Lecture 6 - Oral Interpretation – Verse

What it is and why it is important:

- **Oral interpretation** is interpreting a piece of literature with your body and voice.
  - You are reading aloud, but you also are performing w/out props
  - meaning is conveyed to those who are listening and watching by how you use your voice and body
  - You can do this with **prose, drama, and verse**
- **Why?**
  - Allows the audience to see how another person interprets the words
  - Helps with comprehension (Audio books are a huge market now)
  - For the performer, it is a good opportunity to get more time in front of people (a little less nerve racking because it is someone else’s words)
  - Having to think about how the persona would sound, act, look, move, and so on gives you an opportunity to analyze literature

Choosing a piece of literature:

- Pick a piece that fits time constraints
- Is the text oral? Does it make sense when you read aloud, or does it sound like gibberish?
  - Prose – lots of dialogue and vivid narration
  - Poetry – rhythmic tone, (narrative or dramatic work better than lyrical)
- Choose a text that makes its underlying message, moral, theme, or main point clear.

What to do with the literature:

Before performing, you should

- Understand the theme, message, and main point
- Know the **meaning of all words** (use a dictionary with words you might not know)
- Be able to pronounce all words (with prose, you can change a word; with poetry, you need to choose a piece that you can read)
- Know some background about the author or poet (research: lots of books in the library; Internet searches from reliable websites works also)
- Research how other people have interpreted the poem—*Poetry for Students* is a good source.
- Decide on some **performance choices**
- Decide on **tone and emotion**; is it humorous—witty, slapstick, sarcastic, nice—or serious—sad, angry, mysterious, bitter, unpleasant

**Nonverbal Communication**

**Kinesics:**

- body movement
  - body movement needs to be decided before practicing and then need to be practiced.
    - Use **emblems** – gestures that fully substitute for spoken words
What are some emblems to replace the following?
- I want to vomit!
- I don’t know?
- Peace
- I promise and hope to die
- We’re number one
- This guy is nuts
- I need a ride, mister.
- OK

**Illustrators**
- Gestures that are directly tied to or accompany speech
  - Emphasis
  - Mental imaging
    - Activity: Have students use illustrators from index card

**Regulators:**
- Gestures that aid in interaction
  - Head nods
  - Hand gestures
  - Shifts in posture

**Emotional displays**
- What emotion do the following communicate
  - Slumped shoulders
  - Clenching and unclenching fists
  - Head drooping
  - Kicking the leg back and forth
    - Activity: Have students do “Spontaneous Emotion Game”

**Facial Expressions and Eye Behavior**
- **Facial Expressions**
  - Face muscles can shift to display 20,000 different expressions (some argue that the face can show 250,000 different expressions)

**Eye Contact:**
- **60-40 ratio**
  - 60% of the time, your eyes to be on the audience or in another direction
  - 40% of the time, your eyes can be on the script

**Gaze**
- Looking at another person or object
  - **Focus** – location of characters and scene
    - **Audience focus** - direct eye contact between performer and listener
    - **Off-stage focus** – point out other people or objects in the scene
• **Inner-expressed focus** – express inner thoughts by looking out, up, to the side, and to nowhere in particular

• **Physical appearance**
  - Posture
    - You can suggest age difference by posture and mannerisms
  - Dress

• **Paralanguage**
  - Pitch – inflection
    - “You know, I’ve heard he’s a whole lot of fun at a party” (Have a student say it in earnest; have a student say it sarcastic.) This is done with inflection.
  - Volume
    - “You make me so mad, I could just scream” (Have student scream it and a student say it very softly. Which way expresses more anger and is truer to the emotion?)
    - Should vary to help emphasize
  - Voice Quality
    - Breathy voice – airhead or sex goddess; it can suggest softness, awe, love, passion, and admiration.
    - Tense voice – rudeness, impatience, anger, and insecurity.
    - Nasal voice – whiny, laziness, boredom
  - Vocal characterizers
    - Crying
    - Laughing
    - Whispering
    - Belching
    - Yawning
    - Whining, and groaning
  - Vocal qualifier
    - This is how you emphasize words
      - Example:
        - Was Cheryl going to the movies?
        - Was Cheryl going to the movies?
        - Was Cheryl going to the movies?
        - Was Cheryl going to the movies?

**Organization:**
- **Introduction**
  - Need to deliver as an extemporaneous speech
    - **Attention getter** – a quote relating to the theme; a scenario relating to the theme; rhetorical questions (not the best choice); a quote from a review of the work; a startling fact or statistic; personal or famous anecdote related to the setting, theme, characterization, or so on.
    - **Teaser** – read some attention grabbing lines from the poem.
• **Necessary information:**
  - Author’s name
  - Title of the poem you are going to read. If you have chosen more than one, then authors’ names and titles of poems.
  - Sentences where a theme or thesis is stated.
  - Background information about
    - personae
    - author
    - scene
    - context
    - time frame
    - or a combination of any or all of the above.

  - **Delivery of introduction:**
    - Keep your binder or script closed.
      - This communicates to the audience that the words are yours.
    - Have a demeanor which will set the tone for the selection:
      - Quiet and slow if you are about to read something sad
      - Chirpy if you are about to read something happy
      - Dreamy (breathy) if you are about to read something romantic
    - Direct eye contact
    - Speak in a conversational way; you are yourself
      - This sets up a contrast between you and the character you will be when you are reading.

• **Delivery** of the piece.
  - If you have multiple poems, you need **transitions**
    - If you have multiple pieces, they should be tied together by something: theme, characterization, philosophy, different ways of looking at a problem,
  - **Transitions**
    - Example, “This romantic love that we just saw is contrasted nicely to the king of opportunistic love one sees in John Bilby’s “Marry for Money.”
      - Have your piece mostly **memorized** so that you are not stuck on the page.
      - Use nonverbal communication to communicate your interpretation of the piece.

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**Poetry**

**Four Types:**
- **Narrative** – tells a story
- **Dramatic** – may consist of a monologue, may have characters
- **Lyric** – intimate and personal expressions
- **Song Lyrics**

**Vocabulary**
- **Stanza**
- **Personification**
- **Simile**
- **Metaphor**
- **Oxymoron**
- **Hyperbole**
- **Alliteration** – the repetition of similar pronounced consonant sound at the begging of words
  - Fear led them into a feeding frenzy
- **Consonance** – repetition of similar pronounced consonants anywhere in the word
  - The taut tether stretched into the platinum vault
- **Assonance** – repeated vowel sounds
  - Ghoul tool fool
- **Onomatopoeia**