

GESTURE  
AND  
PANTOMIMIC ACTION

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## RELAXING EXERCISES.

Before beginning the study of the *laws and principles* of Pantomime, we must first put the body in a fit condition to express our emotions in the highest and most artistic manner. For this purpose we have the relaxing exercises, which give flexibility to the muscles and joints and thus thoroughly free the channels of expression.

These exercises develop the faculty in the will of complete self surrender.

### EXERCISE I. — FOR FINGERS.



1. Grasp left hand, thumb of right upon palm of left, fingers of right upon back of left, back of left parallel with floor. Withdraw energy from fingers of left and shake with right. Practise these first with one hand, then with the other.

## EXERCISE II.



2. Grasp left hand, thumb of right upon back of left, fingers of right upon palm of left, palm parallel with ground. Withdraw energy from fingers of left hand, and shake with the right hand.

## EXERCISE III.

3. Grasp the left hand with the right, the thumb of right hand resting upon the palm of left, side of



hand parallel with ground. Withdraw energy from fingers of left hand and shake them with right hand.

## EXERCISE IV.—FOR WRIST.



1. Hold the arm in this position, the hand hanging as a dead weight from forearm.

Shake from forearm. Put no energy in the hand, the whole force should come from forearm.

Imagine the forearm a stick, and the hand a glove fastened to one end. You can readily see that when the forearm, or stick, is shaken, the glove, or hand, will simply *flop*.

2. Hand in this position, thoroughly relaxed, shake.



3. Hand in this position, shake.

4. Hand in position of Exercise 1. Shake forearm with a rotary motion. This is to be done with the hand in the three positions.

#### EXERCISE V. — FOR FOREARM AND ELBOW.

Raise upper arm to level of shoulder, allowing forearm and hand to hang as a dead weight. Shake upper arm from shoulder. This is the most difficult of all the relaxing exercises, and must be practised very carefully.

## EXERCISE VI. — WHOLE ARM.

1. Arms hanging a dead weight from shoulders, rotate the body from the ankles. Arms will swing in all directions.

2. Raise arms above the head. Withdraw energy from them, arms will fall a dead weight to side.

3. Arms hanging relaxed from shoulders, impel the body forward and back, taking a wide base for the feet and bending the knees. Begin slowly, and gradually increase the impetus. Arms will swing as a pendulum, and as the impetus increases, they will gradually describe a circle.

## EXERCISE VII. — FOR SHOULDERS.

1. Arms hanging at side. Throw arms up allowing backs of hands to strike above the head. Keep elbows straight, and arms relaxed, but not stiff. As the muscles of the shoulders become relaxed the backs of hands will meet with perfect ease. It is better to begin this exercise by throwing one arm up at a time, giving

it sufficient impetus to carry it over as far as possible.

2. Raise arms directly in front of body to level of shoulders, wrists crossed.

3. Throw arms behind body. Be careful to keep elbows straight and arms upon level of shoulders. If this is not done, the shoulder muscles do not receive the full benefit of the exercise. Do not strain the muscles in your endeavor to relax them. Practise this exercise easily and carefully.

#### EXERCISE VIII. — THE HEAD AND NECK.

1. Withdraw energy from neck and allow head to drop lifelessly upon breast. Raise it and allow it to drop backwards, then to right, then left, then with a rotary motion. Remember the head is not to be *carried* to these points but allow it to *drop lifelessly*.

2. Bend body forward at waist, allowing head to hang lifelessly. Rotate body at waist, allowing head to swing as it will.

#### EXERCISE IX. — ANKLES.

1. Withdraw energy from ankles and shake from knee.

## EXERCISE X. — KNEE.

Stand upon a foot-stool. Lift leg as high as possible to the front from hip, relaxing knee and lower part of leg completely. Drop lifelessly.

## EXERCISE XI. — HIP.

Same position as in preceding example. Raise free leg *at side*. Drop lifelessly.

## EXERCISE XII. — ENTIRE LEG.

Stand upon a foot-stool. Withdraw energy from free leg and swing it by a rotary motion of the body.

## EXERCISE XIII. — THE WAIST.

Upon the elasticity of the waist muscles depends *almost* entirely the suppleness of the body.

1. Stand in an easy position. Relax muscles of neck, allowing head to fall forward. This will draw the torso. Relax the waist muscles and allow body to fall at the waist as

far forward as possible. The same conditions at the side and at the back.

2. Withdraw all energy from waist muscles. Allow the body to fall as far forward from waist as possible. \* Rotate the body from waist.

#### EXERCISE XIV. — ENTIRE BODY.

Stand with weight upon back leg. Bend the back knee, at the same time inclining torso forward and head back. Sink as low as possible upon back knee. Withdraw energy from back knee, simultaneously relaxing all the muscles. The body will fall to the ground.

#### EXERCISE XV. — THE EYELIDS.

Withdraw energy from lids and allow them to fall over eyes as if going to sleep.

#### EXERCISE XVI. — THE JAW.

Relax jaw and allow it to drop lifelessly. Grasp it with both hands and move it *by means of the hands only* from side to side, forward and back, up and down, and with a rotary motion.



## EXERCISE XVII. — CHEEKS AND LIPS.

Relax as completely as possible the muscles of cheeks and lips. Shake head vigorously. This exercise is apt to cause slight dizziness at first, and should be practised only at short intervals.

All of these relaxing exercises must be practiced faithfully and regularly, but with discretion.

## THE NOSE.

## EXERCISE I.

Slowly expand, then contract the nostrils.

## THE MOUTH.

## EXERCISE I.

Slowly widen lips into a smile, then push them out into a pout. Do not tighten lips but allow them to move easily.

## THE KNEE.

## EXERCISE I.

Slowly sink forward upon right knee ; rise, then sink upon left knee ; rise.

## ZONAL DIVISIONS OF BODY.

The human body has three grand divisions. The head, which is intellectual, the torso, which is affectional, and the legs, which are physical.

Each of these divisions are again divided into what are called zones, and these zones form the points of arrival and departure of a gesture. I shall give only those which are really practical, as each zone can be divided, and again subdivided.

### THE HEAD.

The upper part containing forehead and eyes is mental, and is called the frontal zone. The central portion containing nose and cheeks is affectional, or emotive, and is called the buccal zone. The lower part containing mouth and chin is vital, the mouth being replete with physical instincts. This is called the genal zone.

## TORSO.

The upper part, or chest, is the zone of honor, manhood and womanhood. The heart region is the affectional zone, and the abdominal region is purely vital. Gestures directed from or toward that region are vulgar. Great care must be observed in trying to bring into play these zonal divisions, that we do not make our action petty.

## PRINCIPLES OF PANTOMIME.

These are the fundamental principles governing the significance of pantomimic action.

### I. — PRINCIPLE OF MOTION.

There are three distinct forms of motion. *Eccentric*, (from a centre), which is the vital or explosive form of passion. *Concentric*, (toward a centre), the intense or concentrated form of passion, and *Normal*, or *Poised*, which is the possessed form of passion.

### II. — VELOCITY.

This principle governs the velocity of our motions. "Velocity is in proportion to mass moved and force moving. In proportion to the depth and majesty of the emotion will be the deliberation and slowness in motion, and *vice versa*. In proportion to the superficiality or

explosiveness of the emotion will be the velocity of its expression in motion."

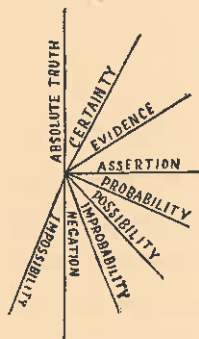
For example :

" When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,  
The line too labors and the words move slow.  
Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,  
Flies o'er the unbending corn and skims along the main."

The first half is suggestive of a huge mass, moved with great toil, and requires a slow, heavy movement, both in voice and gesture; but the last half suggests to us something extremely light and airy. So of course our gestures must be in accordance with this lightness and airiness.

### III. — ALTITUDE.

"Positive emotion rises, negative emotion falls." The more positive you are of the truth of your assertion, the higher the arm is carried in the gesture, and *vice versa*. The more doubtful you are of your assertion, the lower the arm is carried in the gesture. The diagram may



afford some slight help.

## IV. — FORM.

Straight lines are vital and strong. Circular lines are mental and reflective. Spiral lines are spiritual and mystic, and are the most beautiful. The general contour of the body forms a spiral line, and we work to preserve that line in all our changes of position. But do not imagine, because spiral lines are the most beautiful, that all our gestures are to be composed of such. If this were so the sinuosity of our movements would soon pall upon the spectator.

## V. — FORCE.

“Conscious strength assumes *weak* attitudes. Conscious weakness assumes *strong* attitudes.”

A *psychically weak* attitude is one which takes a wide base; but it is physically strong, as it is far easier to retain one's equilibrium upon a wide base than upon a narrow one. It is psychically weak because it shows not a particle of poise or true strength.

A person conscious of strength by having

upon his side truth and right needs not to assume a physically strong attitude, in order to impress; but one who is conscious of his own weakness takes this attitude in order to intimidate.

#### VI. — REACTION.

“Every extreme of emotion tends to react to its opposite.” Concentration or suppressed passion to explosion, and explosive, vehement emotion to prostration. The story of passion is concentration, explosion, prostration.

As an example illustrative of this principle I will quote a few lines from the “potion scene” in “Romeo and Juliet.”

“O look, methinks I see my cousin’s ghost, seeking out Romeo!  
Stay, Tybalt, stay!”

Juliet is wrought up to the highest pitch of intensity, and with the words “Stay, Tybalt, stay!” she rushes forward as if to intercept Tybalt, her passion reaching its climax upon the last “stay,” which she shrieks. She then falls, as the over-wrought nerves give way.



## VII. — SEQUENCE.

Expression of face *must* precede gesture, while as a general rule gesture should precede speech.

## VIII. — CLIMAX.

Never allow *but one grand climax*. Gradually work up to this climax, and when it is reached work down from it. The full height of the emotion should never be expressed only at this climax, and even then let the spectator be conscious of power still in reserve. The climax of power should be expressed by the face rather than the voice.

## IX. — NUMBER AND DURATION OF GESTURES.

Every gesture is an expression of the effect produced upon us of some impression. *Do not multiply gestures*. "But one gesture is needed to express an entire thought." Consequently the gesture must be held until the impression which caused it melts away, and gives place to another impression.

## X. — GRACE.

Perfect grace is a complete blending of the three elements, — ease, precision and harmony.

Too great ease of manner or action leads to assurance, vulgarity and familiarity. Too precise action or manner leads to mechanical motions and stiffness. While a superabundance of harmony leads to affectation and sickens and disgusts the spectator. These apply to vocal and verbal, as well as pantomimic expression.

## XI. — OPPOSITION.

Opposition is the arrangement of parts symmetrically around the centre of gravity. In opposition lies all the symmetry and harmony of motion. Opposite movements *must* be simultaneous, parallel movements may be successive. The greater the number of agents which are brought into play the higher the form of expression.

EXERCISES IN OPPOSITION.

I.

Slowly raise right arm to front, hand relaxed and pendent, simultaneously bowing head. Bring arm down, depressing wrist and raising head. The same with left arm, then with both.

II.

Raise right arm to side, hand pendent, at the same time dropping head over right shoulder. Bring arm down, depressing wrist and raising head. Same with left arm, dropping head over left shoulder; then with both, dropping head forward upon breast.

III.

1. Place right hand on chest.
2. Carry right arm to right in repulsion, simultaneously turning head to left.
3. Drop arm, turning head to front.
4. Place left hand on chest.
5. Carry left arm to left in repulsion, head turning to right.
6. Drop arm and turn head to front.

## IV.

1. Raise right arm to front, hand pendent, simultaneously bowing head.
2. Bring arm down to level of shoulder, depressing wrist and raising head.
3. Carry arm to right, in repulsion, head to left.
4. Raise arm, allowing hand to fall relaxed, at the same time bowing head over left shoulder.
5. Drop arm again to level of shoulder, depressing wrist and raising head.
6. Bring arm to front, side of hand parallel with floor, head turning to front.
7. Raise arm, hand relaxed, bowing head.
8. Bring arm down, depressing wrist and raising head.
9. Same with left arm upon left side.

## V.

1. Hand on chest, head bowed.
2. Arm out in appeal, head thrown back.
3. Hand and head to first position.
4. Arm to right in repulsion, head to left.
5. Hand and head to first position.

6. Arm to left in repulsion, head to right.
7. Hand and head to first position.
8. Drop arm and raise head.

VI. — THE VEIL MOVEMENT.

1. Raise right arm to front, hand relaxed, bowing head.
2. Depress wrist and raise head.
3. Carry arm to right in repulsion, head to left.
4. Retaining right arm in this position, raise left arm and bow head over left shoulder.
5. Depress wrist of left hand and raise head.
6. Carry left arm to left in repulsion, head to front. Both arms are now outstretched at side.
7. Turn hands, bringing palms upwards.
8. Bring arms to front, carrying head back.
9. Bring arms to breast, crossing hands on chest, simultaneously bowing head.
10. Raise elbows.
11. Carry arms out to side in declaration, raising head.

12. Depress wrists, and bring arms down. These exercises should be practised until the movements are smooth and continuous.

## VII.

Stand with weight upon right foot, left foot free and slightly advanced. Raise right arm in the *commanding* movement, simultaneously depressing head. Carry arm back, forefinger extended, moving head to left, transferring weight to left foot. The same with left arm, weight upon left foot, right foot free. Raise left arm, etc.

## VIII.

Weight upon right foot. Carry right arm up over head, forefinger extended, simultaneously bowing head. Bring arm down to side, forefinger extended and pointing towards ground, simultaneously raising head. The same with left arm.

## IX.

Stand with weight upon left foot, the right advanced. Transfer weight to right leg, bend-

ing the knee to suggest kneeling. Clasp hands and raise head. Bring clasped hands to breast, bowing head. Throw arms out in appeal, carrying head back. Clasp hands and bring them to chest, bowing head. Carry hands down and raise head.

*PRIMARY OPPOSITIONS FOR ARM  
AND HEAD.*

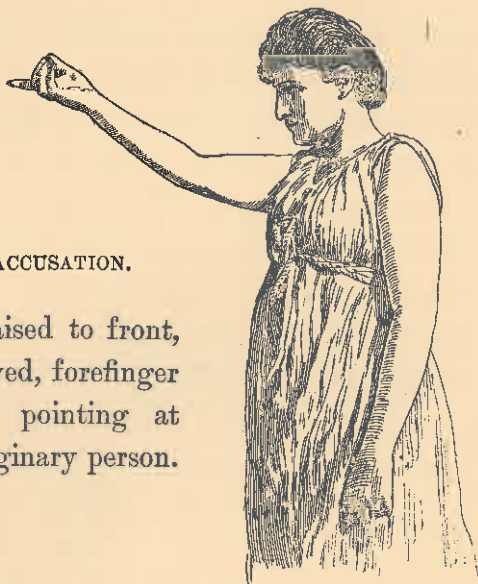
I. — RESIGNED APPEAL TO  
HEAVEN.

Right hand turned out at side, palm to the front. Head inclined over right shoulder, eyes raised to Heaven.



## II. — ACCUSATION.

Arm raised to front,  
head bowed, forefinger  
of hand pointing at  
some imaginary person.



## III. — IMPRECATION.

Right arm raised  
directly overhead,  
hand in the attitude  
of imprecation, head  
slightly depressed  
and advanced. Left  
arm at side, hand in  
attitude of imprecation,  
slightly thrust  
back, as if clutching  
at some object.



IV. — REMORSE.

Throw head back,  
dropping right arm and  
hand over head, left arm  
dropping at side.



V. — SHAME.

Bow head upon breast, at the  
same time carrying arm as far  
overhead as possible, and moving  
arm to front to hide the face.

VI. — DEEP THOUGHT, GRIEF.

Raise head and lower hand until it covers the face.



VII. — PATHETIC REPROACH.

Drop hand to left side of chest, head inclining to right, eyes raised.

VIII. — PATHETIC REPULSION.

Arm carried to right, ending in an upward sweep, head to left and depressed over left shoulder.



IX. — APPEAL.

Carry arm out in appeal, head back.

## X. — BENEDICTION.



Turn hand so that  
the palm is downward,  
slightly raising arm  
and bowing head.