

## SHADOWWORK: SOME VOICE EXERCISES

### CENTRE YOURSELF

**a. Stillness.** Close eyes. Breathe naturally. Relax thoughts. Clear head.

**b. Breath.** Easy. Slow. Full. Free. Rhythmic: in through nose, out through mouth. In your head, count to 4 breathing in through nose, hold for 2, out for 4 through mouth, hold for 2, REPEAT. Breathe deep into belly. Keep going for a few minutes.

**c. POSTURE: “a state of readiness”....**

**Feet** – parallel, beneath hips. Weight slightly forward on the big toe.

**Knees** – not locked. Bend & bounce on them slightly. Unclamp **thighs**.

**Hips** – not thrust out or sideways. Draw big circles with your pelvis, then spiral gradually down.

**Stomach** – don’t pull it in!

**Spine** – straight. “*When your spine goes, you age*”.

**Chest** – don’t collapse it. Avoid hunching.

**Neck & shoulders** (a key area) – shake them out, and flop.

**Head** – neither pushed forward nor pulled back. Not ‘tucked in’ or tilted.

**Jaw** – unclench, lift chin slightly. Clench and unclench.

**Face.** Do **tongue** gymnastics!

**d. Place your palm where you think your voice comes from. Now say “Ahhhh”,** expelling breath slowly with the mouth open. Rediscover the source of that sound with your hand. Is it lower than you thought? How low down *might* it be?

**e. Be aware of tensions, lack of posture** = Restricted delivery. How you stand, move, breathe – all are important to emotion & connection to audience.

### BREATH & POSTURE

1/ Breathe in, but then begin to speak before you are ready. Feel the tightness.

2/ Breathe in, hold back and then speak (too late). Note how abdomen is clenched & the chest too high. (Common fault.)

3/ Breathe out fully. When the breath is *completely* expended, try to read a line out loud. Remember this horrible feeling! When you feel that way reciting, BREATHE!

4/ Speak “oh” from deep stomach. Clench shoulders and repeat. Note the thinness of the sound moving up the tensioned body. Unclench and repeat “oh”. Is that better?

### HOLDING THE THOUGHT

Do you read each line of a poem as though it were a disembodied phrase? Rather: is the start still there in the middle, is the end somehow inevitable? Do the words and thoughts flow, link up, move fluently? Rather: is the start still there in the middle, is the end somehow inevitable? Do the words and thoughts flow, link up, move fluently?

**In pairs**, read your text **aloud** to your partner. They stop you whenever they feel you’ve “lost” the text in some way. Every time that happens, you go back and read again from the start. If you’re having trouble “Holding the Thought”, try to:

\* Speak text in a **monotone**. Then with an **exaggerated range**, swinging the tone wildly. Then just speak the text, again, from a new-found centredness.

\* Speak selected lines with **different emotions**. Languor, anger, boredom, anxiety...

\* **Mouth the text** with no sound.

\* Read out **one another’s texts**: note the qualities and emphasis of the *other* voice.

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