BY INTENTION ALONE

EXTRACT FROM A LEARNINGMETHODS ONLINE SESSION
TO APPLY THE WORK TO PERFORMANCE - 02 AUGUST 2012

David:

And I think in general the more that people understand some of where it's coming from, like describing the evolution of the performance anxiety habit, it not only gets them to see how all these things that people tend to interpret as bad things are actually good things about the way we are built. The problem is that people start to use them against themselves. But it's also you shan't forget in our credentials for bringing in the science of it. For instance, if you have a listen to those Katherine Verdolini recordings, where she talks about those two kinds of learning, and then you can refer to her bring rather describe those that work, that helps people really make sense so they can see that this is not just something you are making up, it's the way were really built.

Oddly enough, everyone's had all these experiences, and if you think about it, this "good way of learning" — the "whole-system" learning — is the way we all learned as kids. It's the way we learned to do everything as kids. You wanted to do something like climb a tree, so you just went at it. Maybe you slipped or got stuck and it wasn't quite the way you wanted; or you wanted to play baseball but you didn't go out and take baseball lessons to learn how to hold the bat. You just got hold of it and started to play and gradually got better and better. And it was fun.

But people have forgotten that, and then they get to performance stuff and suddenly they think, "*This is totally different, I can't learn this like I've learned everything else. Now I'll have to tell all my parts what to do, and learn all the right techniques.*" As if… right?

So, if you can show the characteristics of those two ways of learning, and why one is just so much faster and so much better and so much deeper, it gives you credibility on the one hand, at the same time as it brings out the theoretical background to explain why you're going to go about it this way.

Marion, do you have any practical examples of this from your own acting experience that you can bring in here? Or Bonnie, you probably have some, too?

Marion:

I'll think about it a bit...

David:

This is where you both have the advantage over me because you've been doing the actual

acting work using this approach. I've been teaching people but I'm not an actor so I haven't had to learn lines and do rehearsals and play it out for real in the business. So if either of you have any stories or insights as to the real nitty-gritty of how to apply it...

Marion:

I certainly apply it for myself when I'm working. Are you looking for that, or how I might go about explaining to a student?

David:

Yes, experiences you've may have had applying it in certain situations in acting that gave you new insights into how things work, especially in the sense of difficulties people might run into when they're trying to apply it in the middle of their work and run into one obstacle or another...

Marion:

I'm trying to think of the example I can give you that is close to home and relatively recent so I can give you all the details. OK, this isn't specifically an acting one but I went yesterday and the day before and did some background recording laying in vocal tracks... not spoken but sung... I've never done that before. The guy who is doing the mixing wants to learn how to compose and mix, and I'm interested in learning about the recording part. I just want to get this right order... As the point in the song came up where I was going to start singing, I noticed self-consciousness and tightness and all kinds of things that I considered to be low-value experiences. I also felt that my voice was very thin and coming out kind of pinched.

When I listened to the playback I thought, "*Yeah that sounds pretty pinched and pretty small.*" Before doing the LearningMethods approach, That's kind of a fork in the road right there. Before that I think my focus would have been on how do I get a "bigger sound", or how do I get a "better sound". Or I might have gone into the territory of how do I sound more like, you know, pick a singer who has those sort of qualities.

But instead of going down that road, I thought, "*OK, let's look really closely... I know I've had lots of experiences where I really enjoyed singing and I know that I like it.*" People in general say, "*Oh, great voice, I love to hear you sing.*" So, it's not like good stuff has never happened... But it wasn't happening now. So I thought what am I doing differently now than those high value experiences.

And I saw a few things like I was imagining that the moment of singing was sort of three feet out in front of me and that it was something I had to get to. So my system was organizing itself around the narrow point about three feet in front of me. I recognized this is something that come up last year, feeling that the scene was about five feet in front of me was about the size of a deck of cards — a sort of "getting ready to act", and I want to do a good job in "the scene", and the scene is a small thing out in front of me, which I was surprised to hear from David that this sort of thing is not that unusual. It's absurd, because of course the scene is not an object, it's not five feet in front of me... None of that's true, but because I had already got that out on the table before I recognized that I was looking at the singing is an object in front of me and so, of course, everything is organizing itself around that.

So I thought, "*Well, I'm not doing anything to get that organization, that idea, but the part where I do have a decision is when I notice that I'm imagining the point of singing as being this small fixed point, I can notice that and I can not react at all to that. I can inhibit the reacting around, then just hold it as a question: The point in time when I start singing, is that actually this little thing out in front of me?*"

And I know enough now to allow for repeated experiments, I mean time was absolutely cheap — it was not a rented studio. With repetitions, not a lot, I mean with two or three repetitions, keeping in mind my notion of the point of singing as a small thing... I didn't have

to do anything to get rid of that... gradually it just started to appear as more and more funny, like, "*OK, it just isn't... That isn't even real...*" but I didn't have to talk myself out of it. I just said let's question this, let's keep repeating the experience. And one thing that I did, like actively did, is I thought, "I can't NOT have this thought jump into my head, because I'm not doing anything to get it -- it just jumps into my head, "*Oh, here it comes, here it comes...*" But I don't have to react further. I can go, "*Oh, here it comes, here it comes... isn't this interesting?*" And not do anything different because of that...

And I told the guy I was working with, I said, "*It's small and tight right now*", and he said, "*Yeah, it's tight, you're held back...*" and whatever... So I said, "*I'm going to have a couple of repetitions with this while I play around with something.*" And after about three of them, that whole concept of small object in front of me (sounds bizarre when I talk about it)... that wasn't happening anymore, so I had much more awareness of the entire room, I had more awareness of my friend who was doing the mixing. I was also able to imagine relationships with people who I might be trying to express something to in the song, or wouldn't it be neat if I was singing with so-and-so and communicating something with them. You know, a lot of good coordination to do with communication just came up naturally once I wasn't doing that other thing.

Then I did get a direction from the guy doing the mixing, "*Can you let it out more?*", making a gesture to adjust the width with his hands to show about making my singing bigger. We are really good friends and I am at ease communicating with him, but I really stopped myself because I really don't want to "do something" to get a bigger sound. I know I don't want to do that because I know that once I do that it means that I'm going to have to do that every single time if it's successful. I just don't want to get busy with that.

So I thought this is a good chance for an experiment, it's totally no pressure. What if I ... because this is what I do in rehearsal when a director gives me a direction and I think, "*Oh, how am I going to do that?*" ... I'm literally going to ask my system, "*I would like a sound that sounds bigger to my friend*", and I have no idea beyond that; I'm just going to stay with that's what I'd like.

I thought of the thing we talked about recently [*in our regular training group*] how the important thing is if you're going to do that experiment you really have to be willing to have it not happen. If it's really an experiment you really have to say I'm going to want that but I'm not going to do anything to get it. And that includes that it might not happen, I'm just going to see.

And again, 2 or 3 repetitions, and he was like, "*Oh, yeah, it's totally different. Listen to the playback.*" And this is the neat thing because it was recorded I could listen to the playback and I thought, "Wow, that sounds very different!" He said, "Look at the wave pattern. It is completely different." I could see, "Oh, yeah, it is".

And because I was still sort of hung up on sound because I got the headphones on everything and I can see the wave pattern while I'm recording, I wonder what would happen, I'm going to try a sort of biofeedback thing and I want the wave pattern to be even more like that. I'm not going to try anything to get it and I'm not going to worry about the sound. I'm just going to see what happens if I do it visually.

And I ended up with this totally cool gospel-ly the sound that I didn't even know I could do ! I didn't tell Chris what I was doing because I wanted to try it. All I was doing was looking at the wave pattern and going, "I'd like more of this... in the pattern... I don't know how I'm going to do that and I don't care what it sounds either. I'm just going to see...

I certainly got the big sound but because I'm not a practiced singer in that way one thing that did happen is I became "pitchy", the pitch was not exact... And when I was wanting to get my pitch exact, I was not getting the big sound. But I was able to go, "Well, how many times have actually done this? How many times have I done a recording session? I'm not a

professional singer. That's where I'm at right now. A bigger sounder than I thought is available to me, more interesting color in the tone. But right now that plus exact pitch don't go together. That's okay. That's something that comes, I think, when people practice. To get that now would be asking a bit much for a one-off.

I thought, "*That's interesting. I should clock this.*" And, were I to keep repeating this experiment it would be interesting to see, a year down the road, would pitch still be an issue? In this present case, he's working the program and said, "*Don't worry about pitchy, it's ridiculously easy to correct pitch because of the magic of Melodyne*". And as long as I don't get hung up on it with my ego he can correct it, and honestly I can't tell the difference and I have a pretty good ear. So I actually really had permission to get pitchy. But what he can't change is the actual sound quality and that's what's on there.

David:

There are a couple of things in here, and I bet it wouldn't even take a year if you were to stick with your experiment of knowing what you wanted and not trying to get it directly by doing something, I bet your system would refine what you're doing much quicker than that. Even in weeks if not quicker.

Marion:

Yeah? That would be great.

David:

There's something here to bear in mind to as you're working with people and that is this whole thing about, for lack of a better term, the space — that is, where you are, and what you're up to. You were talking about how you thought the sound is out there in front of you. Maybe that's because there's an actual microphone there, but however people are thinking of it, notice something interesting... He said it sounded like you were back in yourself, and you felt the song was out there, so relative to the out there you were back here.

Marion:

Ohh! That's interesting! Yeah...

David:

So from his point of view he's seeing you back there and you're seeing the song out there in front of you.

Marion:

Oh that is interesting, there's a correspondence. Yeah, he was saying something like you're held back. And I remember thinking, "*Okay now really get clear that I'm not doing anything to pull back, so there's no point in me trying to let go because I'm not trying to hold back...*" So… I'm back here thinking about the thing out here, and... I literally am!

David:

So you're back from it, which is out there from you. This is part of the way we've project things in space. You can see when someone is trying to figure out something that I'm saying, and they think the answer is over in me so as they struggle to try to understand they get pulled out so their head is out in front of their shoulders, but their attention is way over in me trying to get it. Or they go back into their memory to try to recall something by going way back into the inside of their head and you can see they are not here with you, they are way back there in something.

So once you realize this, sometimes you can just, without trying to do anything, you can

move those things around and play with it. For instance, when you are seeing the sound out in front of you, what if you just go out there into the middle of the sound?

Marion:

Wow ! That sounds like so much fun...

David:

You can move the space, that is, you can move yourself around into space. And it's not so much that you are doing things, you're just recognizing that, for whatever reasons you had projected or narrowed the space here or there — it is all a very elastic thing like a bubble — so if you can just move that bubble of space back around you and let it open out you'll be centred back in the present almost as if it is a movement of where things actually are in space.

Marion:

That's really neat, because a couple of times in this session I had a really high-quality experience when I was just kind of noodling around and I got immediate "*Oh, yeah, love that*" feedback and I thought, "*how cool, mark this, and what's going on at this time,*" and that was my experience…

That I'm just in the music which is all around me here. I'm hearing the horns here [*gestures to one side*] and hearing the bass here [*gestures to the other side*] and I'm having a nice 3D experience of sound. And within that I'm just playing, as if I'm climbing around on a jungle gym inside it.

However I describe it, that to me is a high-value experience, so just to notice that and refer back to it, that helped me a lot once I had a few of those. I thought, "*Okay, I know that feels good.*" So that's kind of like...

It would be really interesting to talk about this in terms of the actor working on a monologue or something, because you never hear that kind of talk about this. See, I can talk about this for myself from my own experience, but talking about it with somebody else, I'm not sure.

David:

Well, it's an odd one because most people aren't paying any attention to where they are in space. They often don't really know whether they've narrowed into themselves to feel something or narrowed off to think about something or narrowed into the computer to get as much work done as they can. They know the experience they have because of doing it, but they don't realize the connection with their attention. And it's not an easy one to get a teaching. But if you have people on a week-after-week basis you can start to get at it bit by bit. Once you see someone who's very centred in standing where they're in the centre of their space and they're open rather than narrowed or pulled out in front of them or back behind them or off into the future or back into the past.

You can even see it when people move off from standing, you can see which part of them moves first. For instance, their hips move first. So from this you can get an idea of how they feel themselves and how they conceive of their movements. For them, that is their idea of the movement. Or when they begin to sit, you can see people's attention leave you and go back and down and, in fact, they do move backwards off balance and down to the chair. You can see it.

To them that is just what the movement is, but, of course, that perception of themselves is what organizes them in the movement. It's a very spatially organizing factor. "*I am back here and I want to go out there, so I'm going to have to do something to get out there*

because I see out there as somewhere that's not where I already am. It's not included in my whole openness, it's another place out there, and I'm back here. So I'm going to have to do something to get my 'back here' all the way 'out there'."

But they've never had much in the way of experiences of change so they don't know how they're pulled around in space. They have no basis of comparison like the one you were just talking about.

Sometimes you can get at that by asking people, "*Where are you right now?*" "*Where's your attention?*" If you do this in a class, once you have one or two examples like this and you can get people exploring it won't take long before everybody will begin to get a sense of what you're talking about. And then they will be able to find it for themselves when they go about their rehearsals, their performance, and in their daily life.