDMUTH. [*Sneering.*] 'T won't bite you, will it?

CLAY. [*Averts his face.*] Go away, I tell you.

TOM. [*Holds* CLAY *with left hand. Has pin in right.*] 'T will bite him—bow—wow—wow—

CLAY. Don't, I tell you—don't.

TOM. [*Still holding him.*] Bow—wow—wow—

LEW. Tom!

HARDMUTH. [*Laughing.*] Let them alone.

[5] Thomas, Augustus, *The Witching Hour*, in Dickinson, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Mrs. Augustus Thomas.

CLAY. Go away.

TOM. Bow—wow—

[*Enter* JACK.]

JACK. What's the matter here?

TOM. [*Pursuing* CLAY.] *Wow*— [CLAY *in frenzy swings the large ivory paper-knife from table, blindly strikes* TOM, *who falls.*]

JACK. Clay!

CLAY. [*Horrified.*] He pushed that horrible cat's-eye right against my face.

JACK. What cat's-eye?

HARDMUTH. [*Picks up the pin which* DENNING *has dropped.*] Only playing with him—a scarf-pin.

LEW. [*Kneeling by* DENNING.] He's out, Jack.

[*Enter* JO.]

CLAY. I didn't mean to hurt him; really I didn't mean that.

HARDMUTH. [*Taking the paper-cutter from* CLAY.] The hell you didn't. You could kill a bull with that ivory tusk.

JACK. Put him on the window seat—give him some air.

Topics and Exercises

15

LOVE

EXERCISE 1: from *Madame Butterfly* by David Belasco and John Luther Long

EXERCISE 2: from *Winterset* by Maxwell Anderson

EXERCISE 3: from *Men in White* by Sidney Kingsley

EXERCISE 4: from *An Ideal Husband* by Oscar Wilde

EXERCISE 5: from *Hazel Kirke* by Steele MacKaye

15

LOVE

To show love the actor uses a different technique than he uses when showing anger. In showing love, his muscles are relaxed, his movements are gentle, and his voice is soft.

There are, of course, just as in anger, different degrees and different kinds of the emotion. Love of a brother or sister is not like love of a sweetheart, and parental affection differs from both.

Love will be expressed by different individuals according to age, sex, disposition, environment, mood, and so on. However, certain underlying tendencies carry over in spite of other differences. When the young man in the case has met with opposition and found the path thorny, he breaks into love lyrics and speeches of praise.

Parental and family devotion require different expression. Mother love shows itself as strongest all the way through the animal kingdom; it is eager and positive in nature. Love will often call into play the expression of altogether foreign emotions. A mother protecting her child may express anger as well as fear for its welfare. Her body will express these dissimilar emotions with rapid movements and rigid muscles. Or she may combine pride and love in showing off her "young hopeful"

before friends. When showing these combined emotions, she may be excited or she may be calm. Love, however, taken alone, will be expressed by gentle movements.

The voice will register love more than do other parts of the body. The tones should be soft, sliding, blended. Let the words flow smoothly and evenly. Inflection will not be wide, neither will it be monotonous; rather, the voice will employ much rise and fall as it glides over the words.

The eye is also very expressive of love. It will reveal a gentle, happy feeling. Keeping the character clearly in mind, strive to express love in the following exercises.

EXERCISE 1

(TWO MEN; TWO WOMEN; A CHILD.)

[*The scene is located in Japan in* MADAME BUTTERFLY'S *little house. It is spring and the first robin has just been seen.* MADAME BUTTERFLY *is anxiously awaiting the return of the American seaman whom she married, and who promised he would return to her when the robins nest again.* SHARPLESS, *the American Consul, is urging her to marry another.*[1]]

SHARPLESS. [*Folding the letter.*] No use—you can't understand. Madame Butterfly, suppose this waiting should never end; what would become of you?

MADAME BUTTERFLY. Me? I could dance, mebby, or—die?

SHARPLESS. Don't be foolish. I advise you to consider the rich Yamadori's offer.

MADAME BUTTERFLY. [*Astonished.*] *You* say those? You, 'Merican consul?—when you know that me, I am marry?

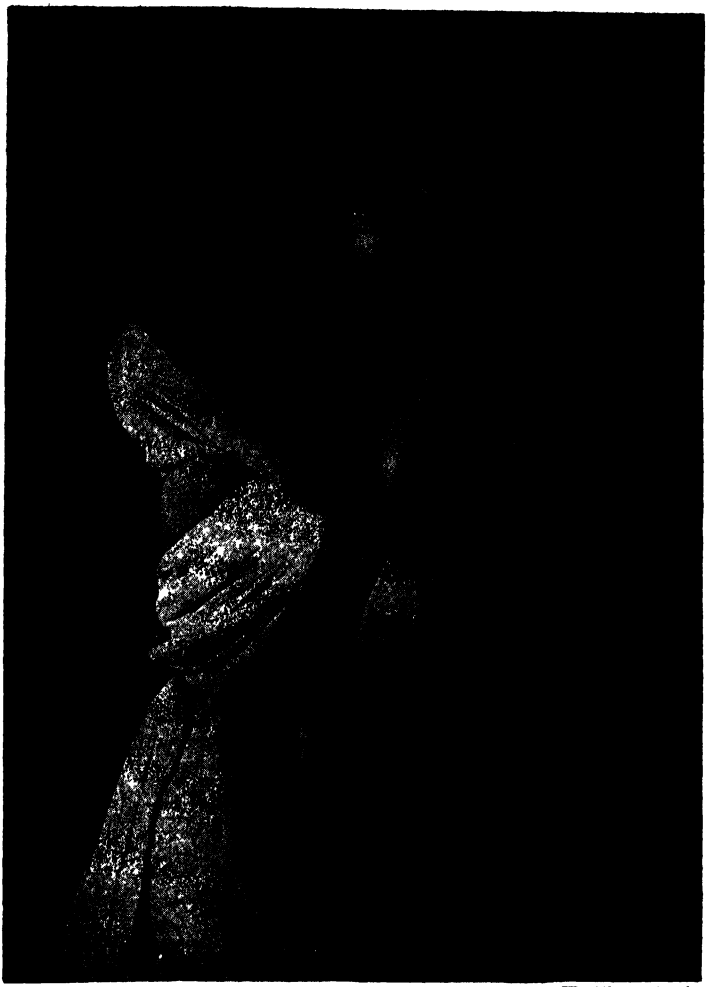
SHARPLESS. You heard Yamadori: It is not binding.

MADAME BUTTERFLY. Yamadori lies!

SHARPLESS. His offer is an unusual opportunity for a girl who—for any Japanese girl in your circumstances.

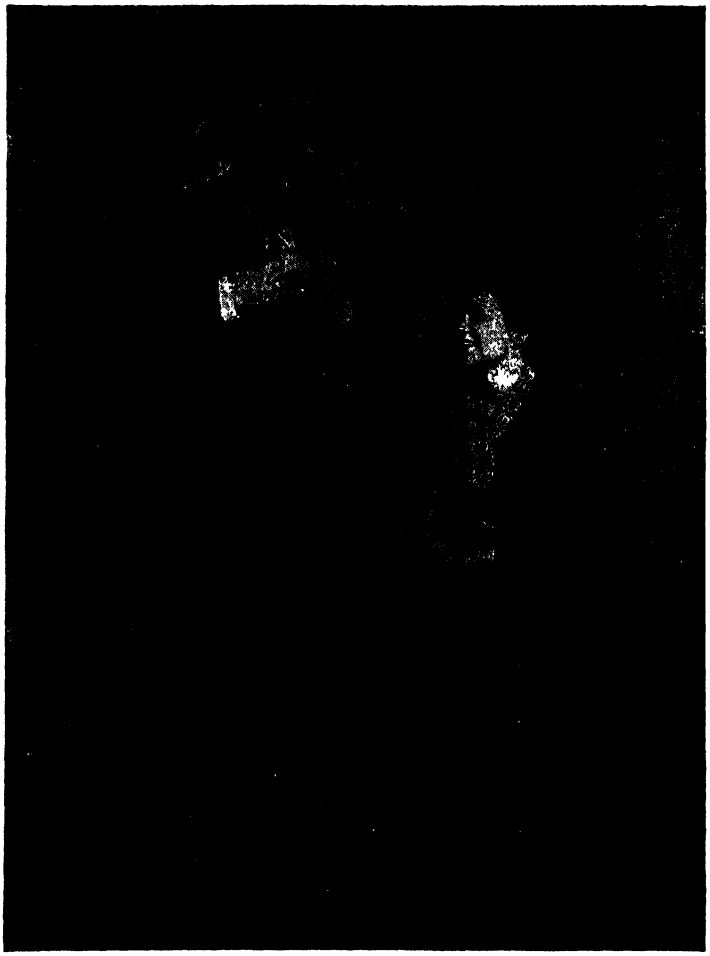
MADAME BUTTERFLY. [*Enraged—she claps her hands.*] Suzuki! The excellent gentleman— [*bowing sarcastically*] who have done us the honor to call—he wish to go hurriedly. His shoes—hasten them!

[1] Belasco, David, and Long, John Luther, *Madame Butterfly*, in Quinn, A. H. (editor), *Representative American Plays*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company. 1928. Reprinted by special permission of D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., publishers.



W. Albert Martin.

Troilus and Cressida, by William Shakespeare. A scene from the production at Pasadena Community Playhouse, Pasadena, California. Love scenes are usually some of the most serious and beautiful parts of a play.



White Studio.

Love on the Dole, by Ronald Gow and Walter Greenwood. Love scenes of comedy characters may be delightful but humorous.

[SUZUKI, *who has entered carrying a jar, gets* SHARPLESS' *clogs and gives them to him—then passes off with her jar.*]

SHARPLESS. [*Holding the clogs awkwardly.*] I'm really very sorry.

MADAME BUTTERFLY. No, no, don' be angery. But jus' now you tol' me—O, gods! You mean— [*Looks at him pitifully.*] I not Lef-ten-ant B. F. Pik-ker-ton's wive—Me?

SHARPLESS. Hardly.

MADAME BUTTERFLY. O, I— [*She sways slightly.* SHARPLESS *goes to her assistance, but she recovers and fans herself.*] Tha's all right. I got liddle heart illness. I can't . . . I can't someways give up thingin' he'll come back to me. You thing tha's all over? All finish? [*Dropping her fan.* SHARPLESS *nods assent.*] Oh, no! Loave don' forget some thin's or wha's use of loave? [*She claps her hands—beckoning off.*] Loave's got remember . . . [*pointing*] some thin's!

[*A child enters.*]

SHARPLESS. A child . . . Pinkerton's? . . .

MADAME BUTTERFLY. [*Showing a picture of Pinkerton's.*] Look! Look! [*Holding it up beside the child's face.*] Tha's jus' his face, same hair, same blue eye. . . .

SHARPLESS. Does Lieutenant Pinkerton know?

MADAME BUTTERFLY. No, he come after he go. [*Looking at the child with pride.*] You thing fath-er naever comes back—tha's what *you* thing? He do! You write him ledder; tell him 'bout one bes' mos' nize bebby aever seen. . . . Ha—ha! I bed all moaneys he goin' come mos' one million mile for see those chil'. Surely this is tie—bebby. Sa-ey, you didn' mean what you said 'bout me not bein' marry? You make liddle joke? [*Moved,* SHARPLESS *nods his head in assent, to the great relief of* MADAME BUTTERFLY.] Ha! [*She lays the baby's hand in* SHARPLESS'.] Shake hand consul 'Merican way.

SHARPLESS. [*Shaking hands with the child.*] Hm . . . hm . . . what's your name?

MADAME BUTTERFLY. Trouble. Japanese bebby always change it name. I was thinkin' some day w'en he come back, change it to Joy.

SHARPLESS. Yes . . . yes . . . I'll let him know. [*Glad to escape, he takes an abrupt departure.*]

SUZUKI. [*In the distance, wailing.*] Ay . . . ay . . . ay. . . .

MADAME BUTTERFLY. Tha's wail. . . .

SUZUKI. [*Nearer.*] O, Cho-Cho-San! [MADAME BUTTERFLY *goes to the door to meet* SUZUKI.] Cho-Cho-San!

MADAME BUTTERFLY. Speak!

SUZUKI. We are shamed through the town. The Nakodo—

NAKODO. [*Appearing.*] I but said the child— [*he points to the baby, whom* MADAME BUTTERFLY *instinctively shelters in her arms*] was a badge of shame to his father. In his country, there are homes for such unfortunates and they never rise above the stigma of their class. They are shunned and cursed from birth.

MADAME BUTTERFLY. [*Who has listened stolidly—now with a savage cry, pushing him away from her until he loses his balance and falls to the floor.*] You lie!

NAKODO. [*On the floor.*] But Yamadori—

MADAME BUTTERFLY. [*Touching her father's sword.*] Lies! Lies! Lies! Say again, I kill! Go . . . [*The* NAKODO *goes quickly.*] Bebby, he lies. . . . Yaes, it's lie. . . . When your fath-er knows how they speak, he will take us 'way from bad people to his own country. I am finish here. [*Taking the American flag from the tobacco jar and giving it to the child.*] Tha's your country—your flag. Now wave like fath-er say w'en excite—wave like "hell!" [*Waves the child's hand.*] Ha'rh! Ha'rh! [*A ship's gun is heard.*] Ah! [MADAME BUTTERFLY *and* SUZUKI *start for the balcony.* MADAME BUTTERFLY *runs back for the child as the gun is heard again; then returning to the shoji, looks through the glasses.*] Look! Look! Warship! Wait . . . can't see name. . . .

SUZUKI. Let me—

MADAME BUTTERFLY. No! Ah! Name is "Con-nec-ti-cut"! His ship! He's come back! He's come back! [*Laughing, she embraces* SUZUKI—*then sinks to the floor.*] He's come back! Those robins nes' again an' we didn' know! O, bebby, bebby—your fath-er come back! Your fath-er's come back! O! O! [*Shaking a bough of cherry blossoms, which fall on them both.*] This is the bes' nize momen' since you was borned. Now your name's Joy! Suzuki; the Moon Goddess sent that bebby straight from Bridge of Heaven to make me courage to wait so long.

EXERCISE 2

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[MIO *is sought for a crime.* MIRIAMNE *who is in love with him is trying to help him flee unmolested.*[2]]

[2] Anderson, Maxwell, *Winterset,* in Gassner, John, *Twenty Best Plays.* New York: Crown Publishers, 1939. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

MIO [*looking up*]. Now all you silent powers that make the sleet
and dark, and never yet have spoken, give us a sign, let the throw be
ours,
this once, on this longest night, when the winter sets
his foot on the threshold leading up to spring
and enters with remembered cold—let fall
some mercy with the rain. We are two lovers
here in your night, and we wish to live.

MIRIAMNE. Oh, Mio—
if you pray that way, nothing good will come!
You're bitter, Mio.

MIO. How many floors has this building?

MIRIAMNE. Five or six. It's not as high as the bridge.

MIO. No, I thought not. How many pomegranate seeds
did you eat, Persephone?

MIRIAMNE. Oh, darling, darling,
if you die, don't die alone.

MIO. I'm afraid I'm damned
to hell and you're not damned at all. Good God,
how long he takes to climb!

MIRIAMNE. The stairs are steep. [*A slight pause.*]

MIO. I'll follow him.

MIRIAMNE. He's there—at the window—now.
He waves you to go back, not to go in.
Mio, see, that path between the rocks—
they're not watching that—they're out at the river—
I can see them there—they can't watch both—
it leads to a street above.

MIO. I'll try it then.
Kiss me. You'll hear. But if you never hear—
then I'm the king of hell, Persephone,
and I'll expect you.

MIRIAMNE. Oh, lover, keep safe.

MIO. Good-bye. [*He slips quickly between the rocks. There is a quick machine gun rattat. The violin stops,* MIRIAMNE *runs toward the path,* MIO *comes back slowly, a hand pressed under his heart.*]
It seems you were mistaken.

MIRIAMNE. Oh, God forgive me! [*She puts an arm round him. He sinks to his knees.*]
Where is it, Mio? Let me help you in!

Quick, quick,
let me help you!

MIO. I hadn't thought to choose—this—ground--
but it will do. [*He slips down.*]

MIRIAMNE. Oh, God, forgive me!

MIO. Yes?
The king of hell was not forgiven then,
Dis is his name, and Hades is his home—
and he goes alone—

MIRIAMNE. Why does he bleed so? Mio, if you go
I shall go with you.

MIO. It's better to stay alive.
I wanted to stay alive—because of you—
I leave you that—and what he said to me dying:
I love you, and will love you after I die.
Tomorrow, I shall still love you, as I've loved
the stars I'll never see, and all the mornings
that might have been yours and mine. Oh, Miriamne,
you taught me this.

MIRIAMNE. If only I'd never seen you
then you could live—

MIO. That's blasphemy—Oh, God,
there might have been some easier way of it.
You didn't want me to die, did you Miriamne—?
You didn't send me away—?

MIRIAMNE. Oh, never, never—

EXERCISE 3

(TWO MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[*Young* DR. FERGUSON *and his fiancée,* LAURA, *have had little opportunity to see each other alone. In the hope of having a few minutes with him, she has come to the hospital, where he is house surgeon.* DR. HOCHBERG, *an old friend of both, has been teasingly staying near.*[8]]

HOCHBERG [*rises, grinning like a little boy who's had his joke*]. All right! [*To* FERGUSON.] I'll call you when I want you. [*He goes.*]

LAURA [*softly*]. Sweetheart! [*She holds out her hands to him.*]

[8] Kingsley, Sidney, *Men in White,* in Coe and Cordell (editors), *Pulitzer Prize Plays.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1935. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

FERGUSON [*taking them*]. Darling! [*He draws her up out of the chair to him.*]

LAURA. How's my boy?

FERGUSON [*stares at her in adoration. He almost whispers*]. You're lovely. . . . Lovely, Laura. [*Big hug.*]

LAURA. If you knew how I've been aching for this. [*Silence for a moment, as she clings to him.*] Three months! [*She sighs deeply.*] I don't know how I can live till then.

FERGUSON [*tenderly*]. Sweet! They're going to be long—those three months—terribly.

LAURA. Yes, I know—I hate to think of them! [*She takes his hand, leads him to a huge easy-chair.*] Come here and—

FERGUSON. Ah!

LAURA. Sit down! [*She pushes him down into the chair and curls up on his lap. Then she takes his head in her hands and scrutinizes his face.*] Let me look at you. [*She shakes her head.*] You're getting thin, young man! And your eyes are tired.

FERGUSON. I didn't have much sleep last night. It was a pretty sick house.

LAURA. You're overworked. . . . [*Pulls his head over on her shoulder.*] And I don't like it one bit. [*Pause.*] You know, you've spoiled everything for me. [FERGUSON *raises his head,* LAURA *pushes his head back.*] I was thinking last night, all the music and noise and fun . . . didn't mean a thing without you. I don't seem to get a kick out of life any more, unless you're around. [*She pauses.*] And that's not very often, is it?

FERGUSON. Darling, we'll make up for it all . . . later on. Honestly.

LAURA. I don't know if we can, George. Last night, for instance. If you had been there—perfect! Now's it's—gone. You see, dearest, the way I feel, if I had you every minute from now on, it wouldn't be enough. [FERGUSON *starts to speak, she puts her hands over his lips.*] I wish I'd lived all my life with you. I wish I'd been born in the same room with you, and played in the same streets.

FERGUSON [*smiles*]. I'm glad you missed them. They were ordinary and gloomy. They might have touched you . . . changed you. . . . [*He cups her face in his hands and looks at her.*] About seven months ago there was a boy here who'd been blind from birth. We operated on him—successfully. One night I showed him the stars—for the first time. He looked at them a moment and began to cry like a baby. because, he said, they were so lovely, and—he might never have seen

them. When I look at you, Laura, I get something of that feeling. I . . . I can't tell you how large a part of me you've become, Laura! You're. . . . [*the loud speaker is heard calling: "Dr. Ferguson! Dr. Ferguson. . . ."*] Oh, damn it! . . .

LAURA. Don't move! [*She clutches him tightly.*]

FERGUSON. It's no use, Laura! That's my call! Let me up!

LAURA. No!

FERGUSON. Come on! [*He rises, lifting her in his arms, kisses her, sets her on her feet.*]

LAURA. Oh! You spoiled it. [*He goes to the phone, picks up the receiver.* LAURA *finds her vanity case . . . powder and lipstick.*]

FERGUSON. Dr. Ferguson! . . . Yes! . . . Oh! Yes, sir! . . . Yes, doctor! I'll be ready . . . I'll tend to that. Right! [*He hangs up—turns to* LAURA.]

LAURA. All right, go on—go to work!

FERGUSON. I won't be needed for half an hour yet.

LAURA. Well, I have to go to my hairdresser's and make myself beautiful for tonight.

EXERCISE 4

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[SIR ROBERT CHILTERN *has been forced to promise that he will withdraw a report from the House.* MRS. CHEVELEY *has secured a letter which throws him in a bad light. With it she threatens him.* LADY CHILTERN *learns of his plan and asks that he revoke his promise to* MRS. CHEVELEY, *as it is a scandalous measure.*[4]]

LADY CHILTERN. Surely, Robert! What else is there to do?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN. I might see her personally. It would be better.

LADY CHILTERN. You must never see her again, Robert. She is not a woman you should ever speak to. She is not worthy to talk to a man like you. No; you must write to her at once, now, this moment, and let your letter show her that your decision is quite irrevocable!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN. Write this moment!

LADY CHILTERN. Yes.

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN. But it is so late. It is close on twelve.

LADY CHILTERN. That makes no matter. She must know at once that she has been mistaken in you—and that you are not a man to do any-

[4] Wilde, Oscar, *An Ideal Husband,* in *The Best-Known Works of Oscar Wilde,* Vol. IV. New York: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1927.

thing base or underhand or dishonorable. Write her, Robert— Write that you decline to support this scheme of hers, as you hold it to be a dishonest scheme. Yes—write the word dishonest. She knows what that word means. [SIR ROBERT *sits down and writes a letter. His wife takes it up and reads it.*] Yes; that will do. [*Rings bell.*] And now the envelope. [*He writes the envelope slowly. Enter* MASON.] Have this letter sent at once to Claridge's Hotel. There is no answer. [*Exit* MASON. LADY CHILTERN *kneels down beside her husband and puts her arms round him.*] Robert, love gives one a sort of instinct to things. I feel tonight that I have saved you from something that might have been a danger to you, from something that might have made men honour you less than they do. I don't think you realize sufficiently, Robert, that you have brought into the political life of our time a nobler atmosphere, a finer attitude towards life, a freer air of purer aims and higher ideals—I know it, and for that I love you, Robert.

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN. Oh, love me always, Gertrude, love me always!

LADY CHILTERN. I will love you always, because you will always be worthy of love. We needs must love the highest when we see it! [*Kisses him and rises and goes out.* SIR ROBERT *walks up and down for a moment; then sits down and buries his face in his hands. The* SERVANT *enters and begins putting out the lights.*]

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN. Put out the lights, Mason, put out the lights!

EXERCISE 5

(THREE MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*Hazel Kirke was a very popular play in the late seventies.* DUNSTAN, *a blind man, drove his daughter,* HAZEL, *from his home. She threw herself into the river but was rescued from it by her husband.* HAZEL'S *name has now been cleared of the wrong she was supposed to have done, and her father is asking for her, although he thinks she is dead.*[5]]

DUNSTAN. [*Inside.*] Where is she? Where is she?

MERCY. Oh, Hazel, it is your father.

HAZEL. He will not drive me out again?

MERCY. No, no; he shall not! he cannot do it now.

DUNSTAN. [*Appearing at the door, followed by* JOE *and* DAN.] Let me get at her, let me get at her! Fools, stand back—give her air—air!

[5] MacKaye, Steele, *Hazel Kirke,* in Quinn, *op cit.*

HAZEL. Heaven help me! He's mad, mad! What shall we do, what shall we do?

RODNEY. Sing the song you used to sing to him so long ago—it may calm his wretched soul and soothe his brain.

[*Hazel sings.*]

DUNSTAN. [*Stands listening.*] Her voice—from heaven—singing to me the old song! No, it's gone; I hear her shriek for help—it's Hazel! She's drowning—let me out of this! Where's the door? Bring me a light—a light!

[HAZEL *takes his hand.*]

MERCY. [*Comes to them.*] Have patience, poor heart, have patience.

DUNSTAN. [*Mistaking* HAZEL *for* MERCY.] Who be that, Mercy,—thee?

MERCY. Aye, Dunstan, I be here at thy side.

DUNSTAN. I'm glad thee's coom—but why didn't thee bring a light? I'm so weary o' this darkness.

[ARTHUR *brings a chair.*]

MERCY. Patience, dear heart, the light will coom—the light will coom.

DUNSTAN. Aye, Mercy, wife, thee always brings the light to my heart, my faithful, loving wife.

[ARTHUR *and* HAZEL *place* DUNSTAN *in the chair.* HAZEL *returns to* MERCY.]

MERCY. No, no, Dunstan, don't say that, for I have a sin to confess to thee.

DUNSTAN. [*Sitting.*] Thee—a sin to confess to me? I'll not believe it.

MERCY. It's true, Dunstan: I've broken my promise to thee.

DUNSTAN. Broken thy promise?

MERCY. I've seen our child—wi'out thy consent.

DUNSTAN. [*Starting up.*] Seen Hazel! Yes, yes, I know—I know—thee's seen her poor dead face—thee's not seen her. No, she's there—above—praying to God to forgive me—forgive me—forgive me.

MERCY. No, Dunstan, no, it's not her body alone I've seen, but her soul too, shining in her eyes, wi' living love for thee—her feyther.

DUNSTAN. [*Rising.*] Then she's alive—saved!

MERCY. [*Goes to* DUNSTAN; HAZEL *kneels before him.* ARTHUR *stands behind him.*] Aye, Dunstan, by her hoosband. The man who took her from thee has brought her back to thy old arms.

DUNSTAN. Where is she? Where is she?

MERCY. Stretch forth thy hands and feel her face.

DUNSTAN. [*Feeling her face.*] Who's this?

HAZEL. Thy child—thine only child.

DUNSTAN. [*With a cry falls back in the chair, dragging her upon his breast.*] Hazel, Hazel, coom to my heart! My child, my child!

RODNEY. At last, Dunstan, the iron of thy will has melted in the fire of a father's love.

Topics and Exercises

16

FEAR

EXERCISE 1: from *In Abraham's Bosom* by Paul Green

EXERCISE 2: from *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen

EXERCISE 3: from *A Night in an Inn* by Lord Dunsany

16

FEAR

THE EMOTION of fear shows itself in almost every scene of every play. Fear in varying degrees is one of the most powerful reasons for suspense, doubt, trepidation, and uncertainty. In fact, fear is the essence of drama.

Since practice in showing mild fear is offered in many exercises, the following give opportunity to show high degrees of the emotion. Dread, terror, horror are all fear at different intensities; no distinct line can separate them.

In real life, we respond to emotional impulses differently as the degree of emotion varies and as our dispositions guide us. At one time a person may recoil slowly from a point of danger. At another time he may show fear suddenly with a start and turn away quickly, or he may stand motionless, with dilated eyes fixed on the danger spot. Hands are often thrown into a protective position, or they may feel the way for retreat.

Muscles are usually held tense when depicting fear. Jaw and neck muscles may contract, drawing the mouth open. The same tenseness will be present in all the muscles of the body. Fingers may separate and become rigid, while leg, feet, and knee muscles may become alert and taut. The joints of the fingers, elbows, knees, and hips may remain bent and stiff.

Severe fright or fear may strike a person motionless. He may realize the danger but be unable to move or speak. He "freezes" in his position. His mind and senses may become so numbed that he is unable to think or feel. When this condition overtakes him, he may seem overly calm with relaxed muscles but with eyes staring before him. The player may show severe fright in this way.

The use of the voice is important in showing fear. A loud voice or a scream is almost always unnecessary and far less convincing than a whisper or a pause. Words will probably be clipped off short; breath will be unsteady and sentences unfinished. The voice, like the body in excessive fear, may respond with over-calmness.

The actor may convey the feeling of fear more convincingly with too little than with too much outward show. Here, particularly, he should guard against overacting.

Fear is closely related to surprise and the physical responses of the two are similar; they are expressed in just the opposite way from love and contentment. Fear, when well portrayed, should arouse a sense of fear in the members of the audience. They should *feel in.*

EXERCISE 1

(TWO MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[ABE, *an ambitious Negro, has seen all his hopes and aspirations blasted. He has become sullen and irritable, resulting in abuses, particularly to* DOUGLASS, *his son. In a fit of anger* ABE *has murdered the son of the plantation master; in the following scene he is returning to his home after the deed.* GOLDIE, *his wife,* DOUGLASS, *his son, and* MUH MACK, *his mother-in-law, are conversing seriously when they hear him coming.*[1]]

GOLDIE [*brushing her hand across her face and looking up as she wipes the tears from her eyes*]. Lawd bless you, chile, dey ain't noth-

[1] Green, Paul, *In Abraham's Bosom,* in Coe and Cordell, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of the author and of Robert McBride and Company. No performance, either amateur or professional, may be given without prior permission in writing from Samuel French, Inc.

ing. I's des' happy to be wid you. [*She catches his hand and holds it a moment, then drops it and begins to look in the fire again.* DOUGLASS *watches her intently a moment and then turns away as if somewhat awed by her manner. There is a noise of some one's coming up on the porch.*]

MUH MACK [*crying out in fear*]. Dat's him, Douglass! I knows his step. Dat's yo' pap. [GOLDIE *stands up, wringing her hands and crying silently as* DOUGLASS *gets his guitar and hurries into the kitchen. The door at the left opens and* ABE *enters.*]

GOLDIE [*leaning forward and rousing the fire*]. Did everything turn out— [MUH MACK *suddenly screams.* GOLDIE *looks up and cries out.*] Oh!

[ABE *comes towards the fire. His face is bruised, his clothes torn to shreds, and he sways as he walks.*]

MUH MACK [*rising from her chair*]. Dey's been adder him! Dey's been adder him!

ABE [*snarling at her*]. Shet up yo' damn yowling, will you? and don't be rousing de neighborhood, I'm not dying yit.

[GOLDIE *stands a moment terror-stricken and then runs up to him.*]

GOLDIE. You's hurt, hurt bad, Abe, po' baby!

ABE [*pushing her back*]. Ain't hurt much. No time to doctor me now. [*He stands before the fire.* MUH MACK *collapses in her chair. He is no longer the reformer and educator, but a criminal, beaten and hunted.*] I come to tell you to git away—[*panting*] to—to leave, leave!

GOLDIE [*sobbing and burying her face in her hands*]. Whut's happened! Whut's happened!

MUH MACK [*swaying in her chair and crying to herself*]. Lawdy-a-muhcy on us! Lawd-a-muhcy!

[*For a moment he stands before the woman silent, with closed eyes.*]

ABE [*looking at the motto on the wall and repeating the words dully*]. We are rising! [*Echoing.*] We are rising!— He didn't know what he said, he didn't. [*He staggers and grips the mantel and stands listening as if to faraway sounds. He turns desperately to the cowering women*]. Git your clothes and leave. You got to go, I tell you everything's finished at de end.

GOLDIE [*wailing*]. What happened at de school-house?

ABE [*pushing his bruised hand across his forehead*]. I cain't, cain't quite think—yeh, they was a crowd of white men at de dooi with

dough-faces over their faces. Said wa'n't going to be no meeting. Dey beat me, run me off. And de give me till tomorrow to git outen de country. You got to git away, foh it's worse'n dat—oh, it is! [*Calmly and without bitterness.*] Who you reckon set 'em on me? Who you think it was told 'em about de trouble I been in before? Yeh, and he made it out terribler'n it was. Douglass told 'em. . . . He done it. My own flesh and blood. No! No! he was but ain't no more! [*Gloomily.*] But I don't blame him—dey ain't no blaming nobody no longer.

GOLDIE [*fiercely*]. He didn't—he wouldn't turn ag'in' his own pa.

ABE [*sternly*]. Hush! He did though. But it don't matter tonight. And you got to leave. [*Half screaming and tearing at the mantel.*] Now! Now, I tell you.

GOLDIE [*between her sobs*]. Did you—who hurt you?

ABE. I tell you I've done murder, and dey coming for me. [MUH MACK *sits doubled up with fear, her head between her arms. With a sharp gasp* GOLDIE *ceases weeping and sits strangely silent.*]

MUH MACK. Murder! Oh, Lawd-a-muhcy! [*She mumbles and sobs in her rag.*]

ABE. Dey drove me away from de meeting. I come back by the road mad. [*He gasps.*] Every white man's hand ag'in' me to de last. And Mr. Lonnie come out to de road when I passed his house and began to abuse me about de crop. He struck at me, and I went blind all of a sudden and hit him wid my fist. Den we fou't.

EXERCISE 2

(ONE MAN; TWO WOMEN.)

[NORA *has borrowed money to meet expenses of her husband* HELMER'S *illness. In doing so she forged her father's name on a bank note.* HELMER *knows nothing of the loan. He, as a bank's officer, plans to dismiss* KROGSTAD. *When* KROGSTAD *learns of the plan he threatens to expose* NORA *unless she persuades her husband to retain him.*[2]]

NORA. Oh, no one knows what wicked men can hit upon. We could live so happily now, in our cozy, quiet home, you and I and the children, Torvald! That's why I beg and implore you—

HELMER. And it's just by pleading his cause that you make it impossible to keep him. It's already known at the Bank that I intend to

[2] Ibsen, Henrik, *A Doll's House,* in *The Works of Henrik Ibsen.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912.

dismiss Krogstad. If it were now reported that the new manager let himself be turned round his wife's little finger—

NORA. What then?

HELMER. Oh, nothing, so long as a willful woman can have her way—I am to make myself the laughing-stock of everyone, and set people saying I'm under petticoat government? Take my word for it, I should soon feel the consequences. And besides, there's one thing that makes Krogstad impossible for me to work with.

NORA. What thing?

HELMER. I could perhaps have overlooked his shady character at a pinch—

NORA. Yes, couldn't you, Torvald?

HELMER. And I hear he's good at his work. But the fact is, he was a college chum of mine—there was one of those rash friendships between us that one so often repents of later. I don't mind confessing it—he calls me by my Christian name; and he insists on doing it even when others are present. He delights in putting on airs of familiarity—Torvald here, Torvald there! I assure you it's most painful to me. He would make my position at the Bank perfectly unendurable.

NORA. Torvald, you're not serious?

HELMER. No? Why not?

NORA. That's such a petty reason.

HELMER. What! Petty! Do you consider me petty?

NORA. No, on the contrary, Torvald dear; and that's just why—

HELMER. Never mind, you call my motives petty; then I must be petty too. Petty! Very well. Now we'll put an end to this, once for all. [*Goes to hall door and calls.*] Ellen!

NORA. What do you want?

HELMER [*searching among his papers*]. To settle this thing. [ELLEN *enters.*] There, take this letter, give it to a messenger. See that he takes it at once. The address is on it. Here's the money.

ELLEN. Very well, sir. [*Goes with the letter.*]

HELMER [*putting his papers together*]. There, Madam Obstinacy.

NORA [*breathless*]. Torvald, what was in that letter?

HELMER. Krogstad's dismissal.

NORA. Call it back again, Torvald! There's still time. Oh, Torvald, get it back again! For my sake, for your own, for the children's sake! Do you hear, Torvald? Do it. You don't know what that letter may bring upon us all.

HELMER. Too late.

NORA. Yes, too late.

HELMER. My dear Nora, I forgive your anxiety, though it's anything but flattering to me. Why should I be afraid of a blackguard scribbler's spite? But I forgive you all the same, for it's a proof of your great love for me. [*Takes her in his arms.*] That's as it should be, my own dear Nora. Let what will happen—when the time comes, I shall have strength and courage enough. You shall see; my shoulders are broad enough to bear the whole burden.

NORA [*terror-struck*]. What do you mean by that?

HELMER. The whole burden, I say.

NORA [*with decision*]. That you shall never, never do!

HELMER. Very well; then we'll share it, Nora, as man and wife. [*Petting her.*] Are you satisfied now? Come, come, come, don't look like a scared dove. It is all nothing—fancy. Now you must play the tarantella through and practise with the tambourine. I shall sit in my inner room and shut both doors, so that I shall hear nothing. You can make as much noise as you please. [*Turns round in doorway.*] And when Rank comes, just tell him where I'm to be found. [*He nods to her, and goes with his papers into his room, closing the door.*]

NORA [*bewildered with terror, stands as though rooted to the ground, and whispers*]. He would do it. Yes, he would do it. He would do it, in spite of all the world. No, never that, never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some way of escape! What to do! [*Hall bell rings.*] Doctor Rank—! Anything rather than that—anything, anything! [NORA *draws her hands over her face, pulls herself together, goes to the door and opens it.* RANK *stands outside hanging up his great-coat. During the following it grows dark.*] Good afternoon, Doctor Rank. I knew you by your ring. But you mustn't go to Torvald now. I believe he's busy.

EXERCISE 3

(FIVE MEN.)

[*Some merchant sailors have stolen a large, valuable ruby from the forehead of an idol in India. They know that they are followed. They have hidden in a room of a deserted inn.* SNIGGERS *has gone to the yard to get some water, and he returns terrified at something he has seen.*[3]]

[3] Dunsany, Lord, *A Night at an Inn*, in Tucker, S. Marion (editor), *Twelve One-Act Plays for Study and Production*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1929. Reprinted by special permission of the author and Sydney A. Sanders, literary agent.

THE TOFF. The honest truth in open court, barring the ruby. We were attacked.

SNIGGERS. There's no police.

THE TOFF. Well, then, what's the matter?

BILL. Out with it.

SNIGGERS. I swear to God. . . .

ALBERT. Well?

THE TOFF. Don't interrupt.

SNIGGERS. I swear I saw something *what I didn't like.*

THE TOFF. What you didn't like?

SNIGGERS [*in tears*]. O Toffy, Toffy, take it back. Take my share. Say you take it.

THE TOFF. What has he seen?

[*Dead silence, only broken by* SNIGGER's *sobs. Then steps are heard. Enter a hideous idol. It is blind and gropes its way. It gropes its way to the ruby and picks it up and screws it into the socket in the forehead.* SNIGGERS *still weeps softly, the rest stare in horror. The idol steps out, not groping. Its steps move off, then stop.*]

THE TOFF. Oh, great heavens!

ALBERT [*in a childish, plaintive voice*]. What is it, Toffy?

BILL. Albert, it is that obscene idol [*in a whisper*] come from India.

ALBERT. It is gone.

BILL. It has taken its eye.

SNIGGERS. We are saved.

A VOICE OFF [*with outlandish accent*]. Meestaire William Jones, Able Seaman. [THE TOFF *has never spoken, never moved. He only gazes stupidly in horror.*]

BILL. Albert, Albert, what is this? [*He rises and walks out. One moan is heard.* SNIGGERS *goes to the window. He falls back sickly.*]

ALBERT [*in a whisper*]. What has happened?

SNIGGERS. I have seen it. I have seen it. Oh, I have seen it! [*He returns to the table.*]

THE TOFF. [*Laying his hand very gently on* SNIGGER's *arm, speaking softly and winningly.*] What was it, Sniggers?

SNIGGERS. I have seen it.

ALBERT. What?

SNIGGERS. O!

VOICE. Meestaire Albert Thomas, Able Seaman.

ALBERT. Must I go, Toffy? Toffy, must I go?

SNIGGERS [*clutching him*]. Don't move.

ALBERT [*going*]. Toffy, Toffy. [*Exit.*]

VOICE. Meestaire Jacob Smith, Able Seaman.

SNIGGERS. I can't go, Toffy, I can't go. I can't do it. [*He goes.*]

VOICE. Meestaire Arnold Everett Scott-Fortescue, late Esquire, Able Seaman.

THE TOFF. I did not foresee it. [*Exit.*]

Topics and Exercises

17

HAPPINESS

EXERCISE 1: from *The Far Off Hills* by Lennox Robinson

EXERCISE 2: from *The Star Wagon* by Maxwell Anderson

EXERCISE 3: from *Light in Darkness* by Helen Toner

17

HAPPINESS

HAPPINESS has its own language. A dog can sense whether his master is happy or sad. Words are only part of the language of happiness. The smile, the light step, brisk movements, bright eyes, and the animated voice all contribute to that language. Laughter goes with mirth and amusement. Although it is true that upon rare occasions laughter also accompanies pain, disappointment, or disgust, it is, nevertheless, the outward demonstration of happiness.

The variations of happiness are expressed in different ways. Pleasure, happiness, joy, delight, elation, and rapture are all closely related; their difference is largely a matter of degree. Mirth, as well as amusement and hilarity, is certainly akin to joy, but the two may express themselves in different ways. Mirth will demand fast reading of lines, quick movements; joy often occurs in a situation that would in no way be amusing. Sobs and tears may accompany joy when it is profound and unexpected, but when joy has come about gradually, one does not cry.

Many players have difficulty in laughing audibly. They can smile, perhaps giggle a little, but to laugh heartily has never been their custom. They say that they cannot "laugh out." Many

of them will not even try. They will work hard to show other feelings, but to express hilarious mirth seems to embarrass them.

It is true that laughing in a play is not natural. The scene may be funny to members of the audience, but to the players it is serious business. Since, however, the player's task is to do the unnatural thing, to act like "what he isn't" and to be surprised at what he already knows, he must also learn to laugh when there is nothing funny to laugh at.

Since laughing is necessary in order to play some happy scenes, it is well to analyze the way people laugh and to practice laughing. Laughing demands action of the diaphragm. Air is expelled from the lungs in bursts, and these are repeated in rapid succession.

Begin by coughing, *ha—ha—ha,* slowly at first, then faster, faster, faster until you are out of breath.

Draw a fast, deep breath and continue the coughing.

Inhale sharply, audibly, and cough some more.

Fill the lungs again and expel most of it without coughing. Finish the last of the breath with coughs.

Practice this with your friends; it's easier in a group. As you laugh, notice *exactly* what you are doing and how. Feel the push of the diaphragm, the hardening of the abdominal muscles, and the cooling stream of air as it rushes down the throat and into the lungs.

Let a laugh, starting with only a snicker, grow to a louder one; then to an unroarious laugh; and, finally, conclude with the player doubled up, convulsed with laughter. After this, try a similar exercise. Start with a sudden outburst and let the laughter diminish gradually until, after several renewed but less violent outbursts, the laugh dies away.

Each student should next try different kinds of laughs, some of which do not show happiness. Let him try:

1. A chuckling old miser's laugh.
2. A giggling schoolgirl's laugh.

3. A gloating laugh.
4. An embarrassed laugh.
5. A simpering laugh.
6. A hurt laugh.
7. A polite laugh.
8. A weak-minded person's laugh.
9. A scale-ascending laugh.

When laughing on stage, the actor must guard against blurring his lines. The laughing should come between ideas, not while the player is actually speaking. He may start to speak and be overcome by his desire to laugh, again try to speak, and again burst out. This can be repeated effectively several times *if* the laugh is a convincing one, if it is in keeping with the spirit of the play, and if the audience responds favorably. A player must learn to sense the reactions of the audience; to feel the pulse of the crowd.

The playing of happy scenes seldom calls for laughing. Nevertheless, that is a good place to begin the study. The purpose of humor if usually to project a happy feeling to the audience and to get laughs and happiness from them.

Any actor can get laughs when he has *funny* lines. Little art is required to put such lines across. However, tricks may be used—but only when entirely appropriate—to get laughs. Certain ways of using the eyes, certain vocal inflections, facial expressions and bits of business when properly timed, can make the audience roar.

Most plays with a happy flavor are played rapidly. There are exceptions, but for the most part players should not try to make farce and light comedy realistic. Lines in both types will be spoken with exhilaration, vivacity, and sparkle, but farce can have the more hilarity of the two. Light comedy more nearly approaches comedy.

Farce is not comedy. Farce is made up of exaggerated situations and can be exaggerated in the acting. Comedy should seem

realistic and be played less violently than farce. Farce and light comedy, however, must be played alike in this very important respect: *they must move fast.* They must both clip along at a rapid tempo, although the lines must not be rushed. Words may be cut short and said rapidly but phrases should be definitely separated by short bits of time.

The actors must walk and act as fast as they speak. This is where players often fail: they do not synchronize speech and action. In farce and light comedy, action must be speeded along.

In character comedy, the audience enjoys the peculiarities of a character. He may be slow and easygoing; but interesting action must fill the play. It dare not drag.

EXERCISE 1

(THREE WOMEN.)

[PET *and* DUCKY, *young sisters in their 'teens, are anxious for more freedom than is granted them by their older sister; they go to* SUSIE, *a very good friend of their widowed father, and ask her to marry their father.* SUSIE *comes into their bedroom after the girls have retired.*[1]]

PET. Sit in here between us. Wait, I'll move the lamp. [*She puts it on the dressing table.* SUSIE *sits between the two beds.*]

DUCKY. What's happened below, Susie?

SUSIE. Marian's talking to your father!

PET. Any fear of her coming up?

SUSIE. Not a bit, I think.

PET. Thank God. . . . Well, Susie?

SUSIE. Well what?

PET. You know. Anything doing? Any news?

SUSIE. Oh! [*She begins to laugh.*]

DUCKY. What are you laughing at? [SUSIE *goes on laughing.*]

PET. [*In excitement.*] She's done it, Ducky! I believe she's done it!

DUCKY. Have you, Susie? Have you?

SUSIE. I— [*She goes off again into a fit of laughter.*]

[1] Robinson, Lennox, *The Far-off Hills,* in Chandler, Frank W., and Cordell, Richard A. (editors), *Twentieth-Century Plays.* New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1934. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

PET [*jumping till the bed shakes*]. She's done it! She's done it! She's done it!

DUCKY. She has! She has! She has! Oh, have you, Susie?

SUSIE. I've come up to break something to you.

DUCKY. Break? Merciful God, Pet, she's after refusing him!

PET. Not at all. She'd never dare face us if she had.

SUSIE. Your father says I must break it to you.

PET. Oh, give over your breaks. Tell us first, yes or no, are you going to marry him?

SUSIE. I am.

PET. Susie, you're a dote! [*She flings herself out of bed and embraces her.*]

EXERCISE 2

(THREE MEN; FOUR WOMEN.)

[STEPHEN *has had a near escape from drowning.* HALLIE *is with him when other young people approach. The group is laughing at* DUFFY *as he humorously imitates* MRS. RUTLEDGE, *the choir leader.* DUFFY *and* CHRISTABEL *come back along the ledge, bringing* OGLETHORPE *and* DELLA. DUFFY *lifts his hand for a baton and they all sing.*[2]]

THE QUARTET. I'm dreaming now of Hallie:
Sweet Hallie, sweet Hallie;
I'm dreaming now of Hallie,
For the thought of her is one that never dies.

HALLIE. I don't know what you think's so funny.

THE QUARTET. She's sleeping in the valley.
The valley, the valley,
She's sleeping in the valley,
And the mocking-bird is singing where she lies.

DUFFY. [*Imitating* MRS. RUTLEDGE.] Now something dulcet, something really dulcet and tender!

[*They burst into laughter.*]

DUFFY. [*Still imitating.*] And now tomorrow evening, nothing preventing, bring the little red hymnal after prayer-meeting, and we'll all—oh, I'm sorry, I'm late—I must rush—foreign missions—so sorry—

[2] Anderson, Maxwell, *The Star Wagon.* Washington, D. C., Anderson House, 1937. Reprinted by special permission of the author and Anderson House.

the young ladies will remember in my absence—propriety please—in all things—

[MRS. RUTLEDGE *enters. The laughter is suddenly hushed.*]

HALLIE. I'm glad if you think it's amusing, because I don't. I've heard it too often.

MRS. RUTLEDGE. *I shall remember this,* MR. DUFFY. [*She passes the* QUARTET *and sees* HALLIE *and* STEPHEN.] So this is where you are. Within easy distance of my call, where you must have heard me. Hallie, have you been in swimming?—You have.

HALLIE. What if I have?

[HANUS *enters with Hallie's shoes and stockings; also a chemise.*]

DUFFY. He fell in and she pulled him out.

[STEVE *sits up.*]

MRS. RUTLEDGE. Very likely. Hanus, what are you doing with Hallie's shoes and stockings?

HANUS. [*Dropping them.*] This always happens to me—always. [*He stuffs the chemise in his pocket.*]

MRS. RUTLEDGE. I'm quite grateful to you. You bring in exactly the evidence I need.

EXERCISE 3

(ONE MAN; THREE WOMEN EXTRAS.)

[*"Light in Darkness" is a Biblical play built about the miracle of* PETER *and* JOHN *healing the crippled beggar at the gate.* SILAS, *the beggar, makes his home with* PRISCA, *his daughter.* SILAS *is an unbeliever who considers the apostles blasphemers.* PRISCILLA, PRISCA'S *small daughter, has taken cakes and wine to her grandfather to refresh him in the heat of the day.* PRISCA *and a neighbor,* SARAH, *are in the dwelling discussing the miraculous healings of Christ.*[3]]

SARAH. There is a great crowd approaching, Prisca. What can it be?

PRISCA. Can it be that Peter and John are coming through the streets? 'Tis such a crowd as followed the Master! Perhaps they are coming here—David was once with them.

SARAH. It doth not look like Peter and John—Look! Here cometh Priscilla running. [*Enter* PRISCILLA.]

PRISCILLA. Mother! [*Rushes into her arms.*]

[3] Toner, Helen, *Light in Darkness.* Unpublished. Printed by special permission of the author.

PRISCA. My child, did the crowd frighten thee? [*Hugs the child to her.*]

PRISCILLA. Mother—he—he—cometh.

PRISCA. Who cometh, Priscilla?

PRISCILLA. Grandfather—he—cometh—

PRISCA [*frightened*]. Priscilla, is he—did the heat—

PRISCILLA. No, no—he cometh, by himself—walking! See!

[*Enter* SILAS.]

PRISCA. Father!

SILAS. Oh, Prisca, Prisca—look at me. I am healed—healed! Now I know what thou meant when thou said Jesus had power to forgive sins.

PRISCA. Thou'rt whole—oh father! But who?—the disciples of Jesus?

SILAS. Peter and John—the ones our neighbors spoke of. [*Excitedly.*] When they did approach the gate I was not going to ask alms, but—thinking of thee and little Priscilla, I held out my hand, and he said—he said, "Silver and gold have I none—"

PRISCA. Yes? [*Encouragingly.*]

SILAS. "But such as I have give I thee—in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk"—and, Ah, Prisca—something happened to me. The hate I had stored up in my heart all these years left me at his words and I saw Jesus for the first time as *thou* seest him. [*All the time he shows his excitement in his voice.*]

PRISCA. Oh, Father, I knew that if thou couldst have seen Him . . . .

SILAS [*dreamily*]. I have seen Him, my Prisca.

MAN. Is this truly our neighbor, Silas, who hath been lame from birth?

ANOTHER. Mine eyes lie not—'Tis he, and he walketh as good as thou or I. Were those men at the gate magicians?

PRISCA. Nay, but followers of Jesus, the Messiah [*proudly*], like my David. Is all the pain gone, my father?

SILAS. *All,* Prisca. It is all so *new,* I cannot believe yet that I dream not.

SARAH. Come, good neighbors, 'twould be better if we left our friends in peace after this eventful day.

SILAS. Meanwhile—my little one, thou'll never have to come and sit with me by the gate any more—See, I am whole like other men!

PRISCILLA. Like father!

Topics and Exercises

18

GRIEF

EXERCISE 1: from *Sun-Up* by Lula Vollmer

EXERCISE 2: from *The Vale of Content* by Hermann Sudermann

EXERCISE 3: from *Beyond the Horizon* by Eugene O'Neill

EXERCISE 4: from *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov

EXERCISE 5: from *Dregs* by Frances Pemberton Spencer

18

GRIEF

PROBABLY the hardest emotion to depict is unhappiness. Great disappointment, sorrow, grief can be easily overplayed or underplayed. It is hard to act sorrow convincingly; with just the right intensity. The acting of this as well as of all difficult emotions needs practice and still more practice.

The great pleasure that the theater has to give still derives, as it always has, from seeing living actors on the stage. Their acting must be true, sincere, convincing. Acting which destroys the illusion does not bring pleasure to the audience; rather, it brings disappointment.

Although the actor should take nature as his model, acting can be no more like nature than a picture is like its model. It must only *appear* to be like it.

Portraying emotion is the very essence of acting. However, it is sometimes the case that one who can portray emotions convincingly still cannot act. Emotions are so varied, so mixed, so intangible that they are hard to deal with. Grief may be merely displeasure or discontent. It may be unhappiness, sadness, sorrow, or dejection. The feeling, be it slight or intense, must be expressed through the eye, the face, the voice, and the whole body.

Grief is acted best when merely suggested. Wiping "tears" from one's eyes or slightly shaking his bowed shoulders is enough to suggest most feelings of sorrow. An outburst of tears and convulsive sobs suggest weakness. Low sobs may be used convincingly if they are in keeping with the scene and the character.

Warnings:

1. Do not drop out of a cry using a natural voice. A cry supposed to be accompanied by tears should be followed by "tears" in the voice. Failure to observe this important particular causes many crying scenes to seem trite and untrue. A tear in the voice always follows tears in the eyes.

2. While crying, the actor must guard his lines carefully. He must enunciate overprecisely when speaking through tears. It is better to speak between sobs than along with them. If the head is dropped into the hands, or onto a table, the mouth must *not* be covered, and every precaution must be taken to keep the lips and mouth toward the audience in order to project the lines.

3. Do not cry too hard. A convulsive cry wrings from the audience emotional responses which you do not want. It makes them uncomfortable; and while thinking about and responding to the cry they forget the play as a whole.

4. Crying and weeping differ. Weeping results from greater anguish than does crying and can be expressed more truly by using restraint. A low sob, a bowed head, or a mere turning away from others can mean more than tears.

A man character seldom cries on the stage, although in real life many men cry when deeply hurt. A boy or young man would be more likely to cry than an older man.

There are many stages of unhappiness. Disappointment is limited, immediate. Sorrow, grief, anguish, and heartache are other stages of unhappiness. They call for different acting. The deeper and more lasting the emotion, the greater the restraint that should be exercised in acting it.

Most scenes of sorrow call for broken lines, pantomime, and long pauses. Time values are essential in expressing emotion. The

time utilized will be regulated by the depth of the emotion. The student will need to test the time used in pauses as well as the general tempo, before deciding how much time is required to give the best effect.

Some students have trouble in "letting go" enough to reveal deep emotion. They should try to forget self, forget others, and see, hear, and feel the character. The player who can register surprise, laugh contagiously, and cry convincingly has crossed three great gulfs on the way to success.

EXERCISE 1

(ONE MAN; TWO WOMEN.)

[MRS. CAGLE, *a mountaineer woman of very positive character, has a son,* RUFE, *at the front in the First World War. She has just received a letter from him.* EMMY, *her daughter-in-law, is with her, also a* STRANGER *who is trying to evade the law. The three are discussing the war.*[1]]

MRS. CAGLE. Who air they fightin', Stranger?

STRANGER. The Germans.

MRS. CAGLE. I reckon they've come 'long since my time. I never heared of 'em. Whut's it over, Stranger?

STRANGER. Well, for one thing to protect our country.

EMMY. That's whut Rufe said, Mis' Cagle. He knowed.

MRS. CAGLE. Yes, I heared him, but I didn't think the boy knowed so much. I heared him say this country belonged to us 'cose God A'mighty let us be born here. He said this land had brung us up, and nursed us—kinder pretty speech for a boy like Rufe, ain't it, Stranger?

STRANGER. Yes. He is right.

MRS. CAGLE. [*Taking the envelope from her bosom and handing it to* EMMY.] Read his letter, Emmy. Rufe could allus write sech nice letters. I reckon ye won't mind hearing it, Stranger?

STRANGER. [*Rising. With some uneasiness.*] No. [*Moves back of table.*]

EMMY. [*Rising. Looking at the letter.*] Why, Mis' Cagle, your

[1] Vollmer, Lula, *Sun-Up,* in Quinn, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Coward-McCann, Inc. No performance, either amateur or professional, may be given without first securing permission of Longmans, Green and Company.

name is printed. [*Goes to the lantern and looks at the envelope closely.* MRS. CAGLE *follows and looks over her shoulder.*]

MRS. CAGLE. Read the inside, Emmy.

EMMY. [*Cries out.*] 'Tain't from Rufe, Mom. 'Tain't from him.

MRS. CAGLE. [*Fiercely.*] Who's it from?

EMMY. I cain't read it. I cain't read it.

MRS. CAGLE. [*Taking the letter from the girl and staring at it*]. Great God, why didn't ye l'arn me how to read? [*Hands it back to her.*] Spell it out, Emmy. Maybe the stranger can help ye. He kin read a little.

EMMY. [*Sobbing as she takes it. The* STRANGER *starts forward as if to take the letter, but stops.*] I'm so afeered—

STRANGER. I'll help you.

EMMY. [*Spells out a letter or two and then speaks the name.*] M-r-s—L—That's yo' name. Mis' Liza Cagle. W-e r-e-g-r-e-t—

STRANGER. That means—are sorry.

MRS. CAGLE. [*Repeating.*] We air sorry—

EMMY. To i-n-f-o-r-m—

STRANGER. That means—to tell—

MRS. CAGLE. We are sorry to tell—

EMMY. You that—your—son, Rufe Cagle, d-i-e-d—

MRS. CAGLE. [*Speaking before the* STRANGER. *She stands erect and rigid, but does not evidence any great emotion otherwise.*] DIED—

EMMY. [*Sobbing as she sinks to a chair.*] O, Mom, Mom—

STRANGER. [*Taking the telegram from her hand and reading.*] "February fifth, in action." That means he died—fighting.

MRS. CAGLE [*very calmly, but with deep emotion*]. It means my boy is dead. It means the law's got my boy same as his pap.

EXERCISE 2

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[ELIZABETH *is leaving her husband because the man she loves and has tried to forget is now a guest in their home and demands that she go with him when he leaves. Rather than play false with her kind husband, she intends to commit suicide. As she tries to steal out, her husband stops her and they talk the matter over.*[2]]

[2] Sudermann, Hermann, *The Vale of Content.* Translated for the author by Dr. Elinor Caruthers

WIEDEMANN. Oh, yes, child, maybe that's what everyone must go through, who has chosen his lot . . . perhaps in everyone there was at some time a whole hell of such hopes and desires.

ELIZABETH. But all that I hoped and desired was connected with that man there upstairs. . . . It was madness, I knew that perfectly. Ah, it was madness! But for that very reason I clung so tight to it. In fact I don't know myself how it all hangs together! But George, I haven't deceived you—I've come to take care of you and the children with my whole soul; I've grown as used to it here as to eating bread. . . . And yet—if I have lived here among you till now, I've been able to do so only through this one longing. . . . So drive me out, if you wish.

WIEDEMANN. [*After a pause, quietly but hurt.*] You are mistress here. Go or stay as you care to.

ELIZABETH. Then say at least one harsh word to me. . . . So much kindness—that's more than I can bear.

WIEDEMANN. Where are you going? Have you any plans? [*She shakes her head.*] What does he want you to do?

ELIZABETH. Haven't you yourself settled that with him? [WIEDEMANN *starts.*] Ah, now I understand him! Now I know on what sort of a man I've thrown away the best of my life! . . . Be at rest, George, I would not have sold myself and you— [*with a laugh of bitter pain*] God knows, no!

WIEDEMANN. Is this the reason, Elizabeth, that this night you have—

ELIZABETH. Whether this night—or some other time! I'm too weary to begin anew— Anyway, it would probably come to the same in the end.

WIEDEMANN [*after a pause*]. Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH. What, George?

WIEDEMANN. Will you stay with us?

ELIZABETH. George!

EXERCISE 3

(TWO MEN.)

[ROBERT *is a young man of artistic temperament, with a touch of the poet about him, and a lover of the beautiful. He and his brother* ANDREW, *a husky, manly son of the soil, have always been great pals.* ROBERT, *surprising even himself, becomes engaged to a neighbor girl,* RUTH, *whom* ANDREW *also loves. Neither knew the other cared for*

the girl in this serious way. ANDREW *wishes his brother all happiness, but says that he himself must go away.*[3]]

ANDREW. Buck up, Rob. It ain't any use crying over spilt milk; and it'll all turn out for the best—let's hope. It couldn't be helped—what's happened.

ROBERT [*wildly*]. But it's a lie. Andy a lie!

ANDREW. Of course, it's a lie. You know it and I know it—but that's all ought to know it.

ROBERT. Pa'll never forgive you. Oh, the whole affair is so senseless—and tragic. Why did you think you must go away?

ANDREW. You know better than to ask that. You know why. [*Fiercely.*] I can wish you and Ruth all the good luck in the world, and I do, and I mean it; but you can't expect me to stay around here and watch you two together, day after day—and me alone. I couldn't stand it—not after all the plans I'd made to happen on this place thinking— [*his voice breaks*] thinking she cared for me.

ROBERT [*putting a hand on his brother's arm*]. God! It's horrible! I feel so guilty—to think that I should be the cause of your suffering, after we've been such pals all our lives. If I could have foreseen what'd happen, I swear to you I'd have never said a word to Ruth. I swear I wouldn't have, Andy!

ANDREW. I know you wouldn't; and that would've been worse, for Ruth would've suffered then. [*He pats his brother's shoulder.*] It's best as it is. It had to be, and I've got to stand the gaff, that's all. Pa'll see how I felt—after a time. [*As Robert shakes his head.*] And if he don't—well, it can't be helped.

ROBERT. But think of Ma! God, Andy, you can't go! You can't!

ANDREW. [*Fiercely.*] I've got to go—to get away! I've got to, I tell you. I'd go crazy here, bein' reminded every second of the day what a fool I'd made of myself. I've got to get away and try and forget, if I can. And I'd hate the farm if I stayed, hate it for bringin' things back. I couldn't take interest in the work any more, work with no purpose in sight. Can't you see what a hell it'd be? You love her, too, Rob. Put yourself in my place, and remember I haven't stopped loving her, and couldn't if I was to stay. Would that be fair to you or to her? Put yourself in my place. [*He shakes his brother fiercely*

[3] O'Neill, Eugene, *Beyond the Horizon,* in *Collected Plays,* by the same author, Vol. I. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1925. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

by the shoulder.] What'd you do then? Tell me the truth! You love her. What'd you do?

ROBERT. [*Chokingly.*] I'd—I'd go, Andy! [*He buries his face in his hands with a shuddering sob.*] God!

EXERCISE 4

(FOUR MEN; TWO WOMEN; EXTRAS.)

[MADAME RANEVSKY, *who has been living abroad, has returned to her family home, only to find that it must be sold for debts. It is a beautiful old place, noted for its cherry orchard, but, through carelessness, she has been forced to sell it. Now it is gone, the orchard is being cut down; they are all packed, ready to go back to the city. She and her family will never return, and they make their last farewells to the place they love.*[4]]

MADAME RANEVSKY. Come on!

LOPAKHIN. Is every one here? No one left in there? [*Locking the door.*] There are things stacked in there; I must lock them up. Come on!

ANYA. Good-bye, old house! Good-bye, old life!

TROPHIMOF. Long live the new life! [*Exit with* ANYA. VERNA *looks around the room, and exits slowly. Exeunt,* YASHA, CHARLOTTE *with her dog.*]

LOPAKHIN. This means until spring. Go on, everybody. Good-bye! [*Exit.* MADAME RANEVSKY *and* GAYEF *remain alone. They seem to have been waiting for this, throw their arms round each other's necks and sob gently.*]

GAYEF [*despairingly*]. My sister! my dear sister!

MADAME RANEVSKY. Oh, my dear, sweet, lovely garden! My life, my youth, my happiness, Good-bye! Good-bye!

ANYA [*calling gaily, without*]. Mama!

TROPHIMOF [*excitedly*]. Aoo!

MADAME RANEVSKY. One last look at the walls, the windows. Our dear mother used to love to go into this room.

GAYEF. My sister! My sister!

ANYA'S VOICE. Mama!

TROPHIMOF'S VOICE. Aoo!

MADAME RANEVSKY. We're coming. [*Exeunt. The stage is empty. One hears all the doors being locked, and the carriages driving away.*

[4] Chekhov, Anton, *The Cherry Orchard.* From a translation made for the author.

All is quiet. The sound of footsteps is heard. FIRS *appears in the doorway, right. He is dressed, as always, in his long coat and white vest; he wears slippers. He is ill.*]

FIRS [*going to the door, left, and trying the handle*]. Locked. They've gone. [*Sitting on the sofa.*] They've forgotten me. Never mind! I'll sit here. Leonid Andreyitch is sure to put on his cloth coat instead of his fur. [*He sighs anxiously.*] He hadn't me to see. Young wood, green wood! Life has gone by as if I'd never lived. I'll lie down. There's no strength left in you; there's nothing, nothing. Ah, you . . . job-lot! [*He lies motionless. A distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, the sound of a string breaking, dying away, melancholy. Silence ensues, broken only by the stroke of the axe on the trees far away in the cherry orchard.*]

EXERCISE 5

(TWO MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[NANCE *and* JIM, *two crooks, work together.* JIM *has kidnaped the adopted son of a wealthy judge who once sentenced him to prison and supposedly sent* JIM'S *child to an orphanage.* JIM *does not know that the judge has adopted his little son.* NANCE, *after drugging* JIM, *attempts to return the kidnaped child.* JIM *is beginning to come to.*[5]]

JIM. What is it? What is the matter with my head? I'm drunk. [*Looks at* NANCE *who is standing in frozen attitude, staring at the child.*] No, I'm not, drink never made me feel like this. What is it? I feel as if I'm drugged. [*He takes in the fact that she is wearing outdoor clothes, and understands. Lunges at her in frenzied rage, his hands at her throat in strangling hold.*] Ye done this. Ye drugged me. You've got your street things on. Ye meant to steal the boy, ye she devil, ye female stool pidgeon—ye was going to double-cross me.

NANCE [*choking, inarticulate*]. Jim! Jim! the boy. [*Points with hand. He releases his hand so roughly that she is thrown upon the floor. He is about to turn and look at the boy when there is a pounding on the door. Enter* OFFICER *and* DETECTIVE.]

JIM [*whipping out pistol from his pocket, insolent, defiant, snarling like an animal at bay*]. All right, ye found me. Now take me.

DETECTIVE [*easily*]. Oh, I guess not this time, Jim. Just give us the

[5] Spencer, Frances Pemberton, *Dregs*, in Mayorga, Margaret Gardner (editor), *Representative One-Act Plays*. Boston: Little. Brown and Company, 1919. Reprinted by special permission of the author. All American and foreign copyrights reserved strictly by the author, Frances Pemberton Spencer, Holicong, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

boy. The Judge has a sentimental prejudice against arresting a father for stealing his own child. [JIM's *figure crumples as the truth dawns upon him. He drops upon his knees beside the child, lifts the small body that is now hanging head downward, staring down into the white face. Suddenly his face presses against the child's, he sobs convulsive, racking sobs, that tell the audience the boy is dead.* NANCE *drags herself like some faithful dog across to him until her head rests upon his foot.*]

Book IV

THE PLAYER TRAINS MENTALLY

Topics and Exercises

19

STUDYING THE ROLE

A. AFTER THE PLAY IS CAST

B. MEMORIZING

C. BUILDING

EXERCISE 1: from *Lady Windermere's Fan* by Oscar Wilde
EXERCISE 2: from *Dead End* by Sidney Kingsley

D. SYNCHRONIZING WITH OTHERS

19

STUDYING THE ROLE

WHEN WE completed the study of the first section, "The Actor Forms Habits," we had studied the only phase of acting that has an element of finality. When habits are formed they are more or less finished; but most of the actor's training goes on indefinitely. Indeed, his physical training is never finished. He is like the musician who practices scales and exercises to keep in trim. The training that he must give himself for emotional responsiveness is also a continuous task.

A player studies and trains mentally for only one play at a time. Each new play brings with it as many problems as did the one before, but they are different problems. Each problem must be attacked, worked out, and completed for each play. There is no short cut in mental training, and very little carry-over. The mind can, of course, be trained to grasp quickly, and steps in the process of study should become habitual; but analyzing the play, getting acquainted with the character, studying the background, and memorizing are new with each play. Great actors have learned the value of delving deeply into every play for which they are cast. Follow their example. Study your role.

After the play is cast

As soon as a play is cast there is usually a reading rehearsal of it. At this time, in amateur groups, a full copy of the play is placed in the hands of the players. Members of professional groups receive only *sides* for the study of their roles.

Definite steps should be taken by the beginning player in studying his part. The following procedure has been found by thousands of players to be helpful:

1. Read again and study the entire play. Understand it thoroughly, noting particularly the different scenes containing complications.
2. Determine the place of each main character in the story and in developing the plot.
3. Determine the relationship of character to character. What need is there for your own character in the play?
4. Discover, from what other characters say about you and from how they act, everything that you possibly can about the character you are to portray. Study your own lines also, to learn about your character.
5. Analyze each scene in which you are to appear and decide what your share in developing the plot is to be.
6. Close your eyes and visualize your character: his size, walk, mannerisms, actions. What does he wear? Clothing should be in keeping with the period, his walk in life, his disposition, his financial standing, and his thinking.
7. Learn to know him so well that you will know exactly how he will react to others and even what he likes to think about when he is alone.

If the character seems glib and speaks his mind before he thinks, then how does he probably walk? How does he handle his magazine? How does he speak, and how much and in what manner does he listen to others?

If your character is a flirt, how does she walk and talk? Is there

a difference when she talks with her family and when an outsider is present? She may not dare to make eyes; that would destroy an effective scene for the others. Just how does she conduct herself?

Would a little chuckle here and there add effectiveness to the story the old man is telling? When would his eyes twinkle, and when would he gaze ahead? How old is he? What time of day is suggested in the scene? Then, is he tired or rested?

It may be your lot to play a nervous type; and there are many types of nervous persons. What kind are you representing? Or, yours may be a calm, collected type, but someone who suddenly finds himself in a jam. He becomes ill at ease, and his nerves are on edge. How will you show his feelings?

8. Give special attention to scenes in which your character is on stage but has no lines. What can he do to help the effectiveness of the play?

Memorizing

When you learn that memorizing the part is *not* the first phase of your study, you will be on the road to better acting. After you have fully studied the play and analyzed your role, you are ready to begin memorizing.

1. It is best to work one scene at a time—that is, from one entrance to the exit following it. First, go through the script and red-pencil all your cues. These are important and should stand out.

2. Study your lines to find the full significance of each speech. Taking each speech alone, find its *key* words. Underscore these to be sure that you will memorize the meaning and point-up the thought.

Although a person may know how to use his voice, the question of what to use will often disturb him. Phrasing the lines troubles the professional as well as the beginning actor. Many different meanings can be expressed by punctuating the speech

in different places. Great actors have disagreed upon the appropriate phrasing for a single line. One of the early steps in preparing a part is to decide upon the vocal punctuation needed between the many ideas. If lines are incorrectly phrased, a misleading meaning may result. The time between phrases will be indescribably short. An actor's reading of his lines must be precise and stimulating as he reads with varying degree of tempo, varying emphasis, rich meaningful intonations, and a knowing use of pause.

3. Locate all comedy words or ideas. Decide upon possible ways of pointing them.

4. Read the scene aloud to get a feeling for it. Move through the pantomime and business as you read your lines with their cues. Thus you memorize in three ways at once: through the eye (the page), through the ear (sound), and through feeling (movement).

5. Take each speech with its action several times. Every time you say the line, prefix it with the right cue. This is important because it insures rapid progress of the play. If players memorize their cues along with their speeches, they will become alert to their cues when they hear them spoken and will answer with the right speech. When you hear someone speak your name in a crowd, you become suddenly alert and instinctively answer. Follow through with your speech, then, without a break between the cue and the line.

Let two students work together on the following speeches with their cues. The cue is in italics and must be linked directly to the speech.

1. . . . *Ezra's weak heart by this time.* What are you driving at. Christine?

From *Mourning Becomes Electra* by Eugene O'Neill.

2. . . . *man, woman, and child in America!* Oh, no! I don't want anything like that!

From *Of Thee I Sing* by George S. Kaufman and Morrie Rysking.

3. . . . *a little something to exterminate 'em.* They're coming from the southwest, Sol, not the northwest.

From *Both Your Houses* by Maxwell Anderson.

4. . . . *through college and med school* . . . Med school, too?

From *Men in White* by Sidney Kingsley.

5. . . . *as if that made any difference.* He offered you a hundred thousand dollars?

From *Confessional* by Percival Wilde.

6. . . . *were brought up. Your mother*— Just leave my mother out of it. I guess she didn't spoil me the way yours did. Of course, I wasn't an only daughter.

From *Thursday Evening* by Christopher Morley.

7. . . . *Yes, sir.* Oh, Hocky—It was important! Terribly important! It was a rehearsal of our wedding.

From *Men in White* by Sidney Kingsley.

8. . . . *I have made you my wife.* Well then, and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation and that is—

From *The School for Scandal* by Richard B. Sheridan.

Building

Every phrase or sentence has one or two words that are more important than are the other words. Give these a little extra *umph,* or a significant inflection, or more careful timing. They are key words.

Not only special words but also certain ideas must stand out. Build these by allowing less important bits—the atmosphere sections—to move on a lower plane with less pointing.

When studying the climactic scenes, make them *top* the others. Plan how they can be made to stand out in their full importance. A single speech may have several climaxes. If it has, be sure to hold back on it; to subdue one part, then build the next, and drop down for the third in order to come up strongly on the fourth.

Notice how the authors have written *build* into the lines of the following speeches. An actor with such speeches cannot help moving forward climactically. However, many speeches that should have climaxes do not have the build written in. When such is the case, the player must add with his voice and acting what the author has failed to insert.

In ESCAPE, *by* JOHN GALSWORTHY, MATT DENANT, *an escaped convict, seeks cover in the vestry of a village church. The* PARSON *and he talk about the position the latter should take.*

PARSON. Yes. [*Nodding.*] When you're gone—shall I be entitled to have been silent about you without telling *them* I have been silent? Am I entitled to refrain from helping the Law without letting them know it? If I let them know it, can I keep what little influence I now possess? And is it right for a parson to go on where he has no influence? That's my trouble, Captain Denant.

In THE FOOL, *by* CHANNING POLLOCK, CLARE *and* DANIEL *are having a serious talk about their love for each other.*

DANIEL. Love?—Love isn't all. [*She turns.*] Not the love you mean. You said: "Take me and we'll both forget." Could we have forgotten promises unkept, faith disappointed, aspirations unrealized? No, my dear, love isn't all; nor even happiness. There's something bigger, and better, and more important, and that something is—DUTY!

The speech of Mrs. Erlynne in *Lady Windermere's Fan* (in the following exercise) must have ebb, and flow, then ebb again. An actress could not build that long speech continuously higher and stronger.

And last of all, since the actor must be able to top all his other scenes in the big climax of the play—if that climax depends upon him—you should find and study all climactic words, climactic ideas, climactic scenes, and finally the climax of the play.

Remember that these builds will not be made in one way only; you must use variety. A low voice, filled with earnestness and punctuated with telling pauses, can be far more climactic than a voice roaring through lines. However, not all speeches are written to be climaxed by use of subdued tone. Try out different

methods. Make the character grow more interesting as the play progresses. Do not give all you have of your character in the first few speeches. As you study the character, you will first discover the different contributions that he can make and then you will distribute them through the play.

Emotional intensity should also build. Plan so that the highest peak does not come early in the play. Most plays do not call for much emotional intensity early; rather, they call upon it to heighten effectiveness later.

In the following exercise, Mrs. Erlynne will probably be standing as she speaks in order that she may fully dominate the scene. She will urge as strongly through her bodily expression as she does through her voice and speech.

EXERCISE 1

(TWO WOMEN.)

[LADY WINDERMERE *believes her husband faithless. She steals away alone to* LORD DARLINGTON'S *rooms prepared to go away with him.* MRS. ERLYNNE, *the woman* LADY WINDERMERE *accuses, finds her there and urges her to go back to her husband whom* MRS. ERLYNNE *knows to be guiltless.*[1]]

LADY WINDERMERE. You talk as if you had a heart. Women like you have no hearts. Heart is not in you. You are bought and sold.

MRS. ERLYNNE [*starts, with a gesture of pain. Then restrains herself, and comes over to where* LADY WINDERMERE *is sitting. As she speaks, she stretches out her hands towards her, but does not dare to touch her*]. Believe what you choose about me. I am not worth a moment's sorrow. But don't spoil your beautiful young life on my account! You don't know what may be in store for you, unless you leave this house at once. You don't know what it is to fall into the pit, to be despised, mocked, abandoned, sneered at—to be an outcast! to find the door shut against one, to have to creep in by hideous byways, afraid every moment lest the mask should be stripped from one's face, and all the while to hear the laughter, the horrible laughter of the world, a thing more tragic than all the tears the world has ever

[1] Wilde, Oscar, *Lady Windermere's Fan.* New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1919.

shed. You don't know what it is. One pays for one's sin, and then one pays again, and all one's life one pays. You must never know that.—As for me, if suffering be an expiation, then at this moment I have expiated all my faults, whatever they have been; for tonight you have made a heart in one who had it not, made it and broken it.—But let that pass. I may have wrecked my own life, but I will not let you wreck yours. You—why, you are a mere girl, you would be lost. You haven't got the kind of brains that enables a woman to get back. You have neither the wit nor the courage. You couldn't stand dishonor. No! Go back, Lady Windermere, to the husband who loves you, whom you love. You have a child, Lady Windermere. Go back to that child who even now, in pain or in joy, may be calling to you. [LADY WINDERMERE *rises.*] God gave you that child. He will require from you that you make his life fine, that you watch over him. What answer will you make to God if his life is ruined through you? Back to your house, Lady Windermere—your husband loves you. He has never swerved for a moment from the love he bears you. But even if he had a thousand loves, you must stay with your child. If he was harsh to you, you must stay with your child. If he ill-treated you, you must stay with your child. If he abandoned you, your place is with your child. [LADY WINDERMERE *bursts into tears, rushes to her.*]

LADY WINDERMERE [*holding out her hands, helplessly, as a child might do*]. Take me home. Take me home.

MRS. ERLYNNE [*is about to embrace her. Then restrains herself. There is a look of wonderful joy in her face*]. Come! Where is your cloak? Here. Put it on. Come at once! [*They go to the door.*]

EXERCISE 2

(TWO MEN; ONE GIRL; THREE BOYS.)

[TOMMY *and his alley pals are the bad boys of the neighborhood.* TOMMY *has cut a man's arm and is being sought by the police. His older sister,* DRINA, *is afraid for him.*[2]]

TOMMY. [*Slowly.*] Yuh know, Drina, I tink 'at's what I ought tuh do.

DRINA. [*Holding him tight, terrified. In a hoarse whisper.*] No. I won't let you do that.

[2] Kingsley, Sidney, *Dead End,* in Gassner, John (editor), *Twenty Best Plays.* New York: Crown Publishers, 1939. Reprinted by special permission of Random House.

TOMMY. Yeah. [*He detaches her arm, and goes to* MULLIGAN.] Hey, mister!

MULLIGAN. What do you want? Come on, beat it!

TOMMY. Wait a minute! I'm Tommy McGrath.

MULLIGAN. What of it? [*The other* BOYS *creep back.*]

TOMMY. I'm da kid dat stabbed dat man today.

MULLIGAN. What!!! [*He grabs* TOMMY'S *arm. The* DOORMAN *comes running over to verify this.*]

TOMMY. [*His voice shrill and trembly.*] Yeah. He wuz chokin' me and breakin' my ahm . . . so I did it.

MULLIGAN. So, you're the kid. I bin lookin' fuh you.

DOORMAN. [*Who has been staring at* TOMMY, *suddenly elated.*] That's him all right. That's him! Wait, I'll call Mr. Griswald. He'll tell you! [*He rushes off through the gateway.*]

MULLIGAN. All right. I'll keep him here. Don't you worry.

DRINA. [*Goes to* MULLIGAN, *pleading.*] Tommy! No, no, they can't take him, let him go, officer! Please!

MULLIGAN. I can't do that, miss.

DRINA. He didn't know what he was doing. He's only a baby.

MULLIGAN. You tell it to the judge. Tell it to the judge.

DRINA. [*Trying to wrench* TOMMY *free.*] No! Let him go! Let him go!

MULLIGAN. [*Pushes her away roughly.*] Get away. Don't try that! [*To* GIMPTY.] You better take her away or she'll get hurt.

GIMPTY. Drina, come here.

DRINA. No.

MULLIGAN. In a minute I'll take her to the station-house too.

TOMMY. Aw, Drina, cut it out, will yuh? Dat ain't gonna help.

GIMPTY. He's right, you know.

T. B. [*Sidles over to* TOMMY, *whispering.*] Hey, Tommy if yuh go tuh rifawmatory, look up a guy named. . . .

MULLIGAN. [*Shoving* T. B. *away.*] Git outa here! [T. B. *flies across the street.*]

DRINA. Yes, of course he's right. I'm so . . . I just don't know what I'm. . . .

DOORMAN. [*Enters with* MR. GRISWALD.] Yes, Mr. Griswald, I'm sure it's the boy. [GRISWALD *pushes him aside, and walks briskly to* MULLIGAN.]

GRISWALD. So you've caught him.

MULLIGAN. Yes, sir.

DRINA. He gave himself up!

GRISWALD. Let me look at him. [*He looks searchingly into* TOMMY's *face and nods.*] Yes, this is the boy all right.

MULLIGAN. Good.

DRINA. He gave himself up.

GRISWALD. [*Turns to her.*] What's that?

DRINA. [*Trying desperately to be calm.*] I'm his sister!

GRISWALD. Oh. Well . . . a fine brother you've got.

MULLIGAN. [*To* ANGEL *and* MILTY, *who have crept to the foreground.*] Come on, get out of here! Beat it! [*They scramble back again under the hopper.*]

DRINA Listen, mister! Give him another chance. . . . [*She clutches his arm. He winces and draws his breath in pain.*] Please, will you?

GRISWALD. Careful of that arm!

DRINA. Oh! I'm sorry . . . Give him another chance! Let him go!

GRISWALD. Another chance to what? To kill somebody?

TOMMY. I won' evuh do it again. Yew wuz chokin' me an' I wuz seein' black aready, an' I . . .

DRINA. Have a heart, mister! He's only a kid. He didn't know what he was doing.

GRISWALD. No?

DRINA. No.

GRISWALD. Then you should have taught him better.

DRINA. [*Her impulse is to fight back, but she restrains herself.*] Listen! He's a good boy. And he's got brains. Ask his teacher . . . Miss Judell, P. S. 59. He used to get A, A, A, . . . all the time. He's smart.

GRISWALD. Then I can't see any excuse at all for him.

DRINA. [*Flaring.*] All right! He made a mistake! He's sorry. What's so terrible about that?

GIMPTY. Sh! Drina!

GRISWALD. I have a gash half an inch deep in my wrist. The doctor is afraid of infection. What do you say to that?

DRINA. [*With such effort at self-control that she trembles.*] I'm sorry! I'm awfully sorry!

GRISWALD. Sorry! That won't help, will it?

DRINA. Will it help to send him to reform school?

GRISWALD. I don't know. It'll at least keep him from doing it to someone else.

✣ *Synchronizing with Others* ✣

You should not depend upon the whole group for working up of your part. Begin with them, rehearse with them to unify and synchronize the parts of the play into a whole, but work out the study and build of your role when you are alone.

While you are on stage, *listen* to the lines of your co-workers. Actually hear *with your mind* what they say, and respond according to the way your character should respond. Failure to do this is a definite and serious fault of most amateur plays. The actors do not seem to listen and to register as the lines are spoken.

When in dialogue with others, hold up the *first* and *last* words of each speech. Make the first word or two *top* those of the speech just before. The last and first words, often the most important in the speech, are habitually dropped and lost by unskilled players. Start each speech with a *push* and end it with another *push* to keep words up and projected.

The tempo must also be regulated while working with the group. To build tempo and adjust it is, for the most part, a group task. Speed your lines and actions in early rehearsals. You can slow them down later if it seems best. Seldom is an amateur play given too rapidly, but many hundreds drag. Pick up your cues, fill your pauses with action and emotion, quicken your pace of speech—without dispensing with the phrasing; these are the best means to quicken tempo and to maintain it at its best.

As the characters work with one another, they will take on more definite relationships. As a result, your own portrayal will become more accurate and your playing surer.

Along with tensed muscles in your face as you show anxiety will come a correspondingly tensed body and a tensed voice. When the line needs a rapid, glib chatter, your body will need to move in harmony with your voice, and all of this must seem, to the audience, to be done with ease.

This co-ordination will take on a definite rhythm. The action of each part of the body will simulate a rhythm and harmony

suitable to the other parts. We have seen the man, with brisk walk, swing of arms, and head erect, greet a friend with a hale "Good morning," as he doffed his hat. We have also seen the old man, whose steps are unsteady, bodily movements calculating and slow, look wonderingly at the friend before he recognized him and smiled his pleased good morning in rhythm with his other movements. To interchange any movement of these two men would generate discord.

The rule, "Interpret with the whole body adjusted to the voice," is a good one to follow. The rhythm for each characterization will have to be thought through and worked out independently. Do not copy any artist. See all of them and observe their strong points; observe *everything* about them. Then, try to incorporate into your own acting whatever points in their acting you believe will help you. As each player's rhythm becomes convincing, a pleasing rhythmic movement will develop in the play as a whole, and all parts of it will become synchronized into an artistic unit.

The student will wish to learn the great possibilities in the use of *contrast.* The dramatist has put many contrasts into his play. He has written beauty and ugliness, pleasure and sorrow, hero and villain into it. The actor may enhance the attractiveness of the play by using contrasts in his part of the work. In some scenes he will speak rapidly; in other scenes slowly. Sometimes he will be gay; at other times calm and quiet. Sometimes his voice will be loud and at other times low. Always the actor must *keep in character,* portraying only the changes in mood of the character he is representing and synchronizing his work with that of the others.

But as he blends his acting with that of the others, he will strive to make his own acting entirely different from theirs. Every artistic composition must have variety, contrast. A piano selection has many contrasts—high and low notes, runs and holds, trills and melody, all woven into a rhythmic pattern. The actors

Wurts Bros.

The Eternal Road, by Franz Werfel. Staged by Max Reinhardt. Many Jews toiling for Pharaoh. The action of all groups synchronizes to form a rhythm peculiar to this play alone.

Ladies of the Jury, by F. Ballard. A University of Washington production, Seattle, Washington. Notice the different rhythm felt in this play. It was staged in the University of Washington Penthouse Theatre, where the audience sits around the entire playing space.

in a play will strive to synchronize many contrasts into the pattern of an artistic production.

Contrasts among characters must be even more striking than those shown in the work of the individual player. Each person in the play should look, act, and be an individual entirely different from the others. In rehearsals, these differences can be emphasized if it seems advisable.

As the players work together, the climaxes may be contrasted with one another by being built in different ways. Just as each individual player works contrast into his vocal expression, so the whole group will work variety into their vocal interpretations. Inflections, pitch, volume, force, energy, can and should define the characters and their places in the play.

The tempo of the play must be varied with the thought. Some of the best actors have become outstanding largely because of their ability to vary artistically the tempo of the play. Actors will want to begin, early, to work for variety and contrast in all of their acting. The voice work, particularly, needs variety; however, the variations must be appropriate and executed to the advantage of the play as a whole.

Throughout all rehearsal and acting, the actor who wishes to excel will train all of his faculties to know and to do those things that will go to make artistic work. This will require much hard study. Many problems must be solved, decisions made, and difficulties and handicaps overcome. The one who thinks that acting is all play has not yet gone far. Acting is work; hard work; but for all, we hope, it is work crammed full of fun. Put your hearts into it and you will take from it infinite joy and satisfaction.

Topics and Exercises

20

DIRECTING SPEECH

A. DIRECTING SPEECH AWAY

EXERCISE 1: from *Confessional* by Percival Wilde

B. DIRECTING SPEECH TOWARD

EXERCISE 2: from *The Aulis Difficulty* by Maurice Baring

C. DIRECTING SPEECH FRONT:

1. FOR NARRATION

EXERCISE 3: from *The Adding Machine* by Elmer Rice

2. FOR COMEDY

EXERCISE 4: from *The Mayor and the Manicure* by George Ade

3. FOR IMPORTANT THOUGHTS

EXERCISE 5: from *Thebesberry Place* by Monita Woodburn

4. FOR ASIDES

EXERCISE 6: from *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* by Molière

5. FOR SOLILOQUIES

EXERCISE 7: from *Hamlet* by Shakespeare

20

DIRECTING SPEECH

THE laboratory for the chemist is the world of liquids, gases, and solids. The laboratory for the contractor is the world of wood, stone, steel, and glass. The laboratory for the actor is the world of men.

If, then, the actor is to know how people react under various conditions, he must observe them under such conditions in his laboratory. One cannot depend upon judgment and reason for guides; the student actor *must* learn not only to observe others but also to remember his observations.

Just how do we act when we are talking with another? Watch two or three people talking together and see what they do. If they are in no hurry and if what they are saying is of no great importance, each, as he speaks, will look off, or down, or at the right of his companion, then for a moment into his face, and away again. Yet, when young people act on the stage, most of them seem to feel that they must look into the faces of their companions for almost every word they speak. Since this is not true to life, the tendency should be guarded against.

The most common position for two characters is the quarter position. In this position they can easily look in different places

and the audience will benefit. A character who stands upstage of another has the advantage because the audience can see more of his face. The character giving the most active response in the scene should have this advantage. He may not have the most lines, but because his part calls for an active face, he needs the better position.

Sofas are usually placed on a slant toward the audience. Two characters will sit so that the one with the active face occupies the upstage position. He may then sit forward, thus allowing the audience to see his face.

One character may hold the center of interest in a scene in which several are taking part. This one dare not come too far down stage if the other characters are to watch him as they listen and talk with him.

To face directly front is a very emphatic position, which is used only to add strength to the character or the lines. Since this position seems to draw a character out of relationship with others, it is used sparingly. At times, however, it is permissible and appropriate.

The actor who faces front never looks into the audience. He directs his speech out over their heads. His chin should be well lifted for most lines. The people in the balcony will profit from such a scene; those on the main floor also have an advantage when speech is "lifted."

Occasionally a character takes a full-back position—with his back toward the audience—and directs his speech upstage. This position is strong because it is spectacular enough to lend definite emphasis to a line or a character.

Directing Speech Away

In real life, we constantly shift the direction of our speech toward and to either side of those with whom we converse. On the stage, then, we should direct speech sometimes to right, or left, or above, or below, and often entirely away from the face of

the other character. When talking to several individuals on stage, speech may be directed from one to another.

Even though the *speaker's* speech and eyes are directed to different places when conversing with another character, still the *listener* will usually look toward and listen to the character speaking. Many times one character will evade his companion's glance, because, for some reason, he does not wish to face him. At other times he will avert his eyes simply because it is natural to do so.

Looking away in casual dialogue makes a scene more natural; but at the same time it lends less force to what is being said. The actor must look back to those listening often enough to keep the group unified.

In the exercise that follows, Baldwin will speak most of his lines simply, directing many of them away from his companions. His family will look at him more than he at them, because of their interest in what he is saying. John will *avoid* meeting his father's eyes when he says, "Rather an expensive compliment." Also, his following speeches will require that his eyes be averted because of this attitude. John's father would not admire his son's attitude, so John would prefer not to meet his father's eye.

EXERCISE 1

(TWO MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*The family of* ROBERT BALDWIN *are in their own living-room. They are listening to* MR. BALDWIN *explain his feeling toward the dishonest business which has taken place in the bank where he is a clerk. He and the dishonest associate have been lifelong friends.*[1]]

BALDWIN. Young man and old man, I've worked with him or for him the best part of my life. I'm loyal to him—I've always been loyal to him—but when John Gresham ceases to be an honest man, John Gresham and I part company!

MARTHA [*weeping softly*]. Robert! Robert!

BALDWIN. I've got only a few years to live, but I'll live those as I've

[1] Wilde, Percival, *Confessional,* in Tucker, S. Marion (editor), *Twelve One-Act Plays for Study and Production.* Boston: Ginn and Company, 1929. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

lived the rest of my life. I'll go to my grave clean! [*He rises presently, goes to the window, and looks out.*] The rain's stopped, hasn't it?

EVIE [*following him and taking his hand*]. Yes, father.

BALDWIN. It'll be a fine day tomorrow. [*There is a pause.*]

JOHN. Dad.

BALDWIN. Yes?

JOHN. What did Gresham offer you?

BALDWIN [*simply*]. A hundred thousand dollars.

EVIE. What!

MARTHA. Robert!

BALDWIN. He put it aside for me without anybody knowing it. It's out of his private fortune, he says. It's not the depositors' money—as if that made any difference.

EVIE [*as if hypnotized*]. He offered you a hundred thousand dollars?

BALDWIN [*smiling at her amazement*]. I could have had it for the one word "Yes"—or even for nodding my head—or a look of the eyes.

JOHN. How—how do you know he meant it?

BALDWIN. His word is good.

JOHN. Even now?

BALDWIN. He never lied to me, John. [*He pauses.*] I suppose my eyes must have shown something I didn't feel. He noticed it. He unlocked a drawer and *showed* me the hundred thousand.

JOHN. In cash?

BALDWIN. In thousand-dollar bills. They were genuine: I examined them.

EVIE [*slowly*]. And for that he wants you to say "I don't remember."

BALDWIN [*smiling*]. Just that: three words only.

JOHN. But you won't?

BALDWIN [*shaking his head*]. Those three words would choke me if I tried to speak them. For some other man, perhaps, it would be easy. But for me? All of my past would rise up and strike me in the face. It would mean to the world that for years I had been living a lie: that I was not the honorable man I thought I was. When John Gresham offered me money, I was angry. But when I rejected it, and he showed no surprise, then I was pleased. It was a compliment, don't you think so?

JOHN [*slowly*]. Rather an expensive compliment.

BALDWIN. Eh?

JOHN. A compliment which cost you a hundred thousand dollars.

BALDWIN. A compliment which was *worth* a hundred thousand dollars. I've never had that much money to spend in my life, John, but if I had I couldn't imagine a finer way to spend it.

JOHN [*slowly*]. Yes, I suppose so.

MARTHA [*after a pause*]. Will the depositors lose much, Robert?

BALDWIN [*emphatically*]. The depositors will not lose a cent.

✣ *Directing Speech Toward* ✣

EXERCISE 2

(TWO MEN; THREE WOMEN.)

[*"The Aulis Difficulty" is a travesty satirizing the old Greek legend of the sacrifice of* IPHIGENIA *at the time of the Trojan War. The scene opens showing* AGAMEMNON *alone with his daughter* IPHIGENIA, *trying to persuade her to be sacrificed in order to appease the wrath of the goddess* ARTEMIS *who has failed to send favorable winds for his sailing.*[2]]

AGAMEMNON. It is highly improbable, of course; only you *must* consent; you must behave exactly as if you were going to be sacrificed; you must express your entire willingness to lay down your life for your country; and knowing what a patriotic, obedient, filial child you are, I am certain this will be a positive pleasure to you.

IPHIGENIA. I won't.

AGAMEMNON. You mean you won't even pretend to—

IPHIGENIA. I won't have anything to do with it at all—I think it's monstrous, and I'm sure mamma will agree with me.

AGAMEMNON. My dearest child, let me beg of you not to say a word about this to your mother just yet.

IPHIGENIA. Of course, I shall tell her. [*Enter* CLYTAEMNESTRA.] Here is mamma. Mamma—

CLYTAEMNESTRA. What is all this?

IPHIGENIA. Papa says I must be sacrificed to Artemis, in order that they may have a smooth passage to Troy, and to prevent Ajax being seasick. I say I won't. [*She begins to cry.*]

CLYTAEMNESTRA. [*Taking her in her arms.*] Of course you shan't, my love—my darling. [*To* AGAMEMNON.] What is this ridiculous nonsense?

[2] Baring, Maurice, *The Aulis Difficulty,* in Tucker, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

AGAMEMNON. I assure you it is not my doing. I merely repeated what Calchas had said. He consulted the Oracle, and it appears that Artemis is vexed: she is, in fact, very much displeased. She says we shall never leave Aulis unless Iphigenia consents to go through the form of being sacrificed—of course it's only a mater of form—but she must consent.

CLYTAEMNESTRA. I see. As long as I'm here my child shall not degrade herself by being a party to any ridiculous farce of this nature. I don't care a bit if we do stay here. You ought never to have come here for one thing. I always said it was absurd from the first—just because of Helen's silly escapade. If you can't get a fair wind you'll have to go home; but you shan't touch Iphigenia. [*Enter a* MAID.]

THE MAID. [*To* CLYTAEMNESTRA.] The cook wants to know whether the fish are to be boiled or fried.

CLYTAEMNESTRA. [*Angrily.*] I told her fried. [*To* AGAMEMNON.] I must go and look after her. I'll be back in a moment. [*Exits.*]

AGAMEMNON. There, you see what you've done. You've set your mother against the whole plan.

IPHIGENIA. [*Crying.*] I hope I have. Of course, if you want to kill me, please do . . . just [*Sobbing.*] as if I were a sheep.

AGAMEMNON. My dear child, do be calm. Who ever talked of killing— [*Enter* CALCHAS.] She won't hear of it.

CALCHAS. My dear child, please be sensible and think of the interests at stake. Remember you are grown up, and we grown-up people have to face these things.

IPHIGENIA. I don't care what you say, I won't be sacrificed—I won't be killed like a sheep.

CALCHAS. Even if the worst came to the worst, I promise you you would feel no pain. I assure you we have reached a pitch of perfection in the working of these things which makes all accidents impossible. Besides, think of the honor and glory.

AGAMEMNON. And it's not as if she would be killed really.

CALCHAS. It's extremely improbable; but even if she were to lose consciousness and not recover, I am sure most girls would envy her. Just think, your statue would be put up in every city in Greece.

AGAMEMNON. All the poets would celebrate her.

CALCHAS. You see it's not as if she were married.

AGAMEMNON. She has always refused everyone.

CALCHAS. And now it's too late.

AGAMEMNON. Girls are so independent nowadays.

Directing Speech Front

The player should occasionally direct speech front—toward the audience. By speaking it front, he will find that he can *point* a line more effectively.

A thought expressed for the world in general may be directed front; and when a character is thinking, feeling for his words, he will face front, sometimes almost staring into space as he thinks.

Narration is often directed front, and *comedy* can be pointed better when spoken toward the house. The actor may *emphasize* a thought by speaking the important words in this direction. *Asides* and *soliloquies* are customarily directed toward the audience. These, however, are used only in plays of earlier periods.

For Narration

A person thinking hard usually stares into space or his eyes wander. For that reason, when an actor is to relate an incident or tell a story, he too looks off—which is usually out front—as he seems to think out what he is saying. The following exercise shows how speech may be directed front for narration.

EXERCISE 3

(TWO MEN.)

[ZERO *and* SHRDLU, *two dead men, have come upon one another in a graveyard at night.* SHRDLU *is telling* ZERO *about murdering his own mother and other sins he committed in life.*[3]]

ZERO. You did!

SHRDLU. Yes, a companion lent me a profane book—the only profane book I have ever read, I'm thankful to say. It was called *Treasure Island*. Have you ever read it?

ZERO. No, I never was much on readin' books.

SHRDLU. It is a wicked book—a lurid tale of adventure. But it kindled in my sinful heart a desire to go to sea. And so I ran away from home.

[3] Rice, Elmer, *The Adding Machine*, in *Theatre Guild Anthology*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1936. *Caution:* This selection is fully protected by copyright laws. Reprinted by special permission of Samuel French, Inc. No performance, either amateur or professional, may be given without prior permission, in writing, of Samuel French, Inc.

ZERO. What did you do—get a job as a sailor?

SHRDLU. I never saw the sea—not to the day of my death. Luckily, my mother's loving intuition warned her of my intention and I was sent back home. She welcomed me with open arms. Not an angry word, not a look of reproach. But I could read the mute suffering in her eyes as we prayed together all through the night.

ZERO [*sympathetically*]. Gee, that must 'a' been tough. Gee, the mosquitoes are bad, ain't they? [*He tries awkwardly to slap at them with his stiff hands.*]

SHRDLU [*absorbed in his narrative*]. I thought that experience had cured me of evil and I began to think about a career. I wanted to go in foreign missions at first, but we couldn't bear the thought of the separation. So we finally decided that I should become a proof reader.

ZERO. Say, slip me one o' them Camels, will you? I'm gettin' all bit up.

SHRDLU. Certainly. [*He hands* ZERO *cigarettes and matches.*]

ZERO [*lighting up*]. Go ahead. I'm listenin'.

SHRDLU. By the time I was twenty I had a good job reading proof for a firm that printed catalogues. After a year they promoted me and let me specialize in shoe catalogues.

ZERO. Yeh? That must 'a' been a good job.

SHRDLU. It was a very good job. I was on the shoe catalogues for thirteen years. I'd been on them yet, if I hadn't— [*He chokes back a sob.*]

ZERO. They oughta put a shot o' citronella in that embalmin'-fluid.

SHRDLU [*he sighs*]. We were so happy together. I had my steady job. And Sundays we would go to morning, afternoon, and evening services. It was an honest and moral mode of life.

ZERO. It sure was.

SHRDLU. Then came that fatal Sunday. Dr. Amaranth, our minister, was having dinner with us—one of the few pure spirits on earth. When he had finished saying grace, we had our soup. Everything was going along as usual—we were eating our soup and discussing the sermon, just like every other Sunday I could remember. Then came the leg of lamb— [*He breaks off, then resumes in a choking voice.*] I see the whole scene before me—Dr. Amaranth at my right, my mother at my left, the leg of lamb on the table in front of me and the cuckoo clock on the little shelf between the windows. [*He stops and wipes his eyes.*]

For Comedy

Comedy may be obvious or it may be hidden. Broad comedy does not require any special technique to permit the audience to see the fun. It is often foolproof, so that all actors playing it may bring out the fun with varying degrees. Subtle comedy, however, requires the application of certain technique. Often the best laughs are lost to the audience because the actor does not use the proper technique in projecting them.

An element of playing comedy that cannot be overlooked is the personality of the actor. Some people can make anything funny; others cannot. However, with varying degrees of success, all players should be able to play comedy lines.

One very effective means of pointing-up comedy is to direct the line toward the audience. Along with this, to pause is almost essential. In the following exercise for the purpose of helping the student to project the comedy, some stage directions have been added to those already given by the playwright.

EXERCISE 4

(TWO MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[*On the day that* WALLIE, *the son of the Mayor of Springfield, is to return home from college,* MAYOR MILFORD *receives a visit from a young woman from the college town where* WALLIE *has been. She is demanding "damages," claiming that* WALLIE *promised to marry her. When* WALLIE *arrives, his father takes him to task in her presence.*[4]]

GENEVIEVE [*indignantly*]. You led me to believe—

MILFORD [*interrupting her—to* WALLIE]. Anyhow, you wrote her. You—the son of a politician! In the future tell 'em anything you want to *(pause and direct the rest of the speech toward the audience)*[5]—but you get a rubber stamp.

WALLIE. I guess I made a fool of myself, but I didn't mean anything.

[4] Ade, George, *The Mayor and the Manicure,* in *One-Act Plays for Stage and Study,* First Series. New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1925. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

[5] Stage directions in parentheses are the author's.

MILFORD. Of course you didn't. The chump who rocked the boat didn't mean anything. *(Last of line given significantly.)*

WALLIE. I didn't suppose—

MILFORD. [*Interrupting.*] Now see here—you've been studying for four years—you think you've learned—but there's one subject about which you'll never know much, if you study for forty years, and that is—woman! [*This impressively but don't take too much time.*] Woman was created merely to keep man guessing! I know—*(direct line front)* I've guessed! You wait outside five minutes and mebbe I can settle this thing for you. [WALLIE *goes to door.*]

GENEVIEVE. [*As they cross, aside—confidently.*] Only one way to settle it!

WALLIE. [*In doorway.*] I'm sorry to get you into trouble.

MILFORD. Yes—I—I appreciate your *(direct the word "sorrow" front)* sorrow! [*Exit* WALLIE, L. MILFORD, *after turning and staring at* GENEVIEVE *who looks back at him defiantly, goes to desk, standing behind it.*] Madam, you may be the best little manicure in the world, but you're not going to trim me. *(Direct "trim me" front.)*

For Important Thoughts

A very *important thought or word* can be stressed by speaking it toward the audience. In Exercise 5, Naomi may look front as she says her decisive lines: "I am not going to be married," and "They will have to be cancelled." She will speak slowly and calmly.

EXERCISE 5

(FOUR WOMEN.)

[NAOMI'S *family and friends are very happy over her approaching marriage to a prominent young writer,* KENNETH BELL. NAOMI, *who has been influenced by others to accept his offer of marriage, finds herself very unhappy about her engagement.* NAOMI'S *mother and two of her friends are discussing the wedding plans.*[6]]

HELEN. Yes, I'll see to the flowers. And I'll see that it's a regular bower.

[6] Woodburn, Monita, *Thebesberry Place.* Unpublished. Printed by permission of the author.

JULIANNA. Yes, do. But I still wish she'd express her wishes about it. Seems a shame for a girl's wedding—

MRS. KEIL. She won't, I don't believe. She insists that she doesn't know about decorating, or care.

JULIANNA. Of course, after all, there are so many details. And with only two weeks to crowd everything into—

MRS. KEIL. The breakfast. It's going to be delightful. They say it's going to be the nicest one of the reason.

JULIANNA. Nicer than Harriet's?

MRS. KEIL. That's what Kennards say. They should know. [NAOMI *enters from the hall. She avoids meeting the eyes of the others as she drifts listlessly to the French chair at R.*] Ah, here you are, dear. We were hoping you'd hurry back. How's the dream dress coming? Nearly finished?

NAOMI. I don't know.

MRS. KEIL. Don't know?

HELEN. Didn't you go over to fit your wedding dress? Rose Peake was quizzing me all about it. She wants it for the story in the *Sunday Herald.* She says she hasn't been able to find you anywhere, and she wants a good story, terribly. [NAOMI *makes no reply.* HELEN *picks up her gloves and starts putting them on.*] She asked me to come over and make an appointment for her. You're a naughty girl not to want your wedding written up with all the trimmings. [NAOMI *still stares into space.*] A nice story will be something for you to enjoy fifty years from now. Everybody's so excited about your marriage.

NAOMI. I'm not going to be married. [MRS. KEIL *looks at her, speechless.*]

JULIANNA. What! You—why—

LUCILLE. [*Gazing at* NAOMI *fixedly.*] What are you saying?

JULIANNA. Are you serious?

LUCILLE. You're just tired. This whirl is enough to finish a person.

JULIANNA. But the plans, the guests, and everything!

MRS. KEIL. [*Rises and comes over to* NAOMI.] Naomi, you frighten me. You can't be serious, of course. [NAOMI *does not reply.*]

JULIANNA. All the red tape for the church has been taken care of.

MRS. KEIL. All arrangements have been made.

NAOMI. They will have to be cancelled.

LUCILLE. Think, think, Naomi, what you're saying.

MRS. KEIL. There are others, dear. Kenn, think of him!

LUCILLE. It would be awful for him.

JULIANNA. He even has the passports.

LUCILLE. And his writing. He has become so well known, they all want to know what he's doing. The papers—it would be an awful scandal. [*She clasps her hands tightly together and turns away toward the window.*]

MRS. KEIL. But you have given your promise, you agreed—

NAOMI. Things have occurred that have made me change my mind.

++ *For Asides* ++

The older plays often contain many *asides.* These aside speeches are directed away from the other characters, who should seem not to hear them.

EXERCISE 6

(THREE MEN.)

[SGANARELLE *is thought to have magic healing powers. He is approached by some men and asked to come and heal a young woman who appears to be deaf and dumb.* SGANARELLE *himself claims no healing power and does not care to try healing.*[7]]

VALERE. That's the fellow, I so believe.

LUCUS. I think you are right, Valere. We've stumbled right onto him.

VALERE. Let's come nearer.

SGANARELLE. [*Kissing his bottle.*] Oh, my little rogue, how I love you, ducky darling. [*Aside.*] What the devil do these people want?

VALERE. I'm sure he's the one.

SGANARELLE. [*He puts the bottle on the ground, but seeing* VALERE *approaching, picks it up and puts it on the opposite side; then, seeing* LUCUS *approaching from the other side he takes it up and hugs it.*] They are talking together while they look at me. What can they want?

VALERE. Monsieur, isn't your name Sganarelle?

SGANARELLE. Hey? What?

VALERE. I'm asking you whether your name is not Sganarelle?

SGANARELLE. [*Turning to* VALERE, *then to* LUCUS.] Yes and No. That depends on what you want of him.

[7] Molière, *The Doctor in Spite of Himself.* Translated for the author by Dr. James R. English.

VALERE. We don't want anything except to offer him our profound respects.

SGANARELLE. Well, then—my name *is* Sganarelle.

VALERE. Honored to meet you, Monsieur. We have been recommended to you for a service we are in great need of. We have to ask your help.

SGANARELLE. Messieurs, if it is anything in my power to grant, I am entirely at your service.

VALERE. You are very kind to us. But, sir, put on your hat. The sun might be injurious to you.

LUCUS. Yes, sir, put on your hat, sir.

SGANARELLE [*aside*]. These fellows are sticklers on ceremony.

VALERE. Skillful people are much in demand, and we have been told of your wonderful cures. You must not think it strange that we come to you.

SGANARELLE. Ah, you flatter me, though, without bragging, I must confess I'm the best in the world at faggot-making.

VALERE. Really, sir?

SGANARELLE. I spare no pains. I do my work in such a way that no one can find fault with it.

VALERE. Sir, it's not a question of that.

SGANARELLE. And I sell them for ten sous a hundred.

VALERE. Lt's not discuss that, please.

SGANARELLE. I assure you I can't sell them for less.

VALERE. Sir, we know all about that.

SGANARELLE. If you know all about it, then you know that I sell them at that price.

VALERE. You are joking, Monsieur.

SGANARELLE. I'm not joking; I can't come down a penny.

VALERE. Pray, Monsieur, let's talk otherwise, please.

SGANARELLE. You may be able to find some in another place for less; but there are faggots and there are faggots; for the ones I make—

VALERE. Ah, Monsieur, let's drop this discussion.

SGANARELLE. I swear to you that you won't get them for a farthing less.

VALERE. Pooh! pooh! nonsense!

SGANARELLE. No, no; on my word, you'll have to pay me that for them. I'm not the sort of man to overcharge.

VALERE. Should a great man like you waste his time on such absurd pretenses? Should he lower himself to the point of talking like that?

Should such a scholarly man, such a famous doctor as you are, want to conceal himself from the eyes of the world? Should he want to bury the fine talents he possesses?

SGANARELLE [*aside*]. He's cracked.

VALERE. Now, now, don't try to conceal from us that you are a genius.

SGANARELLE. What do you mean, Monsieur?

LUCUS. All that shilly-shallying doesn't go. We know facts.

SGANARELLE. Say, what do you want to talk to me about? Whom do you take me for?

VALERE. Exactly who you are; a great doctor.

SGANARELLE. Doctor yourself! I'm not one. I never was.

VALERE [*aside*]. Now he's having his fit. [*To* SGANARELLE.] Don't pretend any longer, Monsieur. . . .

For Soliloquies

It was also the custom of former writers to give *soliloquies* to the characters. The soliloquy of Hamlet offers great opportunity for a variety of expression. Hamlet, in his confusion, jumps quickly from one train of thought to another. Let the vocal inflections be meaningful as the character directs the soliloquy toward the audience.

EXERCISE 7

(ONE MAN.)

[CLAUDIUS, *the new King of Denmark, has just ascended the throne of his dead brother and married his queen.* HAMLET, *the young prince, will take no part in the revelry and feasting. He stands at the side, dressed in black; and when the* KING *tries to seek him out, he answers in no flattering tone. As the* KING, QUEEN, *and* COURT *go out,* HAMLET *is left to himself and his melancholy.*[8]]

HAMLET. O! that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew;
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!

[8] Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet.*

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world.
Fie on't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth! . . .
Let me not think on't: Frailty, thy name is woman!
A little month; or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears; why she, even she—
O God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourned longer—married with mine uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules: within a month,
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. . . .
It is not, nor it cannot come to, good;
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue;

Topics and Exercises

21

THE MATTER OF PACE

A. PICKING UP CUES

EXERCISE 1: from *Excursion* by Victor Wolfson

B. RAPID PACE

EXERCISE 2: from *The American Way* by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart

C. SLOW PACE

EXERCISE 3: from *The Lean Years* by Mary K. Reely

D. MODERATE PACE

E. BROKEN SPEECHES

21

THE MATTER OF PACE

A CONGRESSMAN takes his place before the microphone, holds his manuscript at a comfortable distance, adjusts his glasses, and begins to read. Many thousands have tuned in to hear him. A congressman should have something good to give his listeners. He has. Nevertheless, of the thousands listening, only a fraction continues listening after the first five minutes. And what about this fraction? The heads of most of them nod, and the thoughts of others wander. Why? There may be a number of reasons for the congressman's monotony, but a sure guess is *the matter of pace.* His speech is wordy and its tempo is unvaried. It seems to contain no ideas—only words, and more words, keeping step with each other as they trudge along. Many listeners say, "He's too dry; he's just reading." Yes, he is reading. But then, the best radio news commentators read every word they utter, and millions eagerly watch the clock for the time when they may be heard.

One trouble with Mr. Congressman is his inability to use the varied tempo of speech. Speech rhythm should be broken, irregular; first hurrying on, then slowing down, even halting; the next moment pausing; but it should always be varied. The thought

involved decides the rhythm. We may say that the general pace is rapid, or the general pace is slow, or medium; but each of these should continually vary as the thought changes.

The pace must be right. If one talks rapidly, he will give the impression of being eager or hurried. If he talks slowly, he will give the impression of being calm and deliberate. One must always adjust the pace to the thought and feeling.

In order to be capable of employing variety in pace, a person needs, habitually, to *articulate* clearly. Unless he uses jaw, lips, and tongue easily and correctly, his speech will be muffled, inexact, and uninteresting, and he will not be able to adjust it skillfully to the changing thought—especially when rapid speech is in order.

A number of elements in our speech make it slow or fast. Let us consider, first, *words* and their relation to pace. The lengths of vowels and consonants affects the tempo. We may hold vowels a long time or a very short time. The same is true of consonants, except the stops, which are *b, d, g, p, t,* and *k*. In saying "I might go," we can speak very quickly by shortening all sounds. If in doubt, we would prolong the *I, m, o,* in "I might go," lengthening them until the result is very slow speech. The first thing to consider, then, is length of sounds. Words are also distorted either by substituting a wrong vowel or by shortening vowels beyond recognition. *Forever* is jammed into *frevr, history* becomes *histry, accommodate* is shortened to *comadat.* Sometimes —perhaps we should say regularly—people leave out whole syllables from words, *laboratory* being pronounced without the *or,* and *recognize* without the *og.*

Careless enunciation is a serious handicap and should be overcome; otherwise the player cannot make his speech move rapidly and still be understood.

Any one of a number of bad habits may result in slovenly enunciation, but final consonants probably cause more trouble than any other one thing. American people are in the habit of doing things in a hurry, with the result that hurried actions are

only half done or are very poorly executed. Our speech is an example. Final *t's, d's, f's,* and other consonants are indistinct and blurred. *I can't do it,* becomes *I cand u ud;* and *an awful disappointment* becomes *n awf'l dizappoin men. For heaven's sake* blurs into *fereven zake.*

The in-between consonants, the *d's, t's, h's* and *b's,* in particular, are blotted out. *Little* loses its *t's* entirely and sounds like *lil; confidently* like *coffadenly; perhaps* like *peraps;* and *something* like *somping.* This is the second bad habit.

We use the consonants in our language for making our speech clear and precise; when we abuse them we have bad enunciation. On the other hand, the vowels in words, when given wrong values, often result in bad pronunciation. Many are the abuses: *get* becomes *git; no* becomes *naw; roof* sounds like *rough;* and *piano* is *piiana.* Bad habit number three.

All careless speech traits affect the pace at which a player can speak his lines, to say nothing of limiting the kinds of parts he can play. Not until the actor pronounces the correct consonants with completeness and precision, and gives vowels their proper and full value, can speech be anything but slovenly.

Another element that speeds or retards our speech is the *short time between groups of words.* We divide all of our speech into thought-groups or phrases with very short pauses between them. In real life we speak, instinctively, in thought-groups. Our speech is halting, irregular, broken. Now we stop, now hurry on, now forcefully bear down upon the key words, now lightly skim over a less important thought. Phrasing thus gives a varied speech rhythm.

The time between phrases will vary in length according to the importance of the thought, the size of the auditorium, the characters being represented, and other factors. The phrases themselves will vary in length, some words being set off alone, others being grouped.

Also the *crispness* with which we clip off our words gives an effect of rapid or slow pace, although the amount of time used

for the two paces is almost identical. We may compare this to *staccato* and *legato* in music. It is a matter of touch rather than time. Shakespeare advised, "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, *trippingly on the tongue:* but if you *mouth* it as many of our players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines." Our physical make-up has not changed. If we, in our day, talk in the backs of our mouths, we will muffle the sounds just as the town crier did when he called the inarticulate muddle of sounds in Shakespeare's day. If the attack and the release are quick, the speech seems faster than if words are attacked and released slowly. If one does not use his lips or jaw accurately and easily, he cannot clip words crisply.

Picking Up Cues

The matter of *picking up cues* is of the greatest importance, for the manner in which they are picked up definitely affects the tempo and rhythm of the play. Please do not infer that for slow tempo cues are picked up slowly and in a slovenly manner. We want no dangling lines in the theater. Cues are picked up quickly either by adding words or actions to the emotional expression which is already present, or by continuing the emotional expression alone.

An illustration will help us here. John and Mary are worrying over their household budget. John has been figuring, while Mary, sitting beside him, looks on. He gives up; pushes the pad toward Mary, and says, "There's no way. You see the figures; we can't shuffle them enough to get it in." Mary might be insistent and pick up her cue with *words.* "If all our friends who get lower wages than you can have cars, we can too." Or she might feel differently and pick up her cue by her *emotional expression.* She would simply stare into space, her whole being suffused with disappointment. She might pick up her cue in a third manner, by *action.* She might take the scratchpad, glance at it, throw it aside, rise, cross to the sofa, and throw herself upon it. If Mary

had talked as she crossed to the sofa, she would then have picked up her cue by emotion, plus words, plus action. Hence we see that the cue can be picked up in a number of different ways.

Since by far the most common means, and therefore the most troublesome, of picking up cues is by *words,* a detailed discussion of this may be helpful to many students.

Speech on the stage moves somewhat more briskly than speech in real life. A cue, when given, should be followed quickly by the next speech. There should be no open spaces between speeches. Instead, one speech should follow another with a pace similar to that which a character would use if he were speaking all of the lines. The speeches will not overlap, except in very rapid speech; they may, then, overlap slightly. The reason why amateur performances are so often slow, almost draggy, is that one actor waits until the other has stopped speaking. He then realizes that he must begin. By the time he gets started there is a lapse of time which results in a wait between speeches.

When dialogue is to be carried on between those in each of two or three groups at the same time, the picking up of cues is particularly hard. The dialogues in the different groups have no relation to each other. Each conversation must seem to continue unbroken, but interest of the audience must be shifted as the author has planned. As Nell, Frances, and Tom in group *A* discuss the new Buick; Will, and Kenneth in group *B* talk insurance; and Maxine, Polly, and Burt in group *C* describe the new Smiths on K street; all will have to listen acutely to the dialogue in the *other* groups. That character who is to transfer interest to his own group should do more listening than talking as his cue approaches. He may *seem* to listen to those in group B with whom he is conversing, but in *reality* he must pay strict attention to the dialogue in group C from which he is to pick up his cue when it is given.

A chief reason for slow pickups lies in the failure to memorize the cues that precede the speeches. Players, learn to memorize

each of your cues *along with* and *as a part of* your speeches. Get the habit. Then, when you hear these few familiar words—your cue—spoken by another, you will instinctively attach your line to its cue without losing time. This will necessitate, of course, exactly the right cues being given.

Pace will be used to set the mood of the play. The opening scene should put the audience in the right frame of mind. A lovely play would not start with rapid-fire speeches. On the other hand, if a play is light, or if a whirlwind character is to dominate it, those who open the first act will probably start it with a bang.

The general pace to be used in speaking the lines can be determined by studying, carefully, the mood, the situation, the emotions of characters, and the characters themselves. Every character should vary his rate of speaking to suit the different scenes; but the characters will not all use the same degree of speed. For example, when a slow, Negro character is talking at a tempo that is rapid for him, he will be speaking slowly in comparison with an excited schoolgirl.

Every player will have occasion to use a wide variety of tempo. His speech often changes from the very rapid to the very slow. He must make these changes adroitly. The pitch of the voice usually rises with the increase of tempo and lowers in slow tempo.

The terms *tempo* and *rhythm* may confuse you, for they do not mean the same thing. Tempo is the rate of movement of a speech or a scene, whereas rhythm includes all of the aspects, the unifying of dialogue, dress, characterizations, scenery, mood, and so on. Rhythm is elusive and intangible. Every person, town, community, or even nation has its own rhythm. All the varied tempos of a game, a town, a person, a story, or a play are included to make up its rhythm.

The player must make the rhythm as well as the tempo fit the play. Only then can we have artistic use of this very necessary time element that makes for effective pace.

In the following exercise the interest of the audience will shift

from one group to another. Each group has its own rhythm, and all combine to form the rhythm of the play.

Although only a few lines are supplied for those holding the interest at the moment, nevertheless, the members of each group will continue to converse after their lines are spent. Ears must be kept sharply attuned for cues.

EXERCISE 1

(THREE MEN; FIVE WOMEN.)

[*The scene is laid on the deck of an excursion boat. An air of confusion prevails as passengers come and go, laugh, talk, and in general, amuse themselves.*[1]]

MRS. FITCHEL. Here, Mike. Here's a nickel. Go buy yourself a fudgicle.

MIKE. Gee, thanks, Mrs. Fitchel! [*He runs off.*]

MRS. FITCHEL. Such a nice boy. So big already.

MRS. GEASLING. An' eats f' three! He's an expensive proposition, Mrs. Fitchel.

MRS. FITCHEL. I can imagine. Mr. Geasling is working?

MRS. GEASLING. Three days a week. I can't complain. An' I rented the front room out this week.

MRS. FITCHEL. So—

MRS. GEASLING. All summer long I've been promisin' Mike a boat ride t' Coney Island. Y' can't disappoint him.

MRS. FITCHEL. Ach! Times are still hard, I know. [*The* YOUNG MAN *walks over to* LOLLIE *who some time ago has taken out paper and pencil and has been busy writing.*]

AIKENS. What are you doing?

LOLLIE. [*Looks up suddenly.*] What? Oh!

AIKENS. You're writing, I see.

LOLLIE. [*With a little laugh.*] Yes.

AIKENS. [*Looking off at the city.*] I don't blame you. It's a swell day. [*A pause.*] Do you go on these things often?

[1] Wolfson, Victor, *Excursion*, New York: Random House, 1937. Reprinted by special permission of Random House. This play in its entirety is published and leased by the Dramatist Play Service, Inc., 6 East 39th Street, New York City, without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given.

LOLLIE. Every Sunday.

AIKENS. Really? That's a swell view, isn't it? [*A pause.*]

LOLLIE. Yes.

AIKENS. Gosh.

MRS. FITCHEL. You know, Mrs. Geasling, we'll have to change our name again.

MRS. GEASLING. Again? Why?

MRS. FITCHEL. The name of the store, I mean. The neighborhood is getting so fancy—it doesn't like to come into a store with a Jewish name.

MRS. GEASLING. Go on! What are you talkin' about!

MRS. FITCHEL. Yes. It's true. Business is falling off and Sarah says that's the reason. Sarah's a very smart girl.

MRS. GEASLING. And what'll y' call the store, now, Mrs. Fitchel?

MRS. FITCHEL. [*With a little shrug of the shoulders.*] The Fitch Laundry.

MRS. GEASLING. [*Turning it over in her mind.*] Fitch Laundry. Mmm.

MRS. FITCHEL. Maybe with a shop at the end of it. Old Mr. Haaga's delicatessen store is now a Snack Shop. Papa says— [*Leans to* MRS. GEASLING *and lowers voice*] over his dead body his store will be a shop. But Papa gives in. Oh, he's asleep. He's so tired.

MRS. GEASLING. He works hard for a little man.

MRS. FITCHEL. Hard. You have no idea how hard, Mrs. Geasling. The neighborhood gets richer, but the shirts and pillow cases and towels are *still* dirty. It breaks my heart to see him standing all day long over the hot irons. You see? He's so tired he don't even enjoy the excursion.

MRS. GEASLING. [*Gently.*] Poor man. The ocean air'll do him good.

MRS. FITCHEL. I hope so.

AIKENS. I get mad as all get-out every time I think of it!

LOLLIE. What?

AIKENS. Oh, the millions of people out there who can't even get away for a single day. The millions of people who sweat out their lives day in an' day out—without a chance of asking why. Makes me sore! Some day I'll write something for those people like what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was for the slaves. You watch. [*He indicates the paper in her lap.*] You write—poetry?

LOLLIE. Letters. Letters to my Aunt Sophie in St. Louis.

AIKENS. Oh. [*He stands quietly, disappointed a moment—then walks off, whistling the "Internationale."* CANDY BOY *enters with a basket.*]

CANDY BOY. [*Calling.*] Here y' are—get y' souvenirs of the *S. S. Happiness.* Y' last chance of the season t' get y' Happiness Souvenirs. Here y' are— [*His way is blocked by* MR. FITCHEL, *asleep in his chair.*] Get your souvenirs— [*He almost dumps him out of his chair.*]

FITCHEL. [*Wakes up—startled.*] What's a matter, Mama!

BOY. Have a souvenir, mister, sellin' out cheap!

FITCHEL. Mama! I thought the boat was sinking already!

MRS. FITCHEL. No souvenirs, t'ank you.

BOY. Let y' have it for half a dollar. How about it? Let y' have it for a quarter—

FITCHEL. Go 'way, please. I'm tired out!

BOY. [*Thrusts the pennant into his hands.*] Go on—take it for fifteen cents—

FITCHEL. [*Shouts.*] No!!

BOY. [*Backs away.*] All right, mister, all right, Don't get excited.

Rapid Pace

Rapid pace is used in excitement. The author often suggests the pace by his style of writing. The thought flashes from one idea to another. Very short speeches generally suggest an unusually rapid pace.

The pitch of the voice tends to rise in excitement, moving quickly from one level to another, and intonation becomes more varied. Speeches, unless they are very short, can be overlapped to give a whirlwind effect. The train of thought must be projected through this barrage. Before each speech is finished the next begins, thus causing the dialogue to tear along. Sometimes inferior stock companies use this technique to hold interest. If they can project this false excitement to the audience, they can be sure, at least, of keeping the audience awake. The following exercise needs a rapid-fire tempo. Clip your words short and step on your cues to secure it.

EXERCISE 2

(TWO MEN; EXTRAS.)

[*This scene is only one of many in the great patriotic play "The American Way." On the day that all American Banks are ordered closed in 1934, crowds of people gather before the bank's door. They are panicky, and have come to draw out their money.*[2]]

[*Suddenly* BROCKTON *comes out of the bank, stands on the steps and raises a hand for silence.*]

BROCKTON. There is absolutely no reason for this panic. I give you my word this bank is safe. You have known me for years; I know most of you. Please take my word. This bank is absolutely solvent. Your money is safe.

A VOICE. Well, if it's safe give it to us. Give us our money! [*The crowd echoes this.*]

BROCKTON. Please! Listen to me! No bank in the world can pay every depositor in cash. That is not the way a bank is run. But if you will go to your homes— [*He is shouted down by the crowd. He tries to get their attention again, but he cannot.*]

[*Then, through the Square, comes* MARTIN GUNTHER, *with* KARL *running a few steps ahead of him.* MARTIN *pushes his way to the steps and faces the crowd.*]

MARTIN. People! People; Listen to me! Listen to me! [*The crowd gradually stills; he gains attention.*] You must believe Samuel Brockton when he tells you this bank is safe. [*A voice from the crowd: "We want our money!"*] You will get your money, but you cannot have it all at once.

[*"Give us our money!"*]

Listen to me! I have money in this bank, just like you. I am not drawing it out—not a penny of it.

[*"We don't care! We want our money!"*]

Listen! Listen! You all know Samuel Brockton. He is your friend as well as mine. I am going inside here now and sign over to this bank everything that I have in the world. My factory—everything!

[*There is a scoffing roar from the crowd.*]

Please! Please! Stop this madness! Stop and think this over!

[*The crowd is almost silent, almost convinced.*]

[2] George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, *The American Way*, New York: Random House, 1939. Reprinted by special permission of Random House. This play in its entirety is published and leased by the Dramatist Play Service, Inc., 6 East 39th Street, New York City, without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given.

Do you hear me! Do you understand what I am saying! I am putting everything I have in the world in this bank. [*He stops and looks into the faces of the crowd. They are still.*] [MARTIN *goes into the bank.*] [*For a moment the crowd is quiet—almost too quiet. With solemn faces, men and women look at each other. Then, almost imperceptibly, the line moves—each of them is a few precious inches nearer to his goal.*] [*Quiet again—and then a hysterical woman can stand it no longer. She breaks forth.*]

THE WOMAN. I want my money! I'm a widow! It's all I've got! What'll I do? What'll I do? It's all in that bank! I want my money!

A MAN. [*As the hysteria spreads.*] I've got a sick kid! I've got to send him away or he won't live!

ANOTHER WOMAN. [*Weeping.*] My money! My money! Oh, God! Oh, God!

THE MAN. What's the matter with this line? Why isn't it moving? What are they keeping us out here for? I've got a sick kid! I've got to have money or he'll die! I've got a sick kid, I tell you!

THE FIRST WOMAN. What are you going to do? Why doesn't somebody do something? My whole life—my whole life is in there—all my money! *I want my money!*

⁂ *Slow Pace* ⁂

Slow pace is used in reflection. It may also suggest itself for use in quiet enjoyment of another's companionship or of sad remembrances. The speeches are spoken slowly and with frequent pauses.

EXERCISE 3

(ONE MAN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*"The Lean Years" is a beautiful one-act play divided into four short scenes. This scene finds* TOM *and his wife,* LIZZIE, *on their small prairie farm to which they have come from Ohio. They are both depressed and heavy-hearted because of the failure their venture seems to be. At the end of the scene, as they become happy and excited, voices rise to a higher pitch and the pace quickens.*[3]]

TOM. [*Lifting his head.*] Can't you just remember how it was back in Ohio, Liz?

[3] Reely, Mary K., *The Lean Years,* in Phillips and Johnson, *op cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers

LIZZIE. Let's not think about that, Tom.

TOM. Always so green, Liz. Even in late summer the pastures were green—and plenty of rain—never a dry spell like this—and never hot.

LIZZIE. Well, sometimes a little warm, Tom.

TOM. And always plenty of rain—nice cool rains every day or so.

LIZZIE. Yes, it was lovely, Tom.

TOM. And to think that we left it for this—this country that God forgot. Well, we've had enough of it! We've learned our lesson—we're going back!

LIZZIE. [*Looking wistfully about.*] And leave our nice little home, Tom!

TOM. Fine home it is—with nothing to live on!

LIZZIE. There, there, Letty. Does the horrid dust bother you—there, there—Mother won't let it! Is it true, Tom, the Shanes are thinking of going back?

TOM. Well, yes, I guess so—anyway, Jim will go if I do.

LIZZIE. And if we stay?

TOM. Well, I can't say—

LIZZIE. And the Nelsons, and the other Swedes?

TOM. Well, I suppose the Swedes will stick—you see they've come across the ocean.

LIZZIE. [*Thoughtfully.*] It would be rather a long way to go back—wouldn't it? And I suppose they'd feel rather sheepish—and all their folks would say "I told you so—that country out there's no good—why didn't you listen to us and stay here at home—why couldn't you know when you were well off—with a good job clerking in the grocery store—now you can ask Uncle Amos to let you have your job back—and Lizzie can go back to the old folks—"

TOM. Lizzie, what are you talking about?

LIZZIE. About going back, Tom. Don't you just know what they'll say to us? Aunt Elvira and all of 'em! Tom, I *won't* go back! [*She brings her fists down on the edge of the cradle, disturbing the baby.*] There—there, baby. Mother's getting excited, but she didn't mean to disturb her precious!

TOM. [*Who has been looking very steadily at* LIZZIE.] What do you reckon we're going to live on, Lizzie, if we stay?

LIZZIE. Lord only knows, Tom. What will the Swedes live on?

TOM. Lord knows, Liz—white beans, I guess. It's the only crop we've got this year.

LIZZIE. Then we'll live on white beans! And next year, maybe—

why, Tom, it just can't be like this every year! [*Suddenly—starting to her feet.*] Tom, the wind's gone down!

TOM. [*Lifting his head.*] Why, so it has—or has it only shifted around to the other side? [*Rising.*]

LIZZIE. [*Quicker than he, darts to the window.*] Tom! That looks like a thundercloud. [*Opens the door.*] It is, Tom! And the wind has changed—and it's cooler!

TOM. [*Moving slowly toward the door.*] Too late for it to do any good now.

LIZZIE. But it will be cooler and will settle the dust—and anyway, there's always next year. Tom, feel it—it's *rain!* [*She holds out both her arms.*]

TOM. Yes, there's next year— [TOM *throws an arm around his wife's shoulders and they stand together, lifting their faces to the oncoming rain.*]

Moderate Pace

Moderate pace on the stage is not our common, everyday, rate of speaking; it is much faster. Moderate pace is the rate at which good, animated conversation clips along. We dare not let the voice fall and the tempo become slow in ordinary situations, if we are to hold interest. There may be effective pauses, or pantomime may take the place of voiced speech, but the play must keep moving forward.

The stage is like life, only it is bigger, faster, stepped-up. We overdo the commonplace a little, and underdo—that is use restraint on—the loud, or the wild, or the highly emotional. The stage uses suggestion. But remember that moderate pace on the stage is moderate, *plus!* It is stepped-up to the rate of lively, animated conversation.

Broken Speeches

Broken speeches often cause trouble. A broken line *must not stop.* It must go on until the speech following it cuts it off. There must be an overlapping of lines. The player *must not stop* at the

end of a broken line; he must keep going until another drowns his line with other lines. This is difficult to time and must be rehearsed carefully.

The fault, when a broken line does stop, is always that of the player who fails to pick up his cue. The one with the broken line is not supposed to add words to the play; he does so only when a careless co-worker makes it necessary.

The actor must always actually *continue to think* what he was going to say. This keeps the inflection up so that the speech *seems broken* instead of stopped. Broken speeches are built *up* at the break. They have more intensity, more volume, more force, and higher pitch at just the second before they break. Even though the speech to be broken is heightened, nevertheless the player who interrupts must top the other speech. Some examples of broken speeches follow.

1. From *The Fool,* by Channing Pollock:

MRS. GILLIAM. [*Up to tree.*] Dilly! Nobody knows better than you that I've never had a selfish thought. Mr. Gilliam—

DILLY. [*Looks at* MRS. THORNBURY.] Of the Gilliam Grocery, Incorporated.

2. From *Idiot's Delight,* by Robert E. Sherwood:

CAPTAIN. I give you my word, that train will not move tonight, and maybe not tomorrow night, and maybe never. [*He bows deeply.*] It is a matter of deepest personal regret to me, Mr. Van, but—

HARRY. Listen, pal. Could you stop being polite for just a moment, and tell me how we get to Geneva?

3. From *Mr. and Mrs. North,* by Owen Davis:

CLAIRE. That she was being sweet, Jerry, and trying to help me. And she thinks you don't want her to. She was just—

PAM. I'll tell him, Claire. If people are going to tell Jerry things, I'd better. I was going to see her husband and—argue with him.

4. From *End of Summer,* by S. H. Behrman:

KENNETH. —The European fortune-hunter, once he has landed the bag, has no more twinge of conscience than a big game hunter when he has made his kill. The American—

WILL. Is that what you think I am, Doctor?

5. From *Where the Cross is Made,* by Eugene O'Neill:

SUE [*scornfully*]. Two thousand! Why, over and above the mortgage it's worth—

NAT. It's not what it's worth. It's what one can get, cash—for my book—for freedom!

SUE. So that's why he wants Father sent away, the wretch! He must know the will Father made—

NAT. Gives the place to me. Yes, he knows. I told him.

6. From *Thursday Evening,* by Christopher Morley:

GORDON. Just leave my mother out of it. I guess she didn't spoil me the way yours did you. Of course, I wasn't an only daughter—

LAURA. I wish you had been. Then I wouldn't have married you.

7. From *Men in White,* by Sidney Kingsley:

DR. HOCHBERG [*to* FERGUSON]. Doctor Ferguson!

FERGUSON. I intended to . . . to mention it to him. I guess—I—forgot . . .

DR. HOCHBERG. Forgot? Is that a thing to forget? You should have given the anti-toxin yourself!

Topics and Exercises

22

THE SIGNIFICANT PAUSE

A. PHRASING

B. THE DELIBERATE PAUSE

1. FOR BUSINESS

EXERCISE 1: from *Out of the Past* by Eleanor Pollock

2. FOR TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS

EXERCISE 2: from *'Lijah* by Edgar V. Smith

3. FOR LAUGHS

EXERCISE 3: from *Arms and the Man* by George Bernard Shaw

EXERCISE 4: from *Of Thee I Sing* by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart

4. TO THINK

EXERCISE 5: from *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell

EXERCISE 6: from *An Ideal Husband* by Oscar Wilde

C. THE DRAMATIC PAUSE

1. FOR EMPHASIS

EXERCISE 7: from *Columbine,* by Colin C. Clements

EXERCISE 8: from *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell

2. FOR SUSPENSE

EXERCISE 9: from *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare

3. FOR SHOWING EMOTION

EXERCISE 10: from *In Abraham's Bosom* by Paul Green

22

THE SIGNIFICANT PAUSE

PAUSE! What is pause? The dictionary may mislead the player by defining it as an "interval of inaction." A second definition says that it is a "break made in speech or reading." Let the actor accept only the second definition for his work. For him a pause is *not* an "interval of inaction." He must fill his pause with visible action, visible thought, or visible emotion. Otherwise it is empty and becomes *a wait.* There are places for hundreds and thousands of effective pauses in acting, but *there is no place for a wait.*

Two classes of pause, or time value, are usually considered in studying speech. However, three general classes are essential for the actor's art. The first, *phrasing,* was discussed somewhat in the chapter on *pace.* It is the punctuation-marking system of speech, the placing of bits of time between spoken ideas. The second, the *deliberate pause,* occurs when additional time must be used for listening, for executing some piece of business, to allow time for laughs to die down or for time to think. The third variety of pause is known as the *dramatic pause* and is used for heightening emotional effect, as when the player wishes to emphasize an important thought, to "feel" the emotion, or to change from one emotion to another.

Silences, when filled with feeling, are beautiful. They stir the emotions and make people in the audience fear, or anticipate, or sympathize. Dramatic pauses may be compared to rests in music. No competent musician would ignore the rests or fail to add other breaks (phrases) to give his music color. Nor should you as an actor be afraid of silences. Make them a part of your speech; they will add power, beauty, and finish to your performance.

Phrasing

Proper *phrasing* makes speech seem natural and saves it from becoming monotonous. Any one of three main faults in reading lines can cause monotony. These are: *lack of variety in time* (phrasing), *lack of variety in force* (emphasis), and *lack of variety in melody* (inflection). Listen to yourself and guard carefully against any one of these faults.

Failure to phrase lines is probably the hardest fault to check. Far too often radio speech is dull because it is read by those who, not being skilled in reading, give it out word by word. Good speech does not move with the regularity of a metronome. Most of us, as children, were guilty of reciting our first pieces in a monotone, and a great many adults still read in that mechanical way. These individuals give equal time value and stress to every word they speak. Such reading is lifeless and tiring. Small wonder that the listeners are lulled to sleep or that their minds wander.

There are other important reasons for phrasing correctly. First, when breathing spaces are far apart, the actor lacks power to project the tones and a weak or gasping sound accompanies the words. When this fault occurs, it is necessary to breathe often and to keep the lungs well filled with air. This is done between phrases. Second, we are accustomed to listening to words spoken in groups. When well phrased, the lines come much clearer to those in the audience, making it easier for them to hear and understand. Third, and most important, is the reason that the meaning often hinges upon and must be conveyed by the manner of

phrasing. The speaker can depend upon the punctuation marks in the script only to a certain extent. These marks have been placed by the *author* for the *reader.* Phrasing, however, is the punctuation supplied by the *speaker* for the *listener.* The listener needs many more than the reader, therefore the speaker must use more *"stops"* than the author.

If the thought is especially important, we punctuate oftener, and at the same time give the words more emphasis. The sentence "You mean give up your career?" would ordinarily be spoken in one phrase. But if emphasizing, we would punctuate oftener, thus: "You mean give up your career?" The actor should decide upon the appropriate phrasing early in the study of the part.

In grouping words into thoughts, the player must guard against two dangers. First, there is danger of phrasing in the wrong places, thus presenting a faulty meaning. Proper phrasing makes the thought clear; it makes speech live. Second, there is danger of insufficient phrasing, thus presenting a vague meaning. Notice the dot-and-dash effect when the following paragraph, taken from Galsworthy's *The Silver Box,* is phrased as illustrated:

MRS. JONES: I asked him whatever came over him to do such a thing—and he said it was the drink. He said he had had too much to drink and something came over him. And of course, your Worship, he had had very little to eat all day, and the drink does go to the head when you have not had enough to eat. Your Worship may not know, but it is the truth. And I would like to say that all through his married life, I have never known him to do such a thing before, though we have passed through great hardships and (*speaking with soft emphasis*) I am quite sure he would not have done it if he had been himself at the time.

MRS. JONES: I asked him——whatever came over him——to do such a thing——and he said——it was the drink. He said——he had had too much to drink,——and something came over him.——And of course,——your Worship——he had had very little to eat all day,——and the drink does go to the head——when you have not had——enough to eat. Your Worship may not know,——but it is the truth. ——And I would like to say——that all through his married life,——

I have never known——him to do such a thing before,——though we have passed through great hardships——and I am quite sure——he would not have done it——if he had been himself——at the time.

The Deliberate Pause

The second class of pause, or time value, *deliberate pause,* is time used by the actor to execute a piece of business. It may be for either action of the body or for action of the mind. The actor sometimes needs time to think, listen, write, or perform some other piece of business.

Often a player needs to direct a part of a speech toward one character, a second part toward another, and third or fourth sections toward still others. He can break his lines with short pauses or turn from one to another; or, he may move across stage as he addresses different characters. This latter method of directing speech can be very effective.

Waiting for laughs to subside are *holds* which every player must school himself in. A play may not seem funny when you are working on it, nevertheless it may yield laughs when these are least expected.

Phrasing makes speech seem natural and brings out meanings; the *deliberate pause* gives time for laughs or action; and the *dramatic pause,* the most effective of the three, emphasizes meaning and adds feeling.

The length of a pause will depend upon the reason for it. A pause that is inserted to give time for some action should finish with the completion of that action. A pause for thought should end when the character has given the impression that he has had time to think. A pause for sheer feeling may be held by the projected emotions of the actor as long as the audience sits spellbound. When the purpose has been fulfilled, the actor should not continue the pause. A pause held too long also becomes a wait.

The length of a pause for feeling will depend upon the ability of the player and upon the emotion to be projected. Each player

should sense the feeling of the audience and act accordingly. "Magnify a pause until you are sure you have pushed its effect into the heart of every listener."

Pause for Business

Dialogue may lapse for different reasons: perhaps to develop a character or to carry out certain moods; sometimes to develop a situation or to intensify the suspense. The business must not appear hurried, however, and it must always appear lifelike.

EXERCISE 1

(TWO WOMEN.)

[*Julia's mother died when* JULIA *was a baby. The girl has been reared by her maternal grandmother. We find the* GRANDMOTHER *trying to help* JULIA *decide what her mother would have wished her to do in regard to an important step which* JULIA *is about to take.*[1]]

GRANDMOTHER. No, this was another. The young folks all expected Alice to marry him.

JULIA. Well, why didn't she?

GRANDMOTHER. Because her father and I didn't think he was good enough for her.

JULIA [*decidedly*]. If she had really loved him she would have married him anyway.

GRANDMOTHER. Alice sincerely believed she loved him. In fact, she had quite a struggle to give him up. She was melancholy for months afterwards. She thought she should never get over it. But she obeyed her parents, and got over it all right. Then she met your father and they fell madly in love. After that she couldn't imagine why she had ever tolerated the other boy. After several years she learned exactly what the other boy was. Events proved that she could never have been happy with him. After she and Robert were married, they were—oh,—so happy. Then you came, dear. Your mother always said she hoped that she would be able to help you like her father and I helped her. And then she left you, Julia,—but not because she wanted to. The day before she died she told me that she felt she could never help you grow up. She left you to your father's care. The last words on her lips

[1] Pollock, Eleanor, *Out of the Past.* Unpublished. Printed by special permission of the author.

were, "Robert, the baby." [*Her voice breaks but she tries to continue.*] And ever since then your father has devoted his entire time, money, and thought to you. He has tried to make your mother live on in you. Now, Julia, are you going to disappoint him?—Are you going to disappoint—her? Think, dear, seriously. [*A little doubtfully she goes over to the old-fashioned desk and carefully takes from it a small jewel box.*] This, Julia, is all your mother left you. She meant for you to have it on your twenty-first birthday but I would like to give it to you now. I may not be here to give it to you then, you know. [JULIA *looks at her sadly and takes the box.*]

JULIA. May I open it, Grandma?

GRANDMOTHER. Yes, here's the key. [JULIA *opens the box and finds several pieces of old-fashioned jewelry and other trinkets. On the bottom of the box is a small note.* JULIA *opens it and scans it hurriedly.*] Why, what is that?

JULIA [*awestricken*]. It's—it's from Mother.

GRANDMOTHER. What does it say?

JULIA [*slowly and reverently*]. "My darling baby daughter,—Today you are twenty-one and how I would love to see you. These few pieces of my jewelry are all I have for you except the love and affection I gave you. Try to remember me by these. Love and obey your father because he will be everything to you. You'll never have as true a friend as he. Try to be the kind of girl he wants you to be—for me. With a mother's love, Alice Hawthorne."

GRANDMOTHER. Julia, I'd almost swear that was her voice I heard just now.

JULIA. Grandma, it does seem as tho she came to me—right out of the past.

GRANDMOTHER. Perhaps she did. [*She quietly leaves the room.*]

[JULIA *rereads the note fondly, examines the jewels, and looks at her mother's picture. Slowly but deliberately* JULIA *goes to the telephone. During the call she keeps her eyes on the picture.*]

JULIA. Linden 6974, please. . . . Hello, is Ralph in? . . . May I speak to him, please? . . . Thank you.—Hello, Ralph, this is Julia.—Yes.—Well, hardly. You see, Ralph, I don't think I had better go through with it.—No. It just doesn't seem right.—But, I hope you forgive me.—Perhaps, not for awhile, Ralph.—Oh, I can't explain now. I'll send you a note.—Yes.—I'm sorry, Ralph. I hope you don't care.—All right, Good-by.

JULIA [*goes again to the picture, clasps it to her breast and stares into space*]. Mother, is that what you wanted me to do? Well, I did it for you—and father. And as for myself—well, I'm glad.

✣ *Pause in Telephone Conversations* ✣

The pauses made in telephone conversations should be long enough and filled with enough action to be convincing. The illusion of listening and replying must be created and maintained. One should react according to what the other is supposed to be saying. The *hold* can be slightly shorter than would actually be used. Many times, when talking on the phone, we start to speak; the one at the other end of the line gets ahead of us, and we stop after opening our mouths without saying a word.

Mrs. Williams, for example, is having a telephone visit with a friend. Her dialogue runs something like this:

My housekeeping seems to run on wi—(*Listen*) Oh, yes every time! (*Listen*) Mine runs on witho—(*Listen*) on without—(*Listen*) She couldn't? Well I de—(*Listen*) I de—(*Listen*) I declare!

The start, stop, listen and start again can and should be used to make a telephone conversation seem natural. However, such a conversation must not provoke laughter unless it is supposed to.

Telephone conversations are often poorly written and should be changed if they are to seem true to life. They should not be burlesqued or allowed to retard the proper progress of the play.

EXERCISE 2

(THREE MEN; ONE WOMAN.)

[JUDGE HOLMSTED, *an elderly Southern gentleman, is entertaining in his home two* STRANGERS *from "up North." He has lived well before he was reduced to poverty. Now, however, he lives as well as possible on what he has, but keeps up the pretense to all outsiders that he has many servants, large land holdings, and money.*

It is evening. The STRANGERS *are listening to one of the proud old Southerner's stories, fascinated by his reminiscences.*[2]]

JUDGE HOLMSTED. . . . And the nigger wound up the story with the most woebegone expression on his face by saying: "De on'y thing I hates 'bout it, Jedge, is 'at dawg always b'lieve he waz kilt by a coon!" [*The* STRANGERS *laugh heartily.*]

FIRST STRANGER. That's a good one. I'll have to remember it.

SECOND STRANGER. They're great characters, Judge—your Southern negroes. Wonderfully interesting, from what I've heard of them.

FIRST STRANGER. Very interesting. [*Glances down at boots.*] By the way, Judge, since we didn't have time before supper, I know you'll excuse us while we step up to the room and clean up a bit.

JUDGE HOLMSTED. Certainly. suh! [*The* STRANGERS *leave.* 'BAMA *enters.*]

JUDGE HOLMSTED [*calling after* STRANGERS]. Just leave your boots outside the door, gentlemen. I'll have 'Lijah clean them.

'BAMA. Judge, suh, did you git 'at lettuh what was on de seceta'y?

JUDGE HOLMSTED. A letter? No, 'Bama. [*He goes to secretary; seats himself; takes up letter; looks at it.*] Why . . . it's—from the bank. ['BAMA *leaves room.*] I wonder . . . [*He opens letter nervously; reads it; is greatly perturbed; looks at it again; goes to telephone; takes down receiver.*] Hello! Miss Effie? Will you please, ma'am, get Mr. Needham for me? No'm; he'd hardly be at the bank this late. Try his home. . . . Is that you, Mr. Needham? This is Judge Holmsted, suh. I . . . just got the bank's letter, Mr. Needham. I don't quite understand it. . . . Why—you don't mean that the bank won't renew the mortgage? . . . They've sold it? . . . It's in the hands of someone else, you say? . . . And this other person insists on settlement? But . . . but, Mr. Needham, I had counted on the bank's renewin' it as usual, suh. And it's due the fifteenth of next month? . . . I suppose so, suh, . . . I suppose so . . . if the paper's passed into other hands. Yes, suh. I understand, Mr. Needham . . . I understand. Thank you for yo' trouble and I'm sorry I had to disturb you this time of night. Goodnight, suh. [*With a hand that trembles, he replaces the receiver on its hook, and turns away from the 'phone. His shoulders droop; he is suddenly a broken old man. Slowly he walks to his chair and drops heavily into it. He stares into the fireplace.* 'BAMA *enters.*]

[2] Smith, Edgar V., *'Lijah,* in Phillips and Johnson, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

'BAMA. Judge, suh, dey's somep'm I oughta tell you. [*She is plainly very much worried.*] Hit's bad news, suh.

JUDGE HOLMSTED. All news seems to be bad news, 'Bama, since that ring of crooked politicians took the judgeship away from me. What is it now?

'BAMA. You remembuh, suh, I tol' you yistiddy 'bout de cow comin' home wid her laig all swole up like she was snakebit? Well, suh . . . she died dis evenin'. An bofe dem gentlemens likes cream in dey breakfas' cawfee, suh.

JUDGE HOLMSTED. [*Dully.*] I don't know that there's anything we can do about it, 'Bama.

'BAMA. Naw, suh. Jus' thought I oughta let you know, suh. ['BAMA *leaves through door L.* JUDGE HOLMSTED *renews his attitude of hopeless musing. Voices are heard off stage. The* STRANGERS *are seen descending the stairs.* JUDGE HOLMSTED *rises quickly to his feet. He straightens his tie; runs his hand through his tousled hair; tugs at the lapels of his coat; throws up his head and squares his shoulders. The* STRANGERS *enter.*]

✣ *Pause for Laughs* ✣

The player must learn to hear the laughs. He has worked for them and hoped that the audience would respond to the humor. When the laughs come, the actor has a duty toward those in the house; he must give them time in which to enjoy a hearty laugh. If he speaks too soon, the audience will cease laughing in order to hear what they know they are missing.

The laugh usually begins with a sudden outburst and dies away gradually. The actor's lines ought to be taken up before the laugh is finished but after it has begun to subside, so that words again can be heard. When an actor learns to *listen to the house,* to be conscious of the laughs, he will stop speaking his line but will continue doing whatever he has already started—walking across stage, turning away in disgust, staring in surprise at his companion, perhaps puffing on his cigar, or, usually, just paying attention to the one to whom he is talking. Then, as the laugh is subsiding, he will pick up the speech where it was broken and will finish it—or as much of it as he can—before the next laugh.

The player will find himself in one of two possible positions as

a result of the laugh. If John has created the laugh, attention will continue to be on him throughout it. If, on the other hand, Frank has created it, John's attention will be on Frank and must continue to be on him until the play can be picked up again. But whatever the player's relation to the laugh, he must be careful not to "step on the laugh." It may come, as it frequently does, at the end of a speech. The next line may be his. No one can assume his responsibility. He, personally, must *hold* before speaking his line. He should wait until only a few chuckling souls remain; they will stop laughing when they *see* him speaking. He should stay in character as he holds, and keep directing his attention toward the one who had the attention as the laugh started; or if he started the laugh, he should keep acting his role throughout it.

If he starts speaking too soon, however, the audience will miss the next speech; and an audience hates to miss anything. A pause before a comedy idea will help to point it. The actor must *fill* the pause with expectancy. Rising inflections will indicate that more is to come. Point-up the comedy idea in each of the following sentences by using a rising inflection up to the break, then pause and give the last part of the sentence.

"I tell you I never—luncheonize."

"I don't jail offenders, I—spank."

"I've looked hours for an article known as—a skyhook."

One can never tell where laughs will come, or how many there will be. Each audience is different. Each will laugh at different places, for different lengths of time, with varying degrees of lustiness. The only advice to be offered is to *listen* and *keep on listening*. Hear a laugh, keep in character during it—you often merely hold the picture—pause until it is dying away, then pick up the play where it was dropped.

EXERCISE 3

(FOUR MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[*While her father and her lover* SERGIUS *were away at war,* RAINA *and her mother sheltered one night an escaped soldier of the other*

side. He was starving and RAINA *fed him the only available food, some chocolate creams, thus giving him the name of "the chocolate cream soldier." Now, the war over, the soldier, named* BLUNTSCHLI, *has come back to return the coat* MRS. PETKOFF *loaned him to escape.* MRS. PETKOFF, *terrified lest her husband and* SERGIUS *find out, has received him in the back yard, ordering his bag brought there. But* PETKOFF *comes out and welcomes him, since he is at peace with the enemy soldiers.*[3]]

BLUNTSCHLI. I think I can shew you how to manage that.

SERGIUS. Invaluable man! Come along! [*Towering over* BLUNTSCHLI, *he puts his hand on his shoulder and takes him to the steps,* PETKOFF *following. As* BLUNTSCHLI *puts his foot on the first step,* RAINA *comes out of the house.*]

RAINA [*completely losing her presence of mind*]. Oh, the chocolate cream soldier! [BLUNTSCHLI *stands rigid.* SERGIUS, *amazed, looks at* RAINA, *then at* PETKOFF, *who looks back at him and then at his wife.*]

CATHERINE [*with commanding presence of mind*]. My dear Raina, don't you see that we have a guest here—Captain Bluntschli, one of our new Servian friends? [RAINA *bows;* BLUNTSCHLI *bows.*]

RAINA. How silly of me! [*She comes down into the center of the group, between* BLUNTSCHLI *and* PETKOFF.] I made a beautiful ornament this morning for the ice pudding; and that stupid Nicola has just put down a pile of plates on it and spoiled it. [*To* BLUNTSCHLI, *winningly.*] I hope you didn't think that you were the chocolate cream soldier, Captain Bluntschli.

BLUNTSCHLI [*laughing*]. I assure you I did. [*Stealing a whimsical glance at her.*] Your explanation was a relief.

PETKOFF [*suspiciously*]. And since when, pray, have you taken to cooking?

CATHERINE. Oh, whilst you were away. It is her latest fancy.

PETKOFF. [*testily.*] And has Nicola taken to drinking? He used to be careful enough. First he shews Captain Bluntschli out here when he knew quite well I was in the—hum!—library; and then he goes downstairs and breaks Raina's chocolate soldier. He must— [*At this moment* NICOLA *appears at the top of the steps with a carpet bag. He descends; places it respectfully before* BLUNTSCHLI; *and waits for further orders. General amazement.* NICOLA, *unconscious of the effect he is producing, looks perfectly satisfied with himself. When* PETKOFF

[3] Shaw, George Bernard, *Arms and the Man*, in Shaw, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of the author.

recovers his power of speech, he breaks out at him with] Are you mad, Nicola?

NICOLA [*taken back*]. Sir?

EXERCISE 4

(FIVE MEN; EXTRAS.)

[*In this scene from "Of Thee I Sing," a travesty, a number of politicians make plans for their campaign. They have forgotten whom they nominated for vice-president.* ALEXANDER THROTTLEBOTTOM, *the forgotten candidate, comes and tries to tell them that he is their man.* This role was played on the stage by Victor Moore.[4]]

THROTTLEBOTTOM [*all smiles*]. Hello, Mr. Fulton.

FULTON. I'm afraid I don't quite place you. Your face is familiar, but—

THROTTLEBOTTOM. I'm Throttlebottom.

FULTON. What?

THROTTLEBOTTOM. Alexander Throttlebottom.

JONES [*pushing him right out*]. We're very busy, my good man. If you'll just—

THROTTLEBOTTOM. But I'm Throttlebottom.

FULTON. I understand, Mr. Teitelbaum, but just at present—

GILHOOLEY. You come back later on.

LIPPMAN. After we're gone.

THROTTLEBOTTOM [*insistent about it*]. But I'm Throttlebottom. I'm the candidate for vice-president.

FULTON. That's the fellow!

GILHOOLEY. Of course!

LIPPMAN. Sure!

FULTON. What's your name again?

THROTTLEBOTTOM. Alexander—

FULTON. Of course! I nominated you! Alexander! Boys, this is—What's your first name, Mr. Alexander?

THROTTLEBOTTOM. That's my first name. Alexander.

FULTON. Well, well, Alexander Alexander.

GILHOOLEY. Well, that certainly is a coincidence. [A WAITER *has arrived with the accessories. Check in hand, he looks uncertainly around for the victim.*]

[4] Kaufman, George S., and Ryskind, Morrie, in Coe, K., and Cordell, W. H. (editors), *Pulitzer Prize Plays.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1935. Reprinted by special permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

THROTTLEBOTTOM. But that isn't my last name. It's Throttlebottom.

LIPPMAN. Throttle what?

THROTTLEBOTTOM. Bottom.

LIPPMAN. How do you spell it?

THROTTLEBOTTOM [*as he starts to spell* LIPPMAN *takes the check from the* WAITER and writes "T-h-r-o-t-t-l-e-b-o-t-t-o-m."]

LIPPMAN. Right! And thank you very much. [*The* WAITER *goes, and with him the signed check.*]

FULTON. Well, sir, we're very glad indeed to see you, and very proud to have you on our ticket. Sit down. [*They all sit, leaving no place for* THROTTLEBOTTOM.]

THROTTLEBOTTOM. Thanks. I won't sit. I'm only going to stay a minute. There's something I came up to see you about.

FULTON. What's that?

THROTTLEBOTTOM. Being vice-president. I want to know if you won't let me off.

FULTON. What!

GILHOOLEY. What do you mean?

THROTTLEBOTTOM. I don't want to be vice-president. I want to resign.

FULTON. Why, you can't do that!

JONES. That's treason!

LYONS. Absurd, suh!

LIPPMAN. Why don't you want to be vice-president? That's a good job.

THROTTLEBOTTOM. It's—it's on account of my mother. Suppose she found out?

FULTON. You've got a mother?

GILHOOLEY. He's got a mother.

LIPPMAN. This is a fine time to tell us!

FULTON. Yes, why didn't you tell us? You can't back out now. Everything's printed.

GILHOOLEY. Listen—she'll never hear about it.

JONES. Of course not.

THROTTLEBOTTOM. But maybe she will. Somebody may tell her.

LIPPMAN. Who'll tell her?

FULTON. Nobody'll know!

GILHOOLEY. You'll forget it yourself in three months.

FULTON. Of course!

LIPPMAN [*ever the salesman*]. Besides, suppose something should happen to the president?

THROTTLEBOTTOM. What?

LIPPMAN. Suppose something should happen to the president? Then you become president.

THROTTLEBOTTOM. Me?

LIPPMAN. Sure.

THROTTLEBOTTOM. President! Say!

LIPPMAN. Let's drink to that! To our next president! [*There is a great passing of glasses, and* THROTTLEBOTTOM *comes out of it without one. He dashes into the bathroom, and emerges with one of those green tumblers.*]

GILHOOLEY. Our next president!

JONES. *Our* next president! [*And he enters.* JOHN P. WINTERGREEN *himself.*]

WINTERGREEN. I'll drink to that! [*Takes the glass from the extended arm of* JONES *and drinks.*]

JONES [*as the others greet him*]. You dirty crook!

WINTERGREEN. I'll drink to that too!

LIPPMAN. Well, how's the candidate?

WINTERGREEN. Thirsty. Say, doesn't a fellow get a drink? [*He sees the drink* THROTTLEBOTTOM *has just poured for himself and takes it from his hand.*] Ah! Thank you, waiter. And get me one of those dill pickles, will you?

THROTTLEBOTTOM. But I'm not—

WINTERGREEN. There they are—right over there. [THROTTLEBOTTOM *obediently goes for the pickle.*] Well, gentlemen, it certainly was a great convention. I never expected to get the nomination. Didn't *want* the nomination. Never was so surprised as when my name came up. [*Takes pickle from* THROTTLEBOTTOM, *and gives him the empty glass.*]

✣ *Pause to Think* ✣

In real life we pause many times to think. We halt, feel for a word, then often go back and exchange one for another. On the stage, if we were to hesitate so often, our plays would drag. However, even on the stage, characters must occasionally pause to seek the right word in order to create the illusion of life, and characters must also pause to realize the importance of another's words. In Exercise 5, Hale will hesitate a great deal in recounting the incident, trying to find words.

EXERCISE 5

(TWO MEN; EXTRAS.)

[MR. HALE, *a farmer, has come to his neighbor* WRIGHT'S *house soon after* MR. WRIGHT *has been murdered. The* COUNTY ATTORNEY *and* SHERIFF *have come with* MR. HALE *to the Wright home to find some reason for the murder. As they stand about the kitchen stove* MR. HALE *tells them and their wives what he found.*[5]]

COUNTY ATTORNEY. Let's talk about that later, Mr. Hale. I do want to talk about that, but tell now just what happened when you got to the house.

HALE. I didn't hear or see anything; I knocked at the door, and still it was all quiet inside. I knew they must be up, it was past eight o'clock. So I knocked again, and I thought I heard somebody say, "Come in." I wasn't sure, I'm not sure yet, but I opened the door—this door [*indicating the door by which the two women are still standing*] and there in that rocker— [*pointing*] sat Mrs. Wright. [*They all look at rocker.*]

COUNTY ATTORNEY. What—was she doing?

HALE. She was rockin' back and forth. She had her apron in her hand and was kind of—pleating it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. And how did she—look?

HALE. Well, she looked queer.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. How do you mean—queer?

HALE. Well, as if she didn't know what she was going to do next. And kind of done up.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. How did she seem to feel about your coming?

HALE. Why, I don't think she minded—one way or other. She didn't pay much attention. I said, "How do, Mrs. Wright, it's cold, ain't it?" And she said, "Is it?"—and went on kind of pleating at her apron. Well, I was surprised; she didn't ask me to come up to the stove, or to set down, but just sat there, not even looking at me, so I said, "I want to see John." And then she—laughed. I guess you would call it a laugh. I thought of Harry and the team outside, so I said a little sharp: "Can't I see John?" "No," she says, kind o' dull like. "Ain't he home?" says I. "Yes," says she, "he's home." "Then why can't I see him?" I asked her, out of patience. " 'Cause he's dead," says she. *"Dead?"* says I. She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited,

[5] Glaspell, Susan, *Trifles,* in Phillips and Johnson, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

but rockin' back and forth. "Why—where is he?" says I, not knowing what to say. She just pointed upstairs—like that [*points*]. I got up, with the idea of going up there. I walked from there to here—then I says, "Why, what did he die of?" "He died of a rope around his neck," says she, and just went on pleatin' at her apron. Well, I went out and called Harry. I thought I might—need help. We went upstairs and there he was lyin'—

COUNTY ATTORNEY. I think I'd rather have you go into that upstairs, where you can point it all out. Just go on now with the rest of the story.

HALE. Well, my first thought was to get that rope off. It looked . . . [*Stops, his face twitches.*] . . . but Harry, he went up to him, and he said, "No, he's dead all right, and we'd better not touch anything." So we went back down stairs.

EXERCISE 6

(ONE MAN; ONE WOMAN.)

[LORD CHILTERN *has been involved during his youth in a scandal which someone has now threatened to bring to light. He does not wish* LADY CHILTERN *to know, because she considers him near perfect and would no longer love him.* LORD CHILTERN'S *friend and confidant,* LORD GORING, *is talking with* LADY CHILTERN *at this moment.*[6]]

LORD GORING. Nothing. But, my dear Lady Chiltern, I think, if you will allow me to say so, that in practical life—

LADY CHILTERN [*smiling*]. Of which you know so little, Lord Goring—

LORD GORING. Of which I know nothing by experience, though I know something by observation. I think that in practical life there is something about success, actual success, that is a little unscrupulous, something about ambition that is unscrupulous always. Once a man has set his heart and soul on getting to a certain point, if he has to climb the crag, he climbs the crag; if he has to walk in the mire—

LADY CHILTERN. Well?

LORD GORING. He walks in the mire. Of course I am only talking generally about life.

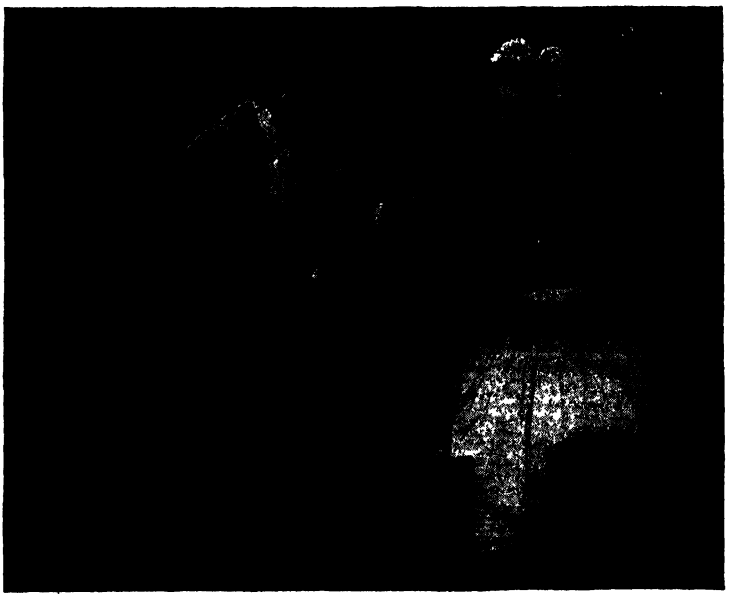
LADY CHILTERN [*gravely*]. I hope so. Why do you look at me so strangely, Lord Goring?

LORD GORING. Lady Chiltern, I have sometimes thought that—per-

[6] Wilde, Oscar, *An Ideal Husband,* in *The Best Known Works of Oscar Wilde,* Vol. IV. New York: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1927.

haps you are a little hard in some of your views on life. I think that—often you don't make sufficient allowances. In every nature there are elements of weakness, or worse than weakness. Supposing, for instance, that—that any public man, my father, or Lord Merton, or Robert, say, had, years ago, written some foolish letter to someone—

LADY CHILTERN. What do you mean by a foolish letter?



The Barretts, by M. C. Carlton. A production by the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. A dramatic pause can be used with great effect.

LORD GORING. A letter gravely compromising one's position. I am only putting an imaginary case.

LADY CHILTERN. Robert is as incapable of doing a foolish thing as he is of doing a wrong thing.

LORD GORING [*after a pause*]. Nobody is incapable of doing a foolish thing. Nobody is incapable of doing a wrong thing.

✣ *The Dramatic Pause for Emphasis* ✣

As has been pointed out in Chapter 4, pausing before a very important word or thought emphasizes it. The student must find

these important places and try different ways of emphasizing to determine whether or not a pause is the most effective method that he can use.

EXERCISE 7

(TWO WOMEN.)

[SALLY *is a romantic young girl who looks forward to marriage and a home.* MINNIE, *her roommate, has lost her faith in men, romance, and dreams.* SALLY *is ready to fly away with her love, but on the evening she plans to elope,* MINNIE *decides to stay at home to try to influence* SALLY *to reconsider.*[7]]

MINNIE. You, Sally, you?

SALLY [*coming forward*]. Yes, me—and I'm not ashamed of it! Every girl wants a romance. Every girl wants the man she loves—and I've found my man. I'm going to help him—work for him, live for him, love him—always. I suppose every man plays around with girls; they are all alike to him until he comes to the right one—the one that is meant to be his mate and then,—then she's got to let him know it. Men! Why, they're all alike—just big stupid boys. Every man needs a woman to take care of him. And I've found my man!

MINNIE. [*She takes* SALLY's *hand.*] I'm not really such a bad sort, Sally. I've seen a lot more than you have, that's all. Why, you're only a kid. I'm not going to let you go through what I have. After all, it ain't worth the candle. Perhaps [*pause*] there is something in dreams. I wish I could believe so.

SALLY. I know there is!

MINNIE. That's the reason I'm going to stay home with you tonight. I want you to go on believing in dreams. [*With a sigh of resignation she sits down. After a long pause.*] They was going to have a real jazz band. [*Another long pause.*] I wonder if the drummer from St. Louis is still waiting for me.

SALLY. [*She walks over and puts her hand on* MINNIE's *shoulder.*] I don't want you to stay here with me tonight. I want to be alone.

[7] Clements, Colin C., *Columbine,* in Shay, Frank (editor), *Treasury of Plays for Women.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1922. Reprinted by special permission of the author and D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., publishers.

EXERCISE 8

(TWO WOMEN.)

[MRS. HALE *and* MRS. PETERS *have come with their husbands to the farm home where a murder has been committed. The wife of the murdered man is held in the local jail. While the men are looking for some clue, the women are gathering up some things which the imprisoned woman has asked them to bring to her.*[8]]

MRS. HALE. She—come to think of it, she was kind of like a bird herself—real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and—fluttery. How—she—did—change. [*Silence; then as if struck by a happy thought and relieved to get back to everyday things.*] Tell you what, Mrs. Peters, why don't you take the quilt in with you? It might take up her mind.

MRS. PETERS. Why, I think that's a real nice idea, Mrs. Hale. There couldn't possibly be any objection to it, could there. Now, just what would I take? I wonder if her patches are in here—and her things.

[*They look in the sewing-basket.*]

MRS. HALE. Here's some red. I expect this has got sewing things in it. [*She brings out a fancy box.*] What a pretty box. Looks like something somebody would give you. Maybe her scissors are in here. [*She opens box. Suddenly puts her hand to her nose.*] Why— [MRS. PETERS *bends nearer, then turns her face away.*] There's something wrapped up in this piece of silk.

MRS. PETERS. Why, this isn't her scissors.

MRS. HALE. [*Lifting the silk.*] Oh, Mrs. Peters—it's— [MRS. PETERS *bends closer.*]

MRS. PETERS. It's the bird.

MRS. HALE. [*Jumping up.*] But, Mrs. Peters—look at it! Its neck! Look at its neck. It's all—other side to.

MRS. PETERS. Somebody—wrung—its—neck.

✣ *Pause for Suspense* ✣

Pause for suspense builds the play toward a climax. The audience has the question in mind; the question grows in interest as the audience anticipates the answer.

[8] Glaspell, Susan, *Trifles,* in Phillips and Johnson, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of Walter H. Baker Company, publishers.

Great suspense can be secured in Exercise 9 if the proper technique is used, Pauses for suspense have been suggested in definite places. However, the student should try fewer or more and determine the right number and places for them. Pauses depend both upon the player and the audience.

EXERCISE 9

(TWO WOMEN.)

[ROMEO *has been banished for slaying* TYBALT. *Just previous to the incident, he secretly married* JULIET. *Now* JULIET'S *father has decided that on the next day she shall be married to* PARIS. JULIET, *desperate, has been given by the* FRIAR, *who married her to* ROMEO, *a sleeping potion which shall make her seem as dead and will thus help her to avoid the intended marriage. She debates about taking it.*[9]]

LADY CAPULET. What, are you busy, ho? need you my help? Get thee to bed, and rest; for thou hast need.

JULIET. No, madam; we have culled such necessaries
As are behoveful for our state to-morrow.
So please you, let me now be left alone,
And let the nurse this night sit up with you;
For, I am sure, you have your hands full all
In this so sudden business.

LADY CAPULET. Good-night:
Get thee to bed, and rest; for thou hast need.

[*Exeunt* LADY CAPULET *and* NURSE.]

JULIET. Farewell! [*Pause.*] God knows when we shall meet again.
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins,
That almost freezes up the heat of life: [*Pause.*]
I'll call them back again to comfort me:
[*Calling.*] Nurse!— [*Pause.*] What should she do here? [*Pause.*]
My dismal scene I needs must act alone.
Come, vial.

[*As she is about to drink it, a thought occurs to her.*]
What if this mixture do not work at all? [*Pause.*]
Shall I be married then to-morrow morning? [*Pause.*]
No, no; this [*taking up a dagger*] shall forbid it: lie thou there.

[9] Shakespeare, William, *Romeo and Juliet.*

[*Lays the dagger on a table beside her bed. Again takes up the vial, and again hesitates.*]
What if it be a poison, which the friar
Subtly hath ministered to have me dead,
Lest in this marriage he should be dishonoured,
Because he married me before to Romeo? [*Pause.*]
I fear it is: and yet, methinks, it should not,
For he hath still been tried a holy man.
[*Is about to drink, when another disturbing thought occurs to her.*]
How, if, when I am laid into the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Come to redeem me? [*Pause.*] there's a fearful point! [*Pause.*]
Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,
And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes? [*Pause.*]
Or, if I live, is it not very like,
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place, . . .
Environed with all these hideous fears,
And madly play with my forefathers' joints,
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud?
And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
As with a club, dash out my desperate brains?—
O, look! methinks I see my cousin's ghost
Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body
Upon a rapier's point.—Stay, Tybalt, stay!—
Romeo, I come! this do I drink to thee.
[*She drinks the potion, and falls upon her bed, within the curtains.*]

Pause to Show Emotion

A person must pause to feel. Changes of emotion come over one slowly. Not only must the actor hold the pause to let the change of mood come over himself, but there must be time, through the pause, to create an effect upon the audience. Skillful expression of an emotion, through the face, eyes, and body of the character moved, can hold an audience tense through a long pause. The more charged the actor is with controlled emotion, the better he will be able to hold this pause. The changes

from one mood to another must not be rushed. A pause separating the moods can and should be held long enough to be effective.

Pause to express emotion requires the co-operation of all the characters. In order to project the effect, every effort should be made by all to center the entire attention of the audience on the character moved. This means that every other character must remain transfixed through the pause. Usually the full attention of these other characters will be centered upon the one character, with no bodily movement which might distract. If attention is not centered there, it must, at any rate, help and not hinder the emotion expressed. Nothing is more eloquent in the field of acting than the dramatic pause at its best.

EXERCISE 10

(TWO MEN; TWO WOMEN.)

[ABE, *a young Negro, is ambitious to improve his mental faculties. He aspires to teach in a school for the illiterate Negroes of his community; with this purpose in mind, he has spent every spare moment in reading and study.*

COLONEL MCCRANIE *owns the land on which* ABE *and his wife and mother live and work. He has come to their shack to see their baby.*[10]]

MUH MACK [*starting*]. Yes, suh, we ain't gut much longer. [*Then the baby begins to cry and the* COLONEL *smiles.*]

COLONEL. Here, take him, Goldie. Favors Muh Mack, don't favor you, Abe.

ABE. Yes, suh.

COLONEL [*drawing a heavy, folded paper from his pocket slowly and with weighty dignity*]. I got a little surprise for you'n Goldie, Abe. [*He puts on his spectacles, opens the paper and starts to read.*] "Whereas"— [*He stops as if convulsed with pain, and presently goes on.*] "I devise to Abraham McCranie a house and tract of land containing twenty-five acres and formerly known as the 'Howington place,' to him and his heirs forever." [*Hesitating a moment and fold-*

[10] Green, Paul, *In Abraham's Bosom,* in Coe and Cordell, *op. cit.* Reprinted by special permission of the author and of Robert McBride and Company, publishers. No performance, either amateur or professional, may be given without prior permission, in writing, of Samuel French, Inc.

ing the paper together.] Then follows a description of the place in course and distance, Abe, which I won't read. It's all signed up and recorded in the court-house. [*He feels around him heavily for his stick.*]

ABE [*incredulously*]. Whut dat? Dat foh me?

COLONEL. Yes, for you. A deed to this house and twenty-five acres of land, yours. [*He holds out the paper to* ABE.]

ABE [*taking it with trembling hands*]. Lawd, Colonel Mack, whut I'gwine say?

COLONEL. Say nothing. Say thanky if you want to.

ABE [*overcome*]. Thanky, suh, thanky, suh.

COLONEL. Shake hands on it, Abe.

ABE [*wiping his hand on his coat*]. Thanky, suh. [*The* COLONEL *looks at his bent head with strange intentness, and then drops* ABE's *hand.*]

GOLDIE. Oh, Colonel Mack! [*Her eyes are shining with thankfulness.*]

MUH MACK. Abe, you's gut land, boy, you owns you a piece o' land, Glory! [*She runs up to the* COLONEL *and covers his hands with kisses.*]

COLONEL [*waving her off*]. Nothing, nothing to do for him. He deserves it. [*Looking straight at* ABE.] You do, boy. I want to see you go forward now. You had a hard time the last three years.

GOLDIE. He has, po' boy. He had it hard since de day he married me.

COLONEL. Hunh. He couldn't a done better nowhere. I know. [*The* COLONEL *picks up his stick which he has laid across the bed.*] Well, I got to move on. [*He stops near the door.*] And, Abe, how's your book business coming on?

ABE. I—I studying and reading now and then. Most too tiahed every night dough to do much.

COLONEL. Don't give up like Lonnie. Sent him to school, and sent him to school, even tried him at the university, won't stay. He ain't worth a damn, that's what. [*Turning towards the door and stopping again.*] Well, I've got another little surprise for you in celebration of that fine boy. [*He looks down and taps on the floor.*]

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