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LECTURER: RON KRIKAC (with TF adds)
INTERP

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FOCUS ON CHARACTERIZATION

The goal in DI/HI is to recreate believable characters, making them seem real and living to the audience.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN DI AND ACTING

In-so-far as both terms involve feeling, response, characterization, physicality, movement, there is no difference. In DI, props are not utilized, although precise pantomime is permitted. With acting, characters have on-stage focus--they see each other face to face. In DI/HI, characters employ off-stage focus--one sees/visualizes another in the audience's direction.

TOTAL PERFORMANCE

A forensic performance occurs from head to toe--it is a total body--and not just waist up--performance. The best performance will carry the audience out of the room into the living apace and lives of the characters.

EFFECTIVE SELECTIONS OVER THE YEARS IN THE NFL (VARIES)

They tend to be modern to contemporary. The main character tends to be sympathetic, triumphing, somewhat, at the end. Most (85%) cuttings come from plays, and deal with characters in conflict. Whether in DI or HI, cuttings have characters that respond to change. Symbolic and allegorical works as well as science fiction pieces tend not to work well with the typical audience.

They tend to have clear structure, beginning with an exposition, moving to a climax, and coming to a resolution. For the MOST part, effective selections have progressions unbroken by narration, but this is not always the case. Pieces that have character reversals tend to work well.

Lately, DI monologues have been advancing into finals and late elims at NFL Nationals.

THE BEST SCRIPT FOR THE PERFORMER

It is: one s/he likes; one that contains at least one character that is close to the performer; one that contains a character whose stance resembles the performer's; one that is within the performer's vocal intellectual, and emotional range; one whose characters have some depth; one containing characters with whom the performer can empathize.

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THE QUALITY SCRIPT

It is true to human experience; one that has universal meaning; one that offers sufficient challenge; one that explores various internal and external levels; one that is appropriate in subject matter.

EXPLORING A SCRIPT

1. READING it several times, one time being ALOUD
2. LOOKING UP all unclear words.
3. COMBINING THE PLAY for details about characters; being as specific as possible, consider what the author tells you, what characters say overtly or covertly, what characters do overtly or covertly, what characters say about each other (recognizing that sometimes they lie).
4. FLESHING out, or PHYSICALIZING, the discoveries.
 - (a) translate descriptions into PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS
 - bend knees to adjust for height
 - change body weight
 - adjust tempo of character movement
 - adjust body carriage for age
 - (b) translate traits into MANNERISMS
 - nervous types play with hair, blink
 - shy types avert, turn inward
 - bold types sprawl, puff out
 - anal types have jerky, economic movements
 - and so on
 - (c) develop VOICES
 - assign different voice registers to maximize/insure distinctions: soprano, alto, tenor, base
 - (d) discover RELATIONSHIPS
 - how do two characters relate to each other? consider the apparent relationship (husband and wife) and the subtle one (master and slave)
 - how do the characters show mixed emotions simultaneously: how do the aforementioned spouses love and hate at the same time?

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(e) map out the TERRAIN

- PLOT: discover scene progressions, with minor climaxes leading to the major one.
- CHARACTER: show logical development, involving the deepening of a trait or the emerging of a latent one.
- CONFLICT: show how it begins, how it progresses, and how it comes to a head.
- DEPTH: expose each character's full and real personality; every villain is capable of tenderness; every holy roller is capable of sin; every serious scene has some humor; every angry moment contains some love.

(f) BUILD A SUBTEXT

- Figure out, line by line, what the characters want, what the characters are thinking, feeling, remembering, sensing.

Dramatic Interpretation

Piece Selection

Use the following standards when selecting a drama piece:

1. Do you identify with the main character, theme, conflict ?
2. Does the main character fit you personally [voice, face, physical]?
3. Do we genuinely like the main character (s)?
Do we care about their conflict?
4. Does the language of the play engage you as a reader?
5. Is there a wide variety of levels which build to the climax? [shape]
6. Does the ending leave us with a strong resolution?

Cutting your Selection: "Cha Cha Cha Method"

1. "CHUNK" it:

find the various sections of your piece
give brief plot synopsis of the play
name each section [one to two words only]

2. "CHUCK" it:

throw out the sections that you do not like
do not worry about sections which may be important to the plot
at this point, you may realize that you don't like the piece as much as you thought you did

3. "CHOOSE" it:

these are the four most vital minutes of you piece

- a. Climax -- choose this section first
-- include the building of intensity
-- there should be no breathing in the audience
-- approximately one to two minutes
- b. Resolution -- the message of your piece should be here
-- this section should give us hope
-- there should be an incredible last line
-- it should be less than one minute
- c. Teaser -- this section should get our attention and set the mood
-- we should be introduced to the main character (s)
-- it should be less than one minute
- d. Introduction -- should mention the theme or message [a quotation is good]
-- should describe the relationship between the characters
-- should tell all the important information

4. "CHUM" it:

this section is the rising action which builds the conflict
 it should lead into the climax smoothly, be aware of the "shape"
 this section should make us like the main character
 include humor, if possible
 create audience identification
 each piece of rising action should be approximately the same length
 each piece of rising action should be at a different "emotional level"
 - keep us engaged with variety

5. "CHIP" it:

these are "trimming cuts" or the cutting of specific lines and words
 this step should help to maintain the balance of each section
 this is the most difficult step, it is a painful step, it must be done soon
 before you get attached to material which will get cut eventually
 this step is a last resort, you should be down to at least 10 minutes before "chipping"

6. "CHECK" it:

time it NOW !!!!!!!
 It is better to be short than long [you can always add]
 use time to determine the "shape" of your cutting -- find a balance

7. "CHEAT" it:

Hopefully, you will not need this step
 BUT, it is the adding of lines and brief sections to either
 make your cutting make sense
 Or
 make your cutting flow better

Character Charts

"Interpretation is a series of CHOICES... most of them wrong"
 -- Pam Cady

1. Vocal Character:

- Primary Goals -- to give contrast and variety [do not play it safe, Risk]
 -- to make choices for each character [know the range or extremes]
 -- "I Believe You."

Vocal Choices -- pitch. Do not depend on this, find a range
 -- rate. Characteristics and traits, but do not rush
 -- volume. Adjust to the room
 -- quality or tone. Resonant, nasal, breathy, husky, warble, accents
 -- articulation. Exaggerated, crisp, loose, mushy

2. Physical Character:

Primary Goals -- to make the audience see and believe
 -- to use the total body
 -- "I Believe You."

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Body Positions -- areas, Knees | Torso/Shoulders | Neck/Head |
| [tension] | [heart] | [thinking] |
| -- levels, 1=normal | 2=tense | 3=flex |

Eyes -- "squint" to "wide"

Tension -- movements are "tense" to "relax"

Two characters cannot have the same body levels.

3. Character Charts:

these are a series of CHOICES, which may be wrong
 use the charts for consistency and reference during practice
 you can ALWAYS change the chart

Text Analysis and Commitments

A "Commitment" is a dedication to an attitude or emotion until it becomes visible

-- Pam Cady and Joe Wycoff

"Everything Beats the Word"

"The best Interp is done in Silence"

"Slow will go... Fast is last"

"I Believe You"

Use your body, face, and eyes to express your commitment

Be specific with the wording of each commitment

1. Monologues:

- a. Keep it brief, one or two words at the most
- b. Should change often, every phrase if possible

2. Dialogues:

- a. Always direct it toward the other character
- b. Keep it brief and simple, do not psychoanalyze the characters

3. OBJECTIVES:

- a. Definition -- your goal toward the other character
- b. Keep it active -- to _____[verb]
- c. One character begins the "beat" [or set of objectives]
- d. The other character matches in response
- e. Ask -- "What do you want from the other character?"
- f. The "beat" changes with a new set of objectives
 one character wins or decides to move on

4. TACTICS:

- a. Definition -- the means of achieving the objective
- b. Keep it active -- _____ing [verb], emotion, or attitude
- c. Tactics grow in intensity during the "beat"
- d. The other person must match the intensity and respond appropriately
- e. Ask -- "How are you going to get what you want?"
- f. The more tactics per objective, the better

Performance Techniques for Dramatic Interpretation

- 1. Focal Points
 - each character in the scene focuses onstage
 - really BELIEVE in your focal points, interact with them
 - in Drama, keep them as close together as possible
 - focus down a bit, just over the heads of your audience in the back

- 2. Visualization
 - when in a dialogue, create other events/props/characters
 - keep it as real as possible, react to what you are seeing
 - place the visual image in a believable position

- 3. Character Pops
 - this is the transition between the characters
 - it relies on every aspect of your physical character [esp. Body levels]
 - pop into your commitment [Everything Beats the Word]

- 4. Gesture
 - there are four basic movements for your character
 - your character pop may start at any of these stages
 - a. neutral, hands at your side [maintain energy in your arms]
 - b. gesture, must be meaningful and add to your commitment
 - c. freeze position, control each gesture
 - d. "the move", either to neutral or a new gesture [controlled]

- 5. Phrasing
 - slight pauses which allow you to breathe
 - this will prevent you from "dropping" the ends of the phrase

- 6. Pausing
 - longer pauses, usually for a change in commitment

- 7. Commitments
 - in delivery, the change of commitment must be clear and specific
 - It must involve your face, eyes, body, gestures, and voice

Performance Techniques for Humorous Interpretation

1. Focal Points
 - each character in the scene focuses offstage
 - really BELIEVE in your focal points, interact with them
 - in Humor, keep them as close together as possible
 - focus down a bit, just over the heads of your audience in the back
2. Visualization
 - when in a dialogue, create other events/props/characters
 - keep it as real as possible, react to what you are seeing
 - place the visual image in a believable position
3. Character Pops
 - this is the transition between the characters
 - it relies on every aspect of your physical character [esp. Body levels]
 - pop into your commitment [Everything Beats the Word]
 - a reaction alone may get you a laugh
4. Gesture
 - there are four basic movements for your character
 - your character pop may start at any of these stages
 - a. neutral, hands at your side [maintain energy in your arms]
 - b. gesture, must be meaningful and add to your commitment
 - c. freeze position, control each gesture
 - d. "the move", either to neutral or a new gesture [controlled]
5. Phrasing
 - slight pauses which allow you to breathe
 - this will prevent you from "dropping" the ends of the phrase
6. Pausing
 - longer pauses, usually for a change in commitment
7. Commitments
 - in delivery, the change of commitment must be clear and specific
 - It must involve your face, eyes, body, gestures, and voice

All three "touchstones" are clearly related. Sometimes they are not present in equal force, but if any one quality is totally absent or extremely weak, you will do well to look elsewhere for material.

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 (This section is based on information taken from INTERPRETATION, 2nd EDITION by Alethea Mattingly and Wilma Grimes)

A Note on Interpretive Objectives

A program should yield a sense of "going somewhere," of one thing (or piece) leading to another, and of "coming full circle."

The audience should feel that the interpreter has reached his/her objective and that the listening has been worthwhile.

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 (This section is based on information taken from THE COMMUNICATIVE ACT OF ORAL INTERPRETATION, 2nd EDITION by Keith Brooks, Eugene Bahn, and L. LaMont Okey)

Your Personal Examination of Literature

1. **Title.** When the oral interpreter and the interpreter's audience are aware of the significance of the title of a piece, it will serve as a clue and make possible a richer and more complete understanding of the material for both interpreter and audience.
2. **Theme.** Sometimes a topic sentence in a story or poem may also be a clue to its meaning. It may tell you what the literature is trying to say. This is the piece of literature's theme.

The theme usually grows out of the writer's experience. Very often the subject has a wide appeal to mankind (it has universality). It is essential that you understand the theme of the material and its relationship to the entire literary selection, even though it may not be in accord with your own view point.

3. **Meanings of Words.** The dictionary definition of a word does not always give the meaning of the word as intended by its context. The author has a certain meaning in mind which he/she tries to convey in the written story, poem or other piece of literature. You may have another meaning in mind when you read it aloud, and the listener to your reading may have still another meaning in mind when hearing the piece.

While all three, the author, the interpreter, and the listener, have the same word in mind, differences exist because of the variety of experiences and associations each person has had. T.S. Eliot said, "... what a poem means is as much what it means to others as what it means to the author." The same is true of words; words do not have meanings, people have meanings. Your task as an interpreter is to help your listener to attach to the words of the literature those meanings that you believe are appropriate to the intended literary experience.

4. **Symbolism.** Probably the most important symbols are the vast numbers of words we have created to represent actions of our bodies and our minds. Through these word-symbols we have been able to create and develop a complexity of ideas that serve as a medium of understanding between people.

But, word-symbols offer a tremendous range of subtle shadings of meanings, so, even though several people see or hear the same words, each individual has a background of unique life experiences that give the words special and individual meanings. Therefore, each piece of literature has special and individual meanings (through word-symbols) for each person.

5. Allusions. Frequently writers make references to places, events, or characters to strengthen or clarify an idea. These references are called allusions, and they help sharpen meanings and often carry great emotional power. A good writer will use his allusions with great care, for they can make an otherwise mundane description very memorable. But, if the allusions are too vague then they hinder, rather than help, understanding.
6. Attitude. When you study a piece of literature, try to discover what viewpoint (or attitude) the literature is attempting to establish.

The writer may reinforce an attitude through choice of words, figures of speech, linguistic structuring, rhythm, tempo, and repetition.

7. Critical and Historical Investigation. In addition to studying the text of the literature, it will help you to go beyond that to see if there are other pertinent facts you need to know. For example, it is often valuable to read critical comments about the author or by the author. (What do the critics say about the author's work? What does the author say, either about his/her own work or about that of another writer?) The author may, in an essay, or poem, or other work, give his/her philosophy of writing.

For critical reviews of literature you may turn to THE SATURDAY REVIEW, THE KENYON REVIEW, CURRENT BIOGRAPHIES, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, THE EDUCATIONAL THEATRE JOURNAL, CELEBRITY REGISTER, BIOGRAPHY INDEX, PUBLICATIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION (PMLA) and CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS, among many others.

Also, frequently a knowledge of the times and society in which the writer lived will provide meaningful insights. These insights may come from biographies, autobiographies or letters or from the social history of a period, to name just a few sources.

Bibliographic Information

The Communicative Act of Oral Interpretation, 2nd Edition, Keith Brooks, Eugene Bahn, and L. LaMont Okey. Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston, 1975.

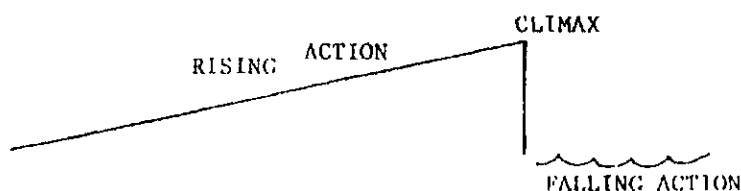
Interpretation, 2nd Edition, Alethea Mattingly and Wilma Grimes., Wadsworth Publishing Company., Belmont, California, 1970.

Oral Interpretation, 7th Edition, Charlotte I. Lee and Timothy Gura, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1987.

- I. CHARACTERIZATION AND MATERIAL SELECTION
 - A. CHARACTERIZATION EXERCISE - the importance of only one thought to the creation of a character
 - B. WHY CHARACTERIZATION IS IMPORTANT
 1. creates depth
 2. creates believable characters
 3. eliminates boring characters
 4. creates sympathy for your characters with audience
 - C. HOW TO CREATE A CHARACTER
 1. IDENTIFY - study your script
 - a. understand lines
 - b. understand stage direction/director's notes
 - c. analyze character's interaction
 - d. find the hidden meaning (subtext)
 2. INTELLECTUALIZE - doing your homework
 - a. ask questions about characters (i.e. economic background; childhood memories; marriage status; favorite food/hobby/etc.)
 - b. winners ask questions, losers look for answers
 - c. "AS-IF" statements - statements used to relate a character of situation that is not in your life vocabulary to a similar character or experience that is
 3. INTERNALIZE - the process of taking your homework and putting it within yourself
 - a. emotions and actions flow from internal character dispositions, not because you think they are cool
 - b. don't beat us with emotion
 - c. let the inherent emotion of script shine through
 - d. motivate all actions and reactions
 4. MOLD YOUR PERFORMANCE; ALLOW IT TO GROW
 - D. SUMMARY
 1. Why Characterization is Important
 2. The Three I's
 - a. IDENTIFY
 - b. INTELLECTUALIZE
 - c. INTERNALIZE
 3. Christian's Final Words - "Remember Don't Get COMPLACENT or COCKY, Your Work is Never Done."

II. CUTTING LECTURE

- A. Choose - read and re-read play
- B. Mark pages of play that interest you with a pencil
- C. Have one complete copy of play
- D. Make one copy of pages you marked
- E. Decide on the pattern of your cutting



- F. Place pieces of material on paper in columns (2 1/2 for DI, 4 for III)
- G. Ending in place first
- H. Teaser placed second (teaser is like a 30 second preview)
- I. Place rest of cutting in place like a puzzle
- J. Tape cutting to paper
- K. Make copies of cutting

III. TECHNIQUE

This involves the specifics of **WHAT** you technically do in your performance.
Remember:

- A. "Everything Beats the Word"
- B. "You Do Your Best Interpreting in SILENCE".
- C. the Hula-Hoop
- D. the gesture zone
- E. gestures: "Lift and lay" (think of the "string" idea)
- F. pantomime: use sparingly; practice with the REAL object, if possible
- G. focal points: be consistent; visualize - "see" the scene; go away from your spot as if in thought; should be moved crisply (go "eye-to-eye," not "eye-to-floor")
- H. believability is the objective in gestures, posture and reaction
- I. legs!
- J. that your character needs to be established from head to toe
- K. the 30 second eye drill
- L. to move with the leg in the direction you're going
- M. to keep your fingers natural
- N. to make your folder an extension of your arm/hand
- O. to turn pages (reading) as if you're "discovering" the script
- P. to use all of your range

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|------|--------|
| P | E |
| I | M |
| RATE | O |
| C | T |
| H | PACING |
| | O |
| | N |

- Q. "slow might go," but "too fast is last"
- R. when character changes, **EVERYTHING** changes
- S. not to leave your spot until the character's line is totally finished
- T. commitment
- U. 3 body positions

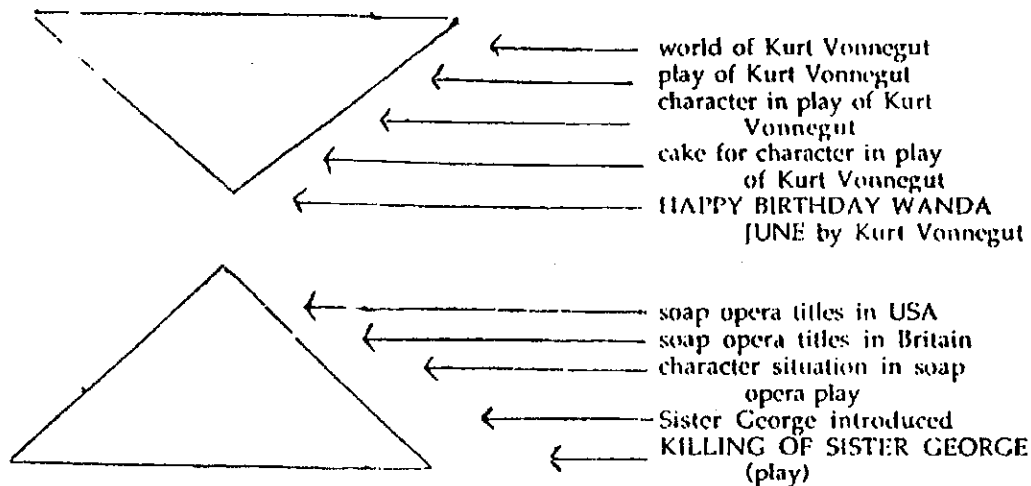
IV. Style

This is when you can take the correct aspects of A and B (strengths of **CHARACTERIZATION**, **MATERIAL**, and **TECHNIQUE** and apply your own individual personality.

V. INTRODUCTIONS (clarity, cohesion, commonality with audience, conversational, concise, creative)

The main purpose of an introduction, simply stated, is to prepare the audience to listen to your cutting. Unfortunately, defining this goal is much easier than achieving it. Following are some guidelines that will hopefully aid you in preparing a more effective introduction.

- A. Keep the intro in its place! Intros, while important, are not THE most important factor in forensic success. Chances are your talent, technique, and material will play a larger role in your success or failure. It's better to have a mediocre intro and a great cutting than vice versa. However, that doesn't mean that a poor intro won't drag you down. It will.
- B. It's their first impression; don't blow it! Since the intro is the ONLY place the audience has a chance to see YOU, don't rob them of it by either not being conversational or not being polished.
- C. Don't lose the audience! When writing the intro, you must think of the audience. Think not as the person who is performing, but as the audience LISTENING FOR THE FIRST TIME!
- D. Tell them why they should listen. Don't forget to relate your material to the audience. Why are THEY supposed to listen to YOU? They need to know!
- E. DON'T RECITE! Deliver the introduction as if YOU wrote it, YOU understand it, and YOU believe it. If you don't care enough to become involved, why should they?
- F. KEEP IT SHORT! Don't take too long (30-45 sec.!) The audience wants to hear interp, not oration! Besides, they get BORED!
- G. LINES MUST LINK!



SPECIFIC TO BROAD

- H. Intros should handle . . .
 - MOOD - established in 1st line
 - SITUATION - who, when, where, etc.
 - MESSAGE - (D.I.) last line