

**VOICE AND MOVEMENT I:  
EXPLORATIONS ON CONNECTION**

by

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## ABSTRACT

Proceeding from Kristin Linklater's approach to voice work as a focus on "removing the blocks that inhibit the human instrument" (7), within this class, I will be integrating physical movement exercises along with the Linklater voice progression in order to encourage students to experience a deeper, kinesthetic mind/body awareness. The physical components of the class will loosely follow the progression laid out in Sarah Hickler's *In the Moment*, moving through Bartenieff Fundamentals and building to foundational skills in contact improvisation. Through these explorations, I hope to engender an understanding that it is not just *what* one is doing, but *how* one is doing it (Hickler, xiii); process is of much more interest to me than product. The primary question guiding the explorations throughout this course is: How will supplementing the imagery based Linklater Voice progression with other physically based (but still grounded in the psycho-physical precept that movement is an outward expression of inner intent) techniques enhance the concepts that mind and body must learn to cooperate in order for the voice to communicate the actor/human's inner life to the outside world? I believe that it will foster a greater awareness of self, which should translate to a deeper connection with and awareness of others and the world.

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## **PREFACE**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 MY PERSONAL JOURNEY**

Growing up in the south, I was a “good” girl, daughter, student, and friend – someone that never raised her voice or spoke out of turn. Linklater work has been absolutely transformational for me, as a person and as a performer. I first became a student of Linklater voice work in my undergraduate training at Emerson College. I remember doing diagonal stretches as a freshman in Voice One with Susan Main and being flooded with so much emotional energy; it was truly like a dam broke inside of me and the imagery of the pool of vibration and rivers of sound became crystal clear. In that moment, I didn’t just hear my voice, but I *felt* my voice; and Susan was sharp at discerning when I was not tapping into it, and in turn taught me how to listen and pay attention to my inner self with more specificity. Amelia Broome took me under her wing and gave me confidence as we worked through the later half of the progression, particularly with my upper resonators. I strongly believe that because of the Linklater foundation at Emerson, I was able to grow as a performer who is grounded, present, confident in my body and voice as an instrument, and generous to others that I share the space/stage with.

I did not fully appreciate the value, or effect, my voice and movement training had on me while I was at Emerson. A few years after I graduated, I reconnected with Susan Main, my primary voice teacher from Emerson, and began private instruction with her in NYC. My

extensive work in Children's Theatre and performing in outdoor venues had created a habit in me of pushing a little too much for a little more volume and manufacturing emotion rather than truly feeding the impulse for a genuine feeling, so I spent a lot of time with Susan re-learning what it was like to experience a genuine sigh of relief and to keep that connection when adding sound and articulation and physicality. When her work started taking her abroad and our sessions dwindled, I realized what a vital part of my life Linklater work had become. It was during this time that Linklater voice work became a consistent practice in my personal life and not just part of my professional actor practice. I realized how much more open I was with those around me; I was a better and more present listener, but I was also more honest and truthful with others about how I was feeling in the moment as well. This work was (and is still) teaching me to be a more compassionate and empathic person.

## **1.2 INTRODUCTION AND IMPETUS FOR THESIS**

Artists of all kinds spend many hours working with and caring for their instruments. A violinist has the bow and violin, and they will know how to string and re-string both. The violinist will be able to detect the slightest change in pitch and be able to assess whether it is due to the tightness of the string, the temperature or humidity of the environment, the tension of the bow, and other internal and external pressures. Most importantly, the violinist has a consistent routine that allows for time and space to listen, observe, warm-up, and make the necessary adjustments for a specific performance. An actor has their body, mind, and voice. These are the actor's instruments, and as such, time must be spent on their development and preparation for use on stage. If an actor hopes

to create and communicate truthful, honest characters and relationships on stage then they must understand how to access their full body and voice. In order to create authentic characters and relationships, first, actors must know their authentic self.

Traditionally, in academic acting programs, foundational voice and movement classes were taught separately. Even today, many of the top B.F.A, M.F.A., and conservatory programs, such as Julliard, Carnegie Mellon, and Yale still follow this curriculum separation between voice and movement. Even outside of academia, training institutions specify the training of the actor as being physically or vocally based: the homepage for the École Internationale de Theatre Jacques Lecoq website states that the school “emphasise[s] the physical playing of the actor” (The School), Anne Bogart and Tina Landau describe Viewpoints as “a set of names given to certain principles of movement through time and space” (8), while on its website, Fitzmaurice Voicework™ is described as “a comprehensive, holistic approach to voice training” (Fitzmaurice), and in the foreword of Cicely Berry’s book, *Voice and the Actor*, it says that her approach is about “how, in fact, to set the voice free” (1).

Our traditional American training system was set up in such a way that actors, to fine tune their body as an instrument, took classes in movement and then took separate classes in voice and speech. The goal has always be to be able seamlessly integrate and apply them on stage in order to have a whole body, mind and voice that is working in sync with one another. The problem I see with this outline is that, as actors, we are given all of these techniques/tools/building blocks, but, since the focus of the class is *either* voice *or* movement, we only ever practice and receive feedback on these subjects as separate entities. Logically, we cannot expect that they (voice and body movement) will just magically fit into place and sync-up the moment we step on stage. Therefore, more time should be spent in the classroom integrating voice and movement

techniques – and not just integrating them, but creating more opportunities to teach them simultaneously as well.

Whether it is due to the logistics and constraints of a broader curriculum, or for pedagogical reasoning, the integrated voice and movement classes are most often found in B.A. programs within academia. The University of Pittsburgh has had an integrated Voice and Movement class for undergraduate students in the course catalog for many years, though it is not offered every semester. The last time it was taught, in the fall of 2017, it was structured much more like a survey course. Within the Bachelor of Arts curriculum at Pitt, while the Voice and Movement class fulfills one of three required performance classes for theatre majors it is not a requirement for the degree. This means that many theatre majors will graduate without ever being exposed to voice and movement training. Due to the demands of the degree, for most students that do choose to enroll in this class, it is their only opportunity to take voice and movement while at the University.

Rather than create a survey course where students learn about many different voice and movement methods, I chose to lay the groundwork for a strong voice and movement foundation by focusing primarily on one technique. Based on my own personal experience and knowledge, I built this course around Kristin Linklater's progression outlined in her book, *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language (FTNV)*. Based on my experience with the Linklater method, allowing students to delve deeper into one specific technique provides more opportunities for greater personal discovery and growth. Linklater's approach to vocal work is very holistic, already incorporating physical awareness and movement in many of her exercises. I integrated additional physical exercises from other methodologies,

such as Bartenieff fundamentals, Alexander, Feldenkrais, and movement explorations from Sarah Hickler's book, *In the Moment*, to expand upon the physical explorations touched upon in *FTNV*.

I elected to build the course around the Linklater Voice Method and the movement sequence laid out in Sarah Hickler's *In the Moment* not just because of my familiarity with both progressions, but because I believe they complement each other and provide a strong, clear connection and evolution between physical and vocal work. Sarah Hickler states, "Experiencing and communicating from our experiences is a full-bodied proposition. It is with and through the body that we sense, feel, experience and communicate" (xi). Likewise, Linklater says that, "actors must develop bodies that are sensitive and integrated, rather than super-controlled and muscular; and they must educate the voice into the union of self and body" (8). Both subscribe to the belief that you must use a psychophysical approach, one that examines the relationship between the mind and the body, in order to develop an actor's conscious awareness; an awareness that begins with the self before expanding outward.

The term psychophysical is common in theatre and acting approaches, but I prefer the imagery that the word body-mind elicits. I do not mean the mind & body connection, to which I will also refer to as mind/body connection, but rather, I use body-mind to distinguish something other than the intellectual mind - to offer another way to picture how the body experiences and "thinks" about organic and impulsive emotions and movements in a way that is separate from the analytical brain located in the skull. It is also important to note that when talking about the body, I am, most often, including the voice as a part of the body – as I believe that to free the body is to free the voice.

As has already begun above, Chapter 1 will continue to explore my investigation into this thesis course and include some personal background that led me to want to explore this

topic further. Chapter 2 delves deeper into my investigation of Linklater and other movement practitioners, the techniques, and the specific exercises I have chosen to use and experiment with in my class. Chapter 3 is set-up as a course journal that covers the structure of the classes, the major exercises from each unit, as well as my reflection on the work being done, and student responses to the work. Finally, Chapter 4 will re-visit the thesis question, present conclusions on the course as a whole and offer adjustments and suggestions for future teaching and integration of voice and movement pedagogies.

### **1.3 THESIS INVESTIGATION**

The question I explored during this practical and theoretical research is: How will supplementing the imagery-based Linklater Voice progression with other physically-based techniques enhance the concepts that mind and body must learn to cooperate, must be connected, in order for the voice to communicate the actor/human's inner life to the outside world? Based on my experience, connectedness of body, mind, and voice will allow the students to experience a genuine sense of connection with others, both on and off the stage. By that I mean that with an instrument that is healthy, open, and free from inhibitors (i.e. physical tensions and psychological blocks) they will be able to access and act on impulse rather than manufactured emotions.

In my course, *Voice and Movement I: Explorations on Connection*, my aim was to introduce the students to the theoretical foundations and practical exercises of master teacher Kristin Linklater. Linklater herself acknowledges that many of the physical exercises in her progression have been absorbed and adapted from physical exercises stemming from yoga,

Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais work, and Mind Body Centering (Linklater, 2). To that end, I also introduced the students to the theoretical and technical approaches of some of the aforementioned teachers and methodologies as well. For the majority of the classes, I structured them so that students explored the physical techniques or exercises first, and then re-visited them, as they have been adapted in the Linklater progression. This structure revealed the similarities and pinpointed the differences in the techniques, as well as allowed room for the students to notice the subtle changes within themselves that occurred when adding vocal explorations with physical exercises. By building the course in this way, it enhanced my understanding of not just the how, but why these exercises are able to work in tandem with the Linklater progression to provide a clearer mind/body connection.

Over the course of the semester, I observed the students' progress, giving constructive observations and feedback on their work, and providing hands-on coaching or adjustments when needed to help the students explore deeper into individual exercises and succeed in larger projects. Additionally, the students listened and observed themselves and one another, and through their observations and my feedback began to develop awareness and a more specific understanding of their own body and voice. Through this gained awareness, students began to acknowledge and celebrate their progress and assess where to focus their attention and energies in their continued growth. The students also kept a written journal where they reflected more in-depth on their experience during the exercises in class as well as connections they were making from class to the outside world. Through the students' journal reflections and other assignments, I was able to gain a sense of their individual emotional and intellectual understanding of the material, as well as to make note of what they deemed to be the successes and challenges of working with these techniques. Along with my in class observations, these journal reflections provided additional



evidence for assessing my thesis investigation, as well as helped me tailor and adjust the course progression for the needs of class as a whole and gave me a better understanding of how to help each student individually.

My goal for this course was to take the students through the whole progression outlined in *Freeing the Natural Voice*. With the knowledge that this is a foundational course with no pre-requisites, I anticipated spending a significant amount of time in the beginning sections of the progression: physical awareness through touch of sound. Sarah Hickler titles the first section of her book “The Centered Body”, which also embodies what Kristin Linklater was trying to achieve in her early sections as well. These early explorations on “self to self” awareness and connection focused on allowing the students to find their internal center – to connect, listen to, move from, and speak from their body-mind. This internal awareness and openness served as the foundation for all other explorations in the class.

This first section involved very personal and introspective work, so I did not include a formal (graded) project into this beginning work. Often, an assignment or project that determines a large portion of the student’s final grade in the class puts too much focus on delivering a product. This product-oriented mentality can put the actors “in their head” – analyzing what the teacher wants in order to “get it right” and receive a good grade. This kind of thinking and attitude is completely counterintuitive to what this progression is trying to do, which is encourage an understanding and enjoyment of the *process*, as well as increase the ability to listen to and think with the body-mind. Once the actors became comfortable in this first section, began to build an awareness of their physical habits and tendencies, and started the process of the “removal of the blocks that inhibit the human instrument” (Linklater, 7), then I introduced the first project: Riverstories.

Riverstories are a way to connect the body and voice with imagination and memory. Since the course began with looking internally, this assignment built off of those internal explorations by looking at the back-story behind the text of their own lives. Students reflected on seven significant events (which became the stones in their river of life), which have influenced them deeply. Using different elements from each event memory, they walked through their river in front of the class, pausing at each stone, staying present in the moment of the memory while also sharing it with the rest of the class. While this was a primarily solo project, students “walked their rivers” in small groups, so there was the added challenge of being present and generous when others were sharing their stories – to not anticipate or get stuck in their head, dropping out of the present moment to think about their next stone. This presentation style also offered a segue into more external explorations.

The second project, and final one for the semester, was a devised group piece based on the students’ dreams. Over the course of the semester, in addition to their class reflection journals, I encouraged them to pay attention to and record their dreams. An active imagination is an incredibly useful tool for an actor, but it is something that often becomes anemic as we move from childhood to adulthood. For me, dreams offer a way to tap back into our imaginative capabilities. If we think of imagination as a muscle that can be exercised, than being able to recall our dreams is a specific way to exercise that imagination muscle. By this point in the semester, the students explored self to self awareness, and self to other, and this project offered a chance to explore self to world connections. While working in small groups, students had the option to explore their dreams literally, by “re-enacting” specific moments, or figuratively, by exploring larger themes or connections from each of their dreams. The goal of this final project was to integrate and synthesize previous exercises and explorations in a performance setting – to tell a

story to an audience, thereby creating and maintaining a connection with self, others on stage, and the larger world of the audience.

My objectives for the course were for the student actors to leave the class with:

- A greater understanding of the importance of healthy, efficient and expressive voice
- An increased awareness of body, mind and self
- Development of imagination and concentration as aids to a more embodied presence on stage
- An effective progression of exercises to warm-up the voice and body before rehearsals and performances
- Increased vocabulary (rooted in terms and techniques discussed and developed in class) that they can apply in their own practice
- Embody collaboration and connections with partners through the development of a final group project

This work is important to the field because it provides an opportunity to integrate voice and movement training earlier in the actor's process. While this class is currently structured as a one-semester class for a B.A. program, I believe that it could easily be applied and re-structured as a longer, more in-depth progression to meet the needs of studio and conservatory style training institutions as well. I chose to teach the full Linklater progression in one semester based on the knowledge that most students would be unable to take additional voice and movement classes beyond this one, but, as I will explain in more detail in Chapter 4, awareness does not happen instantaneously, and habits are not broken in a day. The ability to break the progression down into multiple semesters would allow for more time in each exercise for greater freedom and release.

The questions that I ask in this course all stem from my personal experiences and observations as an actor – through my training and in performance. The challenges and successes I have encountered in my varied experiences, both on and offstage have all helped bring me to the creation of this thesis class and exploration. Which techniques offer a clear approach to developing a greater mind and body connection? How and when, in this process, does physical awareness truly translate to a free and uninhibited voice?

I believe emotion is a physical event, not just something that happens in a disembodied mind: We freeze with fear, shake with anger, cry with sadness, laugh with delight, can feel heavy with dread, light with joy and jittery with excitement. If we look at emotions in the physical sense, this opens up the possibility of developing a subtler and more nuanced palate in performance by finding greater (emotional) sensitivity and nuance in movement. Kristin Linklater says that “to free the voice is to free the person, and each person is indivisibly mind and body” (Linklater, 8). The explorations in this course are not about being able to make large movements and loud sounds, but about learning to sense the smaller, finer differences in the ways we can do things. Recognizing and working with our own restrictions and specific patterns of tension within small ranges of mobility in order to enable a greater subtlety in performance.

Every day I learn something new about the voice, the body – the human experience – as I continue to explore the exercises within the Linklater progression. We are constantly in process, and as actors, our work is never “finished” or static. The progression outlined in *Freeing the Natural Voice* gives us the tools to check-in, reflect, and ground our whole selves (body, mind, voice) in the present moment. It opens us up to intimate and transformative connections with self, to others, and with the world around us.

My initial training and continued development and experience provided the impetus and the means to create this course. The journey of creating and teaching this course - exploring (more specifically) the physical exercises of Alexander, Bartenieff, Feldenkrais, and others - deepened mine and the students' understanding and connection to the Linklater progression and the freedom accessed through the work.

## **2.0 CHAPTER TWO: PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT**

### **2.1 THE COURSE**

In this chapter, I examine the context of this thesis through the writings of Kristin Linklater, Sarah Hickler, Irmgard Bartenieff and other practitioners, concentrating on the specific exercises and techniques used in this thesis class. The chapter introduces the voice methodology - providing background on Kristin Linklater, the term “sigh of relief”, which is the cornerstone of her voice method, and lays out her progression of exercises. Next, I introduce the physical movement methodologies – beginning with Sarah Hickler and her progression of physical explorations, then moving on to Bartenieff fundamentals, and concluding this section by looking at contact improvisation techniques and their application in this course. I have structured this chapter in this order, beginning with the voice method, because I see the Linklater progression as the through line, or spine, of this course. The movement methodologies are presented in a way that closely mirrors the progression as they were taught in the class. This chapter concludes with an examination of how and where I believe these techniques and methodologies intersect and speak to each other.

## **2.2 VOICE METHODOLOGY AND PROGRESSION**

### **2.2.1 Origins of the Kristin Linklater Voice Method**

Kristin Linklater was an acting student at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) in the 1950's, and she returned as a teacher just a few years after graduating. It was there that she met and trained with Iris Warren, whom Linklater credits with the shift of British voice training for actors to include psychological understanding with their strong physical techniques (Linklater, 5). Linklater came to New York City in the early 1960's to bring this type of voice work to American actors. At this time, American actor training, stemming from Stanislavsky's approach through companies like the Group Theatre and the Actors Studio, was steeped in discovering the psychological and emotional lives of the characters to the point that very little emphasis was put on the development of the external physical skills. Seeing a need, Kristin Linklater started working with actors to bridge the gap between "the creative, imaginative inner life and the skillful outer communicative one" (Linklater, 2).

As a young teacher in America, she was introduced to Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais work, and Body Mind Centering, all of which helped "clarify the psychophysical nature of the voice work...and the interdependence of the mind and the body" (Linklater, 2). Coming from Britain (where precision of the external skills was the focus) and absorbing the psychological focus of the actors she was working with in America, she continued to craft a technique, a progression of exercises, that weaves together the inner psychological work with the external physiological understanding of the body and voice.

It is this simultaneous work on both inner and outer technique, the awareness that they effect each other and work together, that I find particularly effective and why I have chosen

not only to use it as the basis of my thesis course but also why I have chosen to deepen my study of her work by undergoing the designation process to become a Linklater teacher as well.

### **2.2.2 “Sigh of Relief”**

To understand Linklater’s concept of the “sigh of relief”, you must have an understanding of where the voice originates. Anatomically, vocal production happens in the larynx. Put very simply:

- “(1.) There is an impulse in the motor cortex of the brain.
- (2.) The impulse stimulates breath to enter and leave the body.
- (3.) The outgoing breath makes contact with the vocal folds creating oscillations
- (4.) The oscillations create frequencies (vibrations).
- (5.) The frequencies (vibrations) are amplified by resonators.
- (6.) The resultant sound is articulated by the lips and tongue to form words.” (Linklater, 13)

Unfortunately, by picturing the physiologically image of your voice originating in your throat, very often you can end up with a voice that is strained and two-dimensional. To understand and feel how the mind, body and breath (and subsequently, the voice) are connected we must look at the way we make sound from a different perspective. “For the development of an artistic and personally expressive voice, you must refocus your attention on the source of breath and the resonators” (Linklater, 14-15). Before dealing with sound, we have to go back even further, or, perhaps, delve deeper inside ourselves, to the breath source.



It is possible to take in a big breath of air, to think about breathing as an engagement of muscles that does not have any emotional content, but to sigh with relief is a slight adjustment that triggers the body to respond to a thought-feeling impulse (Linklater, 51). This is the core fundamental in Linklater's work. "For the actor who wants a voice that will reveal thoughts and feelings rather than merely describing them, exercising the sigh of relief means exercising the connection between thinking and feeling, breath and voice" (Linklater, 51). To genuinely experience this sigh of relief, the actor must be able to give over, let go, and release those long held habits, defenses, and tensions they have been holding. Throughout the progression of exercises, it is the sigh of relief (whether on breath or with sound) that acts as the assessment tool for the teacher and the actor in the moment. As they move forward in the progression, can the sigh of relief continue to be genuinely felt and not forced or muscled?

### **2.2.3 The Linklater Progression**

Over the course of the semester, we touched upon every aspect of the Linklater progression. Since the progression of exercises is such that each one builds on the next, I felt it important not to skip over any sections. The first part of the progression is referred to as "The Touch of Sound" (Linklater, 29). The students began by building a physical awareness of their body; they explored different centers of gravity in order to find their true center, and they paid particular attention to the bone structure of their body as the source of energy keeping their bodies up, so that they could let go of the large external muscles and any unnecessary tensions. Next came breath awareness and the introduction of the sigh of relief. Lots of imagery was used, so that the students could picture their diaphragm and feel as if their thought-feeling impulses were rebounding off the dome

of the diaphragm to fly out past their lips with an immediate and wholehearted letting go in order to achieve “maximum effect with minimum effort” (Linklater, 39).

After breath awareness came the touch of sound. It is referred to as just the touch of sound because it should be a “primal, unformed, neutral [sound] that happens when there is no tension in the throat or mouth to distort it and no vowel demand to mold it” (Linklater, 69). The students were still thinking sigh with relief, but this time with a release on sound. Following the touch of sound came the freeing of vibrations on rivers of sound. Like building blocks, a river of sound required just a little bit more energy and longer, or bigger, thought-feeling impulses – if we had been using words it would be as if the students went from speaking a single word to using sentences.

After the beginning work on whole body awareness and unformed, neutral sounds, we moved onto the channel work. In Linklater, the channel refers to the area of the body that includes the jaw, tongue and the throat. The muscles in this area often become a huge defense system that keeps our emotions and our voices locked inside, and for that reason, my teacher, Andrea Haring, will often refer to the area not as “the channel” but as the “Bermuda Triangle” because it is where thought-feeling impulses die and our voices become lost or misdirected. The channel work is all to experience an open passageway, a direct connection to our breath center and our thought-feeling center, but it is also allows us to imagine and create more physical space in the body (specifically in dealing with the soft palate and tongue) in preparation for part two: the resonating ladder (Linklater, 185).

In this section of the work, the resonating ladder, “the exercises are perhaps diversionary, and employ the mind in such a way that the muscles governing the vocal folds are strengthened and the folds themselves function more and more efficiently” (Linklater, 187). As a

class we worked through chest, mouth and teeth resonators; and then through sinus, nasal, and skull resonators. It was not imperative that they master the nuances of every resonator (a lofty goal for anyone in such a short time period), but more that they stay curious about and interested in the shifts between the different resonators. The concept that they have three to four octaves of range within them to use – and an endless variety of qualities within that range – was the most important thing I wanted them to take away from this section. Resonator work is detailed and specific and can be very frustrating in the moment. Most often the effects are not registered until you have moved on from the exercises, but I laid the groundwork for the exercises and stressed the importance of consistent practice in the hopes that facility and ease with their newly expanded range could come (perhaps) even after the conclusion of the course.

Part three of the Linklater progression is: The Link to Text and Acting (Linklater, 325). Due to the general progress of the class as a whole, and observations I made throughout the semester (of which I will go into further detail in Chapter Three), this section of the Linklater progression had very little attention and time paid to it as it would have been if I had followed the true progression. I did intersperse sections of text through out the course, so I was able to pass along a few key concepts from this section, which included the idea that an “awareness of the sensory nature of words must come before that of their informational purpose if we are to restore words to the body. This is not to say that intellect is to be ignored but that, in order to redress the balance between intellect and emotion, emotion must be given precedence for awhile” (Linklater, 328).

Many exercises in this last section aim to put words back in the body, so they involve long physical explorations with vowels and consonants – and though the class did not practice these specific Linklater exercises, they were able to experience (non-verbally) similar

physical explorations through some of the additional movement techniques taught throughout the course in conjunction with this progression.

## **2.3 MOVEMENT METHODOLOGIES AND TECHNIQUES**

### **2.3.1 In the Moment**

Sarah Hickler is the Head of Acting and Movement Training at Emerson College. She was also my primary movement teacher when I attended Emerson as an undergraduate. While Voice and Movement classes are taught separately at Emerson, I found that, during my time there, the teachers would often blend the classes to include exercises in both. Despite being two distinctly different classes on paper, the end goal was the same for both: for us, the students, to become more aware of our initial (internal) impulses so that we can “communicate *from* that experience in full-bodied and emotionally connected expression” (Hickler, xi). The outline of exercises in her recently published book, *In the Moment*, clarified, for me, the trajectory that I wanted for my thesis course. I focused primarily on the first three sections: The Centered Body, The Intuitive Body, and The Receptive Body. The fourth section: The Speaking Body had a few exercises that I was able to touch upon as the class began devising their final projects as well.

Part one: the centered body, lined up perfectly with the physical and breath awareness sections of the Linklater progression. We began most classes in the first few weeks warming up with Hickler’s exercises before moving in to the Linklater progression. In this early awareness work it was crucial for the students to understand that “dropping into center means

dropping into the core of one's being. It is the source of our power, emotion, imagination, motivation, and creativity. It is the ground through which we take in and respond to our internal and external worlds, and a necessary component of what we call *presence*, on and off stage" (Hickler, 3).

Part two: the intuitive body, used *Authentic Movement*, which is the "practice of quieting mental activity enough to listen and give form through movement to the river of sensations, impulses, images, feelings and memories that runs through us all the time" (Hickler, 35). What I took from *Authentic Movement*, and what I focused on in this section of the work was that it is all about process. There is so much to discover if only we can get out of our own way, so I encouraged students to speak and reflect not "about your movement experience, but *from* it" (Hickler, 38).

Part three: the receptive body and the sections from part four: the speaking body helped to "establish a bridge between the physical work, sound, and language" (Hickler, 47). The exercises in this section dealt with a lot of partner work – leading and following, initiation and response – and provided rich warm-up explorations before some of our longer contact improvisation sessions toward the end of the semester.

The biggest connection between this particular movement method and the Linklater progression was the use of imagery. These imagery based explorations allowed the students to sense, feel, and imagine their bodies and voices in a more playful way than if we had just dealt with the technical aspects of the exercises. The images awakened and activated the connection between mind and body.

### 2.3.2 Bartenieff Fundamentals

For me, each of these methods and techniques illuminate and help to specify pieces of the other. While the language might differ slightly, they are all the same at the core: “In her manuscript, *The Art of Body Movement as a Key to Perception*, Irmgard [Bartenieff] states, ‘the

main object of all this material is to suggest additional modes of perceiving yourself and the world around you, using your live body totally—body/mind/feeling—as a key to that perception’” (Hackney, 3). Throughout her work, Bartenieff speaks of desire and joy in such a way that echoes, to me, Linklater’s pleasurable sigh of relief; and like Linklater’s charge to free the natural voice, one that is already inside of us, Bartenieff refers to her work as “confirming what is fundamental, rather than correcting something that is wrong” (Hackney, 7).

Hickler created a feel, a sensation, and an experience of the body with her imagery. Irmgard Bartenieff was a student of Laban and came from a dance background, so I decided to bring in Bartenieff Fundamentals to provide more of the technical or physiological language to go along with Sarah Hickler’s imagery based movement exercises.

Simplified, Bartenieff’s fundamentals for movement are as follows:

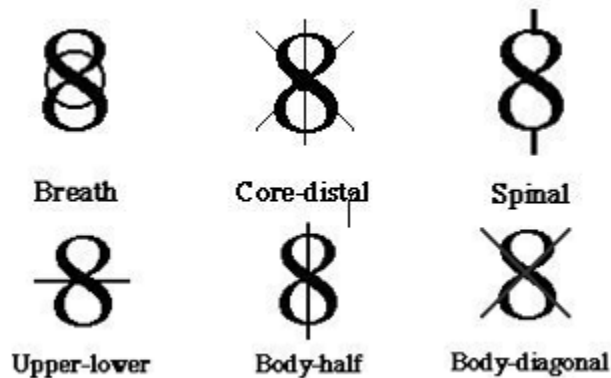
1. Change is fundamental. The essence of movement is change. As we move, we are constantly changing (Hackney, 14).

2. Relationship/Connection is fundamental. It is in our process of moving/ changing that we create our embodied existence. As we move, we are always making connections, creating relationships, both within ourselves and between ourselves and the world (Hackney, 14).

3. Patterning body connections is fundamental. Relationships which are created within our body become patterned as we grow (Hackney, 14).

In the class, we explored the following fundamental patterns:

1. Breath
2. Core-Distal Connectivity
3. Head-Tail (Spinal) Connectivity
4. Upper-Lower Connectivity
5. Body-Half Connectivity
6. Cross-lateral Connectivity



**Figure 1 Jeffrey Scott Longstaff's developmental organization figures**

Again, like Linklater's charge to achieve maximum effect with minimum effort, Bartenieff Fundamentals allowed students a way to recognize habitual ways of movement that may not be serving them and to offer a re-connection with physical movement that provides more ease and efficiency. These movements also remind us that with every movement we have a choice and so "we are in a creative process at all times—creating our own embodied existence" (Hackney, 15).

## 2.4

## CONTACT IMPROVISATION

When thinking about how to structure this thesis class, what to include and what not to include – I knew that I did *not* want to work with published performance material. To me, this class was not about product and so I wanted to ensure that the “performances” and assignments grew out of the students’ experiences without the weight of performing a scene or monologue from a published play. But, as actors, we perform and often in front of an audience, so I wanted to include different ways that we could think about creating text and telling stories. “Contact Improvisation is an evolving system of movement...based on the communication between two moving bodies that are in physical contact and their combined relationship to the physical laws that govern their motion—gravity, momentum, inertia. The body, in order to open to these sensations, learns to release excess muscular tension and abandon a certain quality of willfulness to experience the natural flow of movement. Practice includes rolling, falling, being upside down, following a physical point of contact, supporting and giving weight to a partner.” (Paxton, par. 2)

Building on Sarah Hickler’s idea of the receptive body– having moved through building personal physical awareness, and awareness of body and space – contact improvisation provided a structured way to introduce more dynamic movement with physical contact, and moved the class into more externally motivated explorations (i.e.- to tell a story/share with others). Up to this point in the semester, many of the exercises involved imagery that asked the students to picture their connection(s): to themselves, to the space, to others in the space. Contact Improvisation provided a link or transition from the imagined (or intangible) connections and created opportunities for more tangible physical connections. In the spirit of letting go and release, in order to engage in contact improvisation work, the students had to let go of their intellectual mind and



listen to their body mind. The give and take, the sharing of energy became a kinesthetic thing that *had* to exist in the moment with their partner.

Contact Improvisation can be used in a variety of contexts. For this class, my aim was to use it as a springboard for final group projects, which involved devising a short sound and movement piece based on the students' dreams. My primary source for developing content from our in class contact improvisation sessions was *the frantic assembly book of devising theatre*, by Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett. Their activities like "round/by/through" and "hymns hands" broke down physical improvisations into small tasks, each with a different focus, so that by the end of the exercise the students had created a string of movements that communicated a story, often with a point of view.

Kristin Linklater says that "Embodied listening and speaking involve the whole person from feet to skull. The body is all ears. The body is one big mouth" (Linklater, 346). These in-class improvisation sessions were used as rehearsals for the students' final projects – so I encouraged them to think about the word "text" in the broad sense: It was through these physical explorations that text was created through movement, and that stories came alive. Likewise, from these movements the students discovered what they needed to say (through movement) and speak out loud (with their voices).

## 2.5 THEORETICAL OUTCOMES

It is one thing to say, “I am going to let go of all my tension. I am going to feed in a impulse for a genuine sigh of relief, and it will fly up and out of me uninhibited”. It is quite another thing to actually experience that sense of freedom and release. I paired the Linklater progression with these movement techniques because I believe that, together, they will aide the students in the actual experience of a free body and voice. To voice a thought-feeling impulse, an emotion, can be extremely vulnerable. It is coming face to face with that vulnerability, and the fear that often creeps up along with that vulnerability that can stop the voice before it has even started. These specific physical explorations all focused on allowing the student to connect to the causal impulse that movement and voice springs from, in order find strength and comfort within their vulnerability.

Based on the above research and understanding of the pedagogies, and my experience with these techniques, I developed a one-semester course of study that aimed to: <sup>[[L]]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

- . Give the students a facility and understanding of the Linklater voice method and how it can allow for a more free and expressive body and voice. <sup>[[L]]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
- . Create a space where they can nurture a strong, responsive and expressive emotional life that can benefit them both on and offstage.
- . Give the students several specific exercises/tools from Linklater, Bartenieff, Hickler, and Frantic Assembly to apply in their creative process. <sup>[[L]]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
- . Over the course of the semester, foster a deeper connection to their bodies and voices as an instrument for storytelling and connection.
- . Offer a progression of exercises that can be used as a warm-up, for rehearsals and performance, which will both increase their energy and focus and awaken their connection to body, mind, and voice. <sup>[[L]]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, it was never my intention that the students have master the progression by the end of the semester. This process of undoing and re-connecting is something that needs time, and consistent practice and attention; all of which is not possible in a four hour a week class over the course of one semester. Within this semester, it was my goal that by integrating more dynamic movement with the Linklater progression that the students would be able to experience a deeper understanding of their own bodies, a greater awareness and connection to the world around them, and a deeper commitment to the process of preparing their body to be used as an instrument of communication (both on and offstage). By giving them an understanding of the tools and the progression in which to use and apply them, they would be able to continue and deepen this process of discovery, release, and freedom in their own personal lives and creative paths long after this course had been completed.

### 3.0 COURSE IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter provides an overview of the course, *Voice and Movement I: Explorations on Connection*, organized into weeks and classes. For each group of weeks, I include the main techniques examined, my rationale behind them and some reflection upon them.

The course was structured into three units:

- Weeks 1-3: “*The Centered Body*” or *Self to Self Awareness*: Physical Awareness, Breath Awareness, Touch of Sound, Freeing Vibrations
- Weeks 4-8: “*The Receptive Body*” or *Self to Other Awareness*: Freeing the Channel (Jaw, Tongue, Soft palate), Chest, Mouth, Teeth resonators, Project One
- Weeks 9-15: “*The Speaking Body*” or *Self to World Awareness*: Breathing gymnasium, Upper Resonators, Project 2

### 3.1 CLASS STRUCTURE RATIONALE

In planning the lessons for this course, I structured the classes to begin with physical explorations before moving into the Linklater progression. I drew upon other teachers of integrated voice and movement classes, like Michael Lugering, who says that, “The study of acting should begin with physical action-- a specialized, structured, flexible and adaptable physical action that is enlisted in the direct service of the expression of thought and feeling” (xi). This structure felt natural to me,

as it mirrors the Linklater progression itself, which begins with physical awareness. Beginning each class with physical movement explorations gave the students time to transition their bodies and their minds from the expectations of the outside world and into the laboratory of the classroom. It also helped lay the physical and anatomical foundation to assist the imagery in the Linklater progression, giving the students multiple ways to approach the work and build a three dimensional understanding of their body and voice.

## **3.2 PART ONE: “THE CENTERED BODY” OR SELF TO SELF AWARENESS:**

### **WEEKS 1-3, CLASSES 1-6**

#### **3.2.1 Physical Awareness**

The first week and a half focused just on the body and building a physical awareness. In the first class, after going over the syllabus and setting expectations, I had the students go through a personal body and voice assessment activity. I asked them to draw their voice as it is now, their voice as they would like it to be, describe their relationship to their body, draw a gingerbread wo/man outline and mark the areas of the body that they saw a “problems” that prevented their “voice” from being what they envisioned it to be. This reflection exercise can be very personal and bring up lots of insecurities, but I was surprised and encouraged when so many students were willing to open up and share their thoughts at the end of the exercise.

The primary exercise that I focused on for physical awareness was the concept of scanning the body, beginning with Hickler’s *Standing Alignment* (refer to Appendix C for

description of exercises). The first day I took them through it, they were standing and the focus was on finding a “neutral” stance. From this new “neutral” stance, they began to play with finding their true center of gravity. Imagining their feet as tripods, they moved through all 6 points, varying the degrees of weight on each point, eventually coming to rest with weight equally distributed. From this balanced state, they closed their eyes and I guided them (asking them to picture their body mind’s eye moving through their body), from feet to head, focusing on the bones and the skeleton holding their body upright. The second day, I introduced the Alexander Technique term, *constructive rest*, which is “lying on your back with your knees bent” (Vineyard, 42). From this position on the floor, I led them through another body scan, still focusing on the physiological bone structure but with the added picture of little pockets of air (i.e. their breath) in the joints. The rationale for having them move to the floor and repeat an exercise was so that the floor could aide them in feeling the large external muscles release from over engaging and really give in to gravity. After the initial body scan in *standing alignment*, many students commented negatively about how they were distracted from the exercise because their feet were tingling, or their felt too much pressure in their legs. Conversely, after the body scan in *constructive rest* many students commented on how much taller and lighter they felt and how much more relaxed they were.

After having gone through the body scan picturing the anatomical bone structure, I then led them through the Linklater, imagery based, body scan of picturing the bones of their body like a tree: the legs as the roots, the spine as the trunk, the ribs as flowing branches, with the head just floating on top. Using this nature imagery, I focused this scan on the duality of energy running throughout the body: gravity rooting us to the earth, and levity lengthening us toward the sky. Over the past couple classes, I had noticed the students falling into the common trap in physical

awareness of translating the closed eye, internal awareness and release of tension in the larger external muscles into a relaxed state where they were losing and diffusing physical and mental energy. The rationale for bringing in this duality of energy into the body scan was to remind the students to find energy in the release. I was not seeing the lengthening in the spine, particularly the neck, in many of the students, but by doing a little hands on work and placing my hand on the area of the spine/neck where I was seeing a collapse, I felt and saw an immediate shift in almost all the students. This observation led me to take the class through some *partner spine explorations*, where they took turns rolling up and down the spine guided by their partner's hand. This particular exercise was the most effective tool in getting the students to really understand the correlation of lengthening the spine without engaging the large external muscles. Having their partner's hand as a physical guide gave the students the same kind of tangible marker as the floor, so that they were able to experience the same feeling of release that they experienced in constructive rest while in a standing position.

While many of the students spoke of having experienced feelings of release and lengthening during these exercises, I often noticed during the discussions following the exercises that these students had their arms crossed in front of their body, and hands in pockets, which did not reflect the experiences they were speaking about. The translation of finding openness and release in an exercise to keeping those sensations present after and outside of the exercise is something that I expected the students to struggle with in the first weeks, but I predicted that it would lessen over the course of the semester. Unfortunately, it was something I was constantly bringing their attention to throughout the whole semester.

Despite this gap coming in and out of exercises, in just the first few classes I was already starting to see subtle shifts in a few students. At the start of class many of them came in

with their heads down, shoulders hunched and crouched on their phones, but at the end of class they were starting to leave with their shoulders lowered, head (and neck) lengthened, and engaging with each other rather than reverting back to being collapsed and closed off. They seemed to be right on track for I expected them to be at this point in the course.

### **3.2.2 Breath Awareness**

Breath Awareness, like physical awareness, is very internal. For this section the primary exercises, *body scans* and *spinal rolls*, stayed the same, but I introduced the idea of breath into them. Instead of picturing the bones, the students started to picture the breathing musculature. I started with Hickler's physical warm-up, *Hands-On Centering* (refer to Appendix C), so that they could physically feel their belly and back move in and out with each breath. I led them through some breath imagery while standing, then on the floor in constructive rest, and then I introduced Linklater's concept of the "Sigh of Relief". The attachment of relief, or emotion, to the breath was where I started to notice that some students were pushing and forcing the breath rather than letting it go with ease and release.

I had anticipated that since the physical exercises were the same that the students would make the shift and connect to the new imagery immediately, so I structured breath awareness to be covered in-depth over only one class. I viewed it as a transition from physical awareness into sound, but I should have structured more time for this section. As I look back on the class now, almost every adjustment I offered to the students can be distilled back to breath. The "sigh of relief", the core of the Linklater Method, is introduced for the first time at this point in the work; that alone should have been a huge indicator that this section needed to be broken down into more than one class, but I did not have the foresight to see that. I should have realized,



in the moment of teaching, that the students needed more time to process and understand their natural breathing patterns before moving on to the “sigh of relief”.

Even though I registered that the students were struggling, I interpreted it as resistance or difficulty connecting to the particular imagery, when in fact I think it was more that they actually coming face to face with some deep and long held physical habits and tensions. My rationale for moving through this section quickly was since the “sigh of relief” was going to be revisited so many times throughout the semester, that the difficulties that came up in this initial exercise would be addressed and worked out in subsequent exercises. To some extent, I was correct; over the course of the semester, the concept of the sigh of relief became a way for the students to check-in and listen to their body mind. Over time, as the students continued to feed in impulses for sighs of relief that connected emotional content with breath and body, I saw tension dissipate in the shoulders and the jaw, and I watched knees soften to allow the tailbone to drop and the spine to lengthen. The areas surrounding the breathing musculature – specifically the belly and the back ribs (middle back) were where I saw the struggle for softening and release to be the most difficult for the students. I believe that spending more time on breath awareness and the sigh of relief at this early point in the course would have lessened some of the hurdles and resistance later on in the semester.

### **3.2.3 Touch of Sound**

I introduced Bartenieff’s core-distal work in this section to help strengthen the precept that their impulses, desires, feelings, body-mind thoughts all originate from their center, or core. Sarah Hickler has an exercise called the *Starfish* (refer to Appendix C), which creates beautiful imagery to go along with core-distal explorations. Since I had witnessed some pushing and forcing of the

breath, I used the starfish imagery to help the students find more fluidity and sensuality in their body and breath. I gave them the image of painting the floor with their starfish body and that seemed to awaken something within them and it was this painting imagery that really brought about a greater sense of playfulness and engagement/curiosity in the exercise from the students. This playfulness got them out of their head and into their bodies in such a way that the movements and the breath were flowing with less forced, calculated effort.

It was in this easy, playful state that I led them on an imaginary journey. I used specific images laid out by Kristin Linklater, so that when it came time for the students to move from breath to sound, they could picture and feel that their sound vibrations were coming from their core, their deep sense of self. This imagery and the idea of sound coming from the center of you and arriving in the space helps bypass tensions that might be present in the abdominals or laryngeal areas, as well as quiet any ideas of having to muscle or work at producing sound.

When I think back to when I first was taken through this imagery and exercise when I was an undergraduate, I remember feeling like this was revelatory information; that the idea of producing sound without having to contract my abdominals or push out extra breath was something that I had never thought of before that moment. Taking the students through this imaginary journey to find their “pool of vibrations” (Linklater, 73) for the first time, I expected that they would have the same revelatory experience. What I heard were sounds that were breathy, timid, and unsure, which indicated to me that this exercise had not been as revelatory for this particular group of students. Yet, when I asked for feedback about their experiences, many of them spoke about how freeing it felt, and how large and open their throat and torso felt. One student remarked about how making sound was so much easier than they had originally thought. When I asked for clarification about that comment, they said that it was as if they didn’t have to do any work that they just really

pictured the bubble breaking the surface and it was as if the sound just floated out of them. That was a revelatory moment for me, as a teacher: From the first day of class, I had been encouraging the students to pay more attention to the sensation of the sound vibrations in their body rather than the aural sound of their voice, but when I heard the breathy and timid sounds from the group my first response was to “correct” the sound. The sound is the by-product of the connection to self, so rather than focus my side-coaching on the quality of sound (which is coaching to the symptom not the cause), this comment from the student reminded me that I should be coaching and reminding them to connect to their sigh of relief in their center. An easy, clear, and vibrant touch of sound is only possible with a genuine sigh of relief.

### 3.2.4 Freeing Vibrations <sup>[L]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

Freeing vibrations was about letting the students play around and really feel their voice (the vibrations) spreading and resonating through different cavities in the body. To explore some of the deeper or lower cavities, I introduced the *diagonal stretch*, or what Bartenieff refers to as cross-lateral connection. In the diagonal stretch, the whole body is lengthened causing the feeling of center to shift from the middle torso to lower down in the hips and pelvis. In the diagonal stretch I asked the students to re-visit the imagery of the pool of vibration, to extend the pool down into the hip sockets, and to notice that a deeper pool then means a longer pipeline or river for the sound to travel. After touching sound, we played with rivers (or long sighs) of sound flowing from the hips, through the torso, and out of the mouth. At this point, I was sensing quite a bit of resistance from the class. Breaking them out of the habit of approaching new exercises as having a clear right and wrong approach was very difficult. From what I was observing, the students were not

coming up against physical blocks (i.e. the physical form for the exercise was correct), but rather having difficulty overcoming mental blocks. Drawing too much attention and focus on a trouble spot can often make it harder to release, so I made the choice to not address this mental resistance in the moment.

In order to amplify the vibrations in the body, this section focused a great deal on humming. So rather than fight the resistance, I indulged the group and moved on to a more technical exercise in the Linklater progression: *effective hum* (refer to Appendix C). Kristin Linklater says “tension murders vibration” and that “vibrations thrive in relaxation” (87), so it was imperative that these exercises provided relaxation and release. To contrast tension and relaxation, this part of the lesson was about drawing their attention to how easily the tongue and jaw can get over involved in sound production. The class warmed up their face and lips, and practiced effective humming by just bringing their lips together to capture the vibrations, but they also experienced the common (less effective) hum with the tongue and soft palate coming together. This contrasting of the effective versus the less effective hum gave them a concrete way to assess themselves in a comfortable and familiar setting of right and wrong. The energy in the room became livelier as the students became fixated and determined to quiet the input of the jaw and the tongue.

By ending on the effective hum they didn’t get to fully experience the luxuriating qualities of truly letting go and freeing vibrations. In the future, I would re-structure this section so that we would begin with the technical exploration of the *effective hum* and then move on to doing some of the more dynamic physical exercises with humming, which would allow the students more time to experience and connect the release and movement of the body with the release of sound.

### 3.2.5 Sound to Text: Transition from Self to awareness of Other

I took the students through a Linklater exercise that translates the touch of sound into words, and ends with speaking your full name. This exercise sparked a very lively discussion about owning the space and owning your name and the feelings that come up about your names. A few students revealed that they found it hard to say their name confidently and positively the first time, but after picturing the qualities (both positive and negative) that live within them and make up who they are, it helped them to feel more comfortable inhabiting and embodying their name as they spoke it to the group.

From there, I led them through a *haiku village* (refer to Appendix C) exercise which serves to further break down words and phrases in such a way that the students don't think of them as words but as emotional, sensory images. They ended this class by combining the exercises by, one at a time, coming to the center of the space, sensing their mountain, speaking their haiku, then speaking their name and "I am here". This was the first time the students had taken the exercises and applied them to text. Given the resistance in the classroom in the last section, I was unsure of how the students would respond to this activity, but they blossomed. There was a care and attention to detail in most of the students that was not present in the early weeks of the class. All of them maintained a solid stance and were grounded in the lower half of their bodies, and only a few reverted back to closing off the upper body with crossed arms when they started to speak. While I did hear some laryngeal pushing and closing off during the speaking of the haiku, the students re-connected to breath when they spoke their name and "I am here". The moments before they spoke, as they were sensing their mountain and taking in their classmates before speaking their haiku, was what confirmed for me that the class where they needed to be and ready to move on to part two of the course.

### **3.3 PART TWO: “THE RECEPTIVE BODY” OR SELF TO OTHERS AWARENESS: WEEKS 4-8, CLASSES 7-15**

#### **3.3.1 Freeing the Channel (Jaw, Tongue, Soft palate)**

Opening the channel focuses on releasing tension from the jaw and tongue, and creating flexibility in the soft palate. This technical work can feel, at first, stationary and frustrating, so I began the classes in this section with more active and playful warm-ups to discombobulate them and really bring the energy up. I brought tumbling mats out for the first time, and I let the students self guide through the yoga position, downward dog; pedaling their feet, going down into child’s pose when needed. In the beginning, I saw lots of tension and holding in the neck and head, so I paused and gave them the adjustment of keeping the spine (head/tail connection) long, even through the neck – that, ideally, they should be looking, upside down, at the space behind them. This static pose grew over this section to include more dynamic movements like donkey kicks, and somersaults. The somersaulting really opened them up, energized them and transitioned them out of that place of fear, frustration and tension that was present when we first started downward dog.

The channel work continues to open up and explore the cavities of the body, but with more focus on how the vibrations travel through the body. To give the students a way to physicalize this focus and be able to track the resonance moving through the body, this section focused on awakening the spine as the track for thought/feeling impulses to travel from the lower depths of the body through to the mouth and out into space. The hips, which house the pelvis and the sacrum are often tight, so I started this unit with an Alexander exercise, the *pelvic clock* (refer to Appendix C), to help open up the hips before moving on to the next step in the Linklater progression, the *hum train* (refer to Appendix C). The *pelvic clock* brings up similar sensations to

the freeing vibrations exercise that the class struggled with earlier in the semester, and the students initially came up to some of the same roadblocks: breath was short and shallow, jaws were clenched, and the movements in the pelvis seemed very disjointed and lacked fluidity. I tried a different approach in addressing their frustrations by acknowledging that not every exercise will activate something for every one, and that even a lack of physical sensation or feeling is still useful information to be gathered. That seemed to lift the weight in the room considerably, and the students were able to approach the exercise with less judgment. At the end of the hum train, one student observed that the pelvic clock gave her a very clear image of her sacrum and tailbone, which helped her really sense the initial vibrations in the hum train exercise.

The hum train begins the process of imaging the top jaw/skull as separate from the bottom jaw, which is the beginning of jaw awareness. Like the starfish, finding fluidity and ease in the jaw is something that takes time, and so I was particularly attentive to giving lots of positive feedback and celebrating tiny successes. I made sure that I had time to check-in and give feedback to everyone in brief one-on-one moments as they practiced some of the jaw loosening exercises in their own time. Frustration is an emotion that came up frequently during this section, and that manifested in even more tension creeping into the jaw and shoulders. Being able to give each student one-on-one, specific feedback ensured that they had a clear and specific goal when working individually.

Just like how I mentioned that it is often hard to trust sound, I began this section by reminding the students that with this type of intricate work and attention it is often hard to accurately trust what your tongue is doing. I had them get out mirrors to watch and become familiar with the habits of their tongue, and to visually check that it was laying flat in the bed of the mouth when not in use and that it was stretching and loosening equally when in motion. After the

frustrations and negative energy during jaw awareness, I thought the class did an excellent job of staying curious about the activity of the tongue rather than judging themselves over being able to do the exercises “correctly”. There was laughter over lopsided tongues, there was a whoop of joy when someone realized they did a tongue stretch without involving the jaw – and I made sure to celebrate these successes with them and encourage them to stay in this state of discovery and curiosity rather than judgment and frustration.

### **3.3.2 Intermission Warm-up**

I inserted this Linklater warm-up sequence at this point in the progression to help build confidence and remind the students of, despite whatever frustrations they might be feeling, how far they have come and how much they have learned. It also serves as a condensed version of all the exercises thus far that they could serve them as a regular warm-up in their own personal practice, in rehearsals, and before performances as well. During the section on freeing vibrations, which is supposed to be relaxed and luxurious, there was a huge shift in the energy in the room. I saw some students start to clench their jaw, or press the arms/legs into the ground (creating lots of excess tension), and I heard pushed and heavy sounds with a lack of vibrant resonance. More than the aforementioned blocks, I was acutely aware of students holding their breath.

I paused the warm-up to check-in with the group. Without me having to bring it up, most of the students mentioned feeling frustrated with this exercise. They spoke of feeling extra tension, particularly in their shoulder and arms, which prevented them from feeling a sensation of release in their hips socket (where the imagery was focused). I was very encouraged that the students were able to articulate beyond superficial feelings of frustration to the where and why they were struggling.



Through this particular section, I slowed down the progression in order to allow for more hands-on coaching and specific feedback to each individual. I gave them permission to be a little messier with it. The focus of this section became less about the “correct” placement of the hands on the knee, or the speed at which they were shaking the leg, and more about shaking the sound around in their bodies and paying attention to how that process made them feel. I went back to my earlier teaching revelation of connecting back to the sigh of relief and gathering information and feedback from the resonance.

A few of the students had trouble letting go of “getting it right”, but I saw the majority of the class attempt to shift their focus as we went through the exercise again. Brows became less furrowed, movements became a little more fluid, and even though some of the sounds decreased in volume, I think that was a result of more specific internal attention and curiosity. If I had brought attention to their resistance to the exercise on the first day that I introduced freeing vibrations on the floor, I do not think it would have been as successful. The success of today’s work was possible because I gave the students an opportunity to process, assess, and come to this discovery on their own.

### **3.3.3 Chest, Mouth, Teeth resonators**

Working on these resonators helped strengthen the connection between internal and external. Working on finding a smooth transition between these resonators prepared them for finding the balance between the two worlds for their mid-term project as well. I personally struggle with finding a clear teeth resonator without over-engaging the tongue, so I used this as an opportunity for transparency with the class – to let them know that I am still in process and learning new things about myself through these exercises, even though I have been doing them for almost a decade.

This admission was another way for them to release the critic and idea of “getting it right” and really give in to playing around and experimenting with different sounds and sensations.

The students moved through these beginning resonators rather quickly without much difficulty. One of the strongest moments was when I gave them control over their imagery in the *airport destination* partner exercise that helped blend the three resonators. Like the *haiku village* exercise, there was an added investment and personal connection to the imagery, which directly translated to a clearer, more resonant sound and a more open and grounded body.

### **3.3.4 Project One: Riverstory**

During class, I took the students through a guided imagery exercise that will be the starting point for their mid-term project. With their eyes closed and in constructive rest, I had them visualize their life as a river. I offered them different sensory experiences (you smell something familiar – maybe it is someone’s perfume, or a food or meal that is familiar) and then, similar to the haiku exercise, I asked them to re-visit and remember a specific moment in their life in which that sensory experience was present. After the guided imagery, I gave them a few minutes to write down, or draw, the images and moments that had popped up for them during the exercise. I explained that the purpose of this exercise and assignment is to deepen the work we have been doing which involves letting the imagination (or in this case, memory) activate internal feelings, impulses, and desires and then communicating those thoughts and feelings to the outside world; to stretch and expand the connection between the internal self to a broader connection with others in the space. The students seemed excited to begin working on their first project, and to share their experiences

with others. As we wrapped up class, a couple students remarked that during the exercise, events from their life came up that they have forgotten about and how excited they were to delve deeper to see what else might come up as they continue to work on this project. This was a moment when I realized that the imagery work was actually starting to elicit tangible responses within the students and that they were finally opening up to receive and listen to what their body was telling them.

On presentation day, there was a lot of nervous energy in the room, and a lot more tension than normal. Typically, I would walk into the space before class to students chatting, stretching, or resting in seats. Today the students were pacing, whispering text to themselves, and staring frantically at their written work. I started the class with everyone scrubbing their *Mountain* (refer to Appendix C) in order to ground and center them. I led them through a quick massaging of the body from head to toe on vibration, since that had worked well in the past in opening them up. Then like their personal work with their haiku, I had them lay on the floor in constructive rest and speak some of their project text out loud, taking time to picture and feel the image before letting into the space on sound. There was still a different, excited energy in the room, but it felt more focused then when I first walked in to the room.

I had the students sit on the floor along the edges of the performance space. This set-up made the space feel more intimate and less like a typical performer and audience space; it created the feeling of everyone being present in the performing space. Knowing that this project was during Part Two of the course: self to other awareness, I worked purposefully to create a set-up that would maintain a more intimate connection.

In an earlier discussion about preparing for this project a student mentioned that it takes a certain amount of bravery to be able to get up in front of people, talk from your personal

experiences and speak your truth. What I found through watching the students present their projects and take a journey through the river of their life was that I saw more courage than bravery. There was a moment when I student was singing words of a song and they started to get emotional, and instead of closing off and shutting down, or apologizing (as this student had done in the past), I saw the moment where they paused briefly to connect back to breath and immediately their shoulders lowered, the heart center, or sternum, opened and they were able to sing through the tears; they did not squash or judge the emotional impulse but rather spoke through it. There was a real courage to be vulnerable in front of others in that moment. Brene Brown talks about how bravery is putting on armor to get through a situation whereas courage is allowing yourself to actually take the armor off to be present and vulnerable in the moment. This was my biggest take-away from their mid-term projects: their ability, their choice, to stay connected and share with the group while being vulnerable.

### **3.4 PART THREE: “THE SPEAKING BODY” OR SELF TO WORLD**

#### **AWARENESS: WEEKS 9-15, CLASSES 16-28**

##### **3.4.1 Breathing gymnasium**

A lot of the work up to this point in the semester has been about finding release and building awareness. This next part in the progression starts to strengthen and expand the breathing musculature in order to support a larger, more expansive emotional life (which is typically manifested in the more extreme ends of the speaking/resonating range). To prepare for the higher

resonators, I took the class through some rib stretches and a Linklater exercise called *vacuuming the lungs* (refer to Appendix C).

Over the course of the semester, I had noticed a distinct shift as the class transitioned from warming up into the main lesson or new activity. It was as if they put their “thinking caps” on and shoulders started to hunch and breath went from being full and open to short and shallow. Conscious of keeping them away from the technical “right” and “wrong”, I focused my coaching in this section on keeping the energy up and lively by using different imagery to hopefully stimulate more of a physical response. Rather than saying “can you lift the left bottom rib a half inch higher than before?” my coaching prompts today were more in line with, “this time, imagine that someone is opening an umbrella inside your ribcage – can you feel the structure of the umbrella expanding the front, back, and side ribs?”

I had planned on doing more physiological picturing of the dome of the diaphragm and other more anatomical pictures of the breathing musculature, but I continued to focus this unit on the imagery. I wanted to get them back in their bodies, so without prefacing that we were learning a new part of the progression I had them walk around the space as dogs in anticipation of finding a lost bone. They searched and sniffed for their bones and then let out a sighs of relief when they found it. They looked for bones, they searched for toys, and they even followed the scent of another “dog” in the room. When the group spontaneously erupted in fits of laughter I knew that they were finally out of their heads and actually having an experience in the moment. They were able to let the imagery activate the sensation and experience of panting (anticipation and relief) without all the mental pressure of doing an exercise “correctly”.

### **3.4.2 Upper Resonators**

This was a section in the progression where it was vitally important to assess personal progress based on feeling and not sound. To help them with the physical assessment and to make sure the tongue was not pushing and getting involved, I had them stick the tongue on the bottom lip and place a finger under the jaw where the back of the tongue meets the larynx. As they sighed breath and touched sound they could feel if the tongue was pressing against their finger. If it was, then I encouraged them to go back to breath until they felt the tongue release and then go back to sound. I had found a moment where they could actually give in to their intellectual ideas of right and wrong. By giving them the tools to assess the right and wrong I found that the students were less critical of themselves when they discovered tongue tension.

Through sinus, nasal, and upper sinus resonators, I took them through the physiological and anatomical exploration first. I encouraged them to throw caution to the wind and not worry about pushing or engaging the tongue. That really energized them, and as a result I heard richer, more vibrant sounds and the students commented on how strongly they could feel the vibrations and resonance in the front of their face. I said that as long as they were getting that strong resonate feedback then that is a good indicator that they are not closing off and pushing too hard with the tongue against the larynx. It was also during this section that I noticed, with so much attention on feeling the resonant feedback in the upper resonators, their tension and holding of the breath was not present. The mind got out of the way and the breath dropped in with immediacy, and I could see the subtle release and freedom in the middle back (lower ribs) of a student who had been very stiff and resistant through many of the breathing exercises.

When working through range and the skull resonator, I spent more time warming the group up through all the rungs of the resonating ladder (chest through upper sinus). I had them

close their eyes and visualize their body as a theater with lots of different levels and rooms, and then move through the rooms as if their voice was an elevator at the center of the theater. The theater is my personal image because I can imagine it and see it with clarity and specificity. If there were more time, I would have given them an opportunity to create and visualize their own building, so that they could bring more personal investment and emotional energy into the exercise. After exercising and moving through their range we played around with the top skull resonator, varying the pitch to compare and contrast different resonating feedback.

One of the hardest tasks for me in teaching this semester was to make sure that the male voices in the room understood that they did not have to be in the same octave as me. In an ideal situation there would have been a piano present, so that I could give students pitches on the piano. In addition to helping clarify sounds for the male voices, the piano would also eliminate the tendency to match my pitch, tempo, and duration. Without the presence of my voice to match, the students would have had to rely only on their experience of translating the piano pitch through their body and voice, which could lessened their dependency on interpreting exercises as having a clear right and wrong outcome.

### **3.4.3 Ensemble work and Contact Improvisation**

I knew, while planning this course that aiming for contact improvisation work at the end of the semester was ambitious. The earlier physical explorations on the mats: doing yoga, being upside down and playing with different centers of gravity were all in preparation for weight sharing involved with contact improvisation, but there was not enough time at the end of the semester to explore this concept and really experiment with full body contact improvisations.

Throughout the semester, when a student (or the whole class) was struggling to work through resistance, I kept the pace of the class moving forward because I knew that later sections of the progression would offer a new way into the work. At this point, when I saw the students struggling with weight sharing, I was not confident that there was enough time left in the semester to properly address all the mental and physical inhibitors preventing the students at succeeding in these activities. I saw students start to doubt themselves; I saw old habits of shuffling the feet, crossing the arms over the chest, and eyes dropped to the floor start to creep back in. Seeing these physical inhibitors, in addition to the mental inhibitors, made me make the choice to scale back the weight sharing improvisations. I adjusted by using more class time build physical trust with their final group partners by using smaller, more structured partner improvisation activities that reinforced some of the earlier exercises in the semester.

Structured improvisations like *Hymns Hands* (refer to Appendix C), help the students start to see stories and create meaning through movement. This particular exercise brought a new confidence to the group, in terms of physical contact work. Much of the improvisation exercises up to this point had been completely silent, with the silence weighing down the room. Often they would remain silent and standing still until I asked for observations. With this exercise, liveliness was brought back into the space. The group did not wait for me to ask for assessment or probe them with questions – they began energetically talking to each other about their experience during the exercise. This helped them begin to take ownership and enjoy the process of creating text through movement and was the springboard into more invested work on their final projects.



### **3.4.4 Project Two: Group Sound and Movement Piece**

The students had been tracking their dreams over the course of the semester, so this final project was a chance for them to devise, as a group, a sound and movement piece weaving together moments and themes from their dreams. Dreams are way to exercise the imagination, so this project challenged them to flex their imagination muscle, as well as synthesize all of the work on self-awareness, awareness of others, and (finally) to strengthen their awareness of the larger world around them by developing a performance piece and sharing it with an audience.

We had spent a significant amount of in class rehearsal time focusing on the specificity of movement in the final projects, so on the presentation day I used their warm-up time as an opportunity to connect back, visualize, and feel the emotional connection and weight of the words in the final projects. They spread out in the room, closed their eyes, and visualized themselves in the center of a room with bright white walls. Using words or phrases from their pieces, they colored the walls with their text. Physically going through the motions of painting with rollers, brushes, spray cans, and whatever material they imagined. While a little timid at first, I let them play in this exercise for a full 15 minutes in order to cross that threshold of judgment that creeps in whenever they try a new exercise. The use of color imagery continued to activate them and it grounded them and gave them a great focus to then transition into their final presentations.

Without much introduction, as they already new the order they were presenting, the groups set-up the space, and one by one they presented their final projects. Knowing that this group has been very attached to ideas of right and wrong, and getting good grades, I anticipated that the final presentations would be safe and careful; and my initial impulse was correct. What

they didn't know was that because I had anticipated this first run to be safe and careful, I was not assessing and grading this first run.

I congratulated and celebrated with them on completing their final projects and led them through some of their favorite exercises from the semester as a celebration: they followed the leader and danced to their favorite songs, they goofed around in a sound and action circle, and then I invited them to do a “fun run” of their final project. I had planned on actually assessing and treating this “fun run” as their final performance, but they took the prompt a little further than I expected and I lost the structure of the story from their pieces. There is a common phrase directors use with actors about encouraging the actors to keep making big choices until we (the director) have to ask you to tone it down. Well, the class succeeded with that in their “fun runs”. I saw such a release and abandon in each student through their “fun run”, so I quickly asked them to go through their pieces a third time to find a balance between the two runs – to keep the structure of the first run with the energy and playfulness of the second run. It was such a delight to see them be able to take that information and synthesize it in their third run.

To wrap-up this last class and the semester, the students re-visited the pictures they drew about their bodies and voices from the first class. I asked each student to speak about how they have grown and what they are proud of accomplishing and also to celebrate say progress that have seen in a fellow classmate. The students each spoke of the accomplishments everyone has made throughout the semester, which included releasing tension, finding a sense of freedom, release, and relief, but most importantly they spoke about feeling more grounded and at home in their bodies and more confident in being able to speak from their truth and emotional centers.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

### **4.1 THESIS QUESTION REVISITED**

When I began building this course, my guiding questions was: How will supplementing the imagery-based Linklater Voice progression with other physically-based techniques enhance the concepts that mind and body must learn to cooperate, must be connected, in order for the voice to communicate the actor/human's inner life to the outside world? I anticipated that based on my experience, the connectedness of body, mind, and voice would allow the students to experience a genuine sense of connection with others, both on and off the stage; that with an instrument that is healthy, open, and free from inhibitors (i.e. physical tensions and psychological blocks) they would be able to access and act from primary impulses rather than pre-conceived thoughts or actions.

To explore this concept of a free, open, and connected instrument the students had to be willing to do a significant amount of self-examination and self-reflection. This ability to undergo self-examination and then be able to articulate their experience of the exercises was where I saw significant growth in the students over the course of the semester. Initially, the students seemed to be surprised that my focus for the course was not just to teach them activities and exercises that would magically allow them to have more power and range in their bodies and voices. In the beginning, they would often respond to my questions about their experience of an exercise with, "It was good," or "it was weird". Through their in class feedback and their journal reflections, the students were able to articulate, with more specificity, how their body, mind, and voice was responding to each exercise; by the end of the semester, the typical responses to my questions would be something like, "As I was rolling down my spine I noticed that I was holding

my breath and locking my knees, which made me feel off-balance and frustrated,” or “I could really feel the vibrations of my voice in my lower back when we were on the floor in a diagonal stretch, and it made me feel big and powerful”.

As a result of their increased awareness of body, mind, and voice, the students in this course exhibited a greater physical and emotional commitment to the class and the group. They came to a deeper understanding of their physicality, and how having a supple and responsive instrument allowed for thoughts, feelings, and emotions to bubble up instantaneously as a result of being connected and aware of their inner sense of self. Through exercises like the *haiku village*, *I AM*, and *airport destination* they began to let the imagery of the exercises re-awaken their own imaginations, and they started to trust their primary impulses and became more willing to explore the thought/feeling/emotions that accompanied those impulses. The physical abandon and joy that I witnessed in the second and third runs of their final presentations showed that the students had found an increased awareness and trust in their whole self. The ease and ability to fill the space on this last day showed a significant increase in their presence and focused energy from where they began on the first day of class.

Through this course the students have learned and developed a holistic, psychophysical progression of exercises that they can apply to their acting work (in private exploration, rehearsal, and performance), but also to their everyday life and how they sense, perceive, and communicate with people and the world around them. Through in-class discussion, observation, one-on-one coaching, performances, written reflections, solo and group exercises, and readings the students have been able to gain an understanding of the techniques and their application.

They have developed a facility and understanding of which exercises work for them, how they work, and when they can apply them.

After completing the teaching and implementation of the course, I can say that the majority of students made great progress toward being able to use their body and voice to truthfully and genuinely communicate their inner thoughts and feelings to the outside world. Through their investment and risk-taking in the daily exercises, the self-examinations and analysis in their journal reflections, and the application of the techniques in the two class projects, the students succeeded in meeting the course objectives:

- The students now have a much greater understanding of the importance of healthy, efficient and expressive voice
- They have an increased awareness (*and I will add confidence*) of body, mind and self
- They have developed a greater imagination and more focused concentration which has successfully aided them in a more embodied presence during performances (both in and outside of class)
- They have learned an effective progression of exercises to warm-up the voice and body before rehearsals and performances
- They have greatly increased their vocabulary (rooted in terms and techniques discussed and developed in class), and can apply more specificity to the way they work and reflect on their own practice
- They exhibited a wonderful spirit of generosity in the collaboration, development, and performance of a final group project

## **4.2 REVISIONS FOR FUTURE APPLICATIONS**

### **4.2.1 Break up the Linklater progression into a two-semester course**

As I mentioned in the first chapter, the B.A. curriculum in the theatre department at the University of Pittsburgh only requires students to take three performances classes in fulfillment for their degree. Unfortunately, this means that many students can go multiple semesters without being in performance classroom. This gap in classroom training and application leads to a lack of consistency in terms of the students' ability to understand and develop their own process as an actor. The students in *Voice and Movement I* had little to no experience with physical or vocal training of any kind, and though they made excellent progress during the semester, they all could have benefitted from more time with each step of the progression.

Given the constraints of the current B.A. curriculum at the University of Pittsburgh, my initial thought process for creating a one-semester progression was that I wanted the students to be able to take away as many tools as possible to aide in the development of their own process as an actor. I know that this course gave them tools that, over time, will continue to lead them to more personal freedom and discovery, but it was a very ambitious course calendar that, in the moment, may have overloaded the students, both mentally and physically. After having gone through the course, I now believe that it could be equally, if not more so, beneficial to expand the course into two courses, to allow more time to process and find more consistent freedom, release,

agility, and connection each section of the progression. Because the Linklater progression is such that each exercise builds on the previous exercises, there are greater benefits to be had by spending more time on each one to develop more specificity and awareness.

In the future, this is how I would structure the course over two semesters: The first semester would follow this course through Part One and the first half of Part Two, through freeing the channel. During the implementation of this course, this particular unit, the channel, felt a little disjointed and lacked a sense of true integration of voice and movement concepts. The first half of each class felt like a movement class, and then there was a distinct shift into technical voice work. I had originally planned for the classes to be broken down into three sections, with the third section a combination of the first two. Unfortunately, each section took longer than expected for the students to reach a level of openness and awareness in the exercises, and as a result I did not have the time in the calendar to spend as much time as I would have liked in more of the true integration and application of some of these tools. The capstone project of the first semester would be their Riverstories.

The second semester would pick up with the resonating ladder, beginning with Chest, Mouth, Teeth. There would be a significant amount of time structured into this additional semester to go further into Part Three of the Linklater progression, which expands on the sound and movement ideas that I was only able to briefly touch upon in this course. Right now, I would replace contact improvisations with other, more structured physical movement techniques. The Bartenieff work came out of Laban, so that feels like the natural choice at the moment. Within Laban work there is a fluidity and opportunity for physical contact work that is very similar to what I was hoping to achieve with contact improvisation, and I think Laban work could offer many points of intersection with the Linklater method.

With this two-semester outline, the first semester takes the students through the progression focusing on building awareness and finding release, while the second half of the progression is more focused with strengthening and exercising range. With this breakdown, it would ensure that even if the students were unable to continue with the second semester, that they would be still be getting the benefit of freedom and release, which they could apply to many different areas of their performance process and personal lives.

#### **4.2.2 Provide more structure for journal reflections**

One of the most important tools we have as actors is our awareness of self and the world in the moment, so that we can recreate those moments night after night in performance. The ability to reflect back on exercises and speak specifically about what was happening physically, mentally, and emotionally is a tool that must be nurtured and developed. In my experience, it is not something that comes easily or naturally to most people.

When assigning journals in the beginning of the semester, I gave the students what I believed to be clear and specific guidelines: three entries per week at 200 words per entry. Two of the entries would be reflections on exercises done in class, and the third entry would be their thoughts on assigned readings, and connections they were making between class work and the outside world. Again, the lack of consistent training proved to be a significant hurdle that I had not anticipated. While the students understood the requirements, and they did attempt to keep a journal, in the early entries they had not yet developed the vocabulary to give voice to the feelings they were experiencing and the understanding of the value and importance of self-reflection and analysis. The early entries contained more of an outline of the daily activities of the class, rather than a reflection and assessment of their experience in the activities. Not only was I unable to use



the journals as an additional tool to check-in and assess individual understanding and progress, but they were not serving as a productive tool for the students either.

Over the course of the semester, I collected and reviewed the journals three times. Based off of some of the comments and requests for extensions, I believe that many of the students were not actually journaling in the moment but waiting until right before the due date to try and re-create the journal entries based off of what (if anything) they remembered from classes that took place weeks previous. If I were to assign journals in the future, I would provide weekly prompts and questions for the students to reflect upon. The addition of weekly prompts would make the journals a more useful tool for the students by clarifying and reinforcing themes and objectives. Having the students turn the journals in more frequently would ensure that they are reflecting on each lesson closer to when they actually went through it, giving more benefit to the journal as a tool. It would also provide more assessment opportunities for me and would allow me to make adjustments to the lessons sooner, if needed.

#### **4.2.3 Fun, Play, and “letting go”**

My final thought for future applications is broader and less concrete than the previous recommendations. I would like to explore more ways to infuse my teaching style and the way I present material to include fun and play into the work. The majority of the exercises we explored in this course focused on finding release and letting go of tensions - they used imagery and imagination to activate physiological responses in the body – and yet the students had difficulty giving over to their imagination. They were overly concerned with whether or not they were doing all the physical movements “correctly” rather than staying curious and open to the discovery of new and interesting physical sensations and emotional impulses. While I think that some of that

resistance has been developed through years and years of social conditioning, I believe that it is my responsibility as a teacher to help them work through that and break through that particular barrier.

Most of the students moved through and looked at the Linklater progression as “work” – and they were determined to get it “right”. That mind-set is so counterintuitive to the idea of “letting go”; it kept them using and thinking with their intellectual mind, not their body-mind. I witnessed the most freedom and release in the students in exercises like *panting*, where I let them play around the space like dogs sniffing for bones, but without the knowledge that they were engaged in going through a part of the progression. By removing the label, the students were engaged in a sense of fun and play, so that instead of waiting, looking, and trying to find a way to “be free” they just discovered that, in fact, they already were – that they did not have to “do” anything.

In the future, I want to explore how a set-up and frame the teaching of new material, so that the students begin to separate from their social conditioning of right and wrong earlier in order to experience more of the progression through the lens of playfulness, discovery and fun.

### **4.3 FINAL REFLECTIONS**

This thesis class presented a challenge to me to teach a class of undergraduates with little to no training in voice or movement how to build a trust and awareness of their own body, mind, voice, in order to be able to communicate their thought/feeling impulses freely. My passion for learning and curiosity fed the students and encouraged their continued trust in the class, me as the teacher,

and the potential of the progression to have a profound and transformational effect on them. I witnessed them shed their sense of judgment about the class and the work, and by doing so become more connected to their authentic self and find ways to be courageous and reveal that self in the room, in front of others.

Over the course of the semester students who struggled or were resistant to the concepts and the idea self-exploration were able to lessen their judgment and delve into the work with more playful abandon – for some it happened early in the semester as they danced with their eyes closed in a moment of *authentic movement*; for one student the joy and freedom revealed itself on the final day in the fun run of their final project, in which they finally let out a primal scream that resonated from their whole body as they ran from the dinosaur from their dream. I witnessed the students let down their barriers and begin to access and speak from a place of truth and vulnerability, not just in the exercises but in the honesty of their struggles and insecurities that were coming up as a result of some of the exercises. I saw many of the students learn to rid themselves of reliance on habitual gesture and physicality, and through that release, find access to emotion and impulse unfettered by their intellect.

It was the first time I had taught the majority of these exercises, and my understanding and facility with them grew along with the students. The students' successes and challenges helped me learn where to be clearer or more concise in my teaching. Through this course, I now realize that I am extremely interested in exploring how Linklater work can be combined with more dynamic movement forms like Laban and more in-depth contact improvisations. Personally, this course re-connected me with my own body and physicality and has inspired me to further my training and experience with more physical types of theatre, specifically in regards to Laban movement.

This thesis class is just one stepping stone in what I imagine will be a lifelong journey for me. I look forward to finding more intersections between voice and movement, more ways to integrate and connect body, mind and voice in order to connect to a more authentic self that I can bring to my work as an actor and a teacher. I cannot wait for the next opportunity to put into practice all that I have learned from the building, implementation, and analysis of this particular course – to work, play, and explore these techniques in the classroom with a new group of artists.

## APPENDIX A

### SYLLABUS AND COURSE CALENDAR

#### A.1 SYLLABUS



#### Voice & Movement I

Fall 2017

Course: THEA 1100-1060

T/TH: 1:00pm-2:50pm

Classroom: CL Studio Theatre

Instructor: Brittany Bara

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Office Hours: TuTh 11:00-12:30

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#### Syllabus

*"You breathe; new shapes appear,  
and the music of a desire as widespread  
as Spring begins to move like a great wagon.  
Drive slowly." – Rumi*

*"Movement is life. Life is a process. Improve the quality of the process and you improve the  
quality of life itself." – Moshe Feldenkrais*

*"Know your voice – it's strong, it's sensitive, it's resilient, and it's you." –Kristin Linklater*

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The actor's task is to be present, live openly and communicate honestly within a set of imaginary circumstances. In this class, we will work on the removal of the physical and psychological blocks that inhibit the actor's instrument in order to access a body and voice that is in direct contact with emotional impulse. The approach will be holistic mind, body and vocal practice. Students will begin by examining and identifying healthy, effective, and expressive voice and body use through the progression of exercises in Kristin Linklater's *Freeing the Natural Voice*, as well as physical exercises and explorations rooted in the work of Trish Arnold. Throughout the course of the semester, we will focus on voice and body work as they relate to acting and to any area of life requiring effective communication. Emphasis in exercises and performance assignments will be on clarity of thought, physical and emotional connection and availability, and clear communication.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Through our work together over the course of this semester, each of you should experience:

- A greater understanding of the importance of healthy, efficient and expressive voice
- An increased awareness of body, mind and self
- Development of imagination and concentration as aids to a more embodied presence on stage
- An effective progression of exercises to warm-up the voice and body before rehearsals and performances
- Increased vocabulary (rooted in terms and techniques discussed and developed in class) to serve for more specific evaluation and self-reflection through in class and journal reflections
- Practice collaboration and connections with partners through the development of a final group project

## **Course Requirements**

### **Classroom Etiquette (Safety, Trust, & Tolerance)**

This class involves participation in exercises that may make you or others feel vulnerable or uncomfortable and may lead to discussion of various topics. Although a safe environment will be my top priority, know that you may encounter artistic ground that brings up personal feelings. It is vital that you respect your own feelings and thoughts as well as the thoughts and feelings of others. We each have a unique point of view—part of this class is identifying and strengthening that point of view to enable you to hone it in your craft. This classroom should be a laboratory where we are free to take risks, dream, inspire, create and test our ideas about acting (and life). I strive to create an open, respectful, and trusting environment in this course.

You will be expected to:

- Demonstrate respect for all ideas, beliefs and people.
- Avoid making assumptions, generalizations and stereotypes.

- In all things, but especially when offering criticism or comments, approach the work with a generosity of spirit.
- No cell phones.
- Laptops and other personal computer devices are also not permitted unless by special accommodation through Disability Resources. (\*see note at end of syllabus)
- Please no food.
- No photos or video of class allowed.
- Please clean up after class. Leave the space better than you found it.

## Clothing Guidelines

This is a very active class – warm-ups may include running, jumping, rolling on the floor - so please dress appropriately.

- You MUST wear pants/sweats - nothing too tight or revealing. Yoga/athletic pants are highly encouraged! (the reason is that while working on these physical explorations we want to have a free range of movement)
- We will be barefoot for classes, unless specified
- Limit jewelry
- No hats should be worn in the classroom and hair should be pulled back from the face.
- As a courtesy to your classmates, please go easy on the cologne or perfume.

## 5.0

### 6.0 Class Participation (35% of final grade)

**7.0** This is a highly physical and experiential class and, thus, your participation and generosity of spirit in class exercises and activities is the most important requirement. It is vital that students participate in all aspects of the class. Your attitude and desire to work is a reflection of your commitment and will be taken into account for your final grade. Please arrive on time and ready to work! *Two late arrivals will count as one absence.* Arriving just as class starts is not “on time”. It is late. You should be in class and ready to work at our start time. Please note that appropriate clothing and shoes fall into this category, as inappropriate clothing and footwear effect your ability to fully participate in class activities. Below is a rubric that will be used to gauge and award daily participation points:

PREPARATION (3 points): Arrives full prepared at every class session

PARTICIPATION (3 points): Plays an active and constructive role in exercises and discussions

PEER INTERACTION (3 points): Actively supports, engages and listens to peers

CONTRIBUTION TO CLASS (3 points): Comments are relevant and advance the level and depth of dialogue

GROUP DYNAMICS (1 point): The class ensemble and levels of discussion are often better because of candidate's presence

YOU MAY POSITIVELY AFFECT YOUR PARTICIPATION GRADE BY: <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

1. Becoming more active and/or making more effective comments that raise overall level of discussion and set examples for others. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

2. Asking thoughtful questions that will enhance discussion and engage peers.
  3. Listening carefully to, supporting, and engaging your peers in discussion. This will essentially improve others' learning experience.
- YOU MAY NEGATIVELY AFFECT YOUR PARTICIPATION GRADE BY:
1. Dominating class discussions, thereby restricting others' participation.
  2. Disrupting others' opportunity to listen and/or participate.
  3. Making offensive, and/or disrespectful comments during discussions.

## **8.0 Mid-Term Project: Riverstories (25% of final grade)**

First, in class, we will explore your own back-story through on-your-feet embodied visualization of a river of life. Significant life events and turning points are seen as stepping-stones. After our in class visualization, you will pick out a handful of stepping-stones to expand upon and embody both physically and vocally. You will present your fully formed Riverstory to the class as a solo project. Additional information will be provided later in the semester.

## **9.0 Final Project: Dream Presentations (25% of final grade)**

You will be keeping a personal dream journal over the course of the semester. For your final project you will pick one of your dreams to "present". In small groups, you will weave together your individual dreams to create a larger group "dream sequence". Utilizing movement exercises from class, found text, sounds/music, and your imagination you will work together in a group to devise a cohesive 7-10 minute piece to present to the class. Additional information will be provided later in the semester.

## **Journals (15% of final grade)**

It is expected that you will keep a journal throughout the course of this semester. It will be turned in, so if you are hand writing, please make sure it is legible. A minimum of 3 entries per week, at 200 words per entry. 2 of the three entries can and be about your experiences and observations during class exercises and how the exercises inform your activities outside the classroom. The 3<sup>rd</sup> entry will be in response to class readings and/or specific prompts which will be posted on CourseWeb.

## **Required Materials**

- *Freeing the Natural Voice* by: Kristin Linklater
- An open mind and generous spirit
- Journal/notebook for observations in/out of class (to be turned in periodically throughout the semester)
- Pen/pencil for taking notes
- Folder for keeping handouts and other materials



## GRADING

### Assessment and Grading:

You will be graded on a 1000 point scale based on the following:

In-Class Participation 350 (27 classes x 13 points)

Midterm Project 250

Final Project 250

Journal 150

**Total Points 1000**

Standard University of Pittsburgh grading scale:

97-100 = A+	87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	65-69 = D
93-96 = A	83-86 = B	73-76 = C	64 > = F
90-92 = A-	80-82 = B-	70-72 = C-	

### ATTENDANCE

You will be allowed two absences during the semester. Each absence, after two, will result in a drop of 1/3 of your final grade for the class (i.e., B+ to B). Late arrival interrupts the focus of those students who are on time, therefore two (2) late arrivals will count as one (1) full absence.

If you are absent on a day you are scheduled to present, it is your responsibility to contact your scene partner(s) and switch your time slot with another group.

## **UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENT POLICIES**

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. (Plagiarism, copying of assignments, and cheating will not be tolerated. Violating the University-wide policy on academic honesty will result in automatic failure of the assignment and possible failure of the course.)

### **DIVERSITY CLAUSE**

All participants of this class, both students and instructors, are required to help promote and maintain, at all times, a positive atmosphere in which everyone displays and receives respect, tolerance, and encouragement regardless of race, gender, religion, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background.

### **SEXUAL HARRASSMENT**

The University of Pittsburgh is committed to the maintenance of a community free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment violates University policy as well as federal, state and local laws. It is neither permitted nor condoned. The coverage of this policy extends to all faculty, researchers, staff, students, vendors, contractors and visitors to the University. Notify your instructor, and/or

another trusted University of Pittsburgh official, as soon as possible if you feel you have been sexually harassed.

### **THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT MEDIA POLICY**

In accordance with “The Pitt Promise: A Commitment to Civility,” The University of Pittsburgh Student Code of Conduct, and the professional standards and expectations of our field, students, staff and faculty in the Theatre Arts Department agree to the positive, responsible and respectful use of social media. The Theatre Arts Department’s commitment to civility includes zero tolerance for public aspersion upon students, classes, facilities; the un-approved posting of production videos or photos, per Equity guidelines; cyber bullying. Any member of the university community may file a complaint in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. The Student Code of Conduct and its procedures can be accessed here: <http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/studentconduct>. The Pitt Promise may be accessed here: <http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/pittpromise>.

### **THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT CASTING STATEMENT & MAINSTAGE AND LAB SEASON MISSION**

We are committed to producing stories from multiple cultural perspectives, of diverse styles and structures and from multiple time periods. To tell every story upon our stage, students and artists of all abilities, races, genders, sexualities, nationalities, and religions are needed for our casts, our crew, and our production teams. As a department, we are committed to analyzing and understanding a playwright’s intentions for location, time and character. We are equally committed to challenging ourselves to think beyond the strictures of given circumstances and historical expectations in production. We are committing to cultivating within our students and

faculty a space for artists who are willing to take risks, to stretch themselves and to see each class, audition and production opportunity as a fresh opportunity for greatness.

### **SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, please notify both the instructor and Disability Resources and Services no later than the second week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call 648-7890 (Voice or TDD) to schedule an appointment. The office is located in 216 William Pitt Union. [www.drs.pitt.edu](http://www.drs.pitt.edu). This information is confidential and the instructor may not discuss it in the class unless you choose to do so.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

If you have specific problems, concerns, or questions during the course of the semester, please feel free to talk with me during office hours, or make an appointment to see me. I am available Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11-12:30 PM in office 1610 on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor of the Cathedral of Learning.

## A.2 COURSE CALENDAR

### COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 Tuesday 8/29	Introduction & Syllabus	<u>Practice</u> : start your dream journal(s)
Thursdsay 8/31	Preparation for “the work”: Anatomy, Terms, How the voice works and Why it does not	
Week 2 Tuesday 9/5	Physical awareness: The spine	<u>Practice</u> : stretch and relax your spine every morning. <u>Review</u> : Linklater p. 31-41
Thursday 9/7	Breathing Awareness: Sigh of relief  <i>Add/Drop ends tomorrow</i>	<u>Practice</u> : notice how your breathing responds to the events of your day <u>Review</u> : Linklater p. 42-64
Week 3 Tuesday 9/12	Touch of Sound & Starfish	<u>Practice</u> : diagonal stretching & rolling up and down the spine on pitch <u>Review</u> : Linklater p. 65-86
Thursday 9/14	Rivers of Sound & Haiku Villages	<u>Practice</u> : effective hum <u>Review</u> : Linklater p. 87-116
Week 4 Tuesday 9/19	You and the space (Presence): Trish Arnold swings & Mountain/Village work	<u>Practice</u> : rebounding swings <u>Review</u> : Linklater p. 117-126
Thursday 9/21	Jaw awareness/relaxation & Sharing Center	<u>Practice</u> : massaging the jaw hinges <u>Review</u> : Linklater p. 129-138  Due: Journal
Week 5 Tuesday 9/26	Tongue awareness & Authentic Movement I	<u>Practice</u> : yawn & tongue stretch <u>Review</u> : Linklater p. 139-160

Thursday 9/28	Riverstory Journey & Authentic Mvmt. II: Snapshots	Assigned: Mid-Term Riverstory Project
Week 6 Tuesday 10/3	Soft Palette opening & Spine journey	<u>Practice:</u> Hum Trains <u>Review:</u> Linklater p. 161-180
Thursday 10/5	Chest, Mouth, Teeth Resonators	<u>Practice:</u> moving through the channel <u>Review:</u> Linklater p. 187-198
Week 7 Tuesday 10/10	NO CLASS	MONDAY SCHEDULE
Thursday 10/12	Rib stretches, Vacuuming the lungs & Image Tableaux	<u>Practice:</u> vacuuming <u>Review:</u> Linklater p. 213-227
Week 8 Tuesday 10/17	Mid-Term Presentations: Riverstories	Due: Riverstory Assignment
Thursday 10/19	Mid-Term Presentations: Riverstories	
Week 9 Tuesday 10/24	Sinus and Nasal Resonators & Initiation and Response	<u>Practice:</u> face isolations <u>Review:</u> Linklater p. 245-274  Due: Journal
Thursday 10/26	Skull Resonator & Partner Interruptions	<u>Practice:</u> moving through arpeggios <u>Review:</u> Linklater p. 279-284 Assigned: Final Dream Projects
Week 10 Tuesday 10/31	Duet/Partner work: Round/by/through & chair duets	
Thursday 11/2	Sound & Movement: Text Imagery	
Week 11 Tuesday 11/7	Duet/Partner work continued	<u>Practice:</u> meet with your Dream group
Thursday 11/9	Planet of Certain Sounds & the Woods Between the Worlds	
Week 12 Tuesday 11/14	Articulating – voice joints & physical improv exercises	<u>Practice:</u> physical improv for final projects <u>Review:</u> Linklater p. 295-319

Thursday 11/16	Vowel Ladder & physical improv exercises	<u>Practice:</u> Vowel Ladder & final projects <u>Review:</u> Linklater p. 335-338  Due: Journal
Week 13 Tuesday 11/21	Check – in	
Thursday 11/23	NO CLASS	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Week 14 Tuesday 11/28	Group Choreo & Final project devising	
Thursday 11/30	Group Choreo & Final project devising	
Week 15 Tuesday 12/5	Final Project Presentations	
Thursday 12/7	Final Project Presentations & wrap-up	Due: Journal and OMET's please!

(The Course Calendar is subject to change based on individual class progress)

## APPENDIX B

### ASSIGNMENTS

#### B.1 JOURNALS

### Assignment: Journal

Total: 150 Points (15% of Grade)

#### Summary:

It is expected that you will keep a journal throughout the course of this semester. It will be turned in, so if you are hand writing, please make sure it is legible. A minimum of 3 entries per week, at 200 words per entry. Two (2) of the three entries can be about your experiences and observations during class exercises and how the exercises inform your activities outside the classroom. The third (3<sup>rd</sup>) entry will be in response to class readings and/or specific prompts which will be posted on CourseWeb.

#### Goals of this assignment:

- *Develop and Distinguish* your process and preparation as a performer
- *Evaluate and Reflect* on your work and experience during the exercises in class
- *Synthesize and Discuss* what you have learned from in class exercises and readings into how these tools will benefit you in future

#### Requirements:

- 3 entries per week
- 200 words per entry
- Must relate to work/exercises in class *and* reference assigned readings
- Hard copy must be turned in (no emailing)

#### Areas of Focus for Journaling could include:

1. Presence and Relaxation
2. Physical Awareness & Connection
3. Vocal Awareness & Connection
4. Observations of Physicality and Vocal production in the outside world (by you and/or others)



5. Insight, Questions and comments regarding the language and imagery in *Freeing the Natural Voice*

**Grading:**

This assignment is worth a total of 150 points (divided into 4 sections = 37.5 points per section).

Journal	Points
Journal 1 (due 9/21)	
Journal 2 (due 10/24)	
Journal 3 (due 11/16)	
Journal 4 (due 12/7)	
TOTAL POINTS	

**Rubric:**

3 entries per week @ 200 words per entry	____/10
Provides specific examples from class Including <i>specific</i> personal observations (related to physical and vocal awareness) that occurred during in class exercises	____/10
References assigned readings Engages with terminology and imagery from sections in <i>Freeing the Natural Voice</i>	____/7.5
Outside Connections Discusses moments outside the classroom in which the student's growing physical and vocal awareness is changing the way the see or interact with the world	____/5
Personalization Observations are focused on the individual student needs (as discussed throughout class or through own personal research). Student is prepared to explain their observations/choices as related to their own	____/5

individual needs for that particular day of work.	
TOTAL	____/37.5

## B.2 PROJECT I: RIVERSTORY

### Mid-Term Assignment: River Story

**This assignment is worth 250 points (25% of final grade)**

Connecting voice with imagination and memory we first enter the back-story behind the text of our own lives in on-your-feet embodied visualizations of a river of life. This assignment explores bridges and connections between voice and text. First, as an in class exercise, we explore the actor's own back-story through on-your-feet embodied visualization of a river of life. This imaginative journey reveals significant events and turning points in your own life as stepping-stones in the river story of your life.

On your own, you will then expand your River Story to be both physicalized and vocalized. Students will reflect on 7 significant events (stones), which have influenced them deeply, in written form. These written reflections will then be memorized and brought to life ("performed") as the student walks through their river as an in class presentation.

This personalization and transformation process opens up an opportunity for personal discovery, and an expanded landscape for your creative process; all of which can easily be translated and adapted for a fresh approach to character work as an actor.

#### Objectives:

- *Connect* voice with imagination and memory
- *Discover* which events in your life have influenced you deeply and have contributed to the emotional wellspring within you
- *Create* both a physical picture/drawing of your river and your stepping stones, and a written script of the text that accompanies each stepping stone
- *Rehearse and Memorize* your river script and actions
- *Share your Embodied* journey through your River with the class

#### Format and Requirements:

With each stone, be as specific as possible; think about the given circumstances (who, what, when, where, why, how) of each event. Your river begins in the place where you were born, on the day that you were born – this is your first stone. You will walk your river in chronological order following your birth (ie - the third stone represents a date/time in your life where you are older than you were at your second stone and younger than the event at your fourth stone). Stones numbered one (1), six (6), and seven (7), must be presented as ordered below. Stones two (2)-five (5) may appear in a different order than listed. *For example: the last time I, Brittany, did my river story, my wedding was a stepping stone. More than anything else about that day, I remember the song that was playing as I walked down the aisle.*

*“Life is ever changing, but I will always find a constant and comfort in your love...” So, the song represented my fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) stone.*

1. \*Birth – Share the date, place, time (if you know it) that you were born. Say “my name is \_\_\_” then complete a *full body action* that describes you and how you came into the world/move about the world. After your action, finish with the phrase “and I am born.”
2. Song – sing the song (or a verse/chorus if it is lengthy) that activates this event for you.
3. Dialogue in a play – translate or transcribe the event as if it was dialogue in a play. It is up to you whether you say the lines of all the characters or if you say your lines and use others in the room as scene partners.
4. 6 sensory words – Distill the event into 6 sensory words. What did you smell, think, taste, see? What emotions were alive in that moment?
5. For me this was a time... - Describe the event in 6-8 sentences (think back to the Haiku village exercise) and end with completing the phrase “for me this was a time when...”
6. \*As I look back and listen, I see a life... poem - Turn back and see your river and the stones that you have just traveled through and describe your life in an eight (8) line poem. Do you see themes or common threads in your events? Where are the opposites? Think about where you started and where you are now and what you see ahead of you.
7. \*Today – Take in the space and the people in the room. Say today’s date, place, your name and the phrase “I am here, in this room, with all of you

\* denotes fixed prompt

#### Written Requirement:

- Visual Representation of your river (which will be started in class on 10/3)
- A typed (12 point font, 1 inch margins) “script” that describes each of your seven (7) stones - descriptions of the event in 6-8 sentences as well as the accompanying performance text.
- **Grading Rubric Stapled to the front of your written work. All of which will be turned in on the day of the performance: Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup>.**

Grading Rubric:

Criteria:	Notes:	Points:
Physical Presence Grounded/centered in neutral, no extraneous tension, 3D breathing (not shallow)		___/50
Vocal Presence Resonance, articulation, no extraneous tongue/jaw work, open larynx		___/50
Emotional Investment Commitment/Focus, activated by thought/feeling impulses (not manufactured emotions)		___/50
Storytelling/Connection In the moment, taking in the space, generosity of spirit toward "audience" and fellow actors		___/50
Preparation Completed written work, memorized, well rehearsed		___/50
	Total Points:	____/250

### B.3 PROJECT II: GROUP SOUND AND MOVEMENT PIECE

## Final Project Assignment: Devised Dream Exploration

This assignment is worth 250 points (25% of final grade)

This Devised Dream Exploration serves as a culmination of all of the work and exercises explored over the semester and is an opportunity for you to synthesize and apply all the techniques you have learned. In small groups, you will weave together your individual dreams to create a larger group “dream sequence”. Utilizing voice & movement exercises from class, found text, sounds/music, and your imagination you will work together in a group to devise a cohesive 5-7 minute piece to present to the class.

This is a very open ended project; there is no right way to begin. It may be helpful to remember that you are telling a story: what is the beginning, middle, end? What do you want (what are you reaching towards/moving away from)? We have spent most of this semester accessing and listening to primary impulses and emotions – what common (or maybe contrasting) emotional themes do you see within the dreams of your group? How do you physicalize and give voice to those emotions, needs, desires?

You will have minimal in-class time to explore and rehearse, so the majority of the preparation for this assignment will involve rehearsal outside of the classroom. It is expected that you will work with your group at least one hour a week between now and the presentation day.

#### Objectives:

- *Connect* voice and body with imagination, memory, and emotion
- *Apply* the techniques of Linklater and other voice and movement techniques from class to the exploration of your group’s devised dream project
- *Collaborate* with scene partners in rehearsal and performance of a devised (self created) sound and movement piece
- *Engage* with your scene partners to work toward a common artistic goal

#### Presentation Dates:

- All groups will present on **Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup>**

#### Presentation Requirements:

Your job is to embody and bring to life this imaginary dream world

- Total presentation must be at least 5 minutes long, not exceeding 7 minutes.
- Minimum 2 minute of Sound/music must be used.

- Everyone must have solo spoken text (can be found text or created/devised text)
- There must be group/unison spoken text
- Everyone must have at least one solo movement piece
- There must be at least one moment of unison/group movement
- You must make physical contact with at least one person

### Written Requirements:

- Each person will turn in: a **one page** (12 pt. font, double spaced, 1 inch margin) description of your piece – how does it start? What is the arc of the “story”? How does it end? do you have characters? If so, what are their motivations? Relationships to each other? What sound/music are you using (who composed/performed it)? If using found text, who wrote it?

\*This should be written and articulated in your own words, so each description will be unique. (do not have 1 person write it for the rest to copy)

- Each person will ALSO turn in: a **two page** (12 pt. font, double spaced, 1 inch margin) reflection on the devising process for this project. Address the following questions:

- Where can you see yourself using any of this work? Be specific on what and how you might use it.
- Describe 2 moments in your piece and the physical, psychological and/or emotional effect it had on you.
- What was the most difficult part of this project for you? Where do you think you could have explored further?
- What is your biggest take away from this project?
- What are you most proud of in this piece as a whole? And your individual contribution?
- What positive change or growth did you notice in one (or more) of your co-creators? Be specific with how they changed and by what means.
- What came easily and what was a challenge?

### Things to Consider when creating your “text”:

- Explore the spoken format options used in Riverstories (dialogue, poem, sensory words, song...)
- Haikus & other published poems
- When creating movement text, consider the implications of:
  - Eye contact/points of focus
  - Points of contact (hand to hand, hand to knee, knee to knee...)
  - group Levels
  - Speed
  - Duration
  - Rhythm
  - Proximity (near, far...)
  - Intensity

Grading Rubric:

Criteria:	Notes:	Points:
Physical Presence Full body commitment, clear tempo – rhythm-energy shifts, grounded, open awareness to space and partners		___/50
Vocal Presence Resonance, articulation, no extraneous tongue/jaw work, open larynx, vocal variety		___/50
Emotional Investment Commitment/Focus, activated by thought/feeling impulses (not manufactured emotions)		___/50
Storytelling/Connection In the moment, taking in the space, generosity of spirit toward “audience” and fellow actors		___/50
Preparation Completed written work, all required elements are present in performance, well-rehearsed/memorized		___/50
	Total Points:	___/250

## APPENDIX C

### KEY EXERCISES AND TERMS

*Standing Alignment* – a body scan in a standing position, focused on releasing tension in the muscles and finding a neutral, balanced standing position.

*Partner Spine Explorations* – the students take turns rolling up and down the spine guided by their partner's hand working up the vertebrae from sacrum to top of skull and back down.

*Hands-On Centering* – an extension of *Standing Alignment*, in which the students place one hand on their belly, and one hand on their lower back and picture their breath filling the space in between their hands.

*Starfish* – a core-distal exercise where students imagine that they are starfish “initiating and moving from center remaining released on the floor...the sense is of gathering the five points of the star around your center, and then extending them out and away from center, while engaging as few muscles as possible” (Hickler, 16).

*Diagonal Stretch* – a floor exercise/stretch in which the students lie on their backs, arms outstretched from shoulders in a “T” position, both legs are bent at a 90 degree angle to one side of the body with the neck releasing the head to the opposite side of the legs.

*Pelvic Clock* – A Feldenkrais exercise that helps “to refine control over the position of the pelvis and improve alignment of the spine” which will also “increase your ability to coordinate and oppose head and trunk movements” (Feldenkrais, 115). Students lie on the floor in constructive rest and picture the face of a clock beneath their pelvis, with 12 at the top and 6 at the bottom



(coccyx). Initially, they begin by moving their pelvis through all 12 points of the clock and then they can add moving their head/neck in unison and/or opposition with the pelvis.

*Effective Hum* – is a hum where only the lips come together (i.e. the tongue is laying flat in the bed of the mouth to create a clear and open space behind the lips).

*Hum Train* - a Linklater exercise where students are on all fours (hands and knees), with the spine in neutral, or flat back. As the breath flies in, the tailbone drops and the spine rounds. As the students begin to hum, the tailbone curves up and vertebrae by vertebrae the spine follows until the head lifts at the end and the back is now arched. During this connection of sound and body, the students imagine a toy train traveling from the tailbone, along the spine, and out of their mouth on their hum of vibration, releasing the train and the hum when the skull is lifted.

*Mountain* - As Hickler suggests, the students imagine a “luminous, permeable cone of light” around them (30). They trace the full 360 degree dimension of their mountain of light with their hands, and then they spend a few minutes “scrubbing down” the inside of their mountain, removing imaginary dirt and grime, so that the shine begins to warm them. Then they walk around the space, keeping the sensation of the mountain around them and one at a time, each student enters the center of the space and speaks their full name.

*Vacuuming the Lungs* – Linklater gave this exercise the name “partly because there is a sense of cleaning the lungs out, but mainly because it uses the natural power of a vacuum to stimulate the breathing muscles” (225). Students begin by blowing the air out of their body, they close their mouth and pinch their nose and then try to breath in through the nose. Then they wait as long as possible until the need for a new breath arrives. From there they release the nose and air rushes in.

*Haiku Village* – Students lie on the floor and you feed them the underlined words from the following haiku by Matsuo Basho and translated by Harold G. Henderson:

A village where they ring  
no bells!—Oh what *do* they do  
at dusk in spring?

Let them play with speaking them out loud and letting their minds wander while they imagine a village of their own choosing. After letting them ruminate in their imaginary villages for a few minutes, let them share in partners a little about their experience in the exercise and what kind of village appeared in their mind.

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