

CAPTURING THE AFFECTIONS:
A PERFORMER'S GUIDE TO ACTING
PURCELL'S RESTORATION THEATER MUSIC

BY

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This document presents a guide for the singing actor looking to create a historically informed performance of Purcell's theatre songs. The study of gesture, rhetoric and acting remained very similar throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and Dene Barnett's book, *The Art of Gesture: the practices and principles of 18th century acting* (1987), includes exhaustive research on gesture throughout these two centuries but does not include the other elements of an actor's technique that are particularly germane to performance on the Restoration stage: etiquette, dance and acting principles.

The first chapter illustrates the historical context into which the Restoration play developed and sheds light on the type of music Purcell was hired to compose. Chapter two illuminates acting techniques that were discovered in the ancient Greek and Roman writings and offers parallels to modern acting techniques that will help today's singing actor enter into the world of the Restoration theatre without feeling that they are on completely unfamiliar ground. The third chapter focuses on the training a dancing master provided the Restoration aristocrat: how to stand, bow, walk and take off a hat. The fourth chapter contains gestures prevalent at the time and a style guide. The fifth chapter focuses on matters of decorum and etiquette including using snuff and manipulating the fan, and the last chapter offers a checklist and a technique for breaking down a song into gestural and emotional components utilizing Purcell's song "From Rosy Bowers."

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

When singers approach the work of Purcell and other composers of the Restoration period in England (1660-1710), particularly pieces that were composed for inclusion into spoken theatre, masques or semi-operas, many questions arise. If singers wish to attempt historically informed performances, what sources might guide them into this acting style? How were actors trained in the Restoration Era and are there any similarities to modern training? What elements of acting technique are dissimilar? Finding sources to guide the classical singer is the first challenge; there are no modern sources that encompass the whole of the art of acting in this era. There are modern texts discussing the differing aspects of theatre in the Restoration Era, i.e. dance, gesture, rhetoric, style and manners, but there is no single text aimed toward classical singers wishing to perform this era of music. Just as we can never really know how singers sang in this era (with or without vibrato or something in between) neither can we truly know how they acted. However, there are logical presumptions to be made after investigations into treatises on dance, acting and rhetoric, into the art and literature of the time and into resources on etiquette and deportment.

A resurgent interest in the writings of Quintilian, Cicero and Aristotle influenced theatre and music beginning in the Renaissance and had a major influence on the style of the Restoration stage and on writers throughout this era and beyond. Treatises on rhetorical delivery include much information on gesture, including hand and body positions that would have been prevalent in the pulpit and courtroom as well as on the stage. Seventeenth and eighteenth century treatises on rhetoric which are germane to

acting technique in the Restoration period include Bulwer's *Chirologia or the Natural Language of the Hand* and Austin's *Chironomia or A Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery*. Dene Barnett's book, *The Art of Gesture: the practices and principles of 18th century acting*, 1987, provides dense and exhaustive research into gesture from all over Europe. These resources provide pivotal information but are not designed for ease of use nor do they cover knowledge that contributes to the entirety of an actor's craft.

Bulwer and Austin, along with most writers on rhetoric and gesture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, refer to Cicero and Quintilian as paragons of proper oration. Oration would have been a part of the seventeenth century nobles' education along with dance and etiquette. The popular dance treatises of the Restoration all discuss the five dance positions, the proper way to take off a hat, the proper ways to bow and courtesy (curtsy) and general issues of deportment. These treatises shed light on how nobility were trained by their (often French) dancing masters to carry themselves in polite society. Charles Gildon's text, *The Life of Thomas Betterton* (1710), details acting techniques of the Restoration Era and is one of very few contemporary sources on acting in the Restoration theatre. Gilbert Austin's treatise, *Chironomia*, attempts to categorize and create notation for the elements of gesture and oratory skills which were used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This paper will serve as a guide for the fundamental body positions (informed by dance), the essential social graces, the types of gestures and facial expressions fundamental to Restoration acting and will provide a template for breaking down a song into its gestural and emotional components. It will also establish a correlation between the acting techniques of the past and of the modern era, giving performers a way into the

Restoration world of stylized acting. This knowledge is the starting point for creating a historically informed performance.

Historical Context

The Restoration Era is usually described as the political period comprising the reign of Charles II (1660-1685), but as theatrical era, the dates are usually extended to 1710 when Handel arrived in England and a noteworthy change in theatrical productions began.¹ During the Interregnum, the period when there was no king (1649-1660), public performance of plays was outlawed.² Music continued to flourish and although opera was permitted under the law, there was no real public interest in an English opera. With the restoration of Charles II to the throne of England in 1660, the theatre began to prosper again, but new playwrights had to be discovered, theatres re-opened and old actors had to be found or new ones trained. Almost immediately after Charles II returned to England from his exile in France, he issued two patents that reopened the theatres; as the recipients of these patents, Sir Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant “were given the exclusive right to put on plays for profit and thus for the first time theatrical production in London was limited to only two companies.”³ Because of the royal patent and because of Charles’ interest in theatre, Davenant and Killigrew were at the mercy of

¹ Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy, *History of Theatre*, 10th ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008), 202.

² Emmett L. Avery and Arthur H. Scouten, *The London Stage, 1670-1700* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), xxi-xxii.

³ Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-2.

imperial whim; the King, for example, could request Shakespeare's plays to be rewritten to his tastes. The aristocracy also had a hand in shaping theatrical developments as they were the main contributors to box office success.⁴ The theatrical world was newly formed by these two companies and by royal and aristocratic preference.

Since the aristocracy, the portion of the public that could afford theatre tickets, had a major impact on the success of a theatre company, the two managers had to compete for an audience. Killigrew, who was given the King's Company and the better plays and actors (the remnants from the pre-Commonwealth era), did not fare as well as Davenant and the Duke's Company who had to be innovative and train new actors in order to compete. Davenant proved to be the better manager and pioneered innovations in theatrical design. In 1639, Davenant envisioned a new kind of English theatre: "it was to be England's first operatic playhouse, offering the wealthier end of the London public a taste of the grandeurs of court staging, with music and singing and dancing, set with lavish scenic perspectives and the costly traditions of the court masque's spectacles."⁵ It wasn't until the Restoration that his dream was realized in the building of the Dorset Garden Theatre. His design allowed for transitions between scenes and changes in scenery, had machines for flying in objects and people, had trap doors, had a proscenium arch, had a forestage where most of the action took place and had an area for the

⁴ Susan J. Owen, ed., *A Companion to Restoration Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), xii.

⁵ Gilly Bush-Baily, "Dorset Garden Theatre," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198601746.001.0001/acref-9780198601746> (accessed October 27, 2012).

musicians.⁶ To compete, Killigrew built a new theatre at Drury Lane that would be capable of the same amount of dramatic spectacle. “This spirited...competition had a great and largely beneficial influence on the kinds of plays produced and the direction drama was to take.”⁷ Later in the century, Charles II, who was a Francophile, sent Thomas Betterton, the manager of the Duke’s company, to Paris to study their opera houses and bring French theatrical innovations to England.⁸ The continued advancement of theatrical spectacle and keeping up with all things French would influence drama and theatrical music throughout the era.

The varieties of theatrical performances that developed in the Restoration Era were also influenced by allowing women onto the public stage. Women had been participating in court performances in England since the Renaissance, but it wasn’t until Charles II was restored to the throne that the public accepted women on the stage. When the London theatres were reopened in 1660 men were still playing women’s parts as they had in Shakespeare’s time, but women had been on the stage in Paris since the last half of the sixteenth century.⁹ The fact that Charles II was enamored of all things French is one more reason why he wanted to integrate actresses onto the London stage.¹⁰ Both Killigrew and Davenant began to train women as soon as their theatres opened, and in

⁶ Howe, 3.

⁷ Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 22.

⁸ Todd S. Gilman, “London Theater Music, 1660-1719,” in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, ed. Susan J. Owen (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 245.

⁹ Howe, 19.

¹⁰ Howe, 19.

1662, the king issued a patent that outlawed men from playing women's parts making actresses legal and mandatory.¹¹ The king had a personal stake in the introduction of women on the stage as several of his mistresses and one of his illegitimate daughters were actresses. He also felt "that women performers were necessary for 'useful and instructive representations of human life'."¹²

Actresses on the English stage and Davenant's innovations ushered in a new theatrical age that wove music and plays more tightly together than ever before. The tradition of music being a part of English plays goes back to the mid sixteenth century, but in the Restoration Era, song and instrumental music took a more prominent place in productions. In the seventeenth century, most actors were expected to be able to sing and most theatres had some sort of orchestra.¹³ Demand for singers capable of a more demanding vocal line increased throughout the era. All of Shakespeare's plays, comedic and tragic, included song; this tradition continued throughout the seventeenth century as music became an ever increasing part of the drama:

Every Restoration drama...and many early eighteenth-century English dramas, from tragedy...to comedy... from masque to opera – all together well over 600 stage works – incorporated music in performance. Even in plays that had no singing, a group of musicians would begin with two instrumental suites, the first music and second music, performed while the audience gathered. The musicians were seated aloft in the music room..., or on the stage itself. The first and second music would be followed by an elaborate overture (played after the speaking of the prologue from the stage), then (in many cases) a 'curtain tune' to accompany

¹¹ Howe, 23-24.

¹² Lib Taylor, "Women," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*.
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198601746.001.0001/acref-9780198601746>
(accessed October 27, 2012).

¹³ Brockett and Hildy, 127.

the raising of the curtain; once raised, the curtain usually remained up until after the epilogue. Between the acts the musicians played act tunes (short instrumental pieces). These men also played any music needed to accompany scene changes and dancing within the play.¹⁴

Music was inextricably linked with theatrical performance in England. Like instrumental music, song was also used at the opening of a play and as entracte entertainment, and “could define the episodes within a scene or create the illusion of the passage of time. Songs served to heighten characterization, to strengthen the emotional intensity of a scene, or to create an atmosphere...”¹⁵ Despite the importance song served in English theatre in the Restoration, audiences did not accept all-sung performances. The new Restoration theatres were ideal for opera as it was being performed in Italy and France, but instead of opera becoming popular, the British “experiments with musical drama led to the evolution of an art form that was to be unique in the history of English theatre—dramatic opera,” also known as semi-opera.¹⁶

The path that led to these semi-operatic works began with a search for plays to perform when the theatres were reopened in 1660. At first, pre-commonwealth plays were reused, including Shakespeare’s plays which Charles II divided between the two companies. These older plays were modernized by conforming to neoclassical ideals, including the separation of comedic and tragic forms, an emphasis on truth and morality, and utilizing the Aristotelian unities of time, place and action. “The fundamental demand

¹⁴ Gilman, 243.

¹⁵ Avery and Scouten, cxvi.

¹⁶ Avery and Scouten, cxxvi.

of neoclassicism...was for verisimilitude, or the appearance of truth.”¹⁷ Aristotle’s three unities of “time, place, and action were in some ways offshoots of this concern with reality and believability... Aristotle had said that the best tragedies covered the events of one day.”¹⁸ To conform to this element of truthfulness or plausibility, plays, including Shakespeare’s, had to be altered to fit into one twenty-four hour period with the intent that audiences could more readily believe this shorter passage of time. Comedy and tragedy were separated as the ancients prescribed, and a clear emphasis on teaching was stressed in both genres throughout the era. “Comedy was said to teach by ridiculing ridiculous behavior that should be avoided, tragedy by showing the horrifying results of mistakes and misdeeds.”¹⁹

The first new form of the era was the Heroic Play or Tragedy. The genre was “personally inaugurated” by Charles II.²⁰ It was “a form of serious drama which flourished briefly in England during the Restoration. Heroic tragedy, in rhymed couplets, featured a titanic protagonist, spectacular action in an exotic setting, bombast and overwrought emotion, and themes of love and honour.”²¹ This genre included John Dryden’s *The Indian Queen* which later evolved into semi-opera through the

¹⁷ Brockett and Hildy, 158.

¹⁸ Brockett and Hildy, 158.

¹⁹ Brockett and Hildy, 158.

²⁰ Susan J. Owen, ed., *A Companion to Restoration Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001) xiv.

²¹ Ronald W. Vince, “Heroic Tragedy,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198601746.001.0001/acref-9780198601746> (accessed October 27, 2012).

augmentation of stage effects and by the addition of music by Purcell. “As the heroic mode declined, it was replaced by tragedy written in blank verse and according to neoclassical rules. Using relatively simple plots and observing the three unities, the form first gained popularity through Dryden’s *All for Love* (1677), a ‘regularized’ reworking of Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*.”²² *All for Love* and *The Indian Queen*, both with supplementary music by Purcell, remained popular throughout the Restoration Era and illustrate how plays evolved throughout the period.

Plays with any popularity were expanded by including more song to adapt to changing tastes, but song continued to play different roles in comedy and tragedy:

On the whole, music in the comedies serves as entertainment. Comedies often feature characters singing, playing or listening to others play an instrument (as for a serenade). Some have choruses, pantomimes and/or dances. Restoration tragedies, by contrast, more often use music to enhance pathos: songs in tragedy tend to intensify expressions of love, melancholy, worry and consolation, or to underscore scenes of villainous seduction or death, at times by means of symbolic lyrics.²³

Excellent examples of this are in the comedies *The Fairy Queen*, which is based on Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *The Comical History of Don Quixote*, and in the tragedies *Theodosius* and *The Fatal Marriage*. In the *Theodosius*, the song ‘Ah cruel bloody fate’ intensifies the action as it is sung by the maid after her mistress drinks poison. In a tragedy, it is more likely, but not prerequisite, for song to intensify the current emotion. In the comedy *The Fairy Queen*, one of the most popular semi-operas,

²² Brockett and Hildy, 206.

²³ Gilman, 246.

the songs involved are merely interpolated masques set throughout the play meant to entertain the main characters on the stage.

Most main characters in the semi-operas and tragedies are not involved in music making as the English public could not accept ‘real’ people bursting into song.²⁴ Singing as entertainment occurred in everyday life; therefore, singing to entertain other characters onstage was an accepted reason to include songs in plays. Audiences could also accept supernatural and exotic supporting characters such as ghosts, fairies, witches, magicians and Indians bursting into song, as they were not considered to be ‘real’ people. For example, in the semi-opera *The Indian Queen*, the main character, the queen, never sings, but Purcell included incidental music to amplify her emotional state. The magician sings as does an Indian boy and girl. In the comedies, the lower tier characters were allowed to sing serenades and love songs (something that could happen in everyday life), but the actors in the leading roles were only allowed to sing songs if mad or “feigning madness.”²⁵ Main characters were too high born or important to indulge in singing in public. Only when mad were they allowed to sing. Purcell’s mad songs were reserved for the best singing actors and actresses and were a highlight of an evening at the theatre.

There are a few examples of all sung opera in the Restoration Era, but none gained momentum. Two popular examples (in modern times), Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* and Blow’s *Venus and Adonis* are smaller forms that were never performed for the public

²⁴ Edward J. Dent, *Foundations of English Opera: A Study of Musical Drama in England during the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1965), 8.

²⁵ Curtis A. Price. *Henry Purcell and the London Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 144.

in the composers' lifetimes.²⁶ In fact, both *Dido and Aeneas* and *Venus and Adonis* were not thought of as operas but as masques, which were extravagant court entertainments that "included spoken dialogue, vocal and instrumental music and dance."²⁷ Masques included recitative like opera, but plot and dramatic unity were not compositional concerns in this form. The court masque tradition had much in common with opera including recitative and the use of mythological stories. "The masque, as an extension of court life, attempted to create a fantasy into which members of the audience could enter and rub shoulders with gods and goddesses."²⁸ It was an opportunity for royalty to play dress up and perform in an allegorical setting of which spectacle, lavish costume, singing and dance were the highlights. It was in the masque that English operatic potential was worked out. Composers and poets collaborated as near equals in this genre. Songs and recitative were not as integrated in the Italian opera, but they did retain "a simple and even popular flavor, which gave a distinctive national stamp to English masque music, and by inheritance, to later English opera."²⁹ The masque along with the English playwriting tradition and the modish interest in stage spectacle and song were the major contributors to the origins of opera in England.

²⁶ Curtis A. Price, "England," in *History of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), 38.

²⁷ Price, "England," 39.

²⁸ Price, "England," 39.

²⁹ Donald J. Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, 4th ed. (Columbia University Press, New York, 2003), 148.

Chapter 2

ACTING TECHNIQUE IN THE RESTORATION ERA

Not much is known about actor training and technique in England prior to the Restoration as there are no known treatises or books on acting since the times of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian in ancient Greece and Rome. The discovery of these ancient texts in the Renaissance prompted acting to be “revived as an art form,” and propelled the secular play to prominence in England.³⁰ Research into these ancient texts and the texts of the Restoration Era prove that thoughts on acting have not changed since the dawn of the art form. Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* provides the most detailed source for acting technique including discussions on imagination, breath, voice, countenance, and physical gesture, and he is quoted more frequently by seventeenth and eighteenth century writers of rhetoric, acting and dance than any other.³¹

All three ancient writers were interested in naturalness of expression through specific gestures and facial expressions as well as a trained voice and body, but Quintilian provides the most detail. John Bulwer, Charles Gildon and Colley Cibber provide helpful contemporary accounts on acting and gesture in the Restoration Era. Bulwer’s books *Chiologia* and *Chironomia*, published in 1644 prior to the Restoration, focus on rhetoric, borrow much from Quintilian, and provide thorough explanations of hand and finger gestures for eloquent expression for orators and consequently, for actors and for the aristocracy. Gildon’s *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton: the late eminent*

³⁰ Frederik Schyberg and Harry G. Carlson, “The Art of Acting,” *The Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Jun., 1961): 70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1124818> (accessed October 14, 2012).

³¹ Bella Merlin, *Acting: The Basics* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 12.

tragedian, printed in 1710, gives us a contemporary account of acting technique, styles and training of the day. Gildon's book celebrates the acting technique of the Restoration Era's most famous actor, Thomas Betterton, as well as other Restoration actors and actresses. Colley Cibber's memoir provides highly personal, vivid and opinionated firsthand accounts of acting performances. These texts not only illuminate standard oratorical practices but also acting techniques that are still common today, illustrating that much of acting philosophy remains the same, it is only the style of the centuries that change.

Acting Techniques Familiar to the Modern Actor

The acting techniques and ideas that are pervasive throughout history will help the modern actor enter into the world and style of the Restoration actor. From the beginning of the craft of acting in ancient Greece and Rome, writers extolled the virtues of personal emotion, of naturalness and of not overacting or over-gesticulating. This emphasis on the value of naturalness begins with the writings of Quintilian and Cicero and continues in the texts of seventeenth and eighteenth century writers on rhetoric, acting and dance who looked to the ancients as indisputable sources. Both Cicero and Quintilian endorsed the Greek orator Demosthenes as the paragon of a good rhetorician. In Gildon's book on acting, he advises actors do as Demosthenes did: look in a mirror to make sure that the gesture and the countenance look natural.³² The ancients emphasized speaking and moving onstage as one does in life and this is echoed by Restoration thought: "all Speech

³² Charles Gildon, *The life of Mr. Thomas Betterton: the late eminent tragedian* (London: Printed for Robert Gosling, 1710), 54.

and Gesture should seem Natural, and the nearer they come to Nature, the nearer they are to Perfection.”³³ The importance placed on being natural manifested itself not as naturalistic acting as we think of it today, but as elegance and effortlessness in movement. Elaborate conventions in manner and gesture were the norm for the aristocracy and therefore were considered natural. A noble would have been trained in rhetoric and gesture in school and most would have had a dancing master as well. Rhetorical training meant that everyone was trained in the same gestures and artfulness of holding one’s hand and fingers, in the beauty and balance of body parts and in how to speak well. Nicholas Dromgoole in his book *Performance Style and Gesture in Western Theatre* notes that this training created a greater divide between the poor and the rich:

“The gap between aristocrats and the rest had never been, and never would be again, quite so glaringly obvious... They had dancing masters who taught them not only to dance, but how to carry themselves in almost every social situation: how to bow, how to enter through a door, how to sit in a chair, how to eat at a table, and so on. Life for them was elaborately choreographed, with all the emphasis on being correct, doing the ‘right thing’...”³⁴

This divide is an important aspect for the modern actor to observe. It can make character development much more interesting and vivid. Dromgoole also highlights the fact that the aristocrat must do the ‘right thing’ and do it with ease. Put another way by an anonymous contemporary writer, the Restoration noble “must have the greatest Art, and yet at the same time the Art to conceal it; for whenever Art appears, it loses its Effect;

³³ *Some Rules for Speaking and Action*. 2nd ed. (London, 1716) 20.

³⁴ Nicholas Dromgoole, *Performance Style and Gesture in Western Theatre* (London: Oberon Books, 2007), 89.

and nothing can please, much less persuade, but what is Natural.”³⁵ The definition of naturalness to the Restoration noble was equivalent to artful negligence (a concept described by Castiglione in the Italian Renaissance as *sprezzatura*) and was the theme of the culture of the Restoration noble: everything should appear natural and nonchalant despite elaborate gestures and mannerisms. The connotation of the word ‘natural’ evolves in each succeeding generation of actors just as the style of life continually evolves. Consequently, this word needs to be viewed with historical perspective in order to elicit the appropriate acting style in the Restoration Era and in any era.

The emphasis not only on naturalness but also on personal emotion and observation, on motivation, on delving into the specificity that a particular situation engenders, on character study, on mental and physical excellence, and, amazingly, on the Stanislavski concept of ‘Object of Attention’ and on Uta Hagen’s ‘Inner Object’ are all concepts that can be found at the genesis of the actor’s craft. Many acting techniques advocated since ancient times are familiar to the modern actor who has studied Stanislavski and his descendants. “Quintilian proposed that if you want to arouse a particular response in other people, then first of all you have to generate those feelings in yourself.”³⁶ This concept can be translated in the modern actor’s vernacular as motivation, combining the concepts of naturalness and personal emotion and was advocated by an anonymous writer at the beginning of the eighteenth century: “...your Action must appear purely Natural, as the genuine Offspring of the things you express,

³⁵ *Some Rules for Speaking*, 8.

³⁶ Merlin, 12.

and the Passion, that moves you to speak in that manner.”³⁷ The thing that is natural, which is from a real human place, moves or motivates the dialogue and the action. This is Stanislavski 101: Emotional Memory, “that type of memory which makes you relive the sensations you once felt...” and The Method of Physical Actions, “all action in the theatre must have an inner justification, be logical, coherent and real.”³⁸ Gildon adds further evidence to this correlation marking that every move, expression and sound uttered on stage comes from a natural and emotional place:

Every passion or emotion of the mind has from nature its proper and peculiar countenance, sound, and gesture; and the whole body of man, all his looks, and every sound of his voice, like the strings of an instrument, receive their sounds from the various impulses of the passions.³⁹

Cicero, too, observed that "every notion of the mind has from nature its own peculiar look, tone, and gesture."⁴⁰ In order to perform in this motivated way, the ancients and Gildon beg actors to observe life and become more specific in their passions, to observe people quarrelling and loving and be as specific onstage as in real life.⁴¹ Specificity was admired and generalities spurned in Quintilian and Cicero’s writings, and, clearly, Gildon was influenced by Cicero’s words.

³⁷ *Some Rules for Speaking*, 53-54.

³⁸ Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Handbook* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1963), 55, 8.

³⁹ Charles Gildon, *The life of Mr. Thomas Betterton: the late eminent tragedian* (London: Printed for Robert Gosling, 1710), 43.

⁴⁰ Frederik Schyberg and Harry G. Carlson, “The Art of Acting: Part II. ‘What’s Hecuba to Him?’” *The Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Mar., 1962): 113. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1124937> (accessed October 14, 2012).

⁴¹ Gildon, 37.

The ancients also eschewed over-gesticulation and over-acting. Bulwer echoes these sentiments in his *Chironomia* when he urges orators to “shun affectation; for all affectation is odious...others are most moved with our actions when they perceive all things to flow, as it were, out of the liquid current of nature.”⁴² As they were against overdoing, they also warned that too little action was odious as well. “To use no action at all in speaking, or a heavy and slow motion of the hand, is the property of one stupid and sluggish.”⁴³ In order to make artful and natural choices onstage or in the pulpit or the courtroom, performers (i.e. clergy, lawyers, politicians and actors) were encouraged to have knowledge of many subjects and to have the imagination to express their knowledge in a meaningful way just as actors are trained to do today. Gildon encourages actors to study art to gain knowledge of character and beauty of form. “He ought not to be a Stranger to Painting and Sculpture, imitating their Graces so masterly, as not to fall short of Raphael Urbin, and Michael Angelo, & c.”⁴⁴ Gildon also extols the virtue of knowing one’s thoughts and passions so well that they could be combined to create many different characters:

“The Stage ought to be the Seat of Passion in its various kinds, and therefore the Actor ought to be thoroughly acquainted with the whole Nature of the Affections, and Habits of the Mind, or else he will never be able to express them justly in his Looks and Gestures as well as in the Tone of his voices, and manner of Utterance. They must know them in various Mixtures, and as they are differently blended together in the different Characters they represent.”⁴⁵

⁴² John Bulwer, *Chirologia: or the naturall language of the hand. Composed of the speaking motions, and discoursing gestures thereof. Whereunto is added Chironomia: or, the art of manuall rhetoricke. Consisting of the naturall expressions, digested by art in the hand, as the chieftest instrument of eloquence* (London: Thomas Harper. 1644), 244.

⁴³ Bulwer, 227.

⁴⁴ Gildon, 138-139.

His advice is standard acting advice for the modern Stanislavskian actor who prefers to go from personal emotion outward to the action of the play, but he also suggests a technique for getting into character that a devotee of Michael Chekhov, a student of Stanislavski's who parted ways with his teaching, would appreciate. Gildon recommends that starting with a stereotype of a character is a good place to begin. Using types like the "gallant, rogue, prude, fop, courtesan, wit, cuckold, gossip, plain citizen, wooer, philandering wife, rich uncle, jolly old knight, country bumpkin, or city sophisticate" provides a nice way into the world of the Restoration stage.⁴⁶ This technique is particularly appropriate for comedies, as they were written to expose humanity's foibles through exaggerative and stereotypical characters. Knowledge of these character types is also important for the modern actor to recognize as they were routinely used in Restoration plays.

The most shocking discoveries on acting technique occur in Gildon and Bulwer's books. Stanislavski promoted an 'Object of Attention' to focus the actor's mind and help actors connect to a real moment onstage, and Uta Hagen, Stanislavski's disciple, uses the term 'Inner Object' to denote an actual object in one's mind that immediately conjures an emotional response. In discussing how the ancient players could elicit real tears onstage, Gildon explains that "they us'd several means of bringing this passionate Tenderness to a Perfection; yet this they found the most effectual. They kept their own private Afflictions in their Mind, and bent it perpetually on real Objects, and not on the Fable, or fictitious

⁴⁵ Gildon, 40.

⁴⁶ Gildon, 159.

Passion of the *Play*, which they acted.”⁴⁷ This is an astounding acting technique that Bulwer explains he found in ancient writings, and was one of several ways indicated to help an actor or orator bring about an emotional response to a text. This particular technique is exactly what Stanislavski meant by ‘emotional memory’. In ancient Greece and Rome, Gildon clarifies that the most “effectual” way for an actor to elicit real tears onstage was to find some memory from the actor’s own past that would make them cry. We also find allusion to the idea of Uta Hagen’s ‘Inner Object’ and Stanislavski’s ‘Emotional Memory’ in Hamlet’s speech in Act II, scene ii, commonly referred to as the ‘What’s Hecuba to him’ speech:

Is it not monstrous that the player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his whole conceit,
That from her working all his visage waned,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect;
A broken voice, and his whole Function suiting
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do
Had he the motive, and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears;
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;
Make mad the guilty, and appal the Free;
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears.⁴⁸

Why would the player weep for an imaginary figure such as Hecuba? Using a personal memory like Hamlet’s memory of the death of his father provides the “motive and the

⁴⁷ Gildon, 68.

⁴⁸ Alfred Harbage, ed. *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1969), 949.

cue for passion” giving the actor a way into a highly emotional scene. Gildon explains that Hamlet’s use of personal emotional memory was a path that the ancients promoted toward real emotion onstage:

“Tho in the first seven Lines he seems to have expressed all the Duties of a Player in a great Passion; yet in the following seven he derives a yet stronger Action when the Object of Grief is real; which justifies what the Ancients practis’d in heightening their Theatrical Sorrow, by fixing the Mind on real Objects, or by working your self up by a strong Imagination, that you are the very person and in the very same Circumstances...”⁴⁹

He also explains that the ancients encouraged a well-developed imagination as another path to create “Theatrical Sorrow.” This technique is extraordinarily similar to Stanislavski’s ‘Magic If’: *if I were in these given circumstances how would I feel?*

Another technique proscribed by the ancients and Gildon is the concept of an inner monologue: “The gestures of the hand must be prepared in the mind, together with the inward speech that precedes the outward expression.”⁵⁰

Gildon indicates that that these were common acting techniques in ancient Greece and Rome and encourages early eighteenth century actors to use them.

The audiences and actors of the Restoration theatre would have been familiar with *Hamlet* as Shakespeare’s popularity never waned, and they would have been familiar with another oft quoted speech in *Hamlet* which is used by Gildon and modern writers to illustrate what good acting should involve. The speech is often used in the modern times to make the case that acting was more ‘natural’, like today’s acting, in Shakespeare’s

⁴⁹ Gildon, 71.

⁵⁰ Bulwer, 247.

time. This well-known speech occurs in Act III, scene ii as Hamlet advises the players how to play the scene:

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, by use all gently, for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant. It out-herods Herod. Pray you avoid it... Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve, the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly (not to speak profanely), that neither having th' accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.. O, reform it altogether! And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them, for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. That's villainous and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go make you ready.⁵¹

Just as the ancients proscribed, Hamlet advises his actors against over-gesticulation and over-acting and against doing too little, and just like the ancients, he begs actors “to hold...the mirror up to nature.” Gildon takes this speech apart and analyzes it so that early eighteenth century actors may take heed of Shakespeare’s sage advice.

⁵¹ Harbage, 952.

Even though sound acting techniques had been floating around since the rediscovery of the ancients' texts, it was not the norm that all actors followed these techniques, and it clearly was not the norm in ancient times that orators "held up the mirror to nature" and expressed motivated emotions, that they used the perfect amount of gesture, neither too little or too much, or that they all had well-trained minds and bodies and voices. Cicero and Quintilian would not have had to write about it if refinement and focused training were to be seen in every pulpit and on every stage in ancient Rome. Gildon and the ancients are asking for more technique, more specificity and more naturalness. Just as Demosthenes is used an example of excellence in oration Gildon uses exceptional Restoration actors to prove his points about what good acting could be. He praises Elizabeth Barry for her exceptional acting in the play *Orphan*:

"She indeed always enters into her Part, and is the Person she represents. Thus I have heard her say, that she never said, *Ah! Poor Castalio!* In the *Orphan*, without weeping. And I have frequently observ'd her change her Countenance several Times as the Discourse of others on the Stage have affected her in the Part she acted. This is being thoroughly concern'd, this is to know her Part, this is to express the Passions in the Countenance and Gesture."⁵²

That she was listening to others onstage and changing her countenance in reaction to what was being said was not the norm; it was inspired for the time. Gildon calls on all actors to act with clarity of character, with sincere emotion and to listen and react to the other actors on the stage as the great Elizabeth Barry does.

⁵² Gildon, 40.

Facts that Contribute to the Restoration Style of Acting

Acting was not a respected profession in the Restoration Era. Actors were not paid well and most had to have day jobs. They performed almost nightly and plays only ran for a couple of performances before a new play opened. Actors were not given full scripts, and they only memorized their own lines and a few cue words. There was not much time or motivation to commit on a highly personal level to a character or to learn the other players' lines and react to them. Actors memorized the gestures performed by the actor from whom their part was inherited in the company, or perhaps worked out a few gestures of their own, and that was all. Specificity, listening and personal emotions were the exception not the rule. The actors that went beyond the norm were idolized. Even though the tools for motivated and specific acting were regularly taught in the study of rhetoric since the rediscovery of the ancients' texts, it was widely accepted that inspired acting could not be taught.

An actor imitating older or more experienced actors was commonplace and imitation was even considered a virtue.

“...in mimicking the unforgettable cadences and intonations of certain tragic roles as they were performed by the great interpreters. It did not sound so unreasonable at the time since acting had already been defined generally as an imitative art-and since, for example...[in the Restoration theatre]...certain actors were judged entirely by how well they were able to imitate the acting styles of their famous predecessors. Precision of imitation was regarded as a virtue, and even, for a time, a requirement! Consequently there was the demand carefully to preserve and pass on a mechanically formed tradition.”⁵³

⁵³ Schyberg and Carlson, “What’s Hecuba to Him,” 117.

Because imitation was a virtue, and because audiences saw plays many times, as the theatre was the modern equivalent of television, a new gesture or acting choice caused a sensation. Brockett and Hildy in their book on the history of theatre explain it this way:

“Roles were passed down from one generation to the next, and with them went traditional interpretation. When one actor succeeded another, he or she was expected to learn the business used in that company, since the repertory could not be restaged to suit one actor. Because so much of playing became traditional, new conceptions of characters, or even new line readings, often produced sensations.”⁵⁴

Audiences had gestures and staging memorized and change was looked upon unfavorably in most instances. New actors were trained by older actors and were expected to imitate the movements of the established actor. There were schools called nurseries for young actors, but the most important part of actor training occurred when one actor passed a part down to the next.⁵⁵ To change an established gesture or character interpretation caused a stir, and this occurred only rarely. The next generation of actors, especially the acclaimed David Garrick, did make changes to the gestures and actions that had been codified on the Restoration stage. Shining a light on how acting changed in the next generation illuminates even more detail about how acting in the Restoration Era was viewed.

Schyberg and Carlson in their articles on the art of acting explain the changing styles vividly:

“Actors, who for a century had been forced to comply with a stern decorum, almost an etiquette, which strapped in their playing as in a stylistic strait jacket, were now liberated through the demand that roles be interpreted not as conventional types but as the individual characters which the plots required. It was the custom, for example, long into the eighteenth century, to have Hamlet

⁵⁴ Brockett and Hildy, 220.

⁵⁵ Brockett and Hildy, 219.

respectfully remove his hat when he met his father's ghost on the ramparts-- because his father naturally was above him in rank, and thus it was proper in the theatre to take note of the duty and the obedience owed by a son to his father, and by a subject to a king! In an amusing way this tells us something about the nature of acting in the past. A furor was aroused when Garrick, in this very scene, acted frightened at seeing the ghost, let his hat remain on his head, and instead overturned a stool. It was regarded by some as highly improper, by others as a tremendous piece of artistic audacity and a powerful innovation.”⁵⁶

The rules of decorum were clearly of less importance to Garrick than the emotional immediacy of the moment. Schyberg and Carlson may go too far when they say that Restoration actors were in a strait jacket made of the rules of etiquette, but the point that it was more important to obey those rules in the preceding generation illustrates how engrained and essential those rules were to the life of a nobleman and actor in the Restoration Era.

Restoration life was stylized and so was the acting. George Kernodle in his article on the style of acting explains that:

“For three hundred years, from the time of Shakespeare to the end of the nineteenth century, actors were proud of their style. They were trained to make an entrance and an exit, to mark the beginnings and endings of speeches, and to build step by step to their big climaxes. They played for "points" and expected to be applauded for their skill and finish.”⁵⁷

Style as a virtue lingered long after imitation as a virtue faded. Garrick, who is heralded for innovations in the next generation of actors, still posed and used the rhetorical and elegant gestures of the Restoration theatre. Simon Trussler in his book on the history of the British theatre explains that:

⁵⁶ Schyberg and Carlson, “What’s Hecuba to Him,” 114-115.

⁵⁷ George R. Kernodle, “Style, Stylization, and Styles of Acting,” *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Dec., 1960): 251. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3204551> 251 (accessed October 14, 2012).

“Holding a pose, moreover, has the purpose not only of signalling a particular emotional mood, but also of soliciting applause... in an age long before theatre directors were thought of..., the dancing-master would almost certainly have been prominent in ‘designing’ poses and tableaux, and may well have helped with other conventionalized stage movements – as indicated by the stage directions to ‘come forward’, ‘retire’, or ‘converse apart’.”⁵⁸

An elegantly executed gesture would be held for an extended period to elicit applause.

When one regards the amount of education and time spent in training the body, arms, hands and fingers to be moved in a beautiful and appropriate way, it is logical that a sense of pride was taken in the art of gesture and in posing. Barton explains this beautifully in his book on style for actors: “Movement is like a sentence, and stopping is like punctuation, with each stop as different as a comma from a question mark.”⁵⁹ The idea of movement being this purposeful is not natural for the modern actor, but this and the concepts of posing and imitation as art need to be understood to help the today’s actors appreciate the world of Restoration performance.

Style and gestural emphasis cause this era of acting to be different from acting in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but shared over time are the ideas of emotion coming from within, naturalness, and the concepts of *the given circumstances* and *inner objects* which suggest that an actor today need not feel like acting this repertoire means starting from scratch. An actor’s training will inform the acting of any era’s theatre. The elements of etiquette and gesture make this time period unique. The way to move, to gesture and to show respect need to be ingrained in the actor so that the honest search for truth in action,

⁵⁸ Simon Trussler, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of British Theatre* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1994), 141.

⁵⁹ Richard Barton. *Style for Actors*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 156.

emotion and character is effortlessly mingled with the graceful deportment of the Restoration's movements and social graces. The challenge for the modern actor is to stay true to one's training and to find truth and emotion while moving through a world of elaborate manners.

Chapter 3

DANCE

Dance training is an essential element of stage deportment in the Restoration theatre and is the first step in learning how to act in Restoration Theatre Music. Dance training was a part of every noble's education and included lessons in standing, removing the hat, walking and bowing as well as other social graces. For the Restoration actor and singer, instruction in these basics was provided by the stage dancing master just as these basics were provided by a dancing master at the courts.⁶⁰ "Dance education goes back at least to the sixteenth century, when dancing included the study of manners and courtesies and was an important part of the education of every upper-class Renaissance gentleman and gentlewoman."⁶¹ The dancing masters maintained their influence through the Interregnum and into the nineteenth century. Dance may have been gone from the stage during the brief period of parliamentary rule, but dancing masters were still needed to train young nobles in the social graces. "Dance resumed its contribution to theatrical entertainment in England as soon as the theatres reopened after the restoration of Charles II in 1660," and contemporary sources continued to emphasize the importance of dance training for proper stage deportment.⁶²

Our knowledge of dance in this time period comes from the manuals and treatises that were written at the beginning of the seventeenth century. To stand and bow in the

⁶⁰ *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, s.v. "Great Britain," <http://www.oxford-dance.com/entry?entry=t171.e0725.s0006> (accessed July 23, 2012).

⁶¹ *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, s.v. "Great Britain."

⁶² *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, s.v. "Great Britain."

style of the Restoration Era takes knowledge of the five ballet positions which were systemized by the dancing master at the court of Louis XIV, Pierre Beauchamp, and were later published, first by Raoul Auger Feuillet in 1700, and later by Pierre Rameau in 1725. His manual, *Le maître à danser*, includes descriptions of the five positions of dance and other manners required of an aristocrat.⁶³ This guide on the art of dance was translated and printed in England by John Essex in 1731, but the knowledge would have been disseminated to the English nobility during the Restoration period because “almost all the most fashionable European courts employed a French dancing master,” and because “dance instruction was accepted as one of the best methods to acquire social graces.”⁶⁴ Prior to the printing of Rameau’s manual in England, the dancing master Kellom Tomlinson wrote a manual, *The Art of Dancing Explained by Readings and Figures* in 1724, which also provides detailed accounts of the positions and manners of dancing that were practiced throughout the Restoration Era.

Dancing masters like Rameau and Tomlinson would have taught rules of conduct as well as dance: “ladies and gentlemen of fashion were required to be completely poised, and no action in everyday life was left to chance. Yet the ultimate aim was to appear supremely natural.”⁶⁵ Rameau praises the ability of dance to not only bring out what is natural in the body, but also its capacity to strengthen the body and even out its faults, to give “a Grace to the Advantages we receive from Nature, by regulating all the Motions of

⁶³ Wendy Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre: Selected Writings of Wendy Hilton* (Stuyvesant, New York: Pendragon Press, 1997), 45.

⁶⁴ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 50.

⁶⁵ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 269.

the Body, and strengthens it in its just Positions; and if it doth not quite efface the Defects we are born with, it softens or conceals them.”⁶⁶

The belief that dance heightened nature and made what is natural more beautiful came directly from ancient texts, and Quintilian’s words are used to endorse graceful deportment in Restoration society and theatre. He commends “especially the talent of dancing, as conducive to the formation of orators; not...that an orator should retain any thing of the air of a dancing-master, in his motion or gesture; but that the impression from the graces of the art should have insensibly stolen into his manner, and fashioned it to please.”⁶⁷ The dancing, acting and rhetorical texts of this time period all emphasize the virtues of being natural as did the ancient writers, and all warn of not overdoing the social mannerisms so that they don’t become too extravagant or foppish. The British daily paper, *The Spectator*, which had as its mission to educate the readers on polite manners, makes the following comments in May of 1711:

...a moderate Knowledge in the little Rules of Goodbreeding gives a Man some Assurance, and makes him easy in all Companies. For Want of this, I have seen a Professor of a Liberal Science at a Loss to salute a Lady; and a most excellent Mathematician not able to determine whether he should stand or sit while my Lord drank to him... It is the proper Business of a Dancing Master to regulate these Matters; tho’ I take it to be a just Observation, that unless you add

⁶⁶ Pierre Rameau. *The Dancing Master, or, The Whole Art and Mystery of Dancing Explained: And the Manner of Performing All Steps in Ball-Dancing Made Short and Easy*, trans. John Essex (London: Printed, and sold by him [i.e. J. Essex] at his House in Rood-Lane, 1731), xx. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=musdi&fileName=080/musdi080.db&recNum=7&itemLink=r?ammem/musdibib:@field\(NUMBER+@od1\(musdi+080\)\)&linkText=0](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=musdi&fileName=080/musdi080.db&recNum=7&itemLink=r?ammem/musdibib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(musdi+080))&linkText=0) (accessed July 20, 2012).

⁶⁷ Giovanni-Andrea Gallini. *A treatise on the art of dancing* (London: printed for the author and sold by R. Dodsley, 1772), xiii-xiv. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=musdi&fileName=080/musdi080.db&recNum=11&itemLink=r?ammem/musdi:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(M0804\)\)%230800012&linkText=1](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=musdi&fileName=080/musdi080.db&recNum=11&itemLink=r?ammem/musdi:@field(DOCID+@lit(M0804))%230800012&linkText=1) (accessed July 15, 2012).

something of your own to what these fine Gentlemen teach you, and which they are wholly ignorant of themselves, you will much sooner get the Character of an Affected Fop, than a Well-bred Man.⁶⁸

The dancing masters were commended for teaching refinement, but were also ridiculed for being affected and over-the-top. Restoration actors and nobles were warned not to exaggerate what is naturally graceful. Similarly, Wendy Hilton, a dancer and writer on early dance, warns modern actors of the exaggerated “handkerchief-in-hand flourishes and the waving about of hats so long considered the epitome of period deportment.”⁶⁹ She continues that these embellishments are more suited to the vain and foolish fop character. Hilton also explains that how one bows exposes the level of social upbringing, an important ingredient in character development. To bow incorrectly or foppishly was noted and judged, and to bow well revealed a higher level of education and elicited respect. Rameau describes this social idiosyncrasy well:

A very necessary matter for everyone, whatever their station, to be informed upon, is the correct manner of raising one’s hat and making a graceful bow; but in general it is that which receives the least care... In the first place, this excites admiration in others for us and brings further advantages in its train. It inclines a person to show us consideration by regarding us as persons who have known how to profit from the education we have received.⁷⁰

The knowledge and artful execution of these mannerisms illustrated to all spectators one’s level of education and garnered one respect.

⁶⁸ Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, Vol. I, ed. G. Gregory Smith (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1907), 254-255.

⁶⁹ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre: Selected Writings of Wendy Hilton*, 269.

⁷⁰ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre: Selected Writings of Wendy Hilton*, 270.

To begin to understand the intricacies of these stylized manners, the five ballet positions essential to stage deportment must be reviewed. In first position, Rameau prompts the pupil to have the “Legs well extended, the two heels close together, and the Feet equally turn’d outwards.”⁷¹ The illustration of the five ballet positions are from Essex’s translation of Rameau’s text, and proper first position deportment is seen in figure 1.



Figure 1. First position

In second position the feet are turned out at the same angle and the weight is equally placed on both feet, which Rameau warns of not being farther than a “just Proportion of a step,” meaning that the heels should be no more than a foot apart.⁷² This position is illustrated by figure 2.

⁷¹ Rameau, 7.

⁷² Rameau, 8.



Figure 2. Second position

In third position the “Legs are so well extended and closed together, that light cannot be seen between them... The Body rests on both Feet, the left foot foremost, but crossed before the Heel of the Right at the Instep” as is shown by figure 3.⁷³



Figure 3. Third position



Figure 4. Fourth position

Fourth position, shown in figure 4, is used for controlling and regulating stepping forward or backward and gives walking or dancing its “due Proportion...”⁷⁴ The left foot

⁷³ Rameau, 9.

⁷⁴ Rameau, 10.

is in front of the right, or vice versa, and the heels are on the same plane so that the feet are not crossed which would cause unsteadiness.⁷⁵



Figure 5. Fifth position

Fifth position is not used much except “for cross steps to [the] Left or Right,” and is shown in figure 5.⁷⁶ Tomlinson remarks that fifth position is used for turning.⁷⁷ Whether for cross steps or for turns, fifth position is required for dance not standing, walking or bowing. The use of the first four positions will immediately add style to a performance of Restoration theatre music. If one is portraying a low class person, the positions should be avoided at all cost. A character wishing to be in a class higher than their own might use the wrong poses or exaggerated poses and positions for comic effect.

⁷⁵ Rameau, 10.

⁷⁶ Rameau, 10.

⁷⁷ Kellom Tomlinson, *The Art of Dancing Explained by Reading and Figures Whereby the Manner of Performing the Steps in Made Easy by a New and Familiar Method: Being the Original Work First Design'd in the Year 1724, and Now Published by Kellom Tomlinson, Dancing-Master, In Two Books* (London: Printed for the author and are to be had of him, at the Red and Gold Flower Pot next door to Edwards's Coffee-House, over against the Bull and Gate, in High-Holbourn, 1735), 5.
[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=musdi&fileName=158//musdi158.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/musdibib:@field\(NUMBER+@od1\(musdi+158\)\)&linkText=0&presId=musdibib](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=musdi&fileName=158//musdi158.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/musdibib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(musdi+158))&linkText=0&presId=musdibib) (accessed July 30, 2012).

No matter the character, the knowledge of the positions, how and when they were used, helps an actor build a complex and specific character.

In this era, standing is an act of presentation as is walking and bowing, and they are meant to please the observer. Tomlinson explains it well: "...let us imagine ourselves...exquisitely designed to afford the utmost Pleasure to the Beholders...we ought to let our Bodies [be] in such a Disposition, when we stand in Conversation, that, were our Actions or Postures delineated, they might bear the strictest Examination of the most critical Judges."⁷⁸ In short, one must always behave in public knowing that critical eyes abound. Hilton provides two figures that illustrate the proper deportment for standing; these are represented here in figure 4.6. Notice the feet in fourth position and the hands genteelly crossed.



Figure 6. The general disposition of a man and a woman

⁷⁸ Tomlinson, 4.

Rameau's description of a graceful stance ready to walk is illustrated in figure 7: "The Head must be upright, without being stiff; the Shoulders falling back, which extends the Breast, and gives a greater Grace to the Body; the Arms hanging by the Side, the Hands neither quite open nor shut, the Waste [waist] steady, the Legs extended, and the Feet turned outwards."⁷⁹ He goes on to say that if these instructions are followed "no one will be so ridiculous [as] to be stiff or formal, which ought to be avoided as much as Affectation; a just Carriage requiring nothing more than a natural, free, and easy Air, which is to be only gained by Dancing."⁸⁰



Figure 7. Figure in a graceful posture ready to walk

Both male figures above, are standing in a graceful posture in fourth position with hands relaxed but not slack. Another hand position for men recommended by Tomlinson has the hands elegantly placed between the "Folds or Flaps of the Coat, or Waste-coat, if the coat is unbuttoned..."⁸¹ Tomlinson also describes a posture that would be used only in the

⁷⁹ Rameau, 4.

⁸⁰ Rameau, 2.

⁸¹ Tomlinson, 4.

company of friends. In this “bold” posture that is represented in figure 8, the feet are in second position and the hands are placed at the hips. The other more graceful posture in figure 7 would be more appropriate when in the company of superiors.



Figure 8. Heroic Posture used in familiar company

Women in a graceful stance could also have their hands placed elegantly at their sides or gently crossed as in figure 6, but their feet are hidden so that turn out and position are less important. Tomlinson recommends that women should place their feet, not in any particular position, but so that a graceful upper body could be managed.⁸² Rameau urges women to have the same body alignment as men with “the Head upright, the Shoulders down...,” but with “the Arms bent, an easily drawn back to the Body, and the Hands before, one upon the other, with a Fan; [and] above all, without Affectation.”⁸³ This stance is observed in figure 6.

⁸² Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 274.

⁸³ Rameau, 23.

That the knowledge of ballet positions is necessary for the training of proper walking technique prescribes that walking in the Restoration Era was a highly stylized and important act. It could be compared to having a nice car and showing that nice car off by driving slowly around the main drag. Much of walking technique is as expected: the feet alternate by stepping one in front of the other and the arms swing naturally at the sides. Style is created in this seemingly ordinary activity through feet position and movement, as well as tempo. Both Rameau and Tomlinson agree that when walking the feet must be turned out, the heel must touch the ground first, the knees should bend then extend in a long line and the pace should be moderate, but Tomlinson prescribes a more stylized walk than does Rameau, one starting in first position and alternating from fourth to first.⁸⁴ This would look like the stilted walk that many brides use when coming down the aisle (minus the turned out feet); this style of walking is appropriate for formal functions and promenading. Tomlinson goes on to say the arms should swing naturally and that there should be an awareness of grace and a sense of time in walking. Rameau's description of walking adds that the head should be erect and that one should maintain a steady center.⁸⁵ Using the fourth position pose (figure 7) as a starting point, Rameau states that the left foot would maintain all of the weight of the body while the right foot comes forward into fourth position with the feet about a foot apart and with the heel landing first.⁸⁶ This would be repeated: fourth position with the right foot into fourth

⁸⁴ Tomlinson, 3.

⁸⁵ Tomlinson, 6.

⁸⁶ Rameau, 4-5.

position with the left, with no pause in first position. This act of walking is more natural than Tomlinson's 'wedding march' description, but a graceful style is still accomplished through the turned out feet, the carriage of the body and head and the pace.

Tomlinson and Rameau are speaking of walking for men and both recommend a steady pace that is neither too fast nor too slow and that is at an even proportion of no more than a foot,⁸⁷ but Rameau includes instructions specifically for women observing that "their steps should not be as bold as those of the gentlemen," and that women should walk "smoothly so that their skirts do not bob up and down."⁸⁸ Even though a woman's feet could not be seen under their skirts, Rameau goes on to add that if the women have the same technique as the men, turned out feet and alternating straightened then extended knees, that "they will find they have another Air, and own, that by holding their Heads upright the Body is more steady, and by extending their Knees their steps are more firm."⁸⁹

This is an important note for women performing this era's music: the act of walking in this stylized manner will cause performers to hold themselves in more elevated manner. Rameau also recommends that women walk with hands crossed and with a fan in one hand as in figure 9.

⁸⁷ Rameau, 4.

⁸⁸ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 272.

⁸⁹ Rameau, 22-23.



Figure 9. A woman's carriage while walking

After learning how to stand and walk with specificity, the next social graces to be trained are the bows and the courtesies also called *honours*. The “honours, like greetings and partings today, punctuated life and were imbued with expression.”⁹⁰ One would bow or courtesy upon entering a room, when meeting someone new, when thanking someone, when taking leave of a conversation, when passing someone and when leaving a room. Hilton remarks that “...bows were often made so frequently in company that walking and standing seem only occasionally to have interrupted them.”⁹¹ The formality of bowing and its required frequency immediately adds historical style to a performance of Restoration theatre music. There are three main types of honours: forward, passing and backward. The most common is the bow forward performed when entering a room and when stopping to have a conversation, passing bows are performed when walking and passing people as you go and backward honours are for the most formal of occasions and demonstrate respect to superiors.

⁹⁰ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 270.

⁹¹ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 271.

In every bow a man must first remove his hat which is worn inside and outside “unless in the presence of the King and Queen or in certain more casual circumstances.”⁹² A gentleman stops the walk by pulling the forward foot into third position, the weight rests on the back leg, he then looks at the person to whom the respect is being paid, the right arm raises to shoulder height as the front leg goes out to second position, the hand grasps the side of the brim of the hat with thumb balanced against the forehead, then the arm takes the hat down to the side in the same arc that it came up. This would have all been done in a matter of seconds with the moves flowing smoothly one to the other. Hilton advises the actor to grasp the hat by the brim and never the crown; Rameau advises that the head should remain still and that the three actions should be practiced until they are one smooth motion.⁹³ The figures 10-12 illustrate the feet and arm movements required in the removing of the hat:



Figure 10. The hat part 1



Figure 11. The hat 2



Figure 12. The hat 3

⁹² Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 274.

⁹³ Rameau, 15.

If the gentleman were in a situation where the hat were to stay off of the head, as when in the company of the King and Queen, when in more casual company or on a public walk “he would hold his hat underneath the left arm with the inside against his body.”⁹⁴

Rameau and Hilton’s advice on hat etiquette is essential because the hat is removed every time a man bows, and bows peppered every social interaction in life and thus onstage.

The first and most common bow would be the bow forward as depicted in figures 13-15. A gentleman starts in third position with the hat at the side, next slide or scrape the front foot forward through fourth position into a straight leg position; bend the back knee as you bow at the waist with the eyes and head lowering (figure 14), then pause to show “sufficient respect within the given circumstances. Raise the body and the gaze, transferring the weight, when almost upright, to the front foot and close the back foot into third position behind.”⁹⁵ Make sure that the gaze returns to the person to whom respect was being shown. Tomlinson, Rameau and Hilton all state that the gaze should be precisely directed. To this end, the head should not fall forward when bowing so much that the face is hidden “because you put the Person in doubt whether or no it is him you salute ; therefore before you begin the Bow, look the Person modestly in the Face, which is what we call directing your Bow before you make it.”⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 274.

⁹⁵ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 277.

⁹⁶ Rameau, 19.



Figure 13. Forward bow 1



Figure 14. Forward bow 1



Figure 15. Forward bow 2

This bow, also referred to as *making a leg* or to *bow and scrape*, would be used when entering a room and when walking to someone to start a conversation. It is important to note that the arms do not make big flourishes but are kept artfully at the sides, and that the depth of the bow is lower or higher depending on the rank of the person to whom one is bowing.

The next most common bow is the passing bow. “These are used when walking in the street, promenading at leisure, moving through an assembled company, and to acknowledge complimentary remarks received in conversation when walking side by side.”⁹⁷ This act of bowing is similar to the forward bow except that the passing bow twists toward the person to whom it is directed. The bow should be planned so that the foot nearest the person is in front; this means that if the person you are honoring is on the left, the left foot should slide forward into the bow and vice versa. At the conclusion of

⁹⁷ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 278.

the respect, the back foot does not pull into third position but continues the walk forward.

This twisting bow is shown in figure 16.



Figure 16. The passing bow, left side



Figure 17. The backwards bow

The last and most respectful of the bows is the bow backward. This honor starts in fourth position, hat in hand; the weight is in the back foot so that the front foot can move to second position. Hilton recommends that the heel land first for stability, this should be natural because the heel should land first in walking. The weight is distributed equally on both feet, the body bends forward and the gaze and head are lowered, hold for a duration that respects the person being honored, raise the torso and the eyes as all the weight goes to the foot that moved to second position, then slide the other foot behind into third position.⁹⁸ This *honour* is reserved for very high ranking people and is used when taking leave of a room or a conversation.

Women have it easier when presenting the *honours* because they do not wear hats that need to be removed and because their legs cannot be seen. Rameau explains that “it

⁹⁸ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 279.

is enough for them [women] to have a good Presence, that they turn their Feet out, slide them properly, sink equally on their Knees, and hold up their Heads, their Bodies being steady, and their Arms well placed...”⁹⁹ Hilton adds that a woman only has to “turn her legs outward and bend, then straighten her knees while lowering and raising her gaze. She must keep her body and head upright and be careful not to wobble.”¹⁰⁰ Men and women must take a moment to look at the person to whom the *honour* is being given and judge the depth of the courtesy by the importance of the person to whom the respect is being given. A high ranking person would require a deep knee bending courtesy in which the heels come off the floor. This deep plié takes much control and a strong carriage.

Although a woman’s feet cannot be seen, the courtesy must be presented with ceremony, and balletic feet positions can provide this ceremony. The courtesy forward requires one foot to slide into fourth position, then sink or plié without bending at the waist, lower the eyes only, and then raise the eyes as the body rises. Figures 18 and 19 illustrate the forward courtesy. Figure 20 shows the passing courtesy which differs from the forward courtesy very little: slide the foot closest to the person receiving the respect into fourth position and plié with a twist towards the person. Rameau teaches that the weight be on the front foot in the passing courtesy so that walking can continue easily. In the forward bow, the weight should be on both feet for stability.

⁹⁹ Rameau, 24.

¹⁰⁰ Hilton, *Dance and Music of the Court and Theatre*, 276.



Figure 18. Forward courtesy 1 Figure 19. Forward 2 Figure 20. Passing courtesy

The passing bow for both men and women is made when passing a person on a public walk, but if the person is of higher rank then a backward bow would be presented. In the backward courtesy, a woman slides a foot into second position putting the weight on the foot that slid into second while the other foot slides into first position. As in the forward and passing courtesies, the woman plies and the eyes follow suit. The depth and length of the respect are determined by the superiority of the person receiving the *honour*. Rameau advises women that “Care should be taken not to draw the Foot and sink at the same Time, which would disorder the Body...”¹⁰¹ For all of the courtesies Tomlinson encourages women show off a long neck, to have a lovely facial expression and to have the hands in an agreeable posture as in figures 18-20. Figures 21 and 22, from Tomlinson’s book, display both man and women presenting forward *honours* to one another. Notice the simplicity and the female’s hands. Her hands are in an alternative position in the folds of the skirt.

¹⁰¹ Rameau, 26.

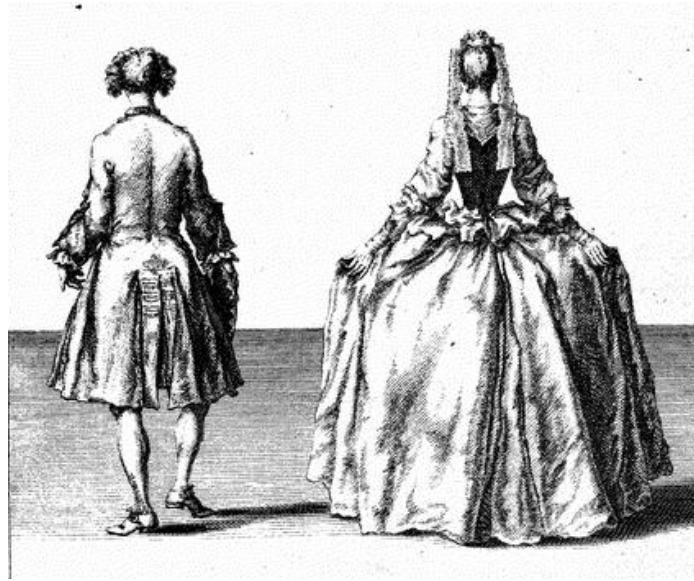


Figure 21. Man and woman presenting honours forward



Figure 22. Man and Woman presenting honours to one another

The process of offering respect is not as showy as is often portrayed on stage. Tomlinson and Rameau agree that the *honours* should be natural, but Gallini in his 1772 treatise on dance goes further: “This simplicity will arise from sensibility, from being actuated by feelings. No one has more than one feeling at a time; when that is expressed

clearly, the effect is as sure as it is instantaneous.”¹⁰² Gallini adds emotion to the process. He argues that nature provides “grace of ease and expertness” to the movements while passion provides the impetus to do the action.¹⁰³ Without passion the movements are soulless. Gallini clarifies many aspects of the beauty of the body and of the soul in the following:

It is not enough that the head should play on the shoulders with all the grace of a fine connection; nor that his countenance should be enlivened with significance and expression; that his eyes should give forth the just language of the passions belonging to the character he represents; that his shoulders have the easy fall they ought to have; let even the motions of his arms be true; let his elbows and wrists have that delicate turn of which the grace is so sensible; let the movement of the whole person be free, genteel and easy; let the attitudes of the bending turn be agreeable; his chest be neither too full nor too narrow; his sides clean made, strong, and well turned; his knees well-articulated, and supple; his legs neither too large nor too small, but finely formed;... all these accompanied with regularity of motion; and yet all these, however essential, constitute but a small part of the talent. Towards perfection of it, there is yet more, much more required, in that sensibility of soul, which has in it so much more of the gift of nature, than of the acquisition of art; and is perhaps in this, what it is in most other arts and sciences, if not genius itself, an indispensable foundation of genius. There is no executing well with the body, what is not duly felt by the soul: sentiment gives life to the execution, and propriety to the looks, motions and gestures.

Gallini explains all of the details that should not be forgotten in the natural and graceful movement of the body in this era and reminds us that without passion the movements are lifeless. The practice of dance movements that would have been essential to any noble or actor’s education is the foundation of acting in the Restoration Era, but emotion is the next part of the process. Passion or acting cannot be added to these body positions or, later, gestures, until the body is trained to do this style. The study of these dance

¹⁰² Gallini. 55.

¹⁰³ Gallini. 66.

movements is essential and a perfect first step to moving in the style of the Restoration Theatre.

Chapter 4

Gesture

The gestures researched and detailed in Dene Barnett's book *The Art of Gesture*, in Bulwer's *Chirologia* and *Chironomia* and in Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia* give us a vivid picture of the common gestures of the Restoration Era and the century that followed. Barnett's book from 1987 is a pictorial collection of gesture and facial expressions from eighteenth century Europe including in depth analysis and historical context; Bulwer's books were published just prior to the Restoration Era and were intended as a study of gesture to better understand humanity as well as provide a gestural guide for the deaf; Austin's *Chironomia*, published in 1806, is heavily influenced by the advice of the ancients, and although it was written in the eighteenth century it includes pictorial examples that are relevant to acting of the Restoration Era. It is striking how similar the information is spanning the time of the mid-seventeenth century through the end of the eighteenth. Most of the gestures included in these books are commonsensical and are relevant today, as gesture is the "common Speech of all Mankind," but a few are peculiar to the time.¹⁰⁴ The quandary for the actor is to decide which of these unique gestures are essential or compelling for performing Restoration theatre music. The primary lesson for Restoration gesticulation lay in the artfulness of execution as all movements must be beautiful, unless playing a comedic character. Knowing that many gestures will come naturally should encourage a singer actor to trust their instincts while learning to carry themselves in a more elegant and precise way. The pictures and

¹⁰⁴ Bulwer, 50.

descriptions should not only calm a singer's fears but should also enhance the actor's catalogue of expression.

John Bulwer's *Chirologia* and *Chironomia* provide explicit explanations and pictorial representations of common seventeenth century gestures. In the first set of gestures in figure 23, it is striking that they are so commonsensical. To entreat, to plead, to pray, to worry, to invite, etc., are all recognizable and conventional gestures. Letter F, the gesture for indignance, is made by a slap to the left hand. This isn't as recognizable as the other gestures, but a little slap to the hand is not uncommon when one is upset. What should be noted is the specificity of slapping the left hand. The left hand was considered the weaker hand in ancient times through the Restoration and beyond. Quintilian explains that the left hand should never be used alone because it is the lesser hand, but it is often used as accompaniment for the right.¹⁰⁵ Bulwer explains that "the left hand of itself alone is most incompetent to the performance of any perfect action; yet sometimes it doth, but very rarely. Most commonly it doth conform and accommodate itself to the right hand. And where both hands concur to any action, they exhibit more affection..."¹⁰⁶ Gesture Y in figure 5 indicates thievery. In the Restoration Era, anything evil or underhanded would have been done with the left hand as much as possible. This departs from Quintilian's advice that the left hand should never be used alone. In the seventeenth century, the left hand was also used to express an aversion to

¹⁰⁵ Bulwer, 235-236.

¹⁰⁶ Bulwer, 248-9.

something or someone and would be used in all gestures of disparagement.¹⁰⁷ In a comparison of good and bad, the good would be emphasized with the right hand and the bad emphasized with the left.

Gesturing predominantly with the right hand can cause an actor to upstage him or herself if one is not aware of body position. It seems that a basic countering technique was utilized; when one person was speaking, the other actor would counter downstage so that the speaking or singing actor need not gesture upstage. There is also some mention of keeping the breast towards to audience to guarantee that the actor's face would be directed towards the audience and therefore be better understood and seen. Singers are, luckily, trained to try to keep the face out so that they can be heard and understood. This aspect of Restoration acting will seem familiar to the opera singer and will aid the singer in the transition between more realistic, modern acting and the more stylized aspects of the Restoration Era.

¹⁰⁷ Dene Barnett and Jeanette Massy-Westropp, *The Art of Gesture: the practices and principles of 18th century acting* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1987), 65, 245.



Figure 23. Chirogrammatic Plate A

Bulwer's explanations of figure 23:

A: Gestus I: Supplico [I entreat]

The stretching out of the hands is a natural expression of gesture, wherein we are significantly importunate, entreat, request, sue, solicit, beseech and ask mercy...at the hands of others...

B: Gestus II: Oro [I pray]

To raise the hand conjoined or spread out towards heaven is the habit of devotion, in a natural and universal form of prayer practiced by those who are in adversity and in bitter anguish of mind, and by those who give public thanks and praise to the most high...

C: Gestus III: Ploro [I weep]

To wring the hands is a natural expression of excessive grief used by those who condole, bewail, and lament...

D: Gestus IV: Admiror [I admire]

To throw up the hands to heaven is an expression of admiration, amazement, and astonishment, used also by those who flatter, and wonderfully praise, and have others in high regard, or extol another's speech or action...

E: Gestus V: Applaudo [I applaud]

To clap the raised hands one against another is an expression proper to them who applaud, congratulate, rejoice, assent, approve, and are well-pleased, [an expression] used by all nations...

F: Gestus VI: Indignor [I am indignant]

To smite suddenly on the left hand with the right is a declaration of some mistake, dolour, anger, or indignation...

G: Gestus VII: Explodo [I explode (in anger)]

To clap the right fist often on the left palm is a natural expression used by those who mock, chide, brawl, and insult, reproach, rebuke and explode, or drive out with noise, commonly used by the vulgar in their bickerings...

H: Gestus VIII: Despero [I despair]

To appear with fainting and dejected hands is a posture of fear, abasement of mind, and abject and vanquished courage, and of utter despair...

I: Gestus IX: Otio indulgeo [I indulge in ease]

To fold the hands is a gesture of idleness...

K: Gestus X: Tristem animi recessum indico [I show mental anguish]

To hold the fingers inserted between each other across is their sluggish expression who are fallen into melancholy muse...

L: Gestus XI: Innocentiam ostendo [I display innocence]

To imitate the posture of washing the hands by rubbing the back of one in the hollow of the other with a kind of deterrent motion is a gesture sometimes used by those who would profess their innocence and declare they have no hand in that foul business, not so much as by their manual assent, as it were, assuring by that gesture that they will keep their hands undefiled and would wash their hands of it, not have anything to do therein...

M: Gestus XII: Lucri apprehensionem plaudo [I applaud the taking of money]

To rub the palms of the hands together, with a kind of applause, much after the manner as some are wont to do who take pains to heat their hands, is an itching note of greedy haste...

N: Gestus XIII: Libertatem resigno [I resign my liberty]

To hold forth the hands together is their natural expression who yield, submit, and resign up themselves with supplication into the power of another...

O: Gestus XIV: Protego [I protect]

To extend out the right hand by the arm foreright is the natural habit wherein we sometimes allure, invite, speak to, cry after, call, or warn to come, bring into, exhort, give warming, admonish, protect, pacify, rebuke, commend, justify, avow, inquire, direct, instruct, order, show a generous confidence, hardiness, and authority; give free liberty of speech, manifest a readiness to answer, and make an apology for ourselves, and appear to undertake business...

P: Gestus XV: Triumpho [I triumph]

To put out the raised hand, and to shake it as it were into a shout is their natural expression who exhalt, brag, boast, triumph, and by exultant gesture express the raptures of their joy; they also who would declare their high applause, or would congratulate, and they who have drunk do commonly use the same gesture...

Q: Gestus XVI: Silentium postulo [I demand silence]

The beckoning with the raised hand hath been ever with all nations accounted a sign of craving audience and entreating a favorable silence...

R: Gestus XVII: Juro [I swear]

To lift up the right hand to heaven is the natural form and ceremony of an oath, used by those to call God to witness and would adjure, confirm, or assure by the obligation of an oath...

S: Gestus XVIII: Asservatione Deum attestor [With asseveration, I call God to witness]

To extend and raise up both the hands to heaven is an expression of establishment and a most strong kind of asseveration implying as it were a double oath...

T: Gestus XIX: Suffragor [I permit]

To hold up the hand is a natural token of...consent, election, and of giving suffrage...

V: Gestus XX: Respuo [I reject]

The flirting out of the back part of the hand or put-by of the turning of the palm is their natural expression who would refuse, deny, prohibit, repudiate, impute, or to lay to one's charge, reject or pretend to lay for an excuse, or would twit and hit one in the teeth with a thing, and signify disdain...

W: Gestus XXI: Invito [I invite]

To show forth the hand, and so forthwith to call back, as it were and bring it again unto us with a waving motion is a natural gesture and a vulgar compellation which we significantly use in calling for men whom we bid come near and approach unto us...

X: Gestus XXII: Dimitto [I dismiss]

To wag and wave the hand from us is an expression by gesture significant to prohibit, bid one be gone, keep off, forbid, dismiss, and bid farewell and adieu...

Y: *Gestus XXIII: Minor* [I threaten]

To show and shake the bended fist at one is their habit who are angry, threaten, would strike terror, menace, revenge, show enmity, despite, contemn, humble, challenge, defy, express hate, and offer injury, tell one what he must look for at their hands...

Z: *Gestus XXIV: Mendico* [I beg]

To put forth the right hand spread is the habit of bounty, liberality, and a free heart; thus we reward and friendly bestow our gifts...¹⁰⁸

All of Bulwer's gestures are named as actions; in the next set of gestures, action is even more significant as many of them involve another person. This knowledge is helpful for the modern actor whose acting technique involves breaking up a song or scene into a series of action verbs. This section is of importance to, again, open the modern actor's eyes to the normality of action and gesture in this era. The first gesture in figure 27, *Munero*, meaning "I reward" is simply giving someone money for something, and gesture B, *Auxilium fero*, meaning "I bring aid" is explained by Bulwer as touching someone in sympathy. Gesture L, the gesture for impatience or sorrow is shown with a hand to the forehead. This is a common gesture of frustration. Gesture M, the rubbing or scratching of the head, is also familiar to one who is confused, and gesture Z, a blessing gesture, is common to the clergy. The gestures in figures 2-4 are less utilized:



Figure 24. I adore



Figure 25. I affirm



Figure 26. I display contrition

¹⁰⁸ Bulwer, 21-55.

Figure 24, *Adoro*, indicates a kiss of the hand as a show of respect and adoration. This gesture could be added by the man to the bow; there is no indication whether women did or did not do this gesture when bowing or in everyday life. The gesture in figure 25, *Conscienter affirmo*, illustrates a graceful hand that would then be placed on the heart accompanied by a little bow when affirming something or swearing it to be true. This is a highly formal gesture that is not customary today. The gesture in figure 26, *Poenitentiam ostendo*, demonstrates a fist ready to be beat upon one's breast when something is painful or shameful. Bulwer expresses this gesture's subtext beautifully: "to beat and knock the hand upon the breast is a natural expression of the hand used in sorrow, contrition, repentance, shame, and in reprehending ourselves, or when anything is irksome unto us because the breast is the cabin of the heart..."¹⁰⁹ The gestures in figures 24-26 are three that should be practiced; they provide three options that would easily fit into Restoration theatre music but are not commonly used today. Gesture S, in figure 27, is another slightly uncommon gesture which is designated for striking an agreement. Today we would 'shake hands on it', but Bulwer indicates that there is only a mere slapping together of the hands. This knowledge provides an interesting bit of stage business if appropriate. The next gesture in the chart proscribes the shaking of hands, so this corroborates that shaking is not being omitted from gesture S. Gesture S has evolved through time to include hand shaking.

Some gestures described by Bulwer but not included in his chirogrammatic plates continue to assure the modern actor that their gestural instincts should not be ignored as

¹⁰⁹ Bulwer, 74.

the essence of human nature has not changed since the seventeenth century. *Gestus LIV*, *Dolorem noto*, which means “I note pain,” is executed by putting the hands on the “sides or hip” or any place with pain.¹¹⁰ This is how any person would react to pain. In *Gestus XL*, *Faveo*, meaning, “I favor,” Bulwer describes how a person behaves when they feel lovingly toward another:

We use to stroke them gently with our hand whom we make much of, cherish, humor, or affectionately love, an expression very obvious among the actions of common life being a kind of indulgent declaration of the mind used to pacify and please other, performed by drawing our hand with a sweetening motion over the head or face of the party to whom we intend this insinuation.¹¹¹

Acting in a period piece can tend to make an actor feel stifled and unnatural. The evidence of familiar and everyday gestures found in Bulwer’s books should encourage an actor to trust their instincts to touch and gesture with confidence.

¹¹⁰ Bulwer, 75.

¹¹¹ Bulwer, 67.



Figure 27. Chirogrammatic Plate B

Bulwer's explanations of figure 27:

A: Gestus XXV: Munero [I reward]

To put forth the right hand spread is the habit of bounty, liberality and a free heart...

- B: Gestus XXVI: Auxilium fero* [I bring aid]
To extend and offer out the right hand unto any is an expression of pity and of intention to afford comfort and relief, used also as a token of assurance, peace, security, and promised safety, and salvation...
- C: Gestus XXVIII: Irascor* [I am angry]
To strike a table or some such like thing with the hand is the gesture of one angry or grieved in mind and very impatient...
- D: Gestus XXXIII: Demonstro non habere* [I show I do not have]
To shake out the hand is their natural expression who would show that they have not, nor desire to have a thing...
- E: Gestus XXXIV: Castigo* [I chastise]
To shake or hold the stretched and raised hand over any is their expression who offer to chastise and show a willingness to strike or take revenge...
- F: Gestus XXXV: Pugno* [I fight]
To strike one with the fist is their gesture who would be avenged of those that have offended them and would right themselves in this wild justice of their hands...
- G: Gestus XLII: Confido* [I confide in]
To lean upon another's hand is their gesture who make a confiding use of the staff of their age or affection, an expression importing that they much rely upon their faith and friendship...
- H: Gestus XLIII: Impedio* [I impede]
To hold fast another's hand in the signification of hindrance and restraint is the gesture so obvious in the choleric perturbations of human life that it needs no illustration by example...
- I: Gestus XLV: Recommendo* [I recommend]
To take one by the hand in courtesy to recommend them unto another way by way of presentation...
- K: Gestus XLVI: Officiose duco* [I lead about in an official capacity]
To lead one by the hand is their expression who take care of the weakness and inability of others in matters of progressive motion used most commonly with young children
- L: Gestus XLVII: Impatientiam prodo* [I betray impatience]
To apply the hand passionately until the head is a sign of anguish, sorrow, grief, impatency, and lamentation used also by those who accuse or justify themselves...
- M: Gestus XLVIII: Sollicite cogito* [I compel by repeated requests]
To rub or scratch the head with the hand is their natural gesture who are in anguish or trouble of mind; for commonly when we are in doubt and uncertain what we do, we musing scratch our head...
- N: Gestus XLIX: Pudeo* [I am ashamed]
The recourse of the hand to the face in shame is a natural expression...
- O: Gestus L: Adoro* [I adore]
To kiss the hand is their obsequious expression who would adore and give respect by the courtly solemnity of a salutation or valediction...

- P: Gestus LII: Conscienter affirm* [I affirm (my) conscience]
To lay the hand open to our heart using a kind of bowing gesture is a garb wherein we affirm a thing, swear or call God to witness a truth...
- Q: Gestus LIII: Poenitentiam ostendo* [I display contrition]
To beat and knock the hand upon the breast is a natural expression of the hand used in sorrow, contrition, repentance, shame, and in reprehending ourselves, or when anything is irksome unto us because the breast is the cabin of the heart...
- R: Gestus LV: Indignatione timeo* [I fear with indignation]
The smiting of the hand upon the thigh in the practice and conversation of common life was ever frequent and is so deeply imprinted on the manners of men that you shall in vain persuade a man angry and enraged with grief to contain his hand from this passion...
- S: Gestus LVI: Data fide promitto* [I pledge my faith]
To strike another's palm is the habit and expression of those who plight their troth, give a pledge of faith and fidelity, promise, offer truce, confirm a league, buy, sell, grant, covenant, bargain, give or take handsel, engage themselves in suretyship, refer their controversies to an arbiter, put to compromise or choose an umpire, engage themselves to be true and trusty, warrant and assure...
- T: Gestus LVII: Reconcilio* [I reconcile]
To shake the given hand is an expression usual in friendship, peaceful love, benevolence, salutation, entertainment, and bidding welcome, reconciliation, congratulation, giving thanks, valediction, and well-wishing...
- V: Gestus LIX: Suspicionem et odium noto* [I note suspicion and hate]
To draw back the unwilling hand instead of reaching it out to embrace the hand of another is a sign of enmity...
- W: Gestus LXI: Honoro* [I honor]
To apprehend and kiss the back of another's hand is their natural expression who would give a token of their serviceable love, faith and loyalty, honorable respect, thankful humility, reverence, supplication and subjection...
- X: Gestus LXII: Reservationem saluto* [I greet one with reservation]
To offer the back of the right hand to be kissed by others...is an expression of state used by proud and scornful persons who affect the garb of great ones and are willing to afford slight respect to one they think unworthy of a higher touch...
- Y: Gestus LXIII: Furcitatem noto* [I show thievery]
To put forth the left hand, as it were, by stealth is their significant endeavor who have an intent unseen to purloin and convey away something...
- Z: Gestus LXIV: Benedico* [I bless]
The imposition of the hand is a natural gesture significantly used in condemnation, absolution, pardon and forgiveness, benediction, adoption, initiation, confirmation, consecration, ordination...and in gracing our meals...¹¹²

¹¹² Bulwer, 55-107.

The next set of gestures Bulwer discusses are those performed by precise finger formations. Many will seem natural while others will take time to assimilate into one's gestural vocabulary. In figure 28, Gesture A is the action of chewing on the fingers while thinking; the fingers need to be elegantly chewed. This is an odd action, but interesting for an singer to have in their bag of gestures. Gesture B merely indicates that one wipes the eyes when crying. Note the finger positions in all of figure 28 and the fact that a handkerchief is included in gesture B. Gestures C and D are performed exactly they are today: one thumb up for something good; two thumbs up for something really good. Gestures E and F are gestures of indication, one with the thumb one with the index finger. Gestures F and G differ in the angle of the finger; towards a person indicates and commands while a finger pointed upwards threatens. Gesture H, like C and D is performed as it is today with index fingers to lips to quiet or shush, but gesture I, meaning to disapprove, refute or convict, has no modern equivalent. The index finger curving downward is a gesture of disapproval and is a smaller version of gesture L.¹¹³ Today, gesture L might look like something more vulgar as the index finger begins erect and then goes limp. Even with the modern interpretation, this gesture would be an interesting choice for disapproval, and perhaps, the vulgarity that this gesture implies today was exactly what was indicated in the seventeenth century. Gesture K is a typical gesture of invitation. M is somewhat familiar but has evolved in modern times from a pinky scratch to the head to betray coy shame to the pinky in the mouth. Gesture O has also undergone an evolution, shifting from a sideways pointing of the middle finger to a

¹¹³ Bulwer, 200.

straight up pointing of the middle finger, and it seems that the use of this finger, although used to communicate hate as it is today, was not such an obscene or shocking gesture. Bulwer indicates that was used to “provoke and argument” and designate name calling.¹¹⁴ Gestures P and Q are flicking gestures of differing intensities. These gestures are not wholly natural, but make logical sense as gestures of insult, contempt or annoyance. Gesture S is a left handed gesture with the left hand in a fist representing greed. Gesture V is seen on many operatic stages now and in the past: the Claw, which Bulwer describes aptly as an “impotent expression of a cursed heart.”¹¹⁵ Gesture W is a very funny gesture that is not used today in which the thumb and middle fingers are touching while the index and ear finger, now known as the pinky, are up being wagged at someone who does something inappropriate or has bad manners.¹¹⁶ This gesture was also used to indicate a cuckold.¹¹⁷ Gesture Y is the gesture of a pinch-penny, someone who is parsimonious. It could be the main gesture for a character illustrating the psychology of the character if it is done habitually. Gesture Z illustrates that counting began with the thumb in the seventeenth century.

¹¹⁴ Bulwer, 132.

¹¹⁵ Bulwer, 138.

¹¹⁶ Bulwer, cii

¹¹⁷ Bulwer, 201.



Figure 28. A Corollary of the Discoursing Gesture of the Fingers

Bulwer's explanations of figure 28:

A: Gestus I: Inventione laboro [I work in discovery]

The finger in the mouth gnawn and sucked is a gesture of serious and deep meditation, repentance, envy, anger, and threatened revenge...

B: Gestus II: Fleo [I weep]

To put a finger in the eye is their expression who cry and would, by that endeavor of nature, ease themselves and give vent to their conceived heaviness...

C: Gestus III: Approbo [I approve]

To hold up the thumb is the gesture of one giving his voice or suffrage, of one that helpeth with his word at the time of election, and of one showing his assent or approbation...

D: Gestus IV: Extollo [I extol]

To hold up both the thumbs is an expression importing a transcendancy of praise...

E: Gestus V: Collateraliter monstro [I show both sides (of an issue)]

To point with the turned out thumb is a note of demonstration

F: Gestus VI: Indico [I point]

The forefinger put forth, the rest contracted to a fist, is an express of command and direction, a gesture of the hand most demonstrative...

G: Gestus VII: Terrorem incutio [I inflict terror]

The holding up of the forefinger is a gesture of threatening and upbraiding...

H: Gestus IX: Silentium indico [I show silence]

The laying of the forefinger upon the mouth is their habit who would express their silence, conviction, shame, ignorance, reverence, servile fear, modesty, a revolving meditation, admiration and amazement...

I: Gestus X: Redarguo [I reprove]

The bowing down of the forefinger for a check of silence, and the redargue (scold, express disapproval of), is an action often found in the hands of men...

K: Gestus XI: Compello [I summon]

The lifting up and bowing of the index towards the face is a usual gesture of invitation...

L: Gestus XII: Veto [I disapprove]

The raising up and bowing the forefinger from us is a gesture natural to those who beckon a retreat or forbid...

M: Gestus XIII: Diffidentiam noto [I show hesitancy]

To feel with the fingers' ends is their special expression who endeavor to satisfy themselves by information of the tact in the qualities of a thing...

N: Gestus XIV: Molliciem prodo [I betray weakness]

To scratch the head with one finger is a kind of nice and effeminate gesture betraying a close inclination to vice...

O: Gestus XV: Convicium facio [I provoke (an argument)]

The putting forth of the middle finger, the rest drawn into a fist on each side...is the natural expression of scorn and contempt....fornicator...whoremonger...

P: Gestus XVI: Contemno [I condemn]

To compress the middle finger with the thumb by their compulsion producing a sound and so casting out our hand is a gesture we use to signify our contempt of unprofitable things and to show, by gesture, how we slight, condemn, insult, and undervalue anything...

- Q: Gestus XVII: Ironiam infligo* [I impose irony]
To bend the middle finger while it stiffly resteth upon the thumb, and so jesting-wise to let it off, is a trivial we with a fillip (flicking motion-me) inflict a trifling punishment or a scoff...
- R: Gestus XVIII: Contemptuose provoco* [I provoke in a contemptuous fashion]
To beckon with the ear-finger is their usual concise expression who are advanced by confidence to rely upon the strength of their ability and would by a provoking signal dare, challenge, defy, and bid one prepare for an encounter, implying a strong presumption of the victory, as if they esteemed him as nothing in their hand...
- S: Gestus XIX: Avaritiam prodo* [I betray avarice]
To grip the left hand, the thumb clutched in withal, is the hold fast gesture of tenacious avarice...
- T: Gestus XX: Offensiunculam resentio* [I resent a slight offense]
To give one a rap with the fingers half bent, or [with the] knuckles, is their expression who would vent their slight anger or dislike upon others, or [who] would softly and modestly knock at some door...
- V: Gestus XXI: Iram impotentem prodo* [I betray a mild anger]
To put the fingers into a grip or claw-like aspect, and to scratch or claw another therewith, is the impotent expression of a cursed heart that eagerly desires to set a mark of displeasure upon those that have provoked it to a splenetic use of its pounces...
- W: Gestus XXII: Stultitiae notam infigo* [I make the sign of folly]
To present the index and ear-finger wagging, with the thumb applied to the temples, is their expression who would scornfully reprove any for failing in any exercise of wit, or for some absurd stumble of tripping and inconsiderate lip, or for some error in manners and behavior. 138
- X: Gestus XXIII: Improbis obijcio* [I accuse of improbability]
To lock the thumb between the next two fingers is an ironical vulgarism of the hand used by plebians when they are contumeliously (a humiliating insult) provoked thereunto and the see that they cannot prevail by vying words...
- Y: Gestus XXIV: Parce do* [I give sparingly]
To give with two fingers is a parsimonious expression of the hand often seen in clutch-fists niggards and pinch-pennies from whose gesture the adage came...
- Z: Gestus XXV: Numero* [I count]
To begin with the first finger of the left hand and to tell on/to the last finger on the right is the natural and simple way of numbering and computation...

A few other gestures useful to the singing actor are the snapping of fingers and the okay symbol. Bulwer recounts that the snapping of the fingers was prescribed by the ancients to call or get a servant's attention. It is an arrogant commanding gesture. This is

a characteristic gesture that someone of higher rank would use to address an underling. It is not out of place in the Restoration theatre. The middle finger to thumb is a gesture of emphasis that is not uncommon, but the gesture of emphasis that looks like the modern ‘okay’ symbol was described by Bulwer as a gesture to “distinguish or approve.”¹¹⁸ The gesture was a gesture of emphasis as well as a mark of approval. Quintilian also refers to this gesture as a gesture to express positive support.¹¹⁹



Figure 29. Colley Cibber as Lord Foppington

This picture of Colley Cibber performing this gesture as the character Lord Foppington illustrates that this was a common gesture. That this character was made more foppish by using this gesture is not clear, but the handkerchief is held very artfully in his left hand.

¹¹⁸ Bulwer, 200.

¹¹⁹ Desmond Morris, Peter Collett, Peter Marsh, and Marie O’Shaughnessy. *Gestures: Their Origins and Distribution* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 103.

To modern eyes, this portrait does not look more ornate or over-the-top than any other male portraits of the time.

Along with Bulwer and Gildon's invaluable texts, Dene Barnett has provided an exhaustive compilation of gesture references across Europe throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It illustrates that acting techniques and gestures were extraordinarily similar throughout both centuries. Perhaps this is because rhetoric was common to the curricula of all European countries, and therefore the physical gestures taught by Quintilian would have been studied by all. In many cases, the pictorial plates show identical gestures and strikingly similar drawings even though they are published in separate countries and in different decades. This is important for the actor singing in any language of the Renaissance, Baroque and Classical eras. Barnett takes a cue from Gilbert Austin's treatise on gesture and divides them into categories: indicative, imitative, and expressive gestures, gestures of address, of emphasis and of commencing and terminating. He also goes on to explain that one or more of these gestures could be combined to make a more complex gesture.

Indicative gestures

Barnett explains that an indicative gesture is "pointing by means of a gesture or posture to an object, a place, a person or an event."¹²⁰ In all indicative gestures, a finger points while the other fingers are elegantly curved in. The finger of indication is most often the index finger but can be the thumb, the middle and the little finger as well.

¹²⁰ Barnett, 27.

Bulwer explains that an indicative gesture of more understated emphasis is formed by “the ear finger [the pinky or little finger] appearing erect out of a bended fist [and] doth by action obtain a force to explain more subtle things.”¹²¹

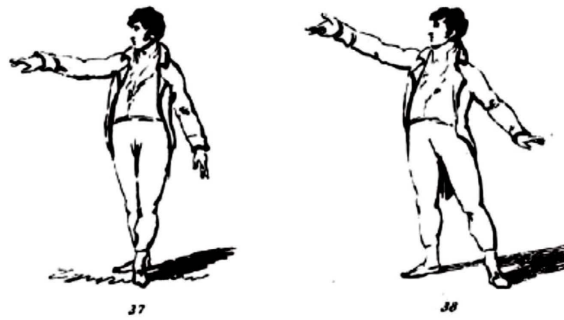


Figure 30. Elegant hand positions

Barnett commends that indicative gestures (and all gestures) should be performed “stylishly, with grace and ceremony...”¹²² He goes on to summarize all of the aspects that create a complete and tasteful gesture:

There must be contrast between hand, forearm and upper arm with a slight bend at elbow and wrist; the hand must move in graceful and often ceremonious curves; when both hands are used the one must be lower than the other; when accompanying a particular word the stroke of the gesture should fall exactly on the right syllable. In particular, the beginning of the gesture must precede the word, and when both eyes and hand are used, the eye movement must precede the hand movement.¹²³

Indicative gestures can be made with the eyes alone, or with both the eyes and hands. An even stronger indicative gesture would also include a change in position of the feet. In the quote above, Barnett includes all of the elements of a beautifully executed gesture:

¹²¹ Bulwer, 204.

¹²² Barnett, 168.

¹²³ Barnett, 167.

contrast, curve, and precision. The advice that the eyes should move before the hands is good advice for any actor, for something is seen and perceived before an action takes place. Barnett emphasizes that indicative gestures are especially important when “depicting and bringing before the eyes imaginary things or events.”¹²⁴

Imitative Gestures

An imitative gesture is “a movement or posture used to depict some feature such as the size or speed of an object, person or event by imitating that feature.”¹²⁵ Gildon in his 1710 book on acting explains the obvious:

The Movement or Gestures of your Hands must always be agreeable to the Nature of the Words, that you speak; for when you say, *Come in* or *approach*, you must not stretch out your Hand with a repulsive Gesture; nor on the contrary, when you say *Stand back*, must your Gesture be inviting...¹²⁶

Like indicative gestures, imitative gestures were meant to paint a picture for the audience, and like imitative gestures, they should be stylish and their size should complement the grandiosity of the text. They both create concrete images for an audience. The linking of text with powerful physical imagery brings a text to life and makes the words more powerful, especially poetic turns of phrase such as metaphor. Figures of speech are the most poetic form of discourse in a play, and therefore warrant elevated and expressive gestures.

¹²⁴ Barnett, 182.

¹²⁵ Barnett, 33

¹²⁶ Gildon, 75.

Expressive Gesture

An expressive gesture is “an attitude or movement used to represent a passion of the character being portrayed... For expressive gestures, the face was the principal instrument.”¹²⁷ This type of gesture is especially important for the singer as songs are primarily expressions of emotion. The facial expressions described in Barnett’s book and in Gildon’s are as expected. For example grief is expressed by “hanging down of the Head” and a sad countenance.¹²⁸ Grief and weeping was a frequent occurrence on the Restoration stage, and although tears were admired, crying was “often a matter of facial expression rather than a flow of tears.”¹²⁹ Surprise is created with suddenly raised eyebrows and an open mouth. The gesture for shock incorporates the facial expression for surprise along with raised hands. Gildon explains how to perform this gesture with beauty of form: “In lifting up the hands to preserve the Grace, you ought not to raise them above the Eyes; to stretch them farther might distort the Body; nor must it be very little lower...”¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Barnett, 36.

¹²⁸ Gildon, 43.

¹²⁹ Barnett, 230.

¹³⁰ Gildon, 76.



Figure 31. Shock



Figure 32. Aversion

The gesture for aversion is frequently explained from Quintilian to Austin. It is performed by rejecting the thing with the right hand and turning the head to the left.¹³¹ This is a dramatic and expressive gesture that should become a part of a singer's lexicon. Another expressive gesture that will be commonly used on the stage is bringing the right hand to the heart in an indication of self as well as adoration. Other gestures of expression include shame and welcome. Shame is portrayed the same in all of Barnett's examples but it includes both hands over the eyes, whereas Bulwer illustrates only one hand in Gesture N:



Figure 33. Shame (Bulwer)



Figure 34. Shame (Austin)

¹³¹ *Some Rules for Speaking*, 27.

This gesture can also be used to indicate a painful recollection. Welcoming gestures are more variegated. One of the most famous paintings of a welcoming gesture is from Botticelli's *Primavera* (c 1482). The gesture she is using is no longer recognizable as a welcoming gesturing because it is stagnant, but with the movement of the arm, an actor onstage could make the meaning obvious. Notice all of the artfully positioned fingers and feet. This painting illustrates the longevity of some gestures, unknown to us, but known throughout Europe from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century.



Figure 35. Welcoming gesture

The gesture for rapture is not included in Bulwer's charts, but Barnett explains that it is executed by lifting the arms up over the head and then down, neither is despondency which is performed by letting the arms fall to the side of the body. Austin's

book describes theatrical conventions a century away from the Restoration Era, but as has been established, the art of gesture did not change much in the Baroque and Classical periods. Indeed, these gestures can still be seen in the silent films of the early twentieth century.

As in Bulwer's pictorial charts and descriptions, one gesture can be used to signify differing actions depending on the context. Bulwer includes the example of clasped hands for grief, but does not mention that they can also express surprise and pleading in different circumstances. Barnett instructs the actor to be aware that gestures can portray different actions and to trust that the context and the actor's face will render the gesture comprehensible, just as he explains that the more ambiguous texts can be conveyed with precision even if a meaning is less exact. A singer/actor should portray as distinctly an abstract thought or a real and concrete person, place or thing.

Gesture of Address

The gesture of address is "an attitude or movement in which the eyes, face, hands or body are directed towards another person in order to indicate that it is he who is being addressed."¹³² This seems simple enough, but it might have been a necessary instruction for actors who memorized only their own lines and did not routinely react to the other actor's on stage. A gesture of address let the audience know to whom the text is being addressed. Gildon explains that "to turn the whole face to any thing is the gesture of one,

¹³² Barnett, 69.

who attends and has a peculiar regard to that one thing.”¹³³ That “one thing” could be a person, and object, or a place like heaven.

Gesture of Emphasis

A gesture of emphasis is “a movement made to emphasize an idea, a word or a syllable.”¹³⁴ Barnett explains, and indeed, it is logical, that these gestures were made frequently and could be small and precise, “flamboyant or epic” depending on the text and situation.¹³⁵ The changing of the position of the feet is also considered a gesture of emphasis. The middle finger and thumb touching as well as the index finger and thumb creating a circle are gestures of emphasis. In figures 14 and 15, Austin illustrates gestures of emphasis indicated by the ancients. Both are versions of the same gesture: one with ear-finger up and one with only the index and thumb touching.

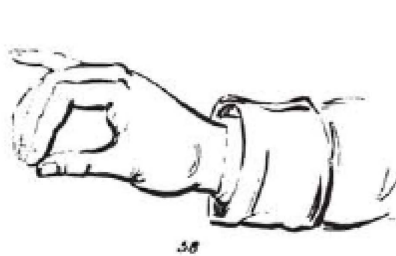


Figure 36. Gesture of emphasis

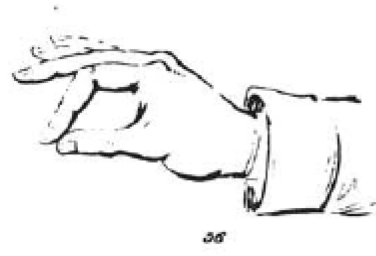


Figure 37. Gesture of emphasis

¹³³ Gildon, 45.

¹³⁴ Barnett, 73.

¹³⁵ Barnett, 73.

Commencing and Terminating Gestures

A commencing gesture implies “a raising of the hand (or eyes) to announce the commencement of a speech or a period.”¹³⁶ It is similar to a conducted upbeat; it does not need to be a big event but should be enough to announce a new beginning or to break a silence. Barnett explains that commencing and terminating gestures are especially effective for the opera singer. A commencing gesture can be a gesture of emphasis, imitation or it could be expressive, but the gesture must commence before the first word is spoken or sung.¹³⁷ A terminating gesture implies “a lowering of the hand (or eyes) to pronounce the termination of a speech or period.”¹³⁸ Gilbert Austin’s diagram of a terminating gesture includes both hands.



Figure 38. Terminating gesture

“The incompotence of the hands is to be avoided, for to begin abruptly with the hand is a sin against the laws of speech. In the exordium (beginning/introduction) of an oration, the hand must not go forth or stand extended, but with a sober and composed heed proceed to

¹³⁶ Barnett, 79.

¹³⁷ Barnett, 79.

¹³⁸ Barnett, 79.

its first action...”¹³⁹ Commencing and terminating gestures are specific to this style of acting and will add to the formality and style of acting if the singer appropriately announces the beginning and ending of a song with these gestures.

Style

Knowledge and use of gestures was commonplace for the noble person, but what makes gesture in the theatre different from daily life is the style with which they were performed. Barnett’s analogy between the art of writing plays and the art of gesture explains it well: the words used in plays, especially the tragedies, are the same words used in daily life, but writers transformed words into verse and prose that “was an artistic transcendence of everyday language. Similarly, each of the basic gestures in the actor’s vocabulary is to be found in everyday life, for we point, we frown in anger and emphasize important words with hand movements...,” but the gestures in plays, although the same as in life, are performed in an elevated manner that matches the artistic nature of the verse.¹⁴⁰ More succinctly put, “the gesture belonged to nature and the style in which it was used belonged to art.”¹⁴¹ The emphasis on finding what is natural and then transforming it into something beautiful begins with the ancient’s writings and continues throughout the Baroque Era and beyond. Bulwer explains this dichotomy:

“There are two kinds of action which are more perceived in the motion of the hand than any other part of the body: one, that nature by passion and ratiocination

¹³⁹ Bulwer, 240.

¹⁴⁰ Barnett, 89.

¹⁴¹ Barnett, 89

teacheth; the other, [that] which is acquired by art. An orator is to observe both the natural and the artificial; yet so, that he add a certain kind of art to the natural motion whereby the too much slowness, too much quickness, and immoderate vastness may be avoided.”¹⁴²

Bulwer explains several of the elements that turn everyday gesture into art: not being too slow, too fast or too grandiose, but Barnett has neatly devised categories that will help the actor formulate artistic gestures. I have added a category and narrowed Barnett’s list down to the four that seem most relevant and non-redundant to the modern actor. The singer should use this as a checklist making sure all of these categories are included when creating gestures in a song:

1. Pictorial beauty and nobility
2. Clarity and Precision
3. Variety in gestures
4. Ornament, beauty and ceremony
5. Linking gestures (added)

Pictorial beauty and nobility

The appearance of an easy elegance, of beautiful and controlled body positions displayed in a seemingly effortless manner has been established as an important part of the style of the Restoration noble, and beauty was a principal aspect of art in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with proportion and grace being primary elements. “In posture and gesture, decorum meant harmonious proportions and graceful contrasts between the various parts of the body: between arm and leg, between two hands, between head and shoulder, forearm and upper arm, and including the smallest details of fingers

¹⁴² Bulwer, 240.

and eye movements.”¹⁴³ If all of this balance between the body parts was an essential element of graceful movement in the upper class everyday life, to the actor, it was more crucial as gestures were held for longer periods and were often more passionate than in daily life. Gestures onstage would have been larger in importance and execution. The effort to execute a well-balanced and artful gesture was often taken too far as is noted by Gildon in his Restoration book on acting: “Some are wholly taken up in viewing themselves, the Proportion of their Limbs, Features of their Faces, and Gracefulness of Mien; which proceeds from Pride, and a vain Complaisance of themselves; of this number are Coquets.”¹⁴⁴ He explains that the obvious preoccupation with looking “just right” is the domain of the fop and the coquette, not the tragedian.

Training should begin with the hands. Chisman and Raven-hart offer advice for the modern actor in achieving stylized hands:

The hands should be well cared for, gesture easy and neat—the movements those of a trained dancer or fencer. Beware of tucking in the elbows and cultivate a graceful turn of the wrist and flexible fingers. If you are inclined to stiffness, try drawing imaginary figure eights in the air, sometimes in front of you, sometimes to the side, sometimes low, sometimes high, bringing every joint of the hand and arm loosely into play.¹⁴⁵

Drawing figure eights while ensuring that the wrists, fingers and arms have a looseness about them is valuable advice. The two most frequent hand positions espoused by Barnett include a flexible wrist joint and relaxed curved fingers. The middle two fingers curved

¹⁴³ Barnett, 91.

¹⁴⁴ Gildon, 43.

¹⁴⁵ Chisman, Isabel and Hester E. Raven-hart. *Manners and Movements in Costume Plays*. (London: H. F. W. Deane and Sons, no date) 20-21.

in more than the little and index fingers is one position and the index finger in a straighter position than the middle, ring and little finger is the second common position. These are also the positions of the hands when the fingers are not actively involved in a gesture. Barnett warns that in this hand posture a crooked thumb would ruin the gesture and would “suggest tension or perhaps malice.”¹⁴⁶ Keeping the hands in either of these two positions ensures that they are never idle or “employed in an insignificant or unbeautiful gesture.”¹⁴⁷

Bulwer, Barnett, Gildon and Austin all repeat the rule from Quintilian that the arms and hands should not be raised higher than the eyes as such a move would distort the beauty of the body, but Austin’s illustrations demonstrate that this rule was not strictly obeyed especially when reaching towards the heavens. They also recommend that an actor must not let the hands “fall down as if lame or dead; for that is very disagreeable to the Eye, and argues no Passion or Imagination.”¹⁴⁸ The major writers on gestures also repeat the Roman advice that to create a beautiful picture the arm should never be completely straightened and that both arms should rarely perform the exact same gesture. Moving the arms across the body so as to distort the body is also condemned and would have been considered a crude and inelegant move. The recommendation that the arms not move too high or too low, compliments the instructions that they also not move too much or too little. Moderation and graceful control should be the aim of the serious actor and singer in the Restoration Era, but passion also dictates that this not be obeyed so strictly

¹⁴⁶ Barnett, 103.

¹⁴⁷ Gildon, 74.

¹⁴⁸ Gildon, 76.

that an actor's instincts are stifled. This is a difficult balance to achieve, but should be the aim of the modern actor. In figure 39, Austin illustrates a more complete picture of the idealized balance between control of the body and passionate expression.

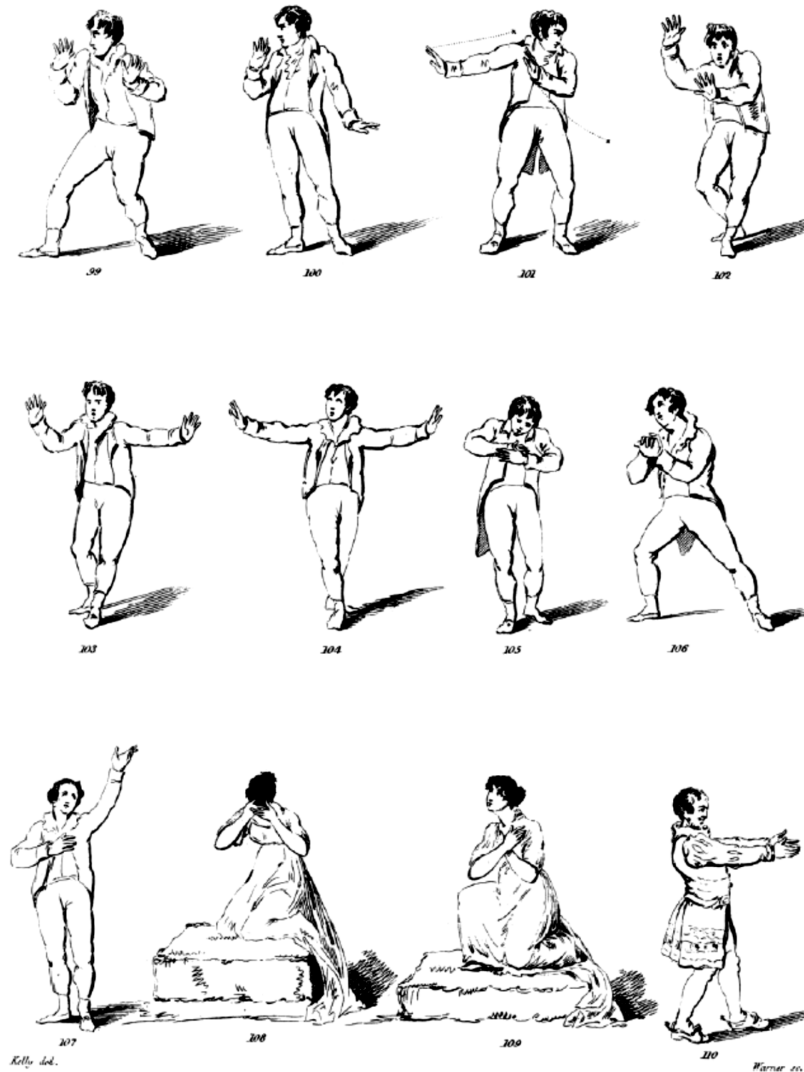


Figure 39. Complex gestures

The feet always illustrate an elegant turnout, the weight is always distributed to one foot in order to create “an elegant curve to the body,” and the feet are neither too

close together nor too far apart.¹⁴⁹ Again, moderation and decorum are of prime intention. The dance positions will keep an actor from standing with the feet in a straight line or in any other unseemly position. It is recommended that since the right hand is typically used in gesture, then the left foot should be forward to create an elegant picture ensuring balance in the body. Quintilian cautions against right hand and right foot symmetry saying that such a position would be “ugly.”¹⁵⁰ Austin, however, recommends the use of right foot and right hand together in moments of great passion as the body inclines towards the passion or away from a frightening thing.¹⁵¹ Figure 40 demonstrates Austin’s recommendation for leaning towards an object of passion, and figure 41 illustrates examples of good and bad feet positions, the first containing ill-balanced feet and the second displaying beauty of form.



Figure 40. Feet and arms

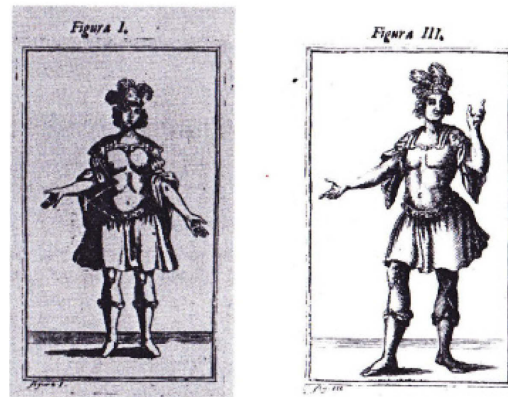


Figure 41. Bad body position v. good position

¹⁴⁹ Barnett, 134.

¹⁵⁰ Barnett, 118.

¹⁵¹ Barnett, 119.

Barnett also advises the modern actor to observe postures and attitudes in Renaissance and Baroque art, and then practice the postures in the mirror until they are naturally formed.



Figure 42. Louis XIV



Figure 43. Charles II

In these examples, the nobility of the postures is apparent; the legs are prominently displayed in the portrait of King Louis the XIV and the hands by King Charles II. The first portrait demonstrates the beauty of opposition as well as the late seventeenth century proclivity for a walking stick, a good choice for character business.

Barnett explains that the practice of art in a tragedy required that the “action and deportment of the actor should be noble, to match the nobility of kings, heroes and gods... Nobility and dignity were also required to reflect the elevated and idealized

nature of the great themes and eternal truths which were being represented on stage by such characters.”¹⁵² Actors were instructed to use paintings as sources for elegant gestures and, vice versa, paintings were made using gestures that were elegantly portrayed in the stage.

Clarity and precision

Clarity and precision in gestural action pertains to the timing of a gesture with the appropriate word while avoiding extraneous or overly busy gestures. If the actor matches appropriate gestures to important words and phrases, it is likely that movements will be specific and clear.

“The Place and Posture of the Body ought not to be chang’d every Moment, since so fickle an Agitation is trifling and light: Nor, on the other Hand, should it always be keep the same Position, fixt like a Pillar or Marble Statue. For this, in the first place, is unnatural, and must therefore disagreeable, since God has so form’d the Body with Members disposing it to Motion, that is must either as the Impulse of the Mind directs, or as the necessary Occasions of the Body require.”¹⁵³

Clarity and decisiveness in the movement of the hands, the body, the eyebrows, the eyes and the feet all contribute to the precision of movement onstage. Clarity and precision was considered a part of the beauty of the action onstage and was expected to match the “clarity of verse and music.”¹⁵⁴ Gildon states, “that as much as possible every Gesture you use should express the Nature of the Words you utter, which would sufficiently and

¹⁵² Barnett, 137.

¹⁵³ Gildon, 57-58.

¹⁵⁴ Barnett, 146.

beautifully employ your Hands.”¹⁵⁵ The precision pertains to choice of gesture as well as the execution of the gesture. The gesture that is “best suited to illustrate or to express the sentiment” should be used.¹⁵⁶ This aspect of style need merely be utilized by the actor to ensure that gestures are specific and not overly numerous as to blur the clarity and beauty of the gestures chosen.

Variety in gestures

Taking stock of overplayed gestures is pivotal for interesting stage action. This is a warning that all actors of any era should observe. Variety does not insinuate that gestures are never to be repeated, simply that one should be aware of too much repetition. Bulwer suggests that the actor “shun similitude of gesture; for as monotone in the voice [is absurd], so a continued similitude of gesture and hand always playing upon one string is absurd...”¹⁵⁷ Awareness of variety also ensures gestural dynamics. Some gestures need to be bigger or smaller according to the text and an awareness of variability will help the actor make stronger choices. Included in variety should also be the awareness of having too many or too few gestures, and the awareness that moments of stillness would not be out of place in a long passage or in an aria as long as the body is held in a beautiful resting position.

Variety in gesture should also include the eyes and facial expressions:

¹⁵⁵ Gildon, 47.

¹⁵⁶ Gilbert Austin, *Chironomia; or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery* (London: T. Cadwell and W. Davies, 1806), 456-457.

¹⁵⁷ Bulwer, 243.

The Countenance, indeed, is chang'd into many Forms, and is commonly the most certain Index of the Passions of the Mind. When it is pale it betrays Grief, Sorrow, and Fear, and Envy, when it is very strong. A louring and dark Visage is the Index of Misery, Labour and vehement Agitations of the Soul... In short, as *Quintilian* observes, the Countenance is of very great Power and Force in all that we do.¹⁵⁸

The eyes are a part of facial expression and are essential in expressing the internal workings of the mind. Use of the eyes and has always been important in clarity of thought in acting and as Gildon explains “The Soul is most visible in the Eyes, as being...the perfect Images of the Mind...”¹⁵⁹ He goes on to give examples of how the eyes can betray character, emotion and action:

Thus we find a rolling Eye that is quick and inconstant in its Motion, argues a quick but light Wit; a hot choleric Complexion, with an inconstant and impatient Mind; and in a Woman it gives a strong Proof of Wantonness and Immodesty. Heavy dull eyes a dull Mind, and a Difficulty in Conception. For this Reason we observe, that all or most People in years, sick Men, and Persons of a flegmatic Constitution are slow in the turning of their Eyes... A bold staring Eye, that fixes on a Man, precedes either from a blockish Stupidity, as in Rusticks; Impudence, as in Malicious Persons; Prudence, as in those in Authority, or Incontinence as in lewd Women. Eyes enflam'd and fiery are the genuine Effect of Choler and Anger; Eyes quiet, and calm with a secret kind of Grace and Pleasantness are the Offspring of Love and Friendship.¹⁶⁰

Variety in facial expression, eye movements, arm and finger movements and body positions are essential elements of artfully crafted acting.

¹⁵⁸ Gildon, 45.

¹⁵⁹ Gildon, 44.

¹⁶⁰ Gildon, 41-42.

Ornament, Beauty and Ceremony

A large part of ornament and beauty is also a part of pictorial beauty where the hand position and the symmetry of the body are emphasized. Ornament, in this case, concerns the curved path that a gesture should take. To create an ornamented gesture, a rounded line was recommended. “Such ornamental curves, which could vary from slight and subtle to flamboyant, not only gave grace to the gestures, but could also be used to lend great ceremony to the actions whenever the style of the words required it, and when the panache of the actor was equal to it.”¹⁶¹ Straight lines are advocated when expressing passion such as anger and contempt. Since the elevated manner with which a gesture is enacted should match the verse or prose, the more elevated the text the more exalted and ceremonial the gesture.

The Linking of Gestures

The linking of gestures seems to have been advanced through the work of the eighteenth century actor, David Garrick. Garrick still performed the stock gestures of the Restoration, held poses and spoke in an elevated tone, but his attention to be more “natural” made his acting seem revolutionary and shocking. Simon Trussler explains the major difference in his acting as compared to the Restoration Era:

That Garrick’s acting style was famously ‘natural’ does not, of course, mean that it was ‘naturalistic’ according to our own expectations. His great strength was apparently in his ‘turns’, or transitions from one mood to another – an ability to modulate the emotions in a subtler manner than the formal style had ever

¹⁶¹ Barnett, 152.

permitted. To this continuity in the rendering of characters was harnessed a richer sense of their complexity...¹⁶²

He still did stock gestures and facial expressions, but he was more artful in the transitions between the gestures. The fact that his transitions were noted illustrates the fact that skillful transitions were not taught as an important element in acting in the Restoration Era, and leaves one to wonder what Restoration actors did between gestures. Barnett includes good advice for the modern actor learning to put together gestures, these are especially applicable to the singing actor. Since text moves more slowly in song than in speech these poses would be held for a much longer duration capturing a lasting affect. This is germane not only to the expression of text but also to the art of all music of this time. Barnett cautions the actor to be aware of letting a gesture hang “meaninglessly in the air” and to practice returning the hands to a casual resting position between gestures if not moving immediately to the next gesture.¹⁶³ This advice instructs the singer/actor to practice the most natural hand and arm positions so that the body naturally responds by returning to these positions. Examples of “resting” position include figures 5, 6, 7 and 9 in the Dancing Chapter. Besides returning the arms gently curving to the sides, the hands could be crossed, or a fan could be held. Returning to a resting position between gestures is good advice since we do not know what Restoration actors did in between gestures or how Garrick made the transitions smoother.

Many of the gestural and facial examples provided by the ancients and by Austin, Bulwer, Gildon and Barnett all draw attention to what is done habitually when one wants

¹⁶² Trussler, 176.

¹⁶³ Barnett, 320.

to portray grief or joy; the eyes go down and the head hangs down in grief or the eyes light up and the head is head high in moments of great joy. The following pictorial examples from Austin's *Chironomia* illustrate this natural tendency, but they also provide, in one concise place, various body positions for the modern singer to practice until the body becomes comfortable in the positions and natural emotional tendencies can be trusted and extended. In figure 44, Austin's "Systematic Positions of the Arms," the top row illustrates gestures that indicate something low or of the earth; in the second row, the figure holds one arm up in what could be a welcoming, halting or indicative gesture; in the bottom row, the figure illustrates something on high in various ways. The second figure on the bottom row is displeasing to the eye, as the arm is covering the face.

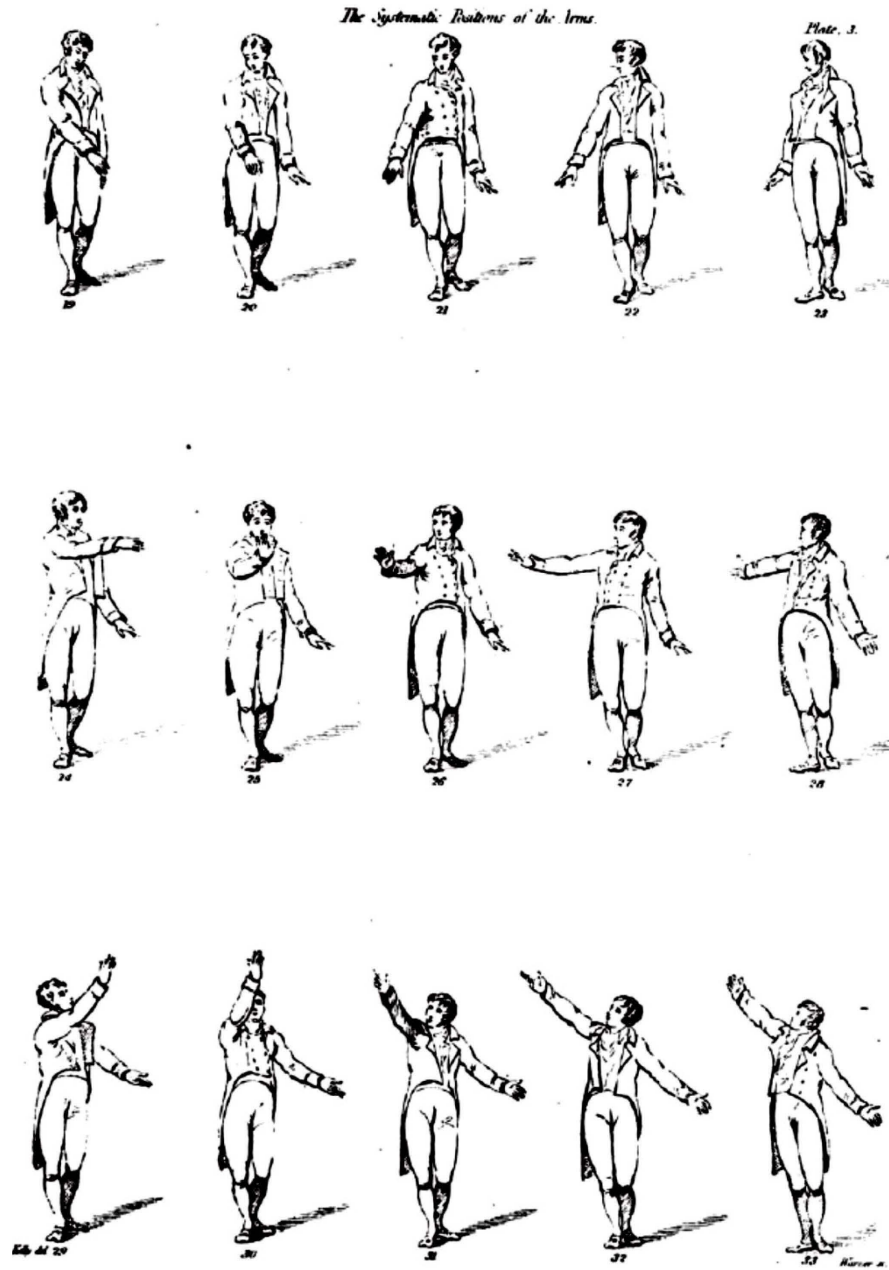


Figure 44. Systematic positions of the arms

Austin also includes in his book, *Chironomia*, 1806, a blocked version of a portion of Gay's fable, *The Miser and Plutus*. This text and blocking should be practiced

and memorized to gain a sense of movement and gestural flow as it is the most vivid and precise example of gestural staging that exists. From Gay's fable, *The Miser and Plutus*:

The wind was high, the window shakes,
With sudden start the Miser wakes;
Along the silent room he stalks;
Looks back, and trembles as he walks!
Each lock and ev'ry bolt he tries,
In ev'ry creek and corner pries.
Then opes the chest with treasure stor'd,
And stands in rapture o'er his hoard.
But now with sudden qualms possest,
He wrings his hands, he beats his breast.
By conscience stung, he wildly stares;
And thus his guilty soul declares:
 Had the deep earth her stores confin'd,
This heart had known sweet peace of mind.
But virtue's sold. Good gods! what price
Can recompence the pangs of vice!
O bane of good! seducing cheat!
Can man, weak man, thy power defeat?
Gold banish'd honour from the mind,
And only left the name behind;
Gold sow'd the world with ev'ry ill;
Gold taught the murd'rer's sword to kill.
'Twas gold instructed coward hearts,
In treach'ry's more pernicious arts.
Who can recount the mischiefs o'er?
Virtue resides on earth no more!¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ John Gay, *Gay's Fables: In One Volume Complete* (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1808), 17.



The wind was high, | *the window shakes,* | *With sudden start* | *Along the silent room* | *Looks back,*
the Miser wakes; | *he stalks;*

The wind was high, the window shakes, With sudden start the Miser wakes; Along the silent room he stalks; Looks back,



and trembles | *Each lock and ev'ry* | *In ev'ry creek* | *Then opes his chest* | *And stands in rapture*
as he walks! | *bolt he tries,* | *and corner pries* | *with treasure stor'd,* | *o'er his hoard.*

and trembles as he walks! Each lock and ev'ry bolt he tries, In ev'ry creek and corner pries Then opes the chest with treasure stor'd, And stands in rapture o'er his hoard.



But now with sudden | *He wrings his hands,* | *By conscience stung* | *And thus his guilty* | *Had the deep earth*
qualms possess, | *he beats his breast,* | *he wildly stares;* | *soul declares:* | *her stores onfin'd,*

But now with sudden qualms possess, He wrings his hands, he beats his breast. By conscience stung, he wildly stares; And thus his guilty soul declares: Had the deep earth her stores onfin'd,



Figure 45.

Chapter 5

Etiquette

Proper decorum, whether it be how to perform a gesture, how to sit, how to stand or walk properly, how to bow, how to take snuff or how to hold and use a fan, is all a part of historically informed acting in Restoration theatre music and will provide the actor with business that can make a character come to life. To the Restoration noble, proper etiquette was wrapped up in every aspect of life. The elements of politesse were commonplace aspects of being human in this period and are essential to creating an atmosphere and transporting an audience to a different time.

Proper understanding and use of Restoration etiquette also has a psychological aspect. Understanding why characters behaved as they did will enhance the modern actor's character development. Joan Wildblood in her book on English decorum explains that "today...prominence is given to the psychological aspect of characterization, but it does not always appear to be recognized that the outward forms of etiquette used among all peoples are in themselves an expression of this psychological aspect."¹⁶⁵ All aspects of etiquette, no matter the period will always have an underlying psychological aspect, i.e. how we greet someone with hug or handshake, with enthusiasm or reserved politeness; all heightens an actor's craft. Wildblood explicates this further: "On the stage, a bow or curtsy is often shown wrongly as a movement, rather than an expression of a feeling. If the handshake were accompanied with as little expression of emotion as is

¹⁶⁵ Joan Wildblood, *The Polite World: A Guide to English Manners and Deportment* (London: Davis-Poynter Limited, 1973), 9.

shown in [some modern] stage reverences, it would appear offhand.”¹⁶⁶ It is also important to acknowledge that the proper or improper use of the rules of etiquette can create a character that is appropriate either for tragedy or for comedy. Tragedies required a more formal acting style while comedies required exaggerated character choices or misuse of etiquette rules. If a comedy’s goal was to expose humanities foibles through exaggerative and funny acting, then tragedy’s goal was to educate through tragic faults. The comedic actor “would break the rules of Grace and Beauty to highlight and mock men’s folly.”¹⁶⁷ The challenge for the modern actor is to know the manners and style so well that gesture and manner are effortlessly stylized in tragedy and exaggerated or misconstrued in comedy.

The dancing masters and tutors trained the well-born in dance, manners and the instruction of the mind and of the body.¹⁶⁸ Along with showing respect, discussed in previous chapters, other skills included learning to use snuff and the handkerchief properly, how to sit and how to use a fan. Of these, taking snuff is the most foreign activity for the modern actor. Barton gives the most complete description of the technique for managing a snuff box and taking snuff:

“Snuff taking was a general habit among men and is most expressive for characteristic stage business. Snuff was extremely expensive; therefore the top of the box was tapped so that any grains that had clung to the lid would drop back into the box. The box was held in the left hand, tapped with the right, and the spring in the lid pressed with the left thumb. A pinch of snuff was taken with the right thumb and second finger, the box was closed with the left hand and the snuff

¹⁶⁶ Wildblood, 23-24.

¹⁶⁷ Gildon, 76.

¹⁶⁸ Wildblood, 93.

was placed on the back of the left hand which was carefully (so as to not spill a grain) lifted to each nostril in turn. The cuff and shirt frill were then flicked with the handkerchief, as snuff stains were difficult to remove if the snuff was allowed to settle on the clothes. Sometimes a small pinch of snuff was taken and applied directly to the nostrils. It was not considered correct to sneeze afterwards, so it is necessary to convey an effect of bad breeding, a lavish and disgusting sneeze would do admirably. The box can be kept in the waistcoat pocket or in the coat pocket, according to size. Snuff was offered as a social gesture, but many men had their own blends mixed and would not accept anyone else's. Ladies did not use snuff until the beginning of the eighteenth century..."¹⁶⁹

This detail provides some very interesting stage business for an actor, as does

"handkering" which is Barton's word for the skillful use of the handkerchief. He explains that a "heavily" perfumed handkerchief was used to guard against odors from one's self and from others as they walked by. It would be held to one's nose or "swooshed" about in circles.¹⁷⁰ "Handkering" is a useful activity for both men and women. Men also could twirl rings about on their fingers as it was fashionable for men to wear many rings.

Men and women carried fans, but women turned the use of the fan into an art form. The fan was used as an accessory, as a cooling device and as a communicative tool. How the fan was held or at what speed it was fanned "could now be made to encode a wide range of meanings... – [it became] a visual aid to social and sexual discourse of some intricacy, since its signals could variously affirm, contradict, or modulate the spoken word."¹⁷¹ Much of the language of the fan, like the language of gesture, seems logical. I have included the most common and commonsensical fan gestures, but as

¹⁶⁹ Barton, 218-219.

¹⁷⁰ Barton, 158.

¹⁷¹ Trussler, 140.

Barton explains, as long as the characters onstage understand the underlying meaning, any fan gesture can be used.

- Tip of the fan touching the lips—Hush!
- Touching the right cheek—Yes!
- Touching the left cheek—No!
- Touching the nose—I do not trust you.
- Yawning behind the fan—You bore me.
- Pointing fan to heart—You have my love.
- Hiding eyes behind the fan—You attract me.
- Brushing open fan towards a person—Go away.
- Carrying in left hand—I desire your acquaintance.
- Twirling in left hand—I wish to get rid of you.
- Drawing across forehead—We are watched.
- Shut—You have changed.
- Carrying in right hand—You are too willing.
- Drawing through hand—I hate you.
- Drawing across cheek—I love you.
- Carrying in right hand before face—follow me.
- Drawing across the eyes—I am sorry.
- Open and shut—You are cruel.
- Dropping—Let's be friends.
- Fanning slow—I am married, or, I am relaxed.
- Fanning fast—I am engaged, or, I am upset.
- With handle to lips—Kiss me.¹⁷²

On June 27, 1711, *The Spectator*, a daily paper that often satirized societal issues, printed a satirical letter on the “rage for fans”; in it, the writer Joseph Addison states that “women are armed with fans as men with swords, and sometimes do more execution with them.”¹⁷³ Later in the letter he offers sarcastic advice to young ladies wanting to learn the art of the fan:

Upon my giving the word to discharge their fans, they give one general crack that may be heard at a considerable distance when the wind sits fair. This is one of the

¹⁷² Barton, 157-158.

¹⁷³ Steele and Addison, 159-160.

most difficult parts of the exercise, but I have several ladies with me, who at their first entrance could not give a pop loud enough to be heard at the farther end of the room, who can now discharge a fan in such a manner, that it shall make a report like a pocket-pistol. I have likewise taken care (in order to hinder young women from letting off their fans in wrong places or on unsuitable occasions) to show upon what subject the crack of a fan may come in properly; I have likewise invented a fan, with which a girl of sixteen, by the help of a little wind which is enclosed about one of the largest sticks, can make as loud a crack as a woman of fifty with an ordinary fan.¹⁷⁴

Addison not only ridicules loud cracking fans, but also the incessant and emotionally charged fluttering of fans.

A few other sundry elements of etiquette include sitting and general movement concerns. The stiff and elaborate clothing made sitting a formal affair. For men, the sword-hilt would need to be tapped to “flip the skirts of the coat out of the way.”¹⁷⁵ Then the man would sit, with one leg taking all the weight. Once down, the other leg would slide under the chair to “steady the descent;” once seated, the man could reverse the positions of the feet to conclude the sitting action. To rise, the actions are reversed. Women have a simpler time of it, sitting and rising in plié.”¹⁷⁶ When walking together, a woman could walk with her hand on a man’s sleeve if he offers his arm, but it was usually the lower classes that went arm-in-arm.¹⁷⁷ Clothing prevented this kind of close, arm-in-arm, walking as hoop skirts very wide. People did not get very close to each other for several reasons, one being that women’s skirts were so large, another being smell, and

¹⁷⁴ Steele and Addison, 159-160.

¹⁷⁵ Isabel Chisman and Hester E. Raven-hart, *Manners and Movements in Costume Plays* (London: H. F. W. Deane and Sons, n.d.), 20.

¹⁷⁶ Barton, 159.

¹⁷⁷ Oxenford, Lynn. *Playing Period Plays*. (London: J. Garnet Miller Ltd., 1958), 217.

the last being that the Restoration aristocracy felt that they were the “center of the universe” taking up and owning the space that surrounded them.¹⁷⁸ Figure 46 displays the sphere Austin uses to illustrate the space in which the arms and body should move.

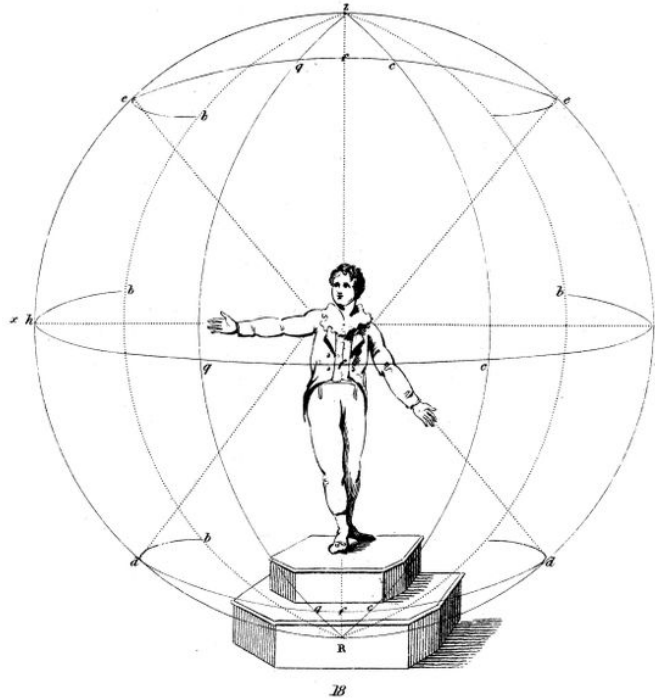


Figure 46. Sphere (Kinesphere)

Catherine Turocy, in an essay on Baroque practice and dance theory, utilizes this sphere and DaVinci’s Vetruvian man to demonstrate a spherical concept of movement for the Baroque performer.¹⁷⁹ The concept of utilizing or ‘owning’ all of the space that one could ostensibly touch (also called a person’s kinesphere), while moving onstage is an indispensable tool for the actor learning to carry him or herself in a more stylized manner.

¹⁷⁸ Barton, 144.

¹⁷⁹ Catherine Turocy, “La Cosmografia del minor mondo: Recovering Dance Theory to Create Today’s Baroque Practice,” in *Dance on Its Own Terms Histories and Methodologies*, ed. Melanie Bales and Karen Eliot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 136-137.

Chapter 6

The Guide

After practicing the dance positions, walking, standing, holding the hands and arms with a beautiful curve and then memorizing, practicing and discovering personal motivations for Austin's gestures for *The Miser and Plutus*, the next step is to apply this knowledge to a song. First, the text and the music are analyzed. "Acting must have involved a process of boiling the text and music down to their essential affects, and devising appropriate gestures for each."¹⁸⁰ A singer in the modern era should analyze the text and music for any art song or aria, but in this era it is even more essential to the craft.

The singer's art was closely aligned with the orator's during the Baroque period. The clear and expressive delivery of a text involved not only proper diction and pronunciation, but also an understanding of the rhetorical structure of the text and an ability to communicate passion and the meaning of the words.¹⁸¹

The following are guides for deciphering poetic and musical moments of import that motivate gesture and action. Reading the play (if available) and researching the history of the show should be a part of the modern actor's process and need not be included in the following guidelines.

Music and Text: musical and textual clues that indicate important moments:

1. Key and modulations
2. Tempo/Meter changes
3. Repetition = important word or phrase for emphasis

¹⁸⁰ Richard G. King, "How to Be an Emperor': Acting Alexander the Great in *opera seria*," *Early Music*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (May, 2008): 184. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27655168> (accessed October 14, 2012).

¹⁸¹ Sanford Sally, "Solo Singing 1," in *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, ed. Stewart Carter (New York: Schirmer, 1997), 5.

4. Word Painting effects
5. Chromaticism, interesting intervals and harmonic changes
6. Figures of speech
7. Dynamics: were not originally included by Purcell, therefore decisions need to be made about dynamics as they will directly affect the size of gestures

Gestures: After the breaking down of the text and the music look for places to add specific types of gestures. This will ensure variety in gesture and specificity in the gestures chosen.

1. Indicative gestures
2. Imitative gestures
3. Expressive gestures
4. Gestures of address
5. Gestures of emphasis
6. Commencing and terminating
7. Check the size of the gestures
8. Note gestures that are made high or low

Acting techniques: choices informed by the text, music and gesture (some actors may find that switching the “acting techniques” section and the “gesture” section will work better for their process; some actors work better from the inside out, some from the outside in):

1. Note emotion changes (passions); think about the facial expressions and gestures that express these emotions
2. Look for action verbs that will incite natural gesture and then adjust to make them more ornamented and/or...
3. ...practice the text as a monologue and look for the gestures that come naturally to make discoveries that come from a more personal and organic place. Make adjustments to the natural gestures to make them more beautiful. (This should start to happen naturally once one is comfortable with the leg, body, hand and arm postures of the time. Also, imagining the weight and size of the clothing will alter one’s movements)
4. Ponder whether a fan, a handkerchief, snuff, cane, a glass or another prop might enhance the character and provide opportunities for more variety in gesture.
5. Utilize modern acting techniques to bring the character to life and ensure a “real” connection to the text

From rosy bowers is a mad song from the comedy, *Comical History of Don Quixote* by Thomas d'Urfey with music by Henry Purcell. The song is sung by Altisidora “a skittish girl who is appointed to try to lure Don Quixote away from the nonpareil Dulcinea.”¹⁸² She is the only “important singing character” as none of the main characters sing. Altisidora sings in the style of a mad song to seduce Don Quixote by using tactics of seduction such as teasing him and making him feel sorry for her as well as playfulness, dancing, crying, distraction, madness, etc. Mad songs were opportunities for actresses to display their talents. Amanda Eubanks Winkler in her book, *O Let Us Howle Some Heavy Note: Music for Witches, the Melancholic, and the Mad on the Seventeenth-century English Stage*, suggests that mad songs (for women, not men) were erotic scenes where madness was an excuse to behave without propriety.

Most of the women who lamented or ran mad on the English stage suffered from “erotic melancholy,” or lovesickness, giving playwrights and composers the opportunity to create titillating displays of excessive, “lascivious” emotion as they represented the common symptoms of the affliction. These women appeared in various states of disarray, singing and speaking in a voluble, disjointed manner that violated the code of proper conduct.¹⁸³

The degree to which this advice should be taken so far as decorum and proper positioning of the body are concerned should be considered by the actor. In this scene, the actress is feigning madness to attract Don Quixote. This could be an excuse to tear at the clothes and show off the body in an erotic and inappropriate way. The degree to which eroticism and disarray were handled is a matter of conjecture, but considering the extensive rules of

¹⁸² Price, *Henry Purcell and the London Stage*, 219.

¹⁸³ Amanda Eubanks Winkler, *O Let Us Howle Some Heavy Note: Music for Witches, the Melancholic, And the Mad on the Seventeenth-century English Stage* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006), 65.

conduct in everyday life, the slightest showing of skin and reckless handling of the body and emotions would surely have seemed titillating.

In the 1696 version of the play, the sections of the song are labeled “Love, Gaily, Melancholy, Passion and Frenzy”. It is not known if Purcell took note of these distinctions, but Price in his book *Henry Purcell and the London Stage* states that “it would be silly to suppose that the various passages represent *just* these coarse emotions.”¹⁸⁴ However, these passions are a good starting point for the actor and do perfectly match the arch of the song. *From Rosy Bowers* is through-composed and sectional contributing to the abrupt shifts suiting the character. The abrupt changes in this type of song ensure variety of mood and of gestural size and position.

Section A: Recitative and Arioso; C minor; Affect: Love

From rosy bow’rs where sleeps the god of Love,

-Commencing gesture: hands up to the heart before the music begins and gently turned away from Don Quixote (hold pose; flutter eyes to attract Don Quixote)

-***From Rosy Bow’rs where sleeps:*** arms go up (stage left) and gently arch down and across the body to gesture sleep (a bower is a woman’s chamber in a castle—gesture should go up because of the bower and because of the reference to the god of love)—expressive gesture



Figure 47. Gesture of address

-***the god of Love:*** arms back up to heaven (stage right) and in the direction of Don Quixote so the double entendre is clear— indicative gesture and a gesture of address

¹⁸⁴ Price, *Henry Purcell and the London Stage*, 219.

Hither, hither, ye little waiting Cupids, fly, fly, fly. (word painting on fly: fioratura)

-E flat major, happy, sudden change of focus

-**Hither** meaning come is an invitation: sudden move to an expressive gesture of invitation (gesture similar to Botticelli's *Primavera* figure 35) (stage left angle)

-**little**: gesture of emphasis, thumb and middle finger emphasize the word little and express imitate the word; arms remain in the invitation pose as the fingers perform this gesture—gesture of imitation and emphasis

-**Fly**: look for them with the eyes and head to show off how beautiful you are

Hither, ye little waiting Cupids, fly:

- **Hither**: same gesture of invitation to the stage right angle this time

-repeat of the above

Teach me, teach me in soft melodious songs to move, (Soft: half-step motion creates a tender pleading melody)

-**Teach me**: small expressive gesture of pleading with both hands



Figure 48. Expressive gesture “to beg”

-**in soft...**: turn hands over to indicate soft and tender sounds—imitative gesture

With tender, tender passion, (word painting on tender: appoggiatura and moving notes)

-**With tender, tender passion**: amping up of passion; hands begin to tremble—expressive gesture

my heart's, my heart's darling joy. (written out trill on darling)

-**My heart's...**: the hands gently grip the heart in joy and passion—expressive gesture

-**joy**: look toward Don Quixote; he is unmoved—gesture of address

Ah! Let the soul of music tune my voice, To win dear Strephon, who my soul enjoys (C major chord indicates change in affect)

-**Ah!**: sigh; hands drop into a low prayerful and expressive gesture

-**Let the soul of music tune my voice**: pray to the gods, plead; hands together praying—expressive gesture and a gesture of address

-the repetition of the text and the rising melodic line indicate a crescendoing affect; the pleading becomes more fervent and larger in size as the pitch ascends until finally the hands burst free from the prayer position and the arms open up to the heavens on the word *enjoys* in a moment of love

Arioso: key moves between c minor to the relative major, E flat major; cut time, faster tempo; sudden new Passion: Gaily (dance, flirty seduction)

Or if more influencing, Is to be brisk and airy,

- Or if more influencing*: hands gently come down to the innocent gesture (figure 23, L) implying sweetness as the next tactic for seduction is conjured—expressive gesture
- airy*: smile (the next tactic is discovered) —expressive gesture

With a step and a bound, And a frisk from the ground,

- With a step...*: step toward Don Quixote (stage right)—gesture of address
- a bound*: small leap to bring feet into first position
- frisk from the ground*: playful gesture up from the ground (a frisk is a playful movement)—imitative gesture

I will trip like any fairy. (cadence on E flat major)

- I will trip like any fairy*: hold pose with hands slightly up to the chest where they ended up after the frisk and tilt the head toward Don Quixote; the hands are indicating the breasts as a byproduct of the previous gesture—indicative gesture (indicated self)

As once on Ida dancing, Were three celestial bodies, (Mount Ida in Greek Mythology is the Mountain of the Goddesses)

- this whole section is meant to show off the body
- indicate Mount Ida—indicative gesture

With an air and a face, And a shape, and a grace,

- With an air and a face*: arms come down to a neutral position, gently touching in front of the waist while the nose goes up into the air a little to show off the neck and face
- And a shape and a grace*: the arms gently curve out to the sides to show off more of the body as the breasts come forward a bit—indicative gestures

Let me charm like Beauty's goddess.

- keep in mind Rameau's instructions for a beautiful body: "The Head must be upright, without being stiff; the Shoulders falling back, which extends the Breast, and gives greater Grace to the Body; the Arms hanging by the Side, the Hands neither quite open nor shut, the Waste steady, the Legs extended, the Feet turned outwards."¹⁸⁵
- this should be the perfect pose of beauty and grace.

Section B: Recitative/Arioso; C major and back to E flat major; Affect: Melancholy (make him feel sorry for me and my unrequited love)

Ah! ah! 'tis in vain, (word painting: sighing suspensions)

- the arms slowly descend to a dejected gesture or gesture of despondency (figure 23, H)—Expressive gesture

¹⁸⁵ Rameau, 2.

'tis all, all, all, all in vain, (word painting: sighing suspensions)

-gently wiping tears away to make Don Quixote feel sorry for me (figure 28, B)—expressive gesture

Death and despair must end the fatal pain, (major seventh leap to the word Death)

-*Death*: sudden move; wring hands (figure 23, K) —expressive gesture

Cold despair, cold, cold, despair, disguis'd, like snow and rain (chromaticism on cold)

-shiver and slowly wrap the arms around the body to warm it in vain
(does this get his attention) —expressive gesture

Falls, falls, falls on my breast. (word painting: falls a fall in pitch on each repetition)

-attention to the breast with the eyes—indicative and imitative gesture

New Section of Recitative: Affect: Melancholy (dramatic/mad suffering)

Bleak winds in tempests blow, in tempests blow, (word painting: blow fioratura)

-(still he doesn't see) sudden move to the "aversion gesture" (figure 32) —expressive gesture

My veins all shiver and my fingers glow,

-slow move bringing dejected hands (figure 23, H) turned over toward the audience to show them the veins—expressive gesture

My pulse beats a dead, dead march for lost repose. (written out ornament for painting the word beats)

-cross one wrist over the other; arms/wrists get heavier and heavier (woe is me section; feel sorry for me Don Quixote) —expressive and imitative gesture

And to a solid lump of ice, my poor, poor, fond heart is froze.

-still no response; step towards him; gesture toward breast finally clasping the breast on the word *froze*. —gesture of address and an expressive gesture

Arioso; in 3/8 (entreat him/the gods to save me) Affect: Passion

Instrumental Introduction

-at a loss, nothing is working; pace a bit and chew finger as the gesture for thinking—expressive gesture

Or say, ye Pow'rs, say, say, ye Pow'rs, my peace to crown,

-stop pacing and entreat the gods to save me with arms out in front and eyes up to the heavens—expressive gesture and a gesture of address

Shall I, shall I thaw myself or drown?

-*Shall I* still the pleading gesture

-*thaw* and *drown* (life and death) require gestures in opposition

-*thaw* hands up to stage right angle, *drown* hands down to stage left angle—expressive and imitative gesture

Amongst the foaming billows, Increasing all with tears I shed,

-indicate where the foaming billows are stage left and wipe a tear—indicative and expressive gesture

On beds of ooze and crystal pillows, (the poetry is increasingly overly dramatic and frothy)

-larger circles of motion to imitate the flowery poetry and indicate the *beds of ooze* which are out in front—indicative and imitative gesture

Lay down, down, down, down, lay down, down, down my lovesick head.

-gradually lower down to the position in figure 49—imitative (of the text) and an expressive gesture

-*lovesick head*: touch the head indicating where the pain is—expressive gesture

Say, Say, ye Pow'rs say, say ye Pow'rs, my peace to crown, Shall I, shall I, shall I thaw myself or drown, shall I, shall I, shall I thaw myself or drown?

-imploring gesture throughout this repeat—gesture of address



Figure 49. Expressive gesture of address

Section C: Recitative/Arioso; C major; Affect: Frenzy/Madness

No, no, no, no, no, I'll straight run mad, mad, mad, mad, mad, That soon, that soon my heart will warm;

-new thought on C major chord, stand

-rejecting gesture (figure 23, V) on *no, no, no...*—expressive gesture

-crazy eyes on *mad...*—expressive gesture

- *that soon my heart will warm*: right hand gently over the breast with the left hand gently out to the side—indicative gesture

When once the sense is fled, is fled, love has no pow'r.

-serene moment of beauty melodically

-manipulation tactic by Purcell: saying one thing (love has no power) while the music speaks another (love)

-*fled*: the hand gently leaves the heart and both arms are open, powerless—expressive gesture

Love, Love has no pow'r, no, no, no, no, no pow'r to charm.

-fioratura section, more attention to the voice than the body

-hold the beautiful pose—expressive gesture

Arioso: Wild thro' the woods I'll fly, wild thro' the woods I'll fly,

-throw off the beautiful pose with wild arms indicating the woods stage right; a few steps stage right

-on the repeat cross a few steps stage left—expressive gesture

Robes, locks shall thus, thus, thus, thus be tore;

-***Robes***: grab the hem of the dress (revealing a little leg-scandalous)

-***thus***: toss the dress and then the hair—expressive gesture

A thousand, thousand deaths I'll die; a thousand, thousand deaths I'll die

-tear at the dress at the breast seam (in a manner similar to beating the breast) —expressive gesture

-this is a very sexual text and would have been known as such to the audience; that an actress would imitate a “sexual death” is highly suspect

Ere thus, thus in vain, ere thus, thus in vain, thus in vain adore.

-***Ere thus, thus***: indicate vain pursuits stage right and left with right hand then left—indicative Gesture

-arms leave the breast to indicate giving up—expressive gesture

-***adore***: indicate Don Quixote with hands crossed at heart and then out to Don Quixote and then arms arch down to the sides in a terminating gesture—expressive and indicative gesture culminating in a terminating gesture

Final Step: Motivation

It is my suggestion that singers performing in the style of the Restoration period combine the knowledge of body positions, gestures and etiquette along with their mode of modern acting techniques to create a performance that is not stilted but alive with historical knowledge and passionate action. Understanding character in this theatrical era is no different from understanding the difference in how a twenty-something behaved in the early twentieth century and how a twenty-something behaves now, how a man in the courtroom composes himself as compared with the same man having a drink in a bar after work, or how a maid in the servants' quarters behaves differently than the noble upstairs, yet there has never been an era before or since in which life was so highly choreographed making the Restoration Era more complicated to put into practice.

Performing theatre music of any era requires a thorough understanding of the time period,

the situation and the social demands on the character, but in the Restoration Era music the singer/actor must study and practice the gesture, etiquette and dance steps thoroughly in order to create a historically informed and effortless performance. Modern acting techniques that ground an actor in personal emotion need not be tossed out the window, but must be utilized to motivate the highly stylized gestures of the Restoration Era in order to create a powerful and inspired performance. The knowledge contained in this paper will give the singing actor the ability for specificity that is rarely achieved in performances of this style of music. The study of Baroque gesture and etiquette will also enhance an actor's catalogue of expression. This analysis and practice will serve the actor as a deepening of their training as well as give them the ability to perform Restoration theatre music with control, passion and beautiful ease.

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