



UNIT 4

STAGE
OF
mind

4. ACTING FUNDAMENTALS

The purpose of the unit is to provide the participants with basic knowledge about the fundamentals of acting, including character development, objectives and tactics.

A variety of widely-used techniques and methodologies will be employed, with an emphasis on experiential learning through physical drama. Through these techniques, participants will acquire the necessary skills to fully embody a character, understand key principles that underlie successful stage performance, and work collaboratively as a team both in-class and during performances. This unit is designed to equip participants with practical tools and knowledge that will serve as a strong basis for further development in the field of acting.

4.1 Learning outcomes

Upon completing this unit, participants of the training program will:

- ▶ understand how to create a character.
- ▶ learn how to use both the script and their imagination to fully understand their character's objectives and motivations.
- ▶ learn how to use their body and voice to effectively communicate their character's thoughts, emotions and actions.
- ▶ develop a level of comfort and confidence when performing in front of an audience.
- ▶ strengthen their cognitive abilities in areas such as creativity and imagination, communication, physical mobility.

4.2 Theoretical background / Approach

The main methodologies used in this unit are Lecoq for the use of physicality, and Linklater for the liberation of the natural voice. These techniques, along with textual analysis, serve as the framework for understanding the basics of acting through character development.

Acting requires proficiency in the body, voice and understanding the character's motivations. Lecoq's approach starts with the idea that drama is movement, even in moments of apparent stillness, bringing the character into the actor's body. Linklater's techniques emphasize the body-voice connection, viewing the voice and word as the final result of an internal movement called impulse or thought that should emerge freely. This approach increases participants' confidence in their voice and body-voice connection, enhancing their range of expressiveness.

Text analysis will equip participants with the skills to comprehend their character's psychology through a careful reading of the script and a series of inquiries that unlock the character's inner life.



4.3 Learning and teaching methods

Below are presented various learning and teaching methods that can be employed to explore the contents of this unit.

- ▶ Lecoq's physical theatre: This methodology focuses on understanding the dramatic movements and developing physical awareness to deeply embody emotional states.
- ▶ Delivering Kristin Linklater's natural voice: This technique frees the body and mind, resulting in a more natural and unrestrained voice. Participants will learn to modulate their voice and create natural character voices through a body-voice approach.
- ▶ Text analysis: Participants will learn to closely read and analyse the script and the character's actions to uncover their motivations and inner world.

4.4 Detailed unit description

This training unit will utilize the methodologies of Lecoq and Linklater to provide practical learning opportunities to participants to get familiar with the acting fundamentals. Games and exercises will be used to increase participation and build confidence in performance, offering a range of techniques to choose from in the creation of an aesthetic piece.

Linklater's approach will focus on voice exercises through body and imagination, incorporating elements of the Alexander technique and natural breathing to develop an understanding of the body's natural resonators. The voice work will also emphasize collaboration and group development.

Lecoq's techniques will include the use of "mimisme", a neology that replaced "mimique", to facilitate observation and exploration of movement, role plays, buffoons, clowns, melodrama, the larval, neutral and jester masks and so on.

Adaptations will be made as needed to ensure that all participants can engage in the exercises and find their voice.

4.5 Unit assessment

Assessment should be tailored to each individual's competencies, experience and expectations, taking into account the unique challenges they may face. Upon completion of the delivery of this unit, participants should have improved their body mobility, naturalness on stage and self-confidence. Additionally, participants should have strengthened their cognitive abilities in areas such as communication, creativity and imagination.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed activities in improving the above-mentioned participants' competencies, questionnaires can be used. These questionnaires can allow the participants to express whether they perceive that they have improved their skills in these areas. Additionally, at the end of each session, time should be allocated to discussing these topics to enable participants to share their experiences with their peers. In the case of exercises involving the voice, participants can be invited to take a notebook in which to record their progress or impressions during the different sessions.



In the framework of this training programme implementation, it is expected to have a professional familiar with the participants present during the sessions to support the facilitator and to provide objective assessment to ensure that the training is achieving its intended goals.

4.6 Additional resources

- ▶ Bielski, J. (2020). *Acciones concomitantes: Un método para la actuación teatral*. Madrid: Asociación de Directores de Escena de España
- ▶ Johnstone, K. (1981). *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*. London: Routledge.
- ▶ Serrano, R. (2004). *Nuevas tesis sobre Stanislavski: Fundamentos para una teoría pedagógica*. Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos.

4.7 References

- ▶ Boal, A (1992). *Games for Actors and non-Actors*. Routledge. New York.
- ▶ Brook, P. (1968). *The Empty Space*. Touchstone. New York.
- ▶ Chekhov, M (1999). *To the Actor: On the technique of acting*. HarperCollins. New York.
- ▶ Donnellan, D. (2003). *The Actor and the Target*. Nick Hern Books. London.
- ▶ Gelb, M (1996). *Body Learning: An Introduction to the Alexander Technique*. Henry Holt and Company. New York.
- ▶ Grotowski, J. (1968). *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Simon and Schuster. New York.
- ▶ Knébel, M. (2020). *El último Stanislavski (ed. revisada): 112 (Arte / Teoría teatral)*. Editorial Fundamentos. Madrid.
- ▶ Layton, W. (1990). *¿Por qué? Trampolín del actor*. Editorial Fundamentos. Madrid.
- ▶ Lecoq, J. (2002). *The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre*. Methuen Drama. London.
- ▶ Linklater, K. (1976). *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language*. Drama Book Specialists. New York.
- ▶ Stanislavski, C. (2013). *An Actor Prepares*. Bloomsbury Academic.



4.8 Unit activities

4.8.I Introduction exercises

EXERCISE NAME: THE JOURNEY OF THE MASK ¹

Exercise number: 1

Aims of the exercise

- Learn a sequence of movements
- Learn to listen and perform at the same time
- Learn how to regulate energy and hold the exercise to its end
- Work on the coordination, agility and resistance

Focus level: High

Energy requirement: Medium

Materials: None

Duration: 30 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator instructs the participants to find their own space in the room facing the facilitator who will guide the exercise with voice and movements.
- ▶ The participants stand with their feet in parallel, shoulder-width apart, bend their knees slightly to lower their centre of gravity and let their arms hang at their sides.
- ▶ The facilitator gives direction and carries out the movements described:

We feel that we are inside the sea, and that the waves are rocking us back and forth, from one side to the other. The intention is to get out of the sea, so we start walking feeling that we are moving in the water, and we focus our gaze on a fixed point, which is the Sun.

We reach the beach, where our feet sink slightly, and a touch of push is necessary to continue.

We arrive at the forest, we stop next to a tree (the mime consists of supporting the hand at the height of the head), and we remove branches, we jump trunks, we look for the Sun among the trees, and after tearing off a branch, we discover from top to bottom, a great mountain.

¹ This is one of the exercises most used by Lecoq. It is usually performed with a neutral mask, without facial expression, but it can be adapted to the abilities of each group. It will be a guide to enjoy the space and a journey with the body through the imagination.



EXERCISE NAME: THE JOURNEY OF THE MASK ¹

We point to the top with our index finger, and climb it.

We made it by zigzagging and leaning our body forward. We encountered rocks, walls and began to climb. When we reach the top, we jump and run down the mountain, turning or twisting from one side to the other, with our body weight backwards.

We reach the river, look from left to right to see its length, and cross it by taking three big jumps.

We contemplate a great plain, and the sun that we intend to reach in the background.

We walk with decision and neutrality to get there, slow down and stop.

We look at the setting sun and lower our heads as the sunset passes.

The mask's journey ends here.

- ▶ The participants perform the journey of the mask together without speaking.
- ▶ Each participant will go on stage to recite a text based on the physicality resulting from the journey of the mask. It can be a text that they have previously learned and discover how it is modified after exercising the body and breathing.

EXERCISE NAME: TONGUE TWISTER AND VOCAL ARTICULATION

Exercise number: 2

Aims of the exercise

- Develop a deeper understanding of vocal techniques and train the voice
- Learn a sequence of vocal warm-ups and exercises
- Identify the vocal resonators
- Practice projecting the voice confidently and with proper articulation

Focus level: Low

Energy requirement: Medium

Materials: None

Duration: 20 minutes



EXERCISE NAME: TONGUE TWISTER AND VOCAL ARTICULATION

Instructions:

- The facilitator chooses a tongue twister and repeats it several times along with the participants to work on the diction. For example, "Peter Piper picked a pack of pickled peppers. How many pickled peppers did Peter Piper pick?"
- Participant recites it first at a low volume, and after several repetitions, they are asked to increase the volume.
- The facilitator asks the participants to find a space in the room to stand and start lowering their head, so their spines are pulled down vertebra by vertebra. When the spine fully downward, the participants shake their shoulders to loosen their scapula and heads. Then they must reverse the action, standing up vertebra by vertebra. Once they are fully upright, they produce a relieved sigh accompanied by sound. Repeat four or five times and, after finishing the sequence, they remain standing.
- The facilitator starts to work with the resonators, asking the participants to imagine a burning ground so they perform a series of movements accompanied by certain sounds:
 - ▶ We say SUH while we put up our feet.
 - ▶ We say OE while we move our hips in circles.
 - ▶ We say GO with our hands on our chests.
 - ▶ We say MA while moving our neck.
 - ▶ We say PEIN with both our hands next to our face.
 - ▶ We say RIIING with our hand in the center of our forehead.
- This sequence finishes and they say "JA, KA, LA" and "PA, TA, SA".

Key words:

Resonators: specific areas in the vocal tract where sound waves resonate and amplify, resulting in the distinct timbre or quality of an individual's voice. These cavities are formed by the articulation of various organs within the vocal canal, and mastering their use can help to improve projection, tone, and overall vocal control.



4.8.II Core exercises

EXERCISE NAME: CREATING A CHARACTER (INTERNAL)

Exercise number: 1

Aims of the exercise:

- Analyse texts and scenes
- Improve concentration and calm
- Develop critical thinking

Focus level: Medium

Energy requirement: Medium

Materials: A text for each participant and writing materials

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Instructions:

The facilitator provides the participants with writing materials and explains how to analyse a text through asking a series of questions about the story while reading it. All of this work is done with an existing dramatic text; if participants are devising a play, the textual analysis questions can help them create their characters.

TEXT ANALYSIS

- ▶ What is the story about?
- ▶ What are the overall themes?
- ▶ What is the character's purpose?
- ▶ What do they do to accomplish it?

MORE DETAILED QUESTIONS

- ▶ How do the characters see themselves? How would they like to see themselves? What are they afraid of discovering about themselves?
- ▶ How can we tell if a character is good or bad?
- ▶ Who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist?



- ▶ What does the character lose or gain in each scene?
- ▶ What is the characters motivation? Are they driven by self-interest or altruism? Are their actions guided by emotions or practical considerations?
- ▶ What are the stakes for each character?
- ▶ How does each character perceive the other characters? How do they want to see them, and what are they afraid of discovering about them?
- ▶ What is the character's main conflict and what do they want to achieve or transform?

ACTIVE ANALYSIS

Define the line of action from where the character starts in the story to where it ends, Actors have to translate everything in terms of action.

- ▶ What is the initial event that triggers the action?
- ▶ What is the basic event around the conflict?
- ▶ What is the central event, which leads to the climax of the action?
- ▶ What is the main event, the climax of the action?
- ▶ What is the final event, the consequence of the action?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- ▶ What does the character do to achieve what they want?
- ▶ What is the task or purpose?
- ▶ What are the dramatic actions carried out to achieve the task?
- ▶ What obstacles must be overcome and how?



EXERCISE NAME: CREATING A CHARACTER (EXTERNAL)

Exercise number: 2

Aims of the exercise:

- Develop both individual skills and teamwork
- Fully understand the character
- Find the character's body and voice

Focus level: High

Energy requirement: High

Materials: None

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Instructions:

- The facilitator hands out a text or chooses a play to work on.
- Participants walk around the space while the facilitator prompts them with questions they have to respond internally but also using their bodies. The objective of this activity is to help participants discover and develop the voice of their character.

Questions:

- ▶ What is your character's walking style? Does your character place their weight behind or in front? Do they walk with their feet turned in or out?
- ▶ Are they living inside or outside?
- ▶ Are they curious/inquiring or unfocused/distracted?
- ▶ Are they introverted or extroverted?
- ▶ Do they have hobbies? Do they like sports, culture, museums? Are they interested in politics?
- ▶ What do they do right after getting up?
- ▶ How do they sit down? How do they stand up?
- ▶ Do they have a job? Do they like it or not? Do they have workmates? How is their relationship?
- ▶ How does your character perceive themselves physically? Do they consider themselves attractive or have they struggled with their appearance? Do they feel like people are looking at them, even if they aren't? Or do they feel unnoticed when they actually garner attention?



- ▶ Does your character seem lost in their thoughts or do they stay present in the moment?
- ▶ Do they exert their influence on the space around them, or do they adapt to the space they are in?
- The facilitator starts to bring in different situations for the characters so the participants can find out more about their characters.

Additional questions:

- ▶ Imagine your character taking a leisurely walk in the park. Do they appreciate the beauty of the flowers and trees?
- ▶ Do they prefer sitting on a bench or the grass?
- ▶ It starts to rain. Do they enjoy the rain or seek shelter immediately?
- ▶ They enter an empty church. Do they walk down the middle aisle, explore the side aisles, or sit down?
- ▶ They go out to the street and watch the rainbow. Do they love it or not?
- ▶ They are given the best or the worst news of the world. How do they react? Do they continue with their activities or become immobilized by the news? Do they obsess over it or try to push it out of their minds?
- Once the exercise is completed, participants will recite a section of their text to explore how their characters express themselves vocally. Do they speak clearly and loudly or softly and timidly? Are they confident or hesitant?

EXERCISE NAME: ENSEMBLE BUILDING

Exercise number: 3

Aims of the exercise:

- Embody the character and respond authentically to the given circumstances.
- Demonstrate initiative by requesting opportunities to speak
- Improve the ability to perform confidently in front of an audience
- Foster a spirit of teamwork and collaboration
- Learn to take and give focus

Focus level: High

Energy requirement: High

Materials: A microphone

Duration: 20-30 minutes



EXERCISE NAME: ENSEMBLE BUILDING

Instructions:

- The facilitator explains to the participants that they will have to embody their characters and act as if they were on a TV show. A first group of people will sit in a chair in a semicircle and talk about three topics. The participants will have a microphone and they will have to raise their hands to be given their turn. They must answer each question at least once.

Facilitators can decide the topics to explore depending on the group. Below some suggestions:

- ▶ Is it appropriate to remove the smoke/tobacco from bars?
- ▶ Does climate change exist? What will happen in 50 years?
- ▶ What is your opinion concerning the current employment situation?
- The facilitator asks for some participants to volunteer (the number will be decided according to the group size). The participants who are going to improvise will sit down, while the rest of the group will be the audience. They will then switch roles.
- The participants improvise by answering the questions as their character would do.
- To conclude the exercise, the facilitator can finally point out how participants give and receive focus.

4.8.III Closure exercises

EXERCISE NAME: THE TANGLE GAME

Exercise number: 1

Aims of the exercise:

- Boost teamwork
- Use the dialogue as a tool to sort out conflicts.

Focus level: Low

Energy requirement: Medium

Materials: None

Duration: 5-10 minutes



EXERCISE NAME: THE TANGLE GAME

Instructions:

- ▶ The participants hold their hands and form a circle.
- ▶ One of them crawls underneath, between the hands of two others, and so on until everyone starts to tangle. It is important not to let go of the other people's hands from the beginning.
- ▶ When they are quite tangled, it is the time to get untangled without letting go of hands.
- ▶ When they go back to the original circle, the game is over. If they let go or it is too complex, they can try again.

EXERCISE NAME: SELF-MASSAGE

Exercise number: 2

Aims of the exercise:

- Relax the body
- Develop body observation skills

Focus level: Low

Energy requirement: Low

Materials: None

Duration: 5-10 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The participants take a place in the room, sitting down.
- ▶ The facilitator leads the self-massage by giving directions.
- ▶ The participants start from the feet, first the right foot, then the left. Then the lower legs, going upwards. They stand up and tap themselves on the lumbar area gently. They massage their shoulder area, the neck and they tap their face gently. They grip their scalp and move it a little. Finally, they grip their ears and carefully stretch them to the sides.



EXERCISE NAME: CLOSE WITH A SONG

Exercise number: 3

Aims of the exercise

- Foster a sense of unity among the group before concluding the session.
- Develop the ability to balance individuality with collaboration within the group dynamic.
- Cultivate a spirit of teamwork and a shared purpose towards a common goal.

Focus level: Low

Energy requirement: Medium

Materials: None

Duration: 5-10 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator chooses an easy song to share with the group. Ideally, it will use an idea that can be represented by movements. This will make its representation and memorization easier.
- ▶ For instance, if the song says "I'll be big, I'll be big as the world..." participants can draw a large circle with their hands while singing.
- ▶ The facilitator introduces the song line by line until the participants learn it.
- ▶ Finally, the group sings it entirely as a closure for the session.



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