

Performance design - Report by Susan Yarnal
Practical exercises made during the workshop in Aalborg

Small group work in 3 beats making sounds on each number, making our bodies used to this connection from top to the bottom because in the western world we don't have that body connection.

Head torso hips downwards are grounding. Sing it from your heart (torso) or ethereal sound or the grounding. Different physical senses, just walk to start with.

1. Imagine you are a bear with lots of muscle and weight - heavy feeling around hip but get ready to attack!
2. Back to natural and be yourself neutral
3. Now no weight as light as a feather, butterfly, you are ready to take off, you could lift anyone, suddenly it becomes quiet in the room
4. Back to neutral what's your mood, happy, tired, gloomy?
5. In a river up to the knees, we have to push through the water, water getting higher, in order to move your legs you have to move through the water, more energy. There's resistance. Water is going down again.
6. Neutral on dry land
7. Dense forest, branches are very low, we have to get down very low, we become monkeys, thigh muscles are very strong
8. Back to neutral

Find a spot where you would like to sing. Good for moving on stage, a little more flimsy if we rush. So our gestures can have resistance in order to get the music across. Find a friend and try to mirror each other. You are releasing more energy, good atmosphere, safe environment among the singers. If I feel exposed it won't work, to create an atmosphere of trust - to team build.

I cannot move too fast so that she can mirror me. Keep a flow in the movement. Taking turns and then doing together.

Focus - The centre solar plexus or below the navel. It's a sensation or feeling. Used for focus to centre ourselves as ensembles. Centre is also a drive it can help us take the stage. Gravity I am bound to perform. Walking from the pelvis. When we take a room our head goes first so my head goes in first. But if I want to show I am feeling I am more balanced. I want to feel the hip bone walk normally I am trying to give the resistance. Ask someone to hold your hips as you walk and then after a short while release their hands and it feels very different ... more freedom. Good exercise for helping students about walking on stage. An image of how to get a walk onto the stage.

Resistance is so good as a source of creating energy.

Power poses and anti power poses. There is a website apparently and some interesting research - (Exercise do 5 power poses and see what happens in job application conversations.)

In pairs, cross legs, slouch, cross areas and talk, this is anti power - I suspect the voice will be weaker.

Now do a power pose chest up arms on hips and strong legs so voice is louder.

Who are we expressing to? Attention - where are we putting our attention.

The work of Stanislavsky: it's not to be an 'actor' but to be true to yourself and be more aware. He works with circle or hula hoops and spotlights. Spotlight is on me not self-promoting. What is my state of mind state of body? Close our eyes and listen to our own breathing move from circle 1 and then increase the circles.

1. Listening to sounds in the room
2. Listening to the sounds inside you
3. Direct attention to muscles and feeling of body
4. Think of a place or a thing that is personal for you, a feeling of peace, at home or in nature and imagine that place, or a thing...if this is connected to sound then think about the sounds and the smells. Almost smell hear and see inner picture. Can you make that sensation of peace in your body now?
5. Open your eyes and keep that vision in you
6. Walk around with your hula hoop around you.
7. Meet someone's eyes and send your story to them
8. Move into circle 2 - I am now noticing more people around me.
9. Now the eye contact is the most important thing, you become a bit more present with other people and leave yourself a bit.
10. Stop with the eye contact. We are dependent on other people. How much flow can you make? (so the powerful people can keep the flow going)
11. People become very focused, we leave our own attention in order to be communicants....
12. There are many levels in this exercise

In two groups now:

The stopping game, there was a rhythm and a pattern in the end. Going slow and going fast. I am a follower or a leader. Today in rehearsal I am not going to be the leader.

Awareness of our groups allowing different people to blossom. Use the breath and your low back to choreograph the song.

Level 3 the last circle is the bodily one. I have an audience behind me. Balance the space!

Standing on a board on a ball. There is a ball underneath the stage. You must balance the stage so it doesn't tilt.

Fuzz ball or dust bunnies, there is a crowd in the middle. Energy in the centre of the song and then in the next song create space is very exciting in concert management.

4th circle is not just the performance hall...so it's the whole wide world. Music creates intensity and it is powerful on a higher level. Why are we doing this concert? Specific theme to create a feeling. Can be fun and can a great team feeling not be always serious?

Stage setting for one song: stand like this we are on circle one or circle three in phrasing. Try to think about a context of the whole songs, the whole programme, so you get a perspective on the songs in a concert for which you need all four circles. Use set lists and narratives when we create concert programmes.

In terms of the choir it is all about how much the singers take responsibility and the skills we are giving them to do this. As well as how we lead the singers. It is good to have the physicality engaged and also the power poses to establish the places of energy in the music and you can give a quick sign to initiate some emotional, social, and interpretative aspects of the musical landscape.

Taking the first movement of Vivaldi Gloria without the sheet music, gave it more power.

Different norms with instruments but you can make them sit in different positions, they stand, or they switch on a light when they play.