

A TONE
RESONATES

ACTING THROUGH
VOICE AND SPEECH

AN IDEA
SEEKS SUPPORT

KARIN RUDFELDT

WORDS GROPE
FOR WINGS

A TALE
NEEDS TO
BE TOLD

STOCKHOLMS
UNIVERSITY
OF THE ARTS

ACTING THROUGH VOICE AND SPEECH

A tone resonates
An idea seeks support
Words grope for wings
A tale needs to be told

Karin Rudfeldt

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After class, he comes up to me and says:

“You know, this really works.

Can it be that simple?”

Yes, I reply.

But it has taken me a lifetime to get to that simplicity.

This is a story about my work. This story is part of my work. About my teaching role in terms of how and what. About my own creative process as a musician, poet and singer. About writing as an attempt to bring together these sides of me. About the joy of bringing to life both the written word and the mind's process. About characterisation as a form of artistic research.

ACTING THROUGH VOICE AND SPEECH

Karin Rudfeldt

An artistic work of development from Stockholm university of the arts

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BRIDGES THAT CONNECT

This book is based on my life-long work with the voice and the spoken word; primarily from the perspective of a teacher, an assistant professor of Voice and Speech at the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts, but also as a musician and poet.

I have not reflected on what connects these two aspects of myself – me the teacher and me the musician/poet. My aim here is to bring all my knowledge and experience to bear in order to catch sight of what the one gives the other. It will be an exploration of the voice and language in relation to characterisation and the creative process. I seek the connection between that which flows and that which binds – between chaos and order.

My work begins in what I hear, what I see, and what I sense.

I examine what I hear, see and sense in relation to what I already know.

I remain open to what I am not yet able to grasp.

It is an artistic and pedagogical choice.

To comprehend what questions drive my learning and my art, I relate my approach as a teacher and musician to my writing and reflecting. The 'how' for this exploration involves juxtaposing my different bodies of knowledge, or rather interposing them, one within the other. I do this to strengthen the bonds between intuition and reflection; in my writing as well as in the moment of creation.

I seek a form for the creative flow. I am interested in when that flow is stopped, what stops it, and how I can move forward from that point. Rather than trying to gloss over the difficulties, I try to become aware of what is happening, so that I can develop myself and my art.

Flow needs form. Creativity need a framework.

It is ultimately about seeking a voice that carries. Not a voice that is perfect and beautiful, but a living, present voice – a voice that seeks out the encounter rather than mere acknowledgement.

Thoughts fly across my sky like wild geese. They manifest themselves in action.
My knowledge is practical and experience-based. It is artistic and creative.
Something inside of me stores all my experiences.
I put my ear to its door and listen.
I put my thoughts down on paper for my own understanding.
I open the door to what lies beyond as well.

“Experience, after many trials, perfected the art, example showing the way”¹

¹ (*Per varios usus artem experientia fecit/Exemplo monstrante viam.*) Manilius, *Astronomica* 1, 61
see MONTAIGNE (1994) p. 405.

A TONE SEEKS A TALE

In free-flow writing, new ideas and insights come to me that I can develop and critically analyse at a later time. The connection between the conscious and the intuitive, the semi-conscious generates new patterns of thought out of past experience and knowledge.

From time to time, impressions arise that are too ephemeral to decipher. They grab hold of my shoulders, like some constant, dull ache. They expect something of me. They are trying to give me something.

Something beyond words.

Something beyond thought.

But just as real as words and thoughts. Only in a different form.

I can find no words for this something. I can feel how it slips through my fingers, as if it has no intention of ever allowing itself to be captured in words. Something gets in the way. But it's more than that. It lures me on to go searching

I leave my desk

Know immediately that the answers I seek are not here

Instead I sit down at the piano

These same fingertips dancing and seeking

The wordless but meaningful tone

The tone, the rhythm, the flow, the leap

The music I write has its own tale to tell

It's trying to give me something

I want something from it

My first encounter with the theatre was through music. Two actresses were sharing the female lead role, I was the third to bring her to life – through music. I played electric guitar and sang. That was how theatrical storytelling via music began for me.

During my first years as a teacher, I began using music when working with scripts and characterisation. Instead of using words to get my acting students to use more power or flow in their lines, I played the piano. I created a mood through music, encouraged them and supported them or pushed them with the energy of the music. Because music speaks to us in a different way than words do. It touches different places inside of us. It opens other doors.

I have not previously juxtaposed my own playing and my critical listening. I have always just let the music flow. I was afraid of losing that flow. But the time has come to let the flow and critical reflection meet.

In my songs, I have focused more on the words and the story than the music itself. I now see that the music needs more of its own characterisation, worked on with a similar focus. An equivalent characterisation. It is through this musical characterisation that I can seek the feeling, seek the form and the tone that lies at the very core of the story. So that there are two forms which, each in different ways, tell the same story.

This is a story about listening.

A story about seeking a form for bringing a work to life.

A FORM THAT BREATHES LIFE INTO THE STORY

Seeking a form, bringing to life, composing.

My work is largely concerned with developing a form for teaching and for the creative process. I look for form and content for my songs and for my classes.

I do this so that they will come to life, so that they will have an impact. I try to create the conditions for an encounter. I need the same keen sensitivity when I put together a class as I do in composing a song, the same striving to give the content a form.

I have encountered many different forms and methods for working with the voice. There are voice techniques that hide the individual and her difficulties. But there are also those that place them in the spotlight where they belong. Where the shadows are allowed to be part of the light, just as silence is part of music.

I have searched high and low in the footsteps of those who have gone before me. People whose own quests have touched me, guided me. I have had the privilege of learning from some extraordinarily knowledgeable people.

Understanding how something works, learning exercises and ideas – that’s the easy part and it goes quickly. Understanding the *intention* behind an exercise takes longer, but this is always what I have always strived for.

“For imitative learning (knowing how), it is enough to understand the action that you learn. For conveying knowledge (knowing that), the facts rather than understanding are in focus. But for constructive learning (knowing why), one of the objectives of developing one’s own knowledge is precisely that it should lead to understanding”²

My way of developing has been to try things out on myself and through my teaching.

Through my own failures, I learn step by step.

Through encounters with others, I discover what is important.

² GÄRDENFORS (2010) p. 136.

It is clarity in form for knowledge and characterisation that give me the opportunity to explore – in my own creative process and in my teaching. They provide a stability that allows me to remain open to the unstable. That what I cannot yet grasp. To venture to grasp something new, I need to let go of what I have. Leave my comfort zone, where everything is familiar to me.

“The encounter with ‘the other’ is the horizon where the already familiar, the already thought and said, becomes alien to itself. What was not known, thought or said in the already known, the already thought and said, is what is revealed in this encounter. Being able to alienate one’s own categories of thought, one’s own dimension or horizon in the encounter with the other, is also an opportunity for self-transformation.”³

I have looked for and looked into forms that have moved me. They must be based on a solid body of practical knowledge that I can be shaped by. But that I can also shape. A form needs to be flexible enough to withstand change.

I seek my own flow that can add further clarity to the form.

So that someone else could take over the form. Make it theirs.

³ CAVALCANTE (2006) p. 155 f.

THE ENCOUNTER

On that day at Bard College when I decided to stop teaching, that was when I finally understood the importance of dialogue and the encounter. I felt I couldn't go on, because there was a voice inside of me stubbornly whispering that there is no such thing as teaching, only learning.

I prepared myself thoroughly, put together what I thought was important for me to have said at this, the last class I was ever going to give. Well-planned to the back teeth, I strode into the room, probably with some kind of energy.

I began teaching according to my plan, and then a student asked a question that I didn't have an immediate answer for. The question aroused my curiosity, because I could see how important it was to her.

We began to investigate the matter together. We embarked on a journey into the unknown. I left all my safe little packages of neatly wrapped exercises and truths behind me.

I didn't stop teaching. Not once I had realised that teaching was about an *encounter*. Learning takes place in this encounter, just as art does. For me, teaching methods are an art form. There is great similarity with the artistic process. It's all based on the encounter. On the space between. It happens *between* people.

Openness and curiosity are fundamental to it.

Mixed with experience and the desire to learn – in myself as well as the student.

I can never be sure in advance what will happen in that unreserved encounter. And it requires both preparation and knowledge to be able to stand ready for that moment.

To both have and not have. To both know and not know.

It's as if someone greater than myself is carrying the class in their hand
I stand there and give way to that part of me that knows more than I do
As always, it's a matter of not instructing more than it is possible to receive
Of not feeling forced to get to the end of a certain kind of knowledge
It usually turns out that most of it gets included anyway
I know that this is so
But these weeks consolidate that experience even more
It's about the ability to just stay with what is happening
Dive down into it
Taking your mind and body with you
So that the student gets guidance and also learns to take responsibility for their own
learning
Not by my lecturing about personal responsibility
Not by my having some idea about personal responsibility
But because I act based on this idea
I'm carried by it
Live it

MY APPROACH AS AN ARTIST AND TEACHER

I am about to meet the new students
Nervousness courses through my body
Why does it do that?
I've been doing this for so many years
It's like going on stage
Stage fright
It doesn't help me to know that it usually works out just fine
Every new encounter brings this anxiety

Even though my practical knowledge is well anchored in me, it is also ephemeral, because I allow myself to be influenced by the situation, by the encounter. This attitude takes the artistic elements of the work to a higher level, both for me and the students. The unpredictable is as essential to creativity as it is to learning.

My approach as a teacher and an artist is based on allowing the unexpected to surface. What I cannot know in advance because it is situational, and it arises in the encounter between me and the other.

To encounter can have a wide range of meanings. For me, it means remaining open to what we don't yet know, what we can't yet do, what we don't even know that we are looking for in some instances, in order to attain something greater than what was planned in advance. In my view, this is the very heart and soul of creativity.

In my work as a lecturer in Vocal Characterisation, I find myself constantly treading a fine line between helping acting students to deepen their knowledge while remaining open to what is actually occurring. I work with artists. And as artists, they need their tools. So their craft must be bound up with their artistic expression. I don't believe that the one must have priority over the other. Rather, they should flow side by side throughout the entire process.

Dramatic art is a collective and collaborative art form. But with a strong hierarchy that makes co-creation more difficult. It is hard to be creative and open in a context that is locked into certain norms and unwritten rules. They say something about how difficult change can be. As vital as it is.

For this reason, trust and confidence are important to this work. They are fundamental to us being able to leave our comfort zones. To let go of control always entails a certain measure of insecurity. Most of us want to have situations under control in order to feel safe and secure. But this control comes at a high price: it gets in the way of the possibilities we actually have.

Reflecting on what has occurred is a way of creating a sense of security. Reflection strengthens me; it strengthens my intuitive eye, and it utilises what is actually occurring. Not so that I will feel more secure in the encounter – an encounter is and remains inherently uncertain – but I learn to deal with the uncertainty. Reflection and feedback strengthen my courage and confidence in the capacity of art to find the most unexpected paths to what will work.

My knowledge from reflection is the foundation on which my openness rests.

THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE SCRIPT

For me, bringing a script to life is about waiting, about allowing time to be in wonderment and uncertainty. About having the courage both to empathise with the script and to look at it objectively. To embrace it, and at the same time keep it at a distance. In Gary Hennessey's *The Art of Reflection*, I found a quote from Reiner Maria Rilke that I often return to.

“Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don’t search for the answers, which could not be given you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the question now. Perhaps, then, far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.”⁴

Live the question until you can live the answer. I think this is a good approach to working with a script, even though it may be quite difficult. We all prefer to understand things as quickly as possible, so that we can make choices early and act on them. But the risk is then that we miss out on the nuances and depth, that something vital slips through our fingers.

Throwing oneself into working with a script, being physical before the ideas behind it have really fallen into place – that can be hard. But I know from experience that analysing the script does not always bring it to life. One’s physical impulses get frozen in their tracks, what is contradictory gets glossed over. The story becomes one-dimensional.

It’s nerve centre lies elsewhere. So I say to the actor: forget about the content, you’re not responsible for it.

But in fact it is quite the reverse. I mean that we should take full responsibility for the script.

By letting go, we let in all the facets, all the angles, all the nooks and crannies of

⁴ HENNESSEY (2010) p. 20.

the story. By working with the body, with the mind, with courage, with fear, we give the script a chance to use us as its vehicle. We are driven by the story. The story is driven by us.

In Matti Bergström's *Hjärnans resurser* (*The Brain's Resources*), I find trains of thought that strengthen and deepen my practical experience and knowledge. He describes the brain as bipolar.

“The ‘I’ in the brain is a clash between chaos (chance) and order (knowledge) ... Evolution seems to have built the brain along the lines of an architectural principle that unites two inherently incompatible structures to form a whole, a brain ... This principle gives the brain a tension, a potential, that is in fact a kind of prime mover, a primordial force ... both physically and mentally.”⁵

It is this primordial force to which I want to keep the door open. The energy on stage arising out of chaos and order can be felt in the theatre, in the actors' bodies, and in their lines. It is part of the theatrical realisation of the script and gives the story depth.

Matti Bergström writes about linguistic behaviour as a result of chaos and order. *“That in the brain, alongside a system that functions according to strict rules there is another system operating that knows no such thing but is instead based on the dynamics of pure chance...”⁶* It is in the encounter between the rational and the irrational that both ideas and language arise; it is in this structure that creativity occurs. It is a continuous battle in our brains and it is a battle to have the courage to simply be in what we do not yet know.

I try to resist analysing the script too early. This is because it links the story to what is logical and ordered. Whereas the actual work of art, the drama, is a totality that instead has its origins in the encounter between the logical and the chaotic and emotional.

In the past, I used to think that the body and mind were two poles. But the dividing line does not run between the body and the mind. They are both on the same team. The battle is in fact between chaos and order.

The life-affirming battle. That radiates energy.

⁵ BERGSTRÖM (1990) p. 64 f.

⁶ BERGSTRÖM (1990) p. 71.

WORKING WITH A SCRIPT

For a period of time, I worked as a *Kapellmeister* for a publisher's author gatherings. An author read an extract from his or her new book, an actor read another extract, and I would play some of my songs that had some connection with the story.

It was clear to me that the story was much more alive when the author read his or her own text. Of course, this was because the actor had not had as much time with the text. But I sometimes think that actors have a bad habit of glossing over the content of a text in their attempts to give it colour – rendering it flat and one-dimensional. In this ambition to give it colour, it easily becomes colourless. In spite of a beautifully resonant voice, the story itself is not heard.

Language is more unruly than it first appears to be. It takes time to work your way into it. To come to grips with its nuances and shades of meaning, to keep its contradictions alive, to be right inside the core of the story while maintaining a coldly detached overview – this is time-consuming and important work.

There is a fear of excess in the theatre. Overacting is a pejorative term. On the contrary, I think that it is an important route to go down. Reading the lines much louder than we will ultimately say them on stage is part of the process of embodying the words, but also a way of discovering unexpected pathways to understanding the script and the situation. By leaping straight out into a landscape that is yet unknown, we will find unexpected paths and possibilities.

Great writers and playwrights assist us in following the twists and turns of a thought process with punctuation. In addition, punctuation is where the text/script breathes, and is very important to its forward movement.

Using the hands can help reinforce this understanding of the thought process. This means moving one hand forward while reciting the text until you get to a punctuation mark – a comma, a full stop, a question mark, etc. Then letting your other hand take over until you reach the next punctuation mark, and so on. Making the thought process physical, which makes it clear. A story is written vertically, but it flows forward horizontally.

After a comma, the next movement starts quickly; the train of thought takes a kind of leap forward. After a full stop, there is pause for reflection.

This is a way of exploring and experiencing the script's musical 'score' and where it breathes. After this, you can choose your own tempo and pauses.

You can also read a monologue with another student, changing from one to the other at each punctuation mark. Besides giving you a feeling for punctuation and breathing, this is an exercise in giving and receiving impulses; going with or against the other, playing with, pushing or following, driving the story forward in concert.

Punctuation is especially important if the script is written in iambic pentameter, as in Shakespeare's blank verse. The rhythm is important but it is also treacherous. If we get bogged down in a monotonous sing-song delivery, the audience will stop listening. So it is particularly important to connect each train of thought with the aid of the punctuation, so that the images emerge in all their clarity, that the plot moves forward, that we know the difference between side lines and the main line of enquiry. Punctuation helps us with this. It is a clarifier.

Intonation enhances the emotion of a line. Although there are many exceptions to them, there *are* rules for when intonation rises or falls in words containing two or more syllables. Broadening the intervals in the intonation means something; it demonstrates emotion, shows intention.

Having a good knowledge of the standard version of a language makes it easier to learn a dialect. Apart from the rhythm and some specific speech sounds, it is intonation, the melody of the language, that is key to working with dialects.

Even when working with intonation, I have found a fear of exaggeration among students. My own experience is that when we exaggerate and allow the voice to glide up and down with the melody of the language, of course it can sound terribly silly and unnatural. What is interesting, however, is that for the listener, the script becomes easier to understand and absorb.

When working on a script, I prefer to work with the whole speech and its parts in parallel. We read aloud to get a feeling for the whole speech, but explore it at a deeper level by taking all of its constituent parts seriously. So that they in turn can give extra clarity to the speech in its entirety.

Phonemes are important, in relation to how they sound, how they are formed and how they can be emphasised in different ways to heighten expression and characterisation. I get inspiration from eurhythmics, giving each speech sound its own movement. There is a joy and energy in magnifying and embodying the sounds of one's language. It helps us to overcome our embarrassment and let the language out; making it physical and sensual.

Maintaining the energy throughout the entire line is important. We often have a tendency when we read a line to emphasise the first word and then swallow the rest. We never do that when we talk to each other. This is a bad habit, born out of a desire to be heard (a good thing in itself), but which diminishes rather than enhances.

If you read only all the first words in a series of lines, they will make no sense at all. But reading all the words at the end of each line makes at least some sense. Because the important information is usually found at the end of a line. We can even stress the last words in each line by breathing in just before them, in order to give them the most power, and then listen to what this gives to the story.

Reading word by word is another way of drilling down into the story. Start by reading the first word aloud, then the first word again adding the second word, then the first, the second and the third, etc., up to the full stop. Then read the entire line and start again with the next sentence. Give each new word its own little extra pause to reflect before you read it, giving your curiosity time to be aroused, and your imagination to generate mental images.

“You want to hold the truth in your hand: that is all very well – if you can! The secret of life is like a bird in the wood. Hold not with those who would blunder forth to have him, alive or dead. You must approach with caution and keep still – that is how to hear him sing!”⁷

When I work with a script, I do so with the idea of trying to get the intuitive and the conscious to work together. To live the question until you can live the answer, whether it concerns a physicalization or an idea. This in turn will lead to further questions. Sometimes the answer is not what we thought it would be; and often it is greater than we dared hope it would be. It takes us to places we did not even know we

⁷ LARSSON (1997) p. 67.

could go. It takes us higher and deeper, further away and right up close. And we need each other's patience, we need our courage and we need our fear.

Fear is an important driver. It makes us seek more solid ground beneath our feet. If we can tolerate the fear for a while, put up with the ground beneath us quaking with uncertainty, we stand a greater chance of becoming grounded.

We don't act any part of this. We are in this

We let the script do this

Our intention gives us the energy, our will in the situation

The direction of our gaze has meaning

It allows the script to open doors to what we did not know

To intend and to let go

To have in mind and to let go

It requires a fundamental trust in oneself and the person playing opposite

It requires a practical knowledge of the voice and body

Before you can fly, you need to stand with your feet firmly on the ground. Before the lines or the song can fly freely, the body and the lines must be firmly anchored. Focus and direction require a relaxed state. Breathing is the foundation of everything. The body is the foundation of everything.

The idea is the foundation of everything.

Working together is the foundation of everything.

The courage to doubt is the foundation of everything.

VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

Vowels and consonants have different physical attributes.

One could say that the vowel is the inside, that it lives inside the body, is the tone. Swedish is a vocalic language. This means that we easily fall into stillness, motionlessness. The story is left hanging in mid-air. Consonants have movement and direction. They drive the story forward. Syllables are built around vowels. But the consonants give them their swing. The energy is in the consonants. In anger, we emphasise them automatically, without thinking about it.

Letting the vowel grow on the inside as the word is intoned is a heady experience

Lengthening the vowel is not about trying to hold onto it

It's about opening up, sharing and through this, your own particular
sound emerges

It travels through my instrument, which is of course myself

My feelings, my thoughts, my everything

If I stay put within myself it comes out

I am clearer now about the importance of consonants

It is the consonants that close off this openness, that take the pressure
off this vulnerable openness

They close off, but they also they have direction

I've known that direction for a long time

But I have not previously seen that they are also guardians of the frontier

It is the consonants that say that's enough now when I want to go overboard

Yes, yes, the consonant mutters like some down-to-earth aunt

Now, now, that's enough

That's how the language and the idea and the feeling weave their way forward

In a fabric that needs both detachedness and fervour

That is enriched by the contrasts, that is borne up them

That swings because there is rhythm in language

That requires focus and being present in both thought and feeling

Naturally, the actor needs to practise locating where each vowel resonates in his or her body. You need preparation to find out where they reside. An open *AH* resides in the chest, *AW* goes deeper down into the pelvic area, *OO* is further forward, pushing out through the forehead.

But then the art is in letting the vowel resonate where it is resonating for the moment. Once there, you need to be able to receive, pause for a moment, expand. The moment that you pause feels like an eternity. Then it is gone.

Precisely because you paused, your body opens up. It opens up more and more.

What is inherent in you gets more latitude.

And a feeling like surfing a wave can arise.

Incomprehensibly easy.

Incomprehensibly powerful.

ABOUT RHYTHM AND VERSE

“Even as a child, long before anything I wrote was published, the writer in me developed a feeling that meaning was in fact bound up in the rhythm of the words in the clauses and sentences...”⁸

When I was young, I attended a weekend course in prosody. I had just begun to discover verse and rhythm and their importance to a script and knew that this was something really big. I went joyfully and full of expectation to a whole day of scansion. I was so disappointed. Something was very wrong. The rhythm, so alive and effervescent, was captured and cut to pieces. As if rhythm existed so that we could tear it apart.

We don't exist for the sake of rhythm. Rhythm doesn't exist for our sake. It touches us much more deeply than that. It is a vital element of human existence.

It was when we started working with *Knittelvers* (a kind of doggerel verse) that I caught on to something. It was my body that caught on, it was my senses that understood. *Knittelvers* is like rap. We all feel the difference between someone who can rap well and someone who can't. It is a visceral experience of the rhythm, something you can dance to, enjoy, be part of.

The thought struck me that in Shakespeare's time, maybe people experienced iambic pentameter in quite a different way than we can imagine. We were born into quadruple time – four beats to the bar. From the cradle to the grave, quadruple time and of course triple or waltz time. Quintuple time (five beats to the bar) is a notion beyond our internal rhythm. For people in Shakespeare's time, iambic pentameter rocked. Blank verse was the rap of Shakespeare's time. People knew what good blank verse felt like in their bodies.

That's how we must seek to perform it.

That's how we must work with Shakespeare's scripts.

Like something that has rhythm.

⁸ DIDION (2006) p. 11.

These days, when I hold courses in prosody, I usually start with *Knittelvers*. I tell the students that it is a mediaeval verse metre with rhyme, and four stressed syllables per line. But unlike other poetic metres, which are strict forms, *Knittelvers* has different numbers of syllables between these stressed syllables. This gives a certain freedom in determining which four syllables will be stressed.

Everyone gets very formal and proper when we start working on lines from Strindberg's *Master Olof*, as befits a master:

*“Woe to them who hath quenched the holy flame
That once burned holy in this my breast!
O how desolate the cry of the seeker
When no one responds to his clamouring voice!”*

But when I tell them that *Knittelvers* and rap have the same rhythm, when I put on a background beat that they recognise, all that properness and formality fly out the window.

Instead, something alive suddenly comes into their reading. It is joy, a drive and swing.

The rhythm of the language needs to be noted and studied. It needs to be scanned and counted and measured. So that it will swing! We can look for the rhythm in a number of ways. I get my students to walk the rhythm, with short and long steps, criss-crossing the room. They have to beat out the short syllables on their chests and swing out their whole arm for the long ones.

The difference between rising and falling rhythms needs to be experienced with the whole body. Rising rhythms, such as trochee and dactyl, begin with an accented or stressed syllable. Falling rhythms, such as iambus and anapaest, begin with an unaccented syllable, an anacrusis.

You can sway your way forward with blank verse, iambic pentameter. It's the forward movement that counts. The anacrusis has the forward movement in its hand. The energy needs to be flung through the entire line. It has to fly on. Just as humankind flies on through the cosmos of the rhythm.

The human being and her sense of rhythm.

There is rhythm in the language whether it is blank verse or prose/drama. It is based on stressed and unstressed syllables.

We can stress the accented syllables in many ways. You can do this with some extra emphasis, a syllable can be prolonged in time, or you can use intonation to add stress. Variation is important in not sounding predictable. The predictable makes us lose interest in the story.

The line “Riding high on the back of the dry desert wind” has four stressed syllables. I usually start by asking the students to find the stressed syllables in a line from a Swedish song, by beating out the rhythm as they read the script. They rapidly locate where the four stresses are. The syllables are constructed around a vowel. But that doesn’t mean that the vowel is always what is stressed.

If the accented syllable has a long vowel, it is the vowel that is lengthened such as in the word hate.

If the vowel in the accented syllable is short, it will be the following consonant that is lengthened, for example, hat.

Riding high on the back of the dry desert wind

By stressing what the rules of the language say should be stressed, in addition to variation, we create a way of heightening the language and speaking clearly without it sounding unnatural. This method is one of the most important for me in making the written language oral, alive and accessible for both the speaker and the listener. It is for the sake of the story, its characterisation, and for the sake of the audience.

Here it is important to know the speech sounds in your language, to be able to prolong them and to be able to be nimble with them, get them to rapidly bounce on. With the aid of movements to the speech sounds, the whole body becomes a rhythm instrument.

The rhythm is written down, but it can be treated and used in a variety of ways. There are virtually endless variations to try. The rhythm helps us to propel the story forward, whether we are singing or speaking. So it is important to acquire the ability to sense and be able to handle the rhythmic movement in the language so you can take advantage of its energy and drive. This requires diligence and curiosity.

Repetition and practice.

Learning to hear the difference between one and the other.

ABOUT THE ART OF BREATHING

One of the problems of working with breathing is that it's easy to disrupt its automatic nature, which is fundamental to it. At the same time, we need to become aware of our breathing in order to have access to it in situations that are anything but natural. Like standing on a stage, for example. In other words, we must be able to get past and through the natural reactions of stress and fear. We need to have our breathing in hand. But we also need to be able to let it loose. It's about striking a balance and diligent practice.

We think we are breathing, but we hold our breath

We hold back our energy, we lower our gaze

It's about something more than just understanding

It's work, and at the same time a giving of permission

It brings demons and fears to life

We can't defeat our resistance, we must work our way through it

When we have got past the fear, something comes to us

And we marvel at how easily the power comes

We have to learn something that we were able to do right from the start. Over the years, what was once entirely organic becomes something that is shut in. Most of us carry tensions in our bodies that we are aware of to varying degrees which disrupt the natural rhythm of our breathing. Taking back what we have lost costs us time and energy, it also makes us vulnerable and can even make us feel raw. Something induced us to close the door, so opening it again must be a careful and gentle process, step-by-step, based on the individual's capacity.

Breathing is the most obvious and the most elusive of all. It is what is most central to my own creativity; having access to it, connecting with the source of my creative process, the source of intention, the source of creativity.

Breathing is what creates
Creates my music and my songs
Breathing that flows from my wellspring
Technique is essential for being able to let it flow
Practice is fundamental to all of it
Conscious choices are the foundation
Concentration and physical fitness are essential
But when I finally get my breathing to cooperate with everything,
something emerges by itself
Something speaks from within me with a natural voice
It is my voice
It is something inside of me that is bigger than myself

Breathing is significant for self-confidence and being in the moment. How we breathe affects flow, whether we are talking, singing, writing or thinking. It's about training ourselves to be able to get through the obstacles of embarrassment and enervation.

FLOW AND FORWARD MOVEMENT

I'm grappling for words that can illustrate and describe what is both manifest and difficult to define: Magic and what it requires. The intuitive and the thoroughly laid out. The idea and its embodiment. The flow of creative energy.

“SOMETIMES THINGS JUST flow – there is the normal flow, the job flow, the perseverance flow.

And then there is FLOW.

... Flow is not inspiration.

Flow comes from working on something for a long time, after mistakes and false starts

... Flow is not a state of madness ...

Flow is a powerful river, you are the river, you are the wave, you are one with the flow, it is conscious, unconscious, you float on its surface tension, you are alert without tension, you feel the depths beneath you and it feels good, you flow to where you are going, where you aim to be.”⁹

When the actor has flow, what is happening? Some might describe it as the actor having found his or her character. I think there are difficulties involved in the traditional way of working with character. Too often it becomes all about the mind, without bringing the body along too. There is a tendency to diminish the script, its life and all its potential nuances. I would prefer to say instead that through flow, the actor is in his or her creative process with all its unpredictable potentialities. It appears to me to be a kind of artistic openness, originating from experience and intuition. It's in these encounters that creativity blossoms, the unexpected occurs and characterisation takes flight.

I am rarely moved by acting that involves pretended emotions. But the opposite for me is not about looking for genuine emotions, but rather looking for the dramatic

⁹ MALMSTEN (2012) p. 119.

energy that drives the story forward. Rather than emotions, I would say that what is needed is a sensitivity and openness to artistic impulses. To be able to get one's body to resonate like an instrument. To practise being able to use the forward progression of music as a driving force.

What is forward movement? What is a drive?

Forward motion is based on the will to reach out, a yearning for an encounter. Allowing oneself to be propelled forward while being able to prolong a moment in time. To touch and to be touched. To bring to life what has stiffened up. To make the written word oral and sensual.

The absence of forward movement is painfully clear when it presents itself. Micro-seconds of waiting turn into oceans of timeless stagnation. Leaving behind a sensation of everything being too late. The story becomes heavy and interest wanes.

“THROUGH THE ENTIRE DRAMATURGY, throughout the entire script, through every part – forward movement.

Forward movement comes first...

Even when what is written is a flashback, a memory of importance to the story, a hiccup in the continuity – forward movement must be there, even if the movement is backwards.”¹⁰

One way of finding the forward movement in a speech is to aim for the last word in the sentence, regardless of whether it is accented or unaccented. You can even aim for the last letter – it doesn't matter if it is a vowel or consonant. That generates the drive. The thing that wants to move forward.

You can hang about in this drive, pause, prolong. There is something in all of us that is searching for meaning, that wants to understand and create context. It's here that the space is created for this. Not by deciding in advance what should be accented or emphasised. That doesn't give rhythm and drive. That just creates a lecture – not drama and music. Being on your way to something gives you the opportunity to prolong, to await.

This is how a script is brought to life.

It is how the actor walks hand-in-hand with the story.

Plays her way through it.

Finds the energy out of that game.

¹⁰ MALMSTEN (2012) p. 79.

To be able to do this, we need to be prepared. Prepared for all the aspects of language, the shape and movement of each vowel and consonant, how you form them, how they resonate in your body. A well-practised moulding and shaping of a series of movements.

Just as the football player needs control of the ball to be able to play the ball. Just as the dancer need a body that can follow impulses without getting in the way. Just as a speaker or singer needs vocal preparation and knowledge to be able to liberate the story.

I sing my songs with the idea that I am going to get to the last word

The final syllable

The final letter

This gives the script a tempo that runs before the musical narrative

In other words, I begin to hang about on words, on vowels, on consonants

But it's not a lifeless hanging about

Because it's related to what is coming

And this is how what has been is connected to what will come

And a living 'now' comes into existence

A presence

A presence, a being in the moment that is dependent on the energy in the forward movement

Here comes the reward for all those preparations

Technique is combined with the artistic

There is a freedom based on knowledge

This is how creativity gets free reign

THE SPACE BETWEEN

The space between is crucial for this forward movement. How we relate to what happens between the lines is important, whether we're talking about speech or song or movement. The space between is closely associated with breathing in.

The space between is the cradle of the impulse

The space between is the moment to utilise the impulse.

The space between is the most realistic thing I can imagine.

Whether I'm working with realism or some other heightened form

Breathing is fundamental to the space between

Thinking is fundamental to the space between

Breathing, whose task is to keep together and let in the new.

The difference between breathing in before each new phrase/sentence compared to releasing and letting oneself be filled with new air, new inspiration, is tangible for the listener and for the singer or speaker.

Paying attention to the space between is about continuing the thought, the forward movement, as a direction, while at the same time letting go of everything and allowing oneself to drop down into a new in-breath, a release of tension. The space between ties what has been to what will come.

You need to practise this, practise becoming aware of it and doing it in the rehearsal room and in the encounter with the audience. There is an energy and power in the space between, in what appears to be nothing at all, but in actual fact is of the greatest importance.

Being able to do this is an art.

It becomes art when you can do it.

At which point it stops sounding artificial and affected.

Thinking about what has just been said is an exercise in linking images and lines in a script. This is a way of avoiding the all too common habit of starting anew at the beginning of each sentence, sometimes even at the beginning of each word. Instead of thinking ahead about what is going to be said or done next, which often happens when working with a script, the mind goes instead to what has just been said. In other words, speak first and then think during your in-breath.

This also creates a space in time where the imagination has free reign, something can come to us, surprise us, something we did not work out ourselves in advance.

Once when working with a Strindberg play, I asked two students to approach the script in a certain way. I asked them to think about what they had just said at the end of each phrase while breathing in for the next phrase.

The interesting thing that happened was that the exercise in itself helped them towards a greater understanding of the script and the situation. The two characters appeared to want to reach out to each other, they appeared to love each other, but they never managed to come out of themselves, they never listened to each other, they never actually encountered each other. Here, technique really became one with the characterisation.

When we speak naturally, how we want things to be is mixed with what has been. The future and the past are intertwined with each other in infinite circles. This is precisely how things are when working on bringing a script to life in speech. Not performing it as obviously moving forward, but rather as a movement that goes forward and back, forward and back.

The space between belongs to the characterisation.

Breathing belongs to the characterisation.

BEING RELAXED AND HAVING DIRECTION

How do I approach this? How do I describe in words what seems to be both obvious and inexplicable, the greatness of which lies in its potential to develop the actor's ability to inhabit a role, to embody an idea?

For an actor, it is initially difficult to combine being relaxed with having a direction. It is easier to focus on one thing at a time. There is an apparent contradiction between having one's body and one's mind both relaxed and directed at the same time. We lose control over both our mind and body when we allow ourselves to relax while working with an external focus at the same time.

So why do we do this? Aren't there any easier ways?

Based on my experience, I can only say that there is no other way that I have tried that has the same capacity to open up our imagination and give us access to that vital energy that is generated on stage. Energy is not something that we get for free. Although of course it can come to us at times when we need it. But with the aid of technique and practice, it is no longer pure chance and happy circumstance that determines it. This energy needs to be bridled and controlled. It is the very core of the art of acting.

A relaxed state is both mental and physical. With each in-breath, with each movement, with each word, you need the heaviness and the lightness of the relaxed state. An open chest grounds the words, gives them resonance, a weight, a human presence.

The first teacher I met who focused on the relaxed state when working with actors was Andris Blekte. He spoke of the importance of being present, and by that he meant the ability to be prepared in a state of relaxation, aware of both the internal and the external. Andris conducted long relaxation exercises focusing on one part of the body at a time, and continued with this state of aware relaxation in increasingly loaded exercises, increasingly energetic and outwardly expressive.

I think he is right. It is the relaxed state that we must seek when the power comes to us, when emotions escalate. Otherwise flow easily becomes tension. If we can instead continue to let go, to relax, particularly in the chest, we will gain access to something that is far greater than we could imagine.

To be able to let go, you need an opposing force, a tension, a direction.

This direction has to do with the focus of the story. The open gaze that projects out and takes in, the directed speech that seeks a recipient. This is an attitude, but you also need to be able to do it, in practice.

In voice teacher Mirka Zemenzakis, I encountered a strong, extroverted energy. She anchored that energy in her body based on a philosophy of breathing and the Greek tragedies that she had worked on with director Peter Stein. In particular, she had worked on the shrieks and cries in Greek tragedies. Mirka spoke of them as physical forms of conveying pain, sorrow and joy.

It was in my work with Nadine George that I fully understood and was able to practise using the energy on stage based on remaining in a relaxed state with direction.

THE SOUNDS

In meeting Nadine George and encountering her approach to breathing, the voice and the script, many pieces of the jigsaw puzzle fell into place: what I had suspected, what I knew, what I was seeking. The importance of being in a relaxed state for energy and flow became tangible, and my work with technique was incorporated in a concrete way into characterisation. It provided the foundation for me to work with the intuitive and the unpredictable, along with making conscious choices and determining their direction.

It is Nadine's work with what she calls "the sounds" that makes her knowledge so important to me. Nadine learned this form of voice work from Roy Hart, who in turn learned it from Alfred Wolfsohn, the founder of the method.

“Alfred Wolfsohn was a German Jew who, at 18 years old, fought in the First World War. After the war he was broken in body and soul by his experiences, like so many young men at the time. What Wolfsohn remembered most were the cries of the dying soldiers, and he asked himself how could there be such life in the voice of someone who was dying, ... he decided to take singing lessons, as he felt this would help to heal his trauma. But he found that the singing lessons were not giving him what he needed – he felt that the human voice was capable of much more ... and began working on his own voice...”¹¹

Nadine combined this way of working with sounds and voice qualities with her skills as an actor. She was trained as an actor at the Central School of Speech and Drama, London. She linked Shakespeare's dramatic works with working on the sounds and different voice qualities. Script analysis and acting from both a physical and mental perspective.

Nadine starts each day with breathing exercises on the floor to induce a state of relaxation. There is no power without an opposing force: being in a relaxed state is fundamental to generating energy on stage. But right from the start, she adds direction – forward/outward – by having the students form an *AW* with their lips as

¹¹ GEORGE (2015).

they breathe out. Initially with eyes closed, but just before we get up, we open our eyes. The focusing of one's eyes is important. The central theme of her work is balancing one's weight and direction. We tend to do either one or the other. Here, it's about getting them to work together.

The same approach applies to walking: a relaxed, downward gait in relation to the energy directed outwards through the out-breath and focused gaze.

The only condition when working with the sounds is that you must stand on both feet and focus your gaze straight in front of you. The sounds themselves are about the inside, the eyes give the big picture and convey the sounds out into the world. The actors intone the sounds one at a time two octaves up and then four octaves down. It's not about making beautiful sounds. It's about the courage to make them, even those that are far too high and far too low.

It's in what is difficult that you can find ways out, it's there that something can happen, something can change. By staying put, even though the urge to escape is strong, through step-by-step getting oneself to let go, tensions can be released and the energy can flow.

Nadine works with four voice qualities; low male, high male, low female, and high female. (I have chosen instead to call them Earth, Fire, Water and Air).

They are based on the vowels *AW*, *AH*, *OO*, and *HA* (a lighter, airier and brighter *AH*).

These vowels reside in different parts of the body.

Nadine talks about the energy of the sounds and their affinity with emotion. Working with these sounds gives us a way of getting past the fears and inner tensions that, more or less unconsciously, we allow ourselves to be controlled by. So that later when we are working with a script, we don't shy away from what burns.

Matti Bergström writes: *"The brainstem has centres that control consciousness. Besides activating the whole brain, these centres also activate the muscular system. You could say that the brainstem holds the first and most fundamental resource for our behaviour, the power"*¹²

Maybe it is precisely this power that we are given the opportunity to work with, to explore, to investigate, through making these sounds. In any case, it is quite apparent that mental and physical forces and opposing forces are set in motion when working with the sounds.

¹² BERGSTRÖM (1990) p. 37.

THE DEMON FEAR

On the road to understanding, insight and ability when working with the voice and characterisation, we often encounter obstacles, which are generally based in fears. They can sometimes be so difficult to deal with that they could almost be seen as demons.

You are the one who says it's impossible, that everything is impossible

You are the opposite of my enlightened self

Should I just let you be? Let you stand in the way?

You are immensely strong and have no limits on how much pain you can take

But I don't really understand what you want with me

Do you just want to show yourself, show me that you exist?

But why do you have to be so negative?

Can't you just stand there with your inexplicable burden on your back and laugh at
the wretchedness of it all

Could we laugh at it together?

Previously, I gave up entirely when you turned up, I turned on my heels at the door
and went home

But that's no good in the long run

So now I go inside, even though I see you're still standing there in the hall

Just so you know

I see you

Matti Bergström writes that demons... *“are just another name for chaotic, disorganised objects that cause insecurity and fear...”*¹³ He says that knowledge helps to counter the external unknown, while the aesthetic helps against the inner unknown. It ties down and treats unfamiliar signal flows. If it cannot do so, you end up in fear and insecurity.

Nadine George talks about the sounds as feelings, that voice work is in fact work with one's own feelings. The body's reactions, such as becoming hoarse, or being in pain, are reactions of our consciousness to letting our feelings dance freely. It's important to respect physical reactions, but not to take them as gospel truth. There is no point in forcing one's way through an obstacle, it's better to patiently keep chipping away at it.

It is an art to listen and to not listen.

It makes me think of Odysseus who lashed himself to the mast before he sailing past the Sirens. He wanted to hear their song, but not be drawn in by their seductive power. Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback writes that Odysseus lashed himself to the mast, in full possession of his senses, his *logos*, in order to be able to listen to the story of life, which is far greater and more dangerous than we humans can comprehend or take in.

*“The Sirens in particular have been interpreted in just a few ways: some have understood them as the harmony of the stars; others have perceived them as the allure of the dead soul; for some, the Sirens are the perils of lust that lead the soul to its ruin; and there are those who have identified the Sirens with the dangerous allure of fiction and even with the seductive power of knowledge”*¹⁴

That's how I want to work as a teacher, in the singing and playing of my own songs, and even in my writing:

Both lashed to the mast and listening to deep, wild sounds.

¹³ BERGSTRÖM (1990) p. 131.

¹⁴ CAVALCANTE (2006) p. 90.

THE SOUND AND THE SCRIPT

I am certified to teach the Nadine George technique. Through my teaching, I have assimilated Nadine's knowledge, combined it with my other knowledge, and created my own way of working with language, the voice and performance.

For a long time, I've been driven by the question of how best to link the sounds, the voice qualities, with working on a script. Whether I am working with drama, epic poetry or lyrics, I seek a way of bringing the language to life that leaves the literary behind it.

The sounds in themselves create something that the spoken word seldom achieves. Song that grips us humans, that penetrates deeper and touches us more deeply than perhaps we understand. The direct proximity of the song to the emotions, the song's ability to get through, the song's transparency that gives both strength and vulnerability to the singer and the audience.

*“If we recognise that understanding and not explanation is what is most key to the reading and interpretation of a “text”, then it is in connection with musical notation that this can really be made apparent. A musical score cannot be explained. It can only be interpreted. Reading here is an interpretative art”.*¹⁵

For me, interpreting a script has a lot in common with interpreting a song. Seeking out the musical in the text is a way of making it more alive, more moving.

Some dramatists and writers know about the inherent musicality of language, while others do not. As an actor and musician, it is important to know about, to recognise, and to be able to utilise what there is in the script.

There is not just one rhythm to relate to in a script, neither is there just one melody. Layer upon layer of rhythms and melodies wind their way through the landscape of the story.

I see them as waves of energy that you can surf on. If you cannot understand them, if you are not able to feel them, you will miss out on their fluent power.

¹⁵ CAVALVANTE (2006) p. 168.

For that knowledge about rhythm and melody to bear fruit, we need to practise listening. Listening to what is happening in the script itself, its drive and energy, but also how it affects our bodies, our breathing, and what kinds of reactions it arouses within us. So that we can take advantage of the impetus we get from working with the musical aspects of the text.

Vocal characterisation is composed of many parts: the rhythm of the language and its melody, breathing and flow, speech sounds and punctuation, the form and content of the story.

These parts need to be linked together by the performance, the artistic expression. In addition to proficiency in technique, this requires an ability to open up – to touch, and be touched by, others. To be in dialogue with the script, the space, with one's fellow actors and the audience.

It is the crossover between technical proficiency and the instant of performance, between awareness and allowing something to happen, being at once well-prepared and also open-minded that is the essence itself, the real challenge for myself as a teacher as well as the actor I am working with.

Based on working in a relaxed state and with direction via the four voice qualities, in bringing a script to life, we can gain a physical understanding of those frequently quoted and vital concepts when working on a script: grounding, broadening, directing and heightening.

AW helps us to be grounded in the narrative.

AH helps us to broaden our speech.

OO helps us to direct our lines.

HA helps us to heighten the acting.

WHAT DOES THE SINGING GIVE TO THE TEXT? WHAT DOES THE TEXT GIVE TO SINGING?

In order to develop the subject *Vocal Characterisation*, to strengthen the link between sound and text, for many years I have collaborated with Pia Olby, who lectures in vocal performance for singers.

I understand my knowledge through her knowledge

I understand my body through her body

We share knowledge but also each have our own specific areas of knowledge

Each of us develops in the encounter with the other

An important step in our collaboration was to bring together vocal characterisation in song and in speech in a joint project. Greek & Rock.

Why bring together Greek tragedy and modern Arena Rock?

Why mix heavy refrains with lamentations to the Greek gods?

Is it possible to create a bridge through time without diminishing the power of the words?

We base our work on what we recognise (Rock) to get closer to what is more remote (Greek tragedy), and it opens the way for a greater understanding of both of these forms of expression. Greek tragedy benefits from the energy of song, while Rock benefits from the narrative power of the drama. It becomes a bridge between those ancient texts and the new.

Our work aims to open the body and let the words run through it. We don't differentiate between the spoken narrative and the sung narrative. We work with direction and relaxation, we work with courage and fear, we allow ourselves to be moved while seeking the big picture, a distance.

This is how we can relate to the audience, allowing them to share in the open, the sensual, the terrible, the wonderful, the terrifying, the glorious, and the intangible. Humanity, in all its greatness and frailty, with all the big emotions in circulation within

it, has not changed throughout the ages. There has always been a need and a desire for catharsis, the purification of the soul.

Pia Olby and I also work with other constellations of song and text where we find common denominators between dramatist/poets and composers/genres:

Chekhov & Tango: In both, there is a longing... across the wide open sea... for Moscow...

Vladimir Vysotsky & Edith Södergran: They share a power and are driven by a vision

Carl Michael Bellman & Lotta Olsson: There is a heightening in their sonnets and their melodies

It is noticeable that a script acquires quite a different life and intensity when it is performed after a song. And it is noticeable that a song will have quite a different quality when its narrative emerges, influenced by working with the text.

Students are asked to sing and read in the different voice qualities. Intellectually, one particular voice quality might seem to be the more logical choice for a particular monologue/song. But this shows that the four different voice qualities give different kinds of depth to the text and the song. It makes us realise how many layers of depth there are in a story. At times, what appears to be the least likely can be the one that most brings the script to life. We all have so many prejudices and sometimes we don't notice we are making choices based on them. We can bring that out into the clear light of day.

The students are not following your lead, I remember Pia saying to me once in the middle of an exercise.

At first I felt ashamed, thought that I had failed. Then I realised that this was an observation, not a judgement from her.

So I looked for ways to make the instructions clearer, more comprehensible for the students, and did not give up before understanding was apparent in their bodies. Having an objective eye gives my teaching depth; through that critical gaze, I am able to develop.

The most important thing about having a colleague in the room is that we help each other to remember. For it is in the encounter with the students that my knowledge is deepened and developed. We help each other to apprehend what is going on, so that we can manage and repeat it.

When a student comprehends something when working on a script, we transfer that experience to working on a song and vice versa. We are not trying to prove anything. But we are looking for evidence. We are looking for physical and mental experiences. We are trying to confirm what is intuitive. We are trying to go one step further.

The student works on linking a voice quality with text and song

It is very clear that the energy of the sound has a direction

But when she goes over to the script, the energy drops at the end of every sentence

I asked her if she could broaden and direct the sound in the final words

She understands, because she has just done this, the body remembers, the mind knows

She begins to speak, but swallows the final words anyway, or tries to scream them

I say that it is not about the volume of the sound

It is about the energy through the final word, the idea of directing the sound

She begins to challenge herself

Putting together many sentences so that she will be really tired by the end

And something happens. What is it?

It is clear and detectable, but also difficult to put into words

The script comes to life

Then she goes over into song

She sings the final word in the phrase beautifully

Pia asks her to think in exactly the same way as in the song when she is working on the script

Not a perfect finish, without any expansion

The song comes to life

It is not about singing or speaking loudly. Doing so is just one of the ways to get to the living, the vibrating, what's important.

The encounter between the human being and the song and the script.

Which is the source of the encounter between the human being/song/script and the audience.

A DAY AT WORK

I start the day's work based on Nadine George's technique. The students lie on the floor and do breathing exercises. Tension in the body, shoulders, neck and thighs are part of our everyday lives. It is these tensions we need to deal with and try to alleviate. We do so for the sake of flow, to be able to use our voices for characterisation.

I asked the students to get up off the floor into a standing position and find a balance between direction and relaxation, focusing their eyes and with energy in the out-breath. Then they walk around the room on the same conditions. I link their walking to punctuation. Imagine, I say to the students, that you are carrying on an internal conversation that makes you change direction in the room at each punctuation mark. The words themselves are not important in this exercise. Rather, it is the focus on a new thought, a new impulse, that impels you to change direction.

This instruction immediately alters the energy in the room. Their walking has direction without this creating unnecessary tensions in their bodies. There is forward movement, a detectable energy and intensity.

For today's lesson, I have a question that I put to both myself and the students: What physical experiences do we have through working with the voice quality based on the AW vowel, and how can we transfer these into our characterisation of the script?

“We could say that the sensation is like an affectionate conversation between rules and concrete responses to those rules; general concepts and unique cases, where the general expresses the individual, which in turn thereby gets a broader expression. The individual is composed of both repeatable and non-repeatable elements ... The general is obscure and does not communicate if it is not made real in the form of a concrete picture ... In the end, the general is never any better than its role in the correct articulation of the concrete.”¹⁶

My teaching in relation to the voice, the body and breathing is once both concrete and hard to grasp. This is why practical experience, reflection and consciousness-

¹⁶ NUSSBAUM (1995) p. 109.

raising are important factors. I begin from what happens with the students and then build on their experiences so that they are able to develop and deepen them. What I have done with others is not relevant in the here and now. Although there is a foundation of knowledge, a foundation of experience, I cannot repeat this in the same way in different situations and contexts.

Earlier in the week, this group of students has discovered that each voice quality has helped them in different ways. The *AH* gave them an experience and awareness of intensity and breadth. The *OO* gave stability and direction. The *HA* helped them to unify the light and airy with the awkwardly dark.

**She has the forehead's brilliant direction
But she doesn't locate the carrying power of the sacrum
Even so, it's in her body that I see it, understand it anew
How she works with it intuitively, seeks it out
But yet she isn't there, because the power isn't there
How can you both be and not be?
She shows me what I have to show her**

The sacrum! That's what working with the sounds based on the *AW* vowel have helped us find today. The sacrum and its importance to the voice's power and its relationship to the forehead.

It helps us to draw the energy from deep down, from the spine, instead of grimacing or waving a finger. Sometimes an actor will do that for emphasis, to communicate the story. While the intention is good, it doesn't work. It draws the focus *away* from the story. To understand the difference, to have experienced the difference, is essential for being able to work on, to practise and then to be able to make conscious choices.

This is an example of something that is both concrete and physical, while also being a thought, an idea. It is an attitude.

Working with the *AW* voice quality also helps students to understand, physically and mentally, the vital link between the pelvic floor/anus and one's gaze.

In the early development of an embryo, the cells divide and become a hollow ball with an opening called the blastopore, the original 'mouth' of the embryo. In less developed species, the blastopore remains the mouth, but in man it eventually

develops into the anus. I tell the students this so that they will gain an understanding of the important connection between the anus and the mouth. Because if we tense up one, the other tenses up as well. This has a major impact on breathing, flow, the voice, its power and how easy it is to use your voice.

I asked the students to collapse backwards, relaxing the muscles around the anus on the in-breath while throwing their arms forward, in the same direction as the focus of their eyes. This gives us two directions at the same time. The body is now ready for song and speech.

I also get them to try tensing the anus on the in-breath in order to feel how this makes the collapse backwards difficult, and how the throat tightens up.

When we reduce the forward movement, we become aware of the importance of the focus of the eyes to forward movement. An open, focusing gaze along with a relaxed in-breath that moves the story forward, to an encounter.

When I work with the four voice qualities, I link a movement to each of the vowels in order to reinforce them, to make them more physical. Then we try adding collapsing backwards, dropping the pelvis, to the movement for each vowel.

Out of this very practical physical work, the students get to test out the different sounds and energies of each of the voice qualities. *AW* has a deep and grounded sound; *AH* comes out of the chest, with a more piercing sound; *OO* comes out of the chest too, but with a warmer resonance; and *HA* rises upwards with an airy lightness.

These different sounds each create their own different characters. They give the story added dimensions, resulting in characterisations of the situation from additional angles. All by working with the voice through the body.

Deep down, she said, it was as if that original mouth, the blastopore, lifted me up

All I thought about was relaxing and I hadn't expected that at all, it just happened

What I heard was a connection through her whole body

Later when she sang, she still had that connection

What is physically anchored gives the mental the freedom to fly

Happiness, a liberated feeling, was clearly reflected in her eyes

I had never understood how to relax on the in-breath, she told me

It felt quite wrong in my body to let my stomach drop

But relaxing that original mouth helped me

ON RESPONSIBILITY

It is difficult to stand and move and breathe on stage. This is the difficult part of what I work with. I am always trying to get to the core of this difficulty. Difficulties can be visible on the surface as symptoms in one way or another. But correcting a symptom on the surface does not help the underlying problem itself. The symptom on the surface only shows that there is something that needs working on. Even with the best of intentions, attempts to correct the underlying problem can result in it becoming even more firmly rooted.

We humans want to do things right. We adapt ourselves and try to be good enough. We want to be accepted and loved. It's easy to take advantage of that desire in others. As a teacher, I have to be sensitive to the position of power I have in the classroom. I can hand out gold stars and send people to the naughty corner. Even where I have no conscious intention of doing so.

I have already talked about co-creation as fundamental to learning. But it doesn't change the fact that as the teacher I have a power, am given a power, in the classroom. And with that power comes responsibility. Buber writes that taking responsibility means responding to what you see.

“Real responsibility only exists where a real response is given. Response to what? To what happens to you, what you are permitted to see, to hear, to observe. For those who are aware, every concrete moment that is shared with you as a person, with its content of the world and fate, is a language ... Thus, this places a demand on the aware individual, that he or she steadfastly relates to this ongoing creation.”¹⁷

As a musician/poet, it is my responsibility to open myself up to the opportunities presented to me and to work on my difficulties. It is my responsibility to connect the creative, flowing voice with the reflective, distanced perspective.

¹⁷ BUBER (2008) p. 50.

As a teacher, it is my responsibility to use all my knowledge and experience to seek out what will help students and actors to progress in their work. In what is happening at this very moment, what is possible at this very moment. My responsibility is to acknowledge what I see and ask questions and provide insights, so that the students' endeavours gain a foothold in the sources of their power and creativity.

It is not my responsibility to take the step, to do the work. That is the responsibility of the student.

This is where courage comes into it – the courage to risk doing something that at first does not feel comfortable, but which gives the creative process a solid foundation on which to grow. The atmosphere in the room is important. That we feel safe enough to try out what we are not yet comfortable with, what we have not yet got a grip on.

We do this for the sake of our art, for the sake of the story, for the sake of the audience.

We even do it for our own sake. So that we can take full advantage of the capabilities that we have.

The power we all possess.

ART AND TECHNIQUE

It is my view that one's approach to stagecraft, be it from the technical or artistic angle, needs the same energy and presence and artistry. But I am becoming increasingly aware that, in practice working with actors, I need to be clear about what differentiates these two aspects of stagecraft, and what they have in common.

Characterisation, performance needs flow. But flow is not characterisation or performance *per se*. Flow is flow, pure and simple.

Characterisation in performance is driven by a need, the expressive need, the will and desire to bring something to life, to give it form.

Flow is not form. Flow emerges through form.

The script is brought to life in the encounter between the will, the form and the flow.

Once in a workshop we were asked to give an open master class in front of an audience. So that everyone would have a chance to participate, we needed a form for that participation. That's when fears and performance pressure crept into the room. The energy that until only recently had shone so brightly petered out into nothing.

What words generate a focus on the artistic side?

What words generate a focus on the technique side?

This is what my work and artistic process is about. To bring about an encounter between art and technique. This gives me the keys to both the performance aspects and the technical aspects of the work. By having one foot in each camp, I find bridges that connect and out of this I am able to take further steps in deepening and developing my understanding.

Sometimes instructing the students in terms of their performance, like a director, achieves better results than instructing them purely in technique, and vice versa. I don't work out in advance when I should use the one or the other. This is where artistic intuition comes in, and the courage to go with my own impulses. It is about listening, about trying to understand what would achieve the most in the moment.

By mixing up the language I use in instructions, I hope that I am helping the acting student to combine their technique with their performance.

I work with a group of students focusing on technique when the following occurs:

He is working well on the task. I could just leave it at that. He is more relaxed than ever and it's working. But I want to take one more step, to bring out something that I have seen, although it's never been entirely visible. I suspect that he has more to give than he is giving, that something is getting in the way. It is in that crossover between technique and acting that this shrinking away occurs, in the crossover between practising and performing. That is why I choose to give him acting direction rather than expand on the exercise we are working with, based on my own intuition.

I asked what would happen if the Guard that he is playing were surprised, even close to being mentally slow. The Guard says what he says, but the question is does he understand? It's as if the words are tripping out through his mouth, but that this makes the Guard confused rather than him gaining any insight from what he says.

By using this approach, something happens with the student. It's got to do with a relaxed chest. When you are surprised you drop your jaw, and let that drop propagate throughout your body.

He is not standing in the way of himself as he has done before

His chest has been so closed

His heart large, his eyes warm, but his chest closed

By opening his chest, his power, the emotion gushes forth

Lets him out

Lets the rest of us in

We spectators become participants in the Guard's monologue

As if we were standing there on the roof and watching the flames arise

We not only see how he experiences it

We enter into the experience itself

An intimate collaboration between the performance and technique, where the one is actually dependent on the other – that's what I am trying to develop.

A CREATIVE ENCOUNTER

I'm in the final phase of working on one of my songs. The lyrics have been thoroughly worked on, I'm satisfied with the melody. But there is something that I still haven't got. That elusive something that I know when I've found it, and know when it's still missing. So I keep on working in order to find it.

I've been almost there for quite some time. I'm a bit irritated on the inside. My patience is beginning to waver. I work on. Doggedly, I could say. Focused sounds better. But the truth is that I am irritated more than focused.

It feels as if I am battling someone or something

But who?

The piano?

Am I battling the piano?

I'm so damned intent that my will is getting in the way of everything

In the way of the encounter?

In the way of creativity?

I recognise this, I think to myself. This willing too much, this belief in the power of one's will. That battle gets you nowhere, it doesn't lead forward. It gets you bogged down in a perpetual cycle of frustration. The time for curiosity can suddenly be gone. Trust can be spent. What remains is frustration and stamping one's feet in the vestibule. Stamping myself deaf and dumb, and maybe stupid, too.

My instrument, my ear and the music's slurs within me are what help me to recognise and decide, so that I can sort things out. Sorting is part of the creative process. But I need things to choose between. I need creativity's flow of ideas.

But still, maybe it's my surprise at all of this that makes me more curious than ashamed. Right then. Now *I'm* in that place that I try to help others to move on from. Now *I'm* fighting it, just as ineffectually. Now I want so much that I am turning a deaf ear. Now I'm demanding creativity on a plate, so much so that she is totally fed up with my company.

Is this me?

Yes, it is!

But why on Earth am I doing this?

Is it to avoid standing in a vacuum, an emptiness?

It hurts just as much every time you enter its realm

Not knowing but nonetheless letting go of one's will

That is the realm of emptiness

That's where I am now.

And this is where reflection comes to my aid. The formulated experience gives me the power and courage to stay put in what is difficult. I can juxtapose my reaction to other experiences, my own and those of others. I have been through this so many times, I have stood on the other side of the fence. I have been the one who has supported others in their courage to stay put in this place. The void, the vacuum, this emptiness is part of creativity.

I stay put in what is difficult

Experience the harsh reality of the void

And suddenly something comes to me

Not because I demanded it

But because I stand ready, open to it

I barely have time to be surprised

Creativity's muse reaches out a hand to me

I take it

ABOUT THE WRITING PROCESS

I began writing a text based on the idea of critically reflecting on my practical knowledge and experience as a lecturer in vocal characterisation. I have taken several courses in knowledge reflection, in which I have critically reflected on my own practical knowledge in the form of an essay. Through regular discussions about the text with the others in the group, through reading books on the subject, and through allowing the one to come up against the other, my perspective was deepened, giving me the big picture and insight into that practical knowledge. These courses were important to me; my perspective was broadened and my understanding of my practical knowledge was deepened.

But this writing did not take me to where I wanted to go. The text felt more ambitious than interesting, and it became cumbersome and unwieldy. I didn't yet know what I was looking for, or how I would move forward, but I understood how important it was to look for answers to these questions:

I am looking for my voice

I am looking for my form of expression

I need tools

I need to tolerate my doubts

It is these doubts in themselves that assist me

They sharpen my focus

I get clarity

And so my explorative writing began to take the form of a process, like the one I work with as a teacher and as a musician/poet – the creative and artistic process. I was seeking a form that could do justice to my ideas and experiences. I wrote about the actual struggle, the search itself. Without this process, I would not be where I am today. I would not have reached the understanding that I now have. The process is important to me. It is fundamental to the result.

I realised that reflection on what I can already do and know was not enough for me, for what I wanted to understand and explore. There was something else that demanded my attention. I wanted to be at the forefront, in what lies immediately before my actions, in what I don't yet know or can't grasp. That's why I also chose to use another method of writing. As a guest lecturer at Bard College, USA, in autumn 2003, I was introduced to a form of free-flow writing called Writing and Thinking, which I then developed in my own teaching. It is a way of writing that lies close to the intuitive and the creative; it allows an uncritical approach, it opens doors to what is not yet formulated and thought through.

How do I retain flow in form? That is the most important question for me. It is the very core of the musician's and actor's work. To be able to repeat something without it being experienced as repeated. To retain and simultaneously not hold on.

I try to tie free-flow writing to reflection

Flow and structure

I begin to suspect that this pendulum movement is the important thing

That it's not a matter of doing the one first and then the other

I must find a way of being in both

Find a way to travel back and forth

Out and in

For me, reflection became a way of guiding my thoughts, of gaining a perspective on them and delving down into them. Free-flow writing became a way of following my thoughts, allowing them to surprise me and take me into previously unknown territory. For me, free-flow writing is similar to improvisation.

*“The word comes from the Latin *improvisus*, which means the unanticipated. It describes the free reign of the imagination and reason unified in a way that is difficult to grasp. This is where the predetermined comes together with the indeterminate, the intended with the unintended, the necessary or the precise with the unanticipated or the unpredictable at one and the same moment.”¹⁸*

¹⁸ CAVALCANTE (2006) p. 169.

Improvising is something I know about from my work with vocal characterisation, with performance for the stage, and as a musician. Now I could transfer this not only to writing but also to the thinking process itself. The creative process is not reserved solely for artistic expression. It can be found in other contexts.

It is driven by the desire to get there, to develop, to understand, to perform. It is a mental process and also a process involving action. For me, this approach has marked my writing.

Out of this work, I finally understood that neither of these two approaches to writing – the critical reflective, nor the free-flow writing approach – were enough for me to be able to achieve my aim in this exploration. The intention, which was still not fully apparent to me, but nonetheless was guiding my actions.

To arrive at that encounter between my knowledge and experience, between art and technique, to the desire itself to bring my experience to life, I opened the door to my own personal form of expression, to poetry.

In free-flow writing, I get closer to my inner voice

In reflection, I gain access to the big picture

They need each other

I want to link personal, creative free-flow writing with critical reflection

Without losing either of them

In addition, I incorporate my creative voice, poetry

I allow it space in both free-flow writing and in reflection

I allow it to influence the structure and the wording of the text.

ON DIFFICULTIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

It wasn't exactly easy trying to get these forms of writing to meld together. I suppose that I had an idea about what reflective writing should be. Writing to suit myself and my intention sometimes resulted in my running into difficulties. My writing was shaped by my experiences as an artist and teacher. My opportunities, but also my difficulties. What made me go on? What gave me the courage to challenge myself?

In the light of my experiences as a teacher, I know that it is when you encounter obstacles that possibilities arise. In what feels insurmountable, you find a way that will carry you forward and beyond. I was secure in my knowledge about my work with the voice and language; now I needed to take that experience with me into my writing.

There is an ongoing struggle between the logical voice and the creative, intuitive voice

I've been aware for a long time of this struggle in the external world

There, the logical voice used to come out the winner

Now I realise that this struggle also exists in me

It runs like a Berlin Wall through my own body

Sense and sensibility live on different sides of this wall

In this struggle, the logical voice has shame and doubt on its side. Who wants to feel shame? But doubt can be beneficial, because it helps me to move forward. If I have the courage to confront its line of argument. It is doubt that stimulates me to continue exploring and developing. Through reflection, intuition grows stronger, consciousness is raised. I become aware of what is happening outside of me and also within me.

I know and I don't know, and I oscillate between these poles.

I can and I can't; this is the way of practical knowledge.

Fervour is a great enemy. Patience demands much more of us than this. It's about being able to acknowledge what's difficult, being able to embrace the uncertainty, with open eyes and listening ears. My music developed once I risked staying where the ground was not solid beneath me. I have let things slip through the net because I was afraid of losing the catch. But then I began to be interested instead in the holes in the net. I trained my ear to recognise the precise. Now I can be strict with myself, or perhaps frank is a better word.

The ability to trust in one's impressions, to capture the impulse and make choices – this is something I have started being able to do when putting music to my lyrics. But it does not work as well with my writing. If anything, I experience it as something that is impenetrably difficult. Fear of failure means that I almost give up.

I found a freedom on the stage. The nervousness that coursed through my body before I went up on stage was stunningly heavy. But once I was up on the stage, it was as if everything gave way. It was in the encounter with the audience that I found my flow.

Do I go up on stage with my writing?

How do I find that feeling that I had on stage?

Is it possible to transfer something from it?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWING AND THINKING

I get in the way of myself. I inhibit my creative flow and imagination by a requirement to be smart, clever and true. At the same time, my practical experience yearns for the big picture and reflection. How can I move on?

Then I read Hannah Arendt's words about "... *the distinction between thinking and knowing, between reason, the urge to think and to understand, and the intellect, which desires and is capable of certain, verifiable knowledge*" and "*the thinking activity, the performance itself, which means that we have to trace experiences rather than doctrines.*"¹⁹ These words inspire me; they make my thoughts soar. I don't need to know for sure, I have the right to think.

In my artistic exploration, in song, I begin to get closer to my own voice. I can distinguish between when I sing without excuses, without trying to hide anything or make it appear better than it is. In turn, this has made me aware of my writing voice, my thinking voice. I notice that the eager-to-please, well-brought-up young lady stands guard at the threshold of my thinking. I think she sees her mission as not letting me stray outside the norms and rules. In particular, she doesn't want me to claim anything that I don't know for sure. She demands the truth of knowing where I seek the deepening of experience in thinking.

I have practical experience stretching over many years of working with the voice and speech and of performing my stories set to music. To move forward in my reflecting, I have recourse to philosophers, writers and brain researchers. People who have spent their lives deepening their knowledge. I cannot come close to their understanding, but their thoughts help me in putting my practical knowledge into words. I now give myself permission to utilise the knowledge of others, without taking responsibility for whether or not I have fully and completely understood them. They have given me a helping hand and I have gratefully received it.

The young lady guarding the door will just have to accept it.

¹⁹ ARENDT (1997) p. 46, 50.

“Do you understand?” said Granddad. “When there is interest, a shameless, passionate interest, not shameful – there is a crucial difference – you see details more and more clearly. And suddenly it’s like Ezekiel telling about the Valley of Dry Bones. A spirit enters the bones so that they come alive again. There is something strange about the feeling of reality, since it apparently demands proximity and precision.”²⁰

For me, knowing and understanding are not the same thing. Knowledge sits in a completely safe place at the top of the mountain. Like water penetrating dry earth, understanding moves mountains and transforms the landscape.

Knowing makes the construction stable. It makes foundations and walls and maybe a roof. But understanding has other movements within itself. It does not allow itself to be captured in beautiful castles and bullet-proof vests. It has the spirit in it. Lightness and depth.

Understanding brings emotions to life. It stirs things up so the water becomes cloudy. It pinches even the most cautious on the cheek. It awakens fears that knowledge has built escape-proof castles around. Art is not about moving. Understanding is what moves people. It holds out its hand for an encounter. That is why I needed to take the artist with me into my writing, requisition myself, to translate my knowing into understanding. To get to what is essential for me. To find the right words.

By listening to myself, I note how much my capacity to listen to others is enhanced. I have always tried to be a good listener, a genuinely interested listener, but a dialogue happens between two parties, even when the dialogue takes place inside of myself. To read a book is to have a conversation with it. To view a work of art is also a conversation. By listening to myself, my capacity to converse with you is enhanced. That was an unexpected bonus.

²⁰ SEEBERGER (2010) p. 53.

ARTISTIC EXPLORATION

“Where a scientific idea is not conceived of in combination with the concrete wealth of its effects, knowledge does not either get a clear picture of this idea”²¹

In the beginning, my intention was not to write about my own creative process, about myself as a musician and poet. I didn't think it had anything to do with it. But in the end, I realised that it was precisely this piece of the puzzle that was missing. I needed to bring together my experiences in order to access the depths of my knowledge; by doing things in practice, by becoming my own teacher, by listening to my own creative process.

My initial idea was to include a work of art. I tested my knowledge about vocal characterisation by staging *Crave* by Sarah Kane with a group of others. But acting is not my art, not my craft, not my form of expression.

I have been on stage many times over the years, but as a musician and singer, sometimes as a poet. I set my lyrics to music and perform them. Rock is where I belong, I have played with many bands over the years, but the ballad is my wellspring. These days, I generally perform alone and accompany myself on guitar or piano.

Initially, I was somewhat embarrassed about listening to my own singing. But I invited in the teacher inside of me; I persuaded myself to listen to my own voice as if I were one of my students. That meant that I stopped judging my voice, and instead I listened to what was preventing it from free-flowing. I used my knowledge of text and the voice to help me explore my singing.

This practical artistic effort helped me to gain a deeper understanding of my knowledge as a teacher, which in turn provided support and inspiration to my reflective text.

But to bring about an encounter between the critical researcher in me and my artistic expression turned out to be considerably more difficult. I was quite simply afraid that

²¹ LARSSON (1997) p. 40.

I would lose my artistic intuition if I subjected it to a critical gaze. This fear surprised me. I didn't think I would react like that. But I did.

In my free-flow writing, I had discovered that certain emotions and experiences don't allow themselves to be put into words. That was how I became aware of the importance of music to me, and I began seeking a clearer musical form for my texts, where what I couldn't put into words could be brought to life using another form of expression.

I am first and foremost a pianist, but when I started playing in rock bands when I was young, I chose to play guitar instead. I found it easier to make contact with the audience from behind an electric guitar than from behind a piano. And I also thought it was more cool, and I needed all the courage I could muster to go up on stage. Now I've returned to the piano, to the craft I know best, to give the spirit of the music the best chance of coming out.

I noted that I had let my songs get stuck in a form that I had taken for granted. As a young woman, I had stepped into this form and had been faithful to it ever since, without ever really questioning it.

It was my critical reflective eye that led me to start realising this. That brought my artistic choices to a head. And this frightened me.

For me, music is closely tied up with intuition. I often experience that I don't create the music – it comes to me. How could I remain open to it and at the same time keep an appraising eye on it? It felt like a huge risk to take. But now that the question had arisen, I could not do anything else than continue in its trail.

I thought: you need trust before you can dare to question. So step-by-step, I began building up an area of trust inside of me, where my music could encounter my critical, reflective ear.

Critically reviewing my artistic expression helped me to place my artistic choices in a clearer light. It gave the intuitive the opportunity to delve deeper. It gave me some clarity and a firmer footing.

This approach then propagated itself like rings on water to my writing and also to my teaching. It created a kind of focus in me as a teacher.

It is not only a matter of trust but also of courage. To use courage not only to remain in what is as yet uncertain but also the courage to launch myself, my insight and my performance into the unknown.

That is what artistic exploration has meant for me. Arriving at the ability to shoot

off my arrow. To relinquish control over not only that which I don't yet know, but also that which I do know. To assert something and allow it to act under its own steam.

Place itself in the spotlight, in clarity, in the formulated, in the explorative.

Clarity that has to do with the capacity to differentiate, the capacity to appraise. To begin with, it was the appraisal itself that frightened me. It is so closely associated with shame, and with the norms and prejudices that operate within me and outside of me. I had no trust in my own capacity to appraise. But by working with it, through critically appraising my own creative process, my capacity in this regard developed. I worked on my artistic choices, where previously I had allowed intuition to rule them. My fear was that my intuition would consequently be weakened, but it turned out that this was not the case. My artistic intuition and critical appraisal in fact worked side-by-side and were mutually strengthened by doing so.

For me, artistic research gives me a clarity and focus. Out of it grows the capacity to choose and the courage to shoot off my knowledge and my performance into the unknown.

The courage to choose and go with impulses.

The courage to confront.

The courage to make a statement.

The courage to create.

ON COMPLEXITY AND INTUITION

It all hangs together: the voice, the script, the body, the space,
one's fellow actors, the audience

It is all life and energy and focus and direction and openness and surprise

I am beginning to understand why it has been difficult for me to write about my work. It has so many parameters. They relate to one another, require each other, affect each other, are changed and also effect change. Initially it felt absurd to circumscribe a small part and write about it. But at the same time, there is no other option. I can only write about one thing at a time. But understanding the complexity gives me the strength to cope with the necessary simplification.

I wanted to write about the almost indescribable, what is perhaps the totality. I know that the totality will elude me if I don't give the details sufficient scope. But I won't be able to get to all those lovely details if I don't get to swim around in the turbulent ocean.

In my work with students, I also need to relate to both the bits and the whole. Teaching is about having knowledge and experience, but the capacity to choose is at least as important. In the past, that made me afraid – I didn't want to choose poorly. Over the years, my perspective has changed, and now I test things out and can go back if I have chosen the wrong path.

I must remain constantly sensitive to what falls on fertile soil and what in fact does not work in the here and now, however good and important it still appears to me to be. I need to trust in the fact that what is happening is enough, that the possible is the right thing.

“The ability to intuit lies in a higher degree of agility, of ease in shifting focus, to free oneself from a notion and return to it, and to be at one point and be everywhere, to be in the present and in the past”²²

Like the orbiting electron, when it gets sufficient energy, is able to take a quantum leap to the next orbit, my knowledge leaps on. It is being deepened and broadened.

²² LARSSON (1997) p. 20 f.

It takes with it what I almost understand to a new dimension of clarity.

The first insight comes to me as a vague idea, barely detectable
I open my ear to it
Open my body, open my mind
Initially, I don't know why, but I retain the discovery
I circle around it
In anticipation of the next insight, the next experience
Which through its energy can induce me to take a quantum leap

The conscious self cannot cope with all that we perceive about the world around us and from inside of us. We choose information through force of habit, based on our capabilities and our value systems, guided by norms. By becoming more aware of the norms that guide us, by increasing our knowledge, and by practising our listening, we can change something of what we choose. We must still choose. But what we don't choose still remains as a possibility up until the time that we have chosen.

“If we look more closely at the brain’s “I-field”, the interaction zone between the two generators (the brainstem and the cerebral cortex), where the chaotic stream of signals and the ordered stream of signals coincide, we understand that this is where large quantities of new information are formed... These signal clouds are, so to speak, ‘waiting’ to be realised in behaviour. We can call these signal clouds the brain’s possibility clouds... It is here in these clouds where creativity resides and where ideas are generated, live and die”²³

Matti Bergström writes that possibility is the original word for time, that tempus means possibility. There is a reason for not choosing too quickly in my way of working with a script, since I prefer to stay a little while longer in that possibility cloud, in order to provide time for artistic instincts and reactions to be part of the process, and so they are not drowned out by analytical thinking.

But it is just as important to be open to impulses, to sense them and to be able to manage them.

Once again, I return to the balance, to the seemingly opposing that together forms something greater than its constituent parts. One is not better than the other. They are needed both, but not if one takes over the other.

²³ BERGSTRÖM (1990) p. 115 f.

I am beginning to realise that I was in fact looking for different forms of writing, so that I would be able to utilise experiences. I sought the big picture and greater depth, but also flow and imagination. I tried to get them to work together, in the way that the creative process works for me. To be creative is to expose yourself. The driving force for me is curiosity and the insight that it is possible.

Something in me knows when I have achieved my intention and when I have not. I call this artistic sensitivity. It is what I develop when working on bringing my songs to life. I now realise that I am doing the same thing in bringing my thoughts and ideas to life. Bringing my experiences to life rather than reflecting on them.

Writing as a process of bringing something to life. That is what artistic research is for me.

Using artistic tools in my reflecting. These artistic tools are sensitivity and sensibility, using one's entire being for this. Weighing up the words in order to achieve one's purpose. The way in which you present content belongs with it.

I was attending a conference where language researchers were talking about their research. They had knowledge about a language, but not the capacity to manage this knowledge. They spoke about the importance of intonation, but were themselves unable to put this into practice, allow themselves to be effective through their intonation. For me, it became clear that it is in the physical embodiment of the idea that my strength lies.

I thought that this was something I only used in performance, on stage. But now I see that it also applies to the actual exploration and reflection themselves.

My capacity to give the thought or idea a shape, a form, generates a different kind of thinking than in those for whom the content is superior to the form, superior to the execution, superior to how it is brought to life.

The form affects the content! For me, there is strength in artistic research. It is the creative force collaborating with reflection which gives me focus.

Matti Bergström writes about the capacity to evaluate and choose as yet another one of the brain's resources. Was it this that I was strengthening by writing reflectively, which then helped me to utilise my intuition?

“Intuition is the immediate, simultaneous consumption of the cloud of possibilities. We now also understand that if we are going to be able to utilise the resource of intuition, our capacity to evaluate and choose must be well practised.”²⁴

²⁴ BERGSTRÖM (1990) p. 118.

ARTISTIC INTUITION AND REFLECTION

In my work as a teacher with actors, my artistic intuition has been crucial. It has been fundamental to guiding me based on what I see, hear and perceive when working with actors. My artistic intuition is with me, in the moment, in every class. It arises in the encounter between the creative process and the reflective afterthought. It is bound up with my knowledge and my experience.

The power of relaxation and the forward movement of being present in the moment are cornerstones of my method. This apparently contradictory pair are essential for accessing the unanticipated possibilities of creativity and performance, and they open the way for the artistic intuition that resides in all of us. The path there requires work. The goal is not just to achieve a particular result, but rather to get to the potential that exists for us in the here and now. There is always a future, there are always more possibilities in front of us. But simply being in what is possible right now is big enough.

The quality of a sound opens the body of both the person who is singing and the person who is listening.

It takes us into the realm of the emotions. We are carried along by something that is bigger than we are.

It generates an encounter between what we know and what we sense, between consciousness and intuition.

Forward movement is the driving force of a story.

It generates energy, flow, and context.

It is what arouses our curiosity to continue listening.

The most difficult thing is being in what appear to be opposites at the same time, being both in the sound and in the forward movement. This creates feelings of confusion and resistance which in themselves provoke emotions and generate energy – precisely the energy that performance requires of us for the story to be brought to life.

This places us in a position that is both familiar and unfamiliar. It isn't possible to control the story, but it is possible to be its co-creator. Our task therefore is to both prepare ourselves for this creative moment, and learn how to utilise it.

This inward listening allows us to listen outwardly to what is going on around us at the same time – our fellow actors, the audience, the music, the drama.

What I work with, what I seek, is a combination of voice, script and performance that helps to bring out the storyteller in every actor.

To get past the embarrassment.

To break through the obstacles.

To go out into the world with his or her greatness and deeply human frailty.

And create magic.

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After class, he comes up to me and says:

“You know, this really works.

Can it be that simple?”

Yes, I reply.

But it has taken me a lifetime to get to that simplicity.

This is a story about my work. This story is part of my work. About my teaching role in terms of how and what. About my own creative process as a musician, poet and singer. About writing as an attempt to bring together these sides of me. About the joy of bringing to life both the written word and the mind's process. About characterisation as a form of artistic research.

Karin Rudfeldt