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Rudolf Steiner's Art of Acting: an introduction

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers an introduction to Rudolf Steiner's Art of Acting. It notes that although Steiner is well known as a pedagogue across a wide range of fields and is developing a reputation as an artist in his own right, his indications for acting have not been fully taken up. This paper will argue that this is part of an overall pattern in which Steiner has either been secularized, or framed within a late nineteenth century occult revival. To redress this contextualizing, it is essential to re-examine Steiner's Goethean project. This allows the core aesthetic aspect of Steiner's contemplative approach to actor training to be uncovered. Thereby building a case for Steiner's inclusion among modernist thinkers on acting.

One

This paper offers an introduction to a little-known contemplative approach to acting: Rudolf Steiner's art of acting. This investigation draws on multiple sources and it notes that although Steiner (1861-1924) is well known as a pedagogue across a wide range of fields and has a developing reputation as an artist in his own right, his indications for acting have not been fully taken up. This paper will argue that this is part of an overall pattern in which Steiner has either been secularized or framed within a late-nineteenth-century occult revival. To redress this contextualizing, it is essential to re-examine Steiner's Goethean project, allowing the core aesthetic aspect of Steiner's contemplative approach to actor training to be uncovered. Further, by providing an elaboration of aesthetic education, principles can be established to explain Steiner's intentions with actor training, thereby building a case for the inclusion of Steiner, with his individual sequence of actor preparation, among modernist thinkers on acting.

In recent years there has been something of a renewed interest in Rudolf Steiner (1861 - 1924), not only as a philosopher, esotericist, a pioneer in education and organic farming, but also as an artist. In Germany in 2010-2011, for example, a major exhibition entitled 'Rudolf Steiner and Contemporary Art' examining the relevance of Rudolf Steiner's ideas, practices and worldview for

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contemporary artists, was presented in Wolfsburg and Stuttgart (Brüderlin, 2010, p. 9). In Australia in 2007-8, the National Gallery of Victoria hosted the blackboard drawings of Steiner and Joseph Beuys under the title 'Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition' (Holland, 2007).

Perhaps the most palpable legacy of Steiner's practice as an artist might be found in the innovative architectural, sculptural and visual aspects of the two Goetheanums in Dornach, Switzerland, designed and built under Steiner's guidance to provide a suitable space for the theatre events of the Anthroposophical Society, the flagship of the modern spiritual movement founded by Steiner. The first Goetheanum built in wood was completed in 1919 and burnt down on New Year's Eve of 1922; it was replaced by the still-active concrete version completed in 1928 after Steiner's death. The theatre events for which Steiner designed the venue included his own *Mystery Dramas*, written between 1910 and 1913 and great plays in the world canon such as Goethe's *Faust* which, in Steiner's view, had an implicit initiatory content. The *Mystery Dramas* break new ground in following the trials and breakthroughs of a group of people drawn to initiation over various lives. What academic scholarship that exists into Steiner's theatrical impulse has focused on the former productions (Chamberlain 1992; Gordon 1978; Lingan 2014), while professional theatre has been drawn to the latter. For instance, the 'Switzerland' section of *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre* explains that:

> One of the most unusual theatres in the country is the Goetheanum-Buhne in the city of Dornach, it was founded by the German theosophist Rudolf Steiner. Professional actors, eurythmists and teachers of eurythmy use the premises to express their interpretations of Steiner's ideas through dramatic techniques inspired by anthroposophy; their performances of Goethe's Faust have led to new interest in Steiner's work (Rubin, 1994, p. 838).

This paper will follow the interest of the professional theatre: the application of Steiner's indications for performing major works of world theatre.

Two

A person of extraordinary contemplative and practical activity, Rudolf Steiner produced an enormous body of work: his complete works number more than 330 volumes. Like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 -1832), whom he admired and whose work he built upon, Steiner's oeuvre straddled art, religion and science. Steiner sought what he conceived of as a higher union of each in a worldview which acknowledged spirituality, a union he framed under the name of 'Anthroposophy'. Across his writing, Steiner communicates quite a body of knowledge, making innovative contributions to many areas of human endeavour from medicine, science, philosophy, to education, special education, religion, economics, agriculture, architecture, the new art of eurythmy and drama.

Given the detail and complexity of Steiner's thought, and the tendency of that thought to be considered in terms of the occult, theatrical practitioners influenced by him—most significantly the leading actor and acting teacher, Michael Chekhov (1881-1955)—have tended to simplify and to secularize Steiner's indications in order to reach a wider public. Such a strategy is not dissimilar to that adopted by those promoting the twentieth century translation of Buddhist philosophy and practices into the largely secular movement of

mindfulness (Chamberlain 2003; Cristini 2015; McMahon 2017). In recent years, however, there has been a desire within the Chekhov movement by some to integrate Steiner's speech impulse with the Chekhov technique and embrace a less secular worldview. Significant developments have been the first publication of the complete edition of Chekhov's *To the Actor as On the Technique of Acting* by Mala Powers in which Chekhov's debt to Steiner is more evident (Chekhov 1991) and the fact that theatre-makers and teachers trained in Steiner's speech and drama techniques, such as Sarah Kane, Graham Dixon, Geoffrey Norris, Jane Gilmer, John McManus and Dawn Langman, are now either teaching in Chekhov training and/or contributing to such training with their literature (Ashperger 2008; Gilmer 2013; Langman 2014, 2014). The Chekhov stream has also become more aware of Michael Chekhov's Goethean aspects, thus pushing back the 'fear' of being tainted by the occult (Ashperger 2008; Pitches 2006). On the other hand, academic scholarship into Steiner's theatrical opus has stressed its occult character, its links to other contemporary and past esoteric traditions, and situates Steiner as part of a late nineteen century Occult Revival (Chamberlain 1992, 2003, 2004; Lingan 2006, 2010, 2014). Both approaches—secularization on one hand, and a focus on the occult on the other—have the effect of overlooking the prescience of Steiner's philosophical thought and its contemporary significance.

Furthermore, there is little academic literature in English on how Steiner's speech and drama impulse has been carried within the Anthroposophical Movement with their four-year, Goetheanum-accredited Speech trainings, with only four scholarly publications taking up this aspect of the practice (Anderson, 2011; Gilmer, 2013; Kimbrough, 2009; Langman, 2014). My 2011 article was an attempt to encompass Steiner's legacy in speech and drama in its historical and Australian context. Gilmer draws on her experiences at the Steiner Speech and Drama "Harkness Studio", making the case that Michael Chekhov's vision for the actor can only be fulfilled through a mastery of Steiner's indications for speech. Kimbrough offers a close analysis of Steiner's key 1924 lecture series on Speech and Drama. Unfortunately, Kimbrough appears to lack direct contact with Steiner speech and drama graduates apart from Robert Taylor, a former student of the Bridgmonts, and shows no knowledge of other core texts such as *Creative Speech* (from 1926) or the 1920 lectures on Recitation and Declamation (Steiner and Steiner-von Sivers, 1978; Steiner & Steiner -von Sivers, 1981). Langman provides the most comprehensive account to date of Steiner's speech and drama impulse building upon her mainstream training in speech and drama with first her Anthroposophical Speech training under Maisie Jones and later her mastery and integration of the Chekhov technique.

Still, with respect to Steiner Speech and Drama graduates, at least in the English-speaking world, some of the most interesting work has occurred where people trained in this way have also had a history in and/or future contact with mainstream professional theatre. For instance, Peter and Barbara Bridgmont were both well regarded professional actors before they undertook the Anthroposophical speech training in England in the 1970s (Bridgmont, 1992); Michael Chekhov employed Alice Crowther, a trained eurythmist and anthroposophic speaker, as part of the Michael Chekhov Studio in Dartington Hall (Chamberlain, 2004); and Mechthild Harkness, who went on to become a leading exponent of Steiner's Speech and Drama work, benefited from early close artistic collaboration with her

husband Alan Harkness, one of the leading teachers of the Chekhov technique and previously a pioneer of experimental theatre in Australia before his untimely early death (Harkness, 2016; Mitchell, 2014). Dawn Langman, who began in theatre education and the professional theatre, was a major figure in adult Steiner education before returning to professional theatre with her solo performances and work with Rosalba Clemente in Adelaide, Australia, as an actor and speech teacher (Langman 2014).

Steiner's influence in the field of theatre is multifaceted, for although not all Anthroposophical speech trainings teach acting, those that do, frequently do not use the Chekhov technique. The notable exceptions being Dawn Langman and Sarah Kane. For generally Anthroposophical trainings are less encumbered by public opinion or changing public tastes and so are not drawn to secularize Steiner's indications, but strive to work out of a conscious knowledge of Steiner's Anthroposophy in their art. For instance, Peter and Barbara Bridgmont, who ran Chrysalis Acting School in London from 1975 until the 1990s, developed their own technique (Bridgmont, 1992, 2019). Hans Pusch (1902-1976), in San Francisco and later in Santa Barbara, America, where he ran a speech school and later a repertory theatre from 1949 onwards, drew on 13 years of playing principal roles on the Goetheanum stage, 1926 to 1939, (Barnes 2005, p. 268); Mechthild Harkness (1923-1986) who ran the Harkness Studio in Sydney from 1973 to 1986 and the teachers who worked under her, Annika Andersdotter, Linden McCall, and Riana Vanderbyl, who still teach, see Steiner's speech and drama impulse as 'a seed or inspiration or a point of departure to evolve the Drama work out of the 'Logos', to develop the drama work into the future in connection with the 'Word' which obviously includes eurythmy' (Andersdotter, 2019; Vanderbyl, 2013).

Three

However, rather than explore these different streams, this paper will argue that in the light of recent interest in contemplative/mindfulness practices in acting, an introduction to Steiner's approach to contemplative actor training itself is a priority. Such an introduction needs to proceed by bracketing out both his modern interpreters, Peter Bridgmont and Dawn Langman, and his earlier interpreter, Michael Chekhov, simply because there is much more in Steiner's vision than is generally recognized. It is difficult to evaluate the creative contributions offered by these interpreters unless we are a very clear grasp of Steiner's indications in themselves, and the very modernity of his thinking.

There is no better way to assess the modernity of Steiner's thinking than to reflect upon his theory of knowledge. Steiner proposed an ecology of knowing—of knowledge as fundamentally relational—rejecting both idealist and materialist epistemologies, and, indeed, the false antimony that frames these perspectives as exhaustive and mutually exclusive. For Steiner, knowledge was a *human* problem requiring human solutions for in what other regard can we have any certainty? Those who look to technological solutions in education would do well to reflect on this.

Steiner acknowledged the suffering of modern experience of separation—humanity's estrangement from nature and confrontation with nothingness—but saw in it the potential of human freedom. Steiner's idea of knowledge as relationship starts with making friends with the

world, recognizing things in their own right as having intrinsic value, giving them the opportunity to reveal themselves. Materialism, Steiner explained, is a denial of such a relationship, taking the world instead as an object to be mastered (Steiner, 1968, 1979b).

Hence Steiner, like Goethe, is at odds with a 'value free objective' science and its ascension of the quantitative over the qualitative (Pitches 2006; Steiner 1968). The act of knowing for him then has moral significance as it changes the relationship between the knower and world. It is also pivotal to human freedom, as it is only by gathering understanding, real 'self' knowledge, that we can begin to act freely (Steiner, 1979a).

Like the phenomenologists Steiner sought no metaphysical grounding for knowledge, but trusted human thinking to provide cognitive stability, conditional on the realization that knowledge is a human problem or gift: in us, the world, which Steiner regarded as a singular totality, is broken up. Knowledge then, is the 'understanding' coming together of what has been separated in us into perception and thinking (Steiner, 1979b; Welburn, 2004).

Welburn argues that Steiner's epistemology, in shifting attention away from the architecture metaphor, of building the edifice of knowledge and in not seeking to provide foundations of knowledge, instead emphasizes human participation and perspective in knowing, anticipating not only theories like quantum mechanics and 'anthropic' science in physics but also highlights the need for a re-evaluation of Goethe's scientific research and methodology in the study of the natural world (Welburn, 2004, pp. 57-84). This combined with the foregrounding of human freedom in Steiner's thought, makes him one of our most contemporary thinkers.

For Goethe, recognition of the role of the interpreter in the making of knowledge was crucial. For instance, with respect to the theory of colour, Goethe held that Newtonians, by refusing to allow the see-er into the experience of colour, were led to speculative ideas to explain the phenomenon rather than directly finding meaning in the phenomena themselves (Welburn, 2004, p. 90-1). This means perception is not mere recognition but is capable of 'potentially infinite extensions of meaning' by an artist or thinker. This highlighting of 'interpretation' in knowing also brings together science and art since it regards neither as having a monopoly on truth. In following Goethe's suggestion that the scientist need not be only a collector of facts but direct on the world 'a perceptive power of thought' (Welburn, 2004, p. 90), we find parallels in the practice of art such as Picasso's range of thoughts and perceptions in his blue period.

A Goethean approach by maintaining a human involvement in seeking knowledge, avoids a conscious cognition leading to dry formulations. Steiner saw no need for art to source itself from the realm of the irrational or unconscious. On the contrary, Steiner advocated *consciousness* in artistic practice, but a consciousness distinguished from the 'rational' intellect:

> Illuminating with consciousness – that is what we have to strive for. Entering with consciousness into the instruments of speech does not mean feeling them intensely in a physical sense, it means freeing the sounds from the physical by penetrating them with consciousness and laying them into the stream of the breath. Consciousness takes hold of the essential nature of a thing and is carried along by it while the intellect can by-pass it in a very strange way. (The) intellect reflects, photographs, and thereby so easily acquires a mechanical and abstract character, becoming ever so more tenuous (Steiner and Steiner-von Sivers, 1981, pp. v-vi).

Techniques to enhance the actor's consciousness or the use of contemplative practices are of course not new in actor training. While (purportedly) 'scientific' approaches to acting were developed early in the period of modernity, many innovators were not exclusively scientific in their worldview or their practice. Edward Gordon Craig, Jacques Copeau, Constantin Stanislavski, Bertolt 5 Brecht, Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski all drew explicitly upon various 'others'—generally eastern and/or mystical traditions—to address what they understood as the limits of 'traditional' Western thinking. Innovations such as Stanislavski's circles of concentration have become part of the actor's tool kit (Stanislavsky, 1964) but often without the awareness of Stanislavski's debt to yoga and Buddhism (Chamberlain, 2014, pp. 3-4). Steiner's contribution to the introduction of contemplative practices into actor training, however, as Jonathan Pitches argues, has been largely overlooked, perhaps because he did not draw upon 'exotic' Eastern practices, but precisely because he strove to build upon the heterodox European tradition of Goethean science (Pitches, 2006, p. 130).

Like the other theatrical innovators, Steiner was responding to his context. The challenge to the arts of instrumental reason or the Enlightenment is well documented. German cultural critic Erich Heller has written well on this, noting the end of the Middle Ages as the beginning of a significant change in consciousness, when the symbol became 'merely symbolic':

> If Thomas Aquinas saw the link between poets and philosophers in their preoccupation with the marvellous, their modern successors seem united in the reverse; either they try systematically to strengthen or desperately to ward off, the predominance of the prosaic (Heller, 1975, pp. xiv-xv).

This is precisely Steiner's main endeavour with regard to the performing arts - a quest to restore poetry to performance in an age of prose. Steiner saw science, art and religion as distinct pathways to bridge the sundered world in us and valued all three. However, of the three, art plays an especially important role. Steiner describes the singular pursuit of 'truth' through science as making us more and more humble, eventually leading to nothingness or dehumanization. Art, by showing us how to respond to the world, restores us to ourselves:

> It is true that for Steiner the many-sidedness of the poet and artist was to be the new ideal for the philosopher too, but art, or man's faculty of 'aesthetic judgement' was never to lose its central position or claim to be—as the Romantics of England and Germany had argued with alternative reason and intuition—the highest and most perfect form of knowledge, because the most human. The apprehension of beauty, as Steiner once put it, 'comprises truth, that is selflessness; but it is at the same time an assertion of self - supremacy in the soul life, giving us back to ourselves as a spontaneous gift (Andrew Welburn cited in Steiner and Steiner-von Sivers 1981, pp. v-vi).

The philosopher Georg Kühlewind (1924-2006) usefully extends Steiner's indications for artist practice. A professor of chemistry, Kühlewind was a longtime contemplative who worked with the spiritual disciplines of Anthroposophy as developed by Rudolf Steiner and who built up an independent body of research published in several books. Particularly relevant is a 1993 essay titled "Art and Cognition", in which Kühlewind addresses the question of the components of an aesthetic education.

> (T)he pedagogy of art has two aims: on the one hand to educate the specific feeling sensibility which is characteristic for the perceptual field of the art-form; on the other hand, teach the technique of the art-form for the necessary interaction with its material medium (instrument, brush and paint, clay and stone, one's own body etc) so that the hand – and through the hand the whole body – can become a speech organ. This standard means that one has to educate an intelligent 'seeing' will, which finds its aims, goals and forms of movement not from thought representational mental pictures but carries the 'what of its will within itself. In essence, artistic 'technique' means this kind of seeing will in the respective medium (Kühlewind, 1993, p. 3).

Kühlewind observes that art and cognition appear to be easy to distinguish: art appears in the sense perceptual world, while cognition occurs our inner consciousness. Both, however, involve a creative element and thus share a common root. He describes the common source as their *logos* or *idea-nature*. For Kühlewind, the birth of an artistic idea involves two equally important first stages: will and feeling. New ideas emerge from a 'will' to come into being; a 'feeling' emerges from the will. This then in turn brings forth a 'living stream of thoughts', more distinct, but still without language. However, in time this "coagulates" into more or less consistent thoughts and crystallizes into words. For art, Kühlewind places particular emphasis on the stage of 6 feeling: "Once the cloud of feeling has formed, "Kühlewind explains, "the artistic phenomenon is immediately produced: living thinking and the level of thought are avoided" (Kühlewind, 1993, p. 2).

Although Steiner writes comprehensively on meditation in general, framing it as a core component of recommended human development in his teaching of Anthroposophy (Selg, 2010; Steiner, 1947, 1973, 2004) in his artistic trainings while providing artists in each discipline with specific meditations to be undertaken privately (Steiner 1998), he foregrounds the development of aesthetic judgement. There is, then, a clear distinction between contemplative practice for human development in general and contemplative practice in the specific context of the arts. In the course of 'general' human activity, Kühlewind points to the potential of meditation to extend that 'flash of understanding' we have when we grasp a new thought. Here the human subject consciously works backward through the stages of thinking, feeling and willing to approach the idea-nature. He refers to this process as the 'ladder of ascent'. Once a suitable theme - such as an inspired verse - has been chosen, the subject concentrates on it, focusing on the meaning independent of the words. The aim is for the thinking to come into 'living thinking', which has a feeling component. When this is achieved, the thinking is renounced, and the attention shifts to holding the feeling. If this is achieved, the feeling can then also be renounced and then the focus changes from feeling to willing attention. The aspiration at this point is to experience directly the idea-nature of the initial theme. Then the subject attempts to 'bring down' the insights gained, by taking the focus back to feeling, then living thinking and finally everyday consciousness.

Kühlewind argues the ladder of ascent is identical for one in search for artistic inspiration but divides on the descending path at the stage of cognitive feeling. For, at this point, in Kühlewind's words "the feeling meditation should not descend any further into the flow of thinking, but seize and steer the artistic intelligent will" (Kühlewind, 1993, p. 7). The

artist needs to train to allow the artistic will to obey the inspiration. There are various aspects to this: Kühlewind describes that each art has its own specific feeling or sensitivity "which is characteristic for the perceptual field of the artform" (Kühlewind 1993, p. 3) towards which the intending practitioner needs to be educated. Additionally, the techniques of the art form need to be well and truly practiced so that they afford transparency to the inspiration:

> Knowledge of the artistic medium means to unite the sense-organism - especially the sense of movement- with the tool or the instrument (in many arts the instrument is one's own body). This growing- together means the sense of touch and the sense of movement are extended into the instrument through feeling: a "feeling" of the piano's entire mechanism, the brush, the paint, the friction of the violin bow, etc. The instrument itself becomes a sense-organ, an organ of movement. The activity is entirely permeated with feeling, feeling which integrates the instrument: this guarantees that the activity is artistic, i.e. that it speaks (Kühlewind, 1993, p. 8)

Four

In his introduction to a 2002 edition of Chekhov's opus magnus *To the Actor on the Technique of Acting*, the highly regarded actor Simon Callow, diagnoses what he sees as a fashion for merely 'recognizable' truth—that is, a verisimilitude of a local, contingent reality—as the root of a crisis or decline in twentieth-century theatre acting. While Callow values the contribution Stanislavski has made to modern theatre practice, he argues that Michael Chekhov's approach addresses precisely this problem:

> (T)he central purpose of his teaching is to encourage the actor's respect for his or her imagination and the freedom to create from it. It opens up the possibility of a relationship with the audience, who once again can be introduced to the idea that actors provide them not with photographic facsimiles of life, but with works of art in which the actor's voices, their bodies and their souls are the medium for the production of unforgettable, heightened creations (Callow, 2002, p. xxi).

How are we to achieve these works of art? Steiner's main response is found in the 1924 Speech and Drama lectures, originally intended only for professional actors, but due to public demand opened to a wider public at the Goetheanum (Steiner 1959). The lectures divide into three sections: 'the forming of speech', 'the art of production and the art of acting', and 'the stage and the rest of mankind'. Steiner's principal focus, as pointed out earlier, is to restore poetry to performance in an age of prose. Students need to be awakened to aesthetic judgement through immersion in poetry and poetic dramas, and to develop an instinctive 'body' intelligence through practicing the Greek gymnastics. Words need to be restored to their sounds, weight, rhythm and physicality. The requisite sensibility is not unlike that evoked by Pablo Neruda:

> You can say anything you want, yessir, but it's the words that sing, they soar and descend…I bow to them..I love them, I cling to them, I run them down, I bite into them, I melt them down…I love words so much …The unexpected ones…The ones I wait for greedily or stalk until suddenly they drop….Vowels I love….They glitter like coloured stones, they leap like silver fish, they are foam, thread, metal, dew…I run after certain words….They are so beautiful that I want to fit them all into my poem…I catch

> them in mid-flight as they buzz past, I trap them, clean them, peel them, I set myself in front of the dish, they have a crystalline texture to me, vibrant, ivory, vegetable, oily, like fruit, like algae, like agates, like olives…And then I stir them, I shake them, I drink them, I gulp them down, I mash them, I garnish them, I let them go…I leave them in my poem like stalactites, like slivers of polished word, like coals, pickings from a shipwreck, gifts from the waves….Everything exists in the word. (Neruda, 1977, pp. 53-4).

Given that one of Steiner key concerns was assisting human being to develop toward 'freedom', he generally only offered fresh insights when prompted by a question or inquiry. With respect to the course in Speech and Drama in 1924, professional actor/director Gottfried Haass-Berkow was the chief instigator. He had already established a reputation as the principal figure in the revival of dramatic performance in the German Youth movement by touring Germany with his own company working out of Steiner's indications. So, later in 1993, when Rudolf Steiner Press wanted to publish a book of firsthand accounts of Steiner's influence across a whole range of activities, for acting they chose Haass-Berkow's article (Haass- Berkow, 1993). I will draw significantly upon this in summarizing the key features for Steiner in preparing for performance. Steiner identifies four key aspects in preparing for a role. First, 'moving from whole to part'; second, 'forming of the speech'; third, 'choreography of the part'; and finally, the 'imagination of the role'.

For acting to be an art, Steiner explained, we have to go beyond a feeling for 'ideas' and operate from a feeling for 'sound' and the 'word' (Steiner, 1959, pp. 120-44). In referring to 'from the whole to the part', Steiner not only means moving from the experience of the complete play to the individual scenes, but from the atmosphere of the scene to the acting within it. The thread running through all this is 'sound', in terms of vowels and consonants.

'Forming the speech' presupposes that the actor is a Steiner-trained speaker and is able therefore to embody a wide range of techniques to differentiate their speaking in an engaging manner for the audience. Such techniques include speech gestures, lyric, epic and dramatic styles of speaking, word gesture, sentence gestures, vowel moods, working with rhythms and metres as well as having a feeling for grammar. Against the late twentieth-century deskilling of the actor with body microphones, but in common with the nineteenth-century French actor, Constant Coquelin, Steiner was not interested in natural, everyday speech on the stage but a trained voice which can fill a theatre and handle poetic texts.

What, then, were Steiner's speech indications? He wished for the actor to have the equivalent artistry of the concert pianist (Steiner and Steiner-von Sivers, 1978, p. 100). To this end he provided a series of speech exercises addressing breath, fluency, articulation, and vowel placement (Steiner and Steiner-von Sivers, 1978). The recommendation was to practice each exercise one hundred times a fortnight. In terms of Kühlewind's model, proficiency in these exercises provides the conditions for the transparency of the artistic will.

> Reciting makes the same demands as playing the piano. To begin with you must know the rules, then they must become second nature so the listener does not notice that rules are being applied. By applying the rules, by introducing as much variation as possible, you give the impression of being natural. This is the case in every art (Steiner and Steiner-von Sivers, 1981, p. 100).

This is not to be learnt out of book or at a remove; Steiner recommended that the

beginner find a trained teacher and begin by imitation: “repeating and learning to hear… the sound in the air around you” (Steiner and Steiner-von Sivers 1978, p. 34). A master teacher in this approach continually is modelling an artistic interpretation of the spoken word.

In terms of preparing for performance, the idea was that the ‘speech’ should get to the point of being so shaped that the actor can stand outside it and allow his feelings to respond to it as an independent creation:

> letting it arouse in him joy and admiration, or again sorrow and distress.… He must feel it as something he has created and formed; and yet at the same time he himself must be there in his own form, standing beside the form he has created (Steiner, 1959, pp. 332-3).

The physical aspects of Steiner’s indications characterize the third aspect of preparing for a role, the choreography of the part. Here the body is conceived as an instrument: the actor, Steiner explains, should know their body as well as a violinist knows his violin (Haass-Berkow, 1993, p. 37). In order that the actor could be wholly conscious of their choreography in a scene, Steiner recommended, some scene rehearsal with a reciter who spoke all the parts, allowing the actor to concentrate exclusively on their physical movements (Steiner, 1959, p. 224). To develop the instinctive ‘limb’ intelligence of the actor, Steiner recommended exercises from the canon of Greek gymnastics - spear throwing to help with releasing the speech, and discus throwing to help with play of countenance (Steiner, 1959, pp. 5; 41-2; 175-97; 223).

In terms of the fourth aspect, imagination, Steiner recommended specific contemplative exercises. Gottfried Haass-Berkow, who was under Steiner’s guidance from 1912 to 1924 (the year of Steiner’s death) notes that yes, observation of life is of paramount importance for the actor but if we stay with the external form we are led to naturalism. On the other hand, “imitation of a form that is beheld in the imagination leads to style” (Haass-Berkow, 1993, p. 38) and Steiner’s indications were to develop style, and to that end, Haass-Berkow recalls, he gave the following advice:

> Try to build up a clear picture of some monologue or short scene. See the picture before you. You will need to hold it there for five minutes, no more. Next morning try to see it all backwards, to see it as a continuous series of pictures in the reverse order. This is a very good exercise, for it will mean you are no longer bound to the thread of the thought…Liberated from yourself, you begin to have positive joy in playing your role. Practice in this exercise takes one right away from any expression of self in the part…and teaches one to present the part objectively. (Steiner cited in Haass-Berkow, 1993, p. 38).

Indeed, Haas-Berkow claimed, for Steiner, imagination was the most important aspect of creative activity on the stage. Here, in 1921, Steiner offered Shakespeare as an example, noting Shakespeare had “a remarkable faculty of beholding the characters of his plays”, seeing them “before him in imagination as objective pictures” which enabled “him to creep inside them and know them from within” (Haass-Berkow, 1993, p. 36). This Steiner advocated actors develop in their training.

To explain this further, Haass-Berkow recalled that Steiner cited the well-known Viennese character-actor, Josef Lewinski, to explain how to approach the part:

> I would of course simply not be able to play at all if I were to depend upon the little hunchback figure standing there on the stage, with his croaking voice and frightfully ugly face; he would never do anything! On the stage I am composed of three persons. The first is the little hunchback. The second is completely outside this hunchback figure, and leads a purely ideal existence; but then I must have him there before me all the time. Finally I myself creep out of both of these and am the third, who plays with the second upon the first—upon the hunchbacked Lewinski (Haass-Berkow, 1993, p. 37).

Not dissimilar to Michael Chekhov, Haass-Berkow analysed this thus: an "artistically creative ego (No. 3) plays, with the imagined figure of his part (No. 2) upon the instrument of his body (No. 1)" (1993, p. 37).

In terms of the contemplative aspects of preparing for a role, Steiner advises the actor to be attentive to his dreams and to the difference between those experiences and those of being in the thick of everyday life. What then is the final preparation? A weaving together of the 'formed speech', which, like a musician, the actor should be able to do in their sleep, and a practiced dreaming though the role in the play, such that the actor is able to tear themselves free of the dreaming to produce and reproduce the speaking with ease and freedom (Steiner, 1959, p. 337)

This whole approach is grounded on Steiner's intuition of a fundamental connection between the spoken word and the 'life world'. Simon Callow, quoted above, draws attention to this demonstrating Michael Chekhov's debt to Steiner, for as far as the text was concerned, Callow writes,

> Chekhov had an almost mystical relationship to language, crystallised by his exposure to Steiner's Eurythmy. He insisted on the vital importance of sound, of the vibrations which were released within the actor and within the audience by the consonants and vowels themselves (Callow 2002, p. xix).

Eurythmy is a new art of movement developed by Steiner, which he noted would be particularly useful to the actor (Steiner 1959, p. 24). Pitches explains that to develop Eurythmy, Steiner looked to Goethe, who had sought "to discern the Whole in the tiniest individual thing": the archetypal form or Urorgan (Pitches, 2006, p.135). For Steiner, for example, "the larynx—responsible for the creation of sound in humans—is the Urorgan of the musical body as a whole" (Pitches, 2006, p. 140). Steiner's claim was that Eurythmy makes visible, with and through the whole body, what is occurring in the larynx. Indeed, there has been some empirical research to support this claim: Serge Maintier, trained in Steiner's art of speech and drama, completed a recent doctorate on the aerodynamics and morphodynamics of speech sounds in the breathing process and was able to demonstrate experimentally "that segmentation of speech signals correlates with speech air-flow figures, and hence it could be represented, as Steiner does in an 'art of movement'" (Maintier, 2016, p. ix).

Steiner's claim of the link between the 'life world' and world of consonants and vowels is that the world of life works from periphery to centre, drawing "the living from the womb of the lifeless" (Steiner, 1973, p. 15) in contrast to gravitational forces which diminish the further they are from their centre of mass. The Eurythmist's task, then, is to make visible through movement this world of life. In this they are assisted by the correspondences that exist between the human being and the cosmos. Here Steiner is taking up and extending the ancient notion of the interrelationship of the microcosm and the macrocosm. In Speech Eurythmy, Steiner identifies the macrocosmic

gestures of the consonants from the Zodiac and macrocosmic gestures vowels from the planets (Spock, 1980, pp. 72-99). The music of the spheres' is not an inappropriate metaphor.

In developing Eurythmy, Steiner created a new way for music and poetry to be expressed in artful movement. The former, the expression of music in movement, he termed 'Tone Eurythmy' and the latter, the expression of poetry in movement, 'Speech Eurythmy'. However, what is not sufficiently appreciated is the crucial role played by the speaker for eurythmy: he or she must provide life and movement in the speaking, the 'world of life' of the poem, so that eurythmist can move it. The speaker and the eurythmist are two sides of the one coin: one totally in the speech and other totally in the movement. The actor, in Steiner's indications, works from the same 'life world' but never reaches these polarities, neither wholly in the speech, nor wholly in the movement, although there are definite relationships between the partial speech and partial movement of the actor as the same underlying gesture speaks through both (Haass- Berkow, 1993, p. 39).

In addition to the pivotal role of Eurythmy, we can also identify what, for Haass-Berkow, were the key two themes to illustrate Steiner's approach to acting: creative activity on the stage, and the interconnection of speech and gesture. Steiner had noted of a 1921 meeting with the actors in the Goetheanum that many felt having a conscious art would rob the artists of their naivety and instincts. He reassured them that there was no need to fear that with the approach he was indicating; indeed, he explained conscious creative activity on the stage was a necessity (Haass-Berkow, 1993, p. 36).

While, as noted before, Haass-Berkow singled out the importance of imagination in Steiner's indications on acting, he also identified the significance of the interconnection of speech and gesture. He describes that in rehearsal, were he to shut his eyes, he could hear from the way the actors were speaking what movements they were making. Miriam Margolyes describes a similar connection in finding her way into a character: "I first try to find the voice and am told I change physically even as I speak, though I am not aware of it." (Luckhurst and Veltman, 2001, p. 74)

Steiner used this correspondence between speech and gesture as a way to bring more gesture into speech. He indicated six underlying possible gestures for speech: effective, thoughtful, feeling forward against hindrances, antipathy, sympathy and drawing back on one's own ground (Steiner, 1959, pp. 53-4). There is not space in this current essay to detail these gestures, but I will explain how they are introduced by taking the first one as an example. The methodology is as follows: first, practicing the gesture solely with the body, in this case 'pointing' in various ways, and then bringing this gesture of 'indicating' into the spoken word by practicing it together with the physical gesture and finally having it just in the speech with no physical gesture.

Indeed, Chamberlain argues that psychological gesture—that which is often regarded as the principal aspect of the Chekhov technique (Chamberlain, 2004, p. 73) stems from Steiner's insight into the interrelationship of speech and gesture (Chamberlain, 1992, pp. 78-9). Although, for Steiner himself, vowels and consonants are the primary means to shape the character. For instance, Steiner wrote of the character of Danton in Hamerling's *Danton and Robespierre*:

> We shall find, if we have understood the play aright, that Danton will express his own soul

best if we connect with him the sound-feelings: **ä** (ay in say), **i** (ee); **ä i.**

Danton: **ä i**

To act the part with this sound-feeling will bring the jovial side of nature to expression; there will be something large and generous about his manner as he comes on the stage, then, if you come to a really deep understanding of him, you will instinctively be tempted to let him walk like this: knees held rather stiff, and feet firmly planted on the ground. You will even feel that his arms too should be a little stiff at the elbow; he will move them as though he could not bend them right up, but only at a rather obtuse angle. Yes, you could very well have the impression that Danton is a man who would never be able to sing either a major or minor third!

If this is the feeling you have about his character, then you may be sure the true Danton will be there on stage, taking his right place among the other characters. And you will be impelled to let him be constantly making gestures with the mouth that help him to produce the right tone of voice, pressing the lips forcefully into the corners of the mouth. Danton should, in fact, be spoken with lips nearly closed and stretched to their utmost, but as if at the corners of the mouth they met with some powerful resistance….And you will further discover, if you are prepared to carry your expression of the character so far, that Danton will have to speak every **j** (y as in 'yacht') and every **l** (and whatever sounds that resemble them) in a manner that is all his own. So we have for

Danton: **ä l j l**

(Steiner ,1959, pp. 293-5)

Haass-Berkow describes how such exercises take acting away from naturalism, and allow it to become, instead, 'objective':

> When formed on the stage in this objective manner, even a cruel scene will win applause from the audience for its art, whereas the very same scene performed naturalistically and subjectively will arouse only abhorrence and disgust (Haass-Berkow, 1993, p. 39)

In a Steiner approach to acting, the education of artistic sensibility and mastery of the technique is achieved by undertaking a four-year training under qualified teachers, who model the aesthetics, and teach a conscious mastery of the techniques. Actors using this approach work with the breath as the life element and artistically shape the sounds, consonants and vowels, to bring out the colour and sculptural elements of a poem, character, scene or play, much as musician will interpret a composer's score. A modern sample of Steiner's drama work is 2017 production of *Faust* at the Goetheanum which can be seen on YouTube (Goetheanum 2017).

Five

To conclude, it is instructive to read Andrei Belyi's observations of Steiner as public speaker and actor. Steiner was fortunate in having such a witness, as Belyi's novel *Petersburg* was regarded by Vladimir Nabokov as one the four greatest novels of the twentieth century (Jones, 2015). Belyi writes about Steiner's earthy enjoyment and artistic talent in directing the Nativity plays which had survived in the peasant populations of Germany. In general, Belyi's impression of Steiner as a lecturer reminds him in gesture and mimicry of his friend, the great Russian actor Michael Chekhov playing Hamlet, with something also of the Hungarian composer, Arthur Nikish. He also describes his experience of witnessing the moment when Steiner stepped in to demonstrate to the cast how to perform a part: first as a shepherd in one of the Christmas plays (here he compares Steiner to the famous Russian actor Pavel Motschalov) and later as Mephisto in Faust. In both cases Steiner totally commits to the part, afterwards it seems requiring a moment to return to himself:

> “Not, not like that, that is not a Mephisto!” he exclaimed. He sprang up onto the stage with one nimble leap, almost impatiently took the script-book from the startled actor, and began to read the part of Mephisto with enthusiasm, then to play it, and finally confronted the eurythmist-angels as the very incarnation of Mephisto. A loathsome, hoary old man stood there on the stage. He was particularly repulsive and uncanny at the moment Mephisto is bombarded with roses by the angels and becomes enamored by them. Right in front of the angels, the devil is transformed into an old man, a doddering old man who whispers dirty and pitiful declarations of love to the angels. This was not the Doctor anymore; this was the Devil. At the conclusion of the monologue, he himself seemed surprised. He remained standing on the stage and wiped his forehead. “This is how one must act!” – those were, I believe, his words (Belyi 1978, p. 30).

The aspiration of this paper has been to show the contemporary nature of Steiner’s thought and to make a case that Steiner’s significance for actor training extends beyond the Occult Revival of late nineteenth and early twentieth century and his well-documented influence on the Michael Chekhov technique. Thus, presenting a case for Steiner’s inclusion among modernist thinkers on acting because he offers the modern actor a comprehensive and systematic aesthetic education of acting based on a Goethean re-discovery of the ‘life’ and ‘imagination’ inherent in language.

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