

SPEECH AND DRAMA AS LIVING ARTS

A Course by Séamus Maynard and Meaghan Witri

Study Guide and Introduction



EduCareDo
International Research and Learning Centre
based on the work of Rudolf Steiner

Study Guide: Suggestions and Directions

This course is designed to be experiential and practical with many exercises to integrate into an individual artistic practice. This practice will encompass speech exercises, movement exercises, imaginative exercises, study of the principles of the dramatic arts as well as contemplative exercises to orient and train oneself. Each lesson is an assignment in itself, based around bringing the content into daily thoughts, reflection, and actions, as well as keeping a diary/journal.

WORK PLAN AND TIMETABLE

The time you put aside for each lesson is up to you. Most people find they spend several hours on average to read, converse, do the exercises, and write their diary/journal entries. Some lessons suggest further complementary reading, exercises, or artistic work. Studying with another EduCareDo participant can be supportive.

READING THE LESSON

Try reading over the entire lesson once to grasp its main purpose. Keep the continuity of thought to ponder over parts not immediately clear to you as you read. Then begin reading again, but this time read only one paragraph, focusing with deep attention on the meaning of the words and how they relate to you. Then move onto the next paragraph, slowly working your way through the lesson.

RESEARCH READING

Reading references are given in each lesson.

EXERCISES

Instruction and suggestions for integrating the exercises into a regular practice are provided with the content of each lesson.

SUPPLIES

These will be utilized for specific exercises at varying points throughout the lessons. Generally, these can be found around your home or community. However, you can make substitutions as needed.

- 1 tennis ball
- 1 frisbee
- 1 broom stick
- 1 large hula hoop (or large round ball)
- 1 javelin (or long stick)
- 1 discus

SUMMARIZE

Take the time to summarize what you have learned in each lesson. This may be through such things as a conversation in a study group with colleagues, mentors, or friends, or it may be a written summary.

KEEPING A DIARY OR JOURNAL

Keeping a diary/journal throughout your course of study can help you to individualize the content and exercises provided in these lessons. Using the questions listed at the end of each lesson can be helpful for finding a jumping off point for your diary/journal entries.

Revisit these questions every three months, and in your diary/journal, reflect on the progress, obstacles, and refinement of the activities you set out to do from each lesson. Being honest and objective with oneself is encouraged.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

EduCareDo will be happy to help you with your questions concerning the course. Please contact us for clarification or support. Tutors give feedback to your submissions and can help to give direction between submissions. But first give yourself space to live with questions related to the content, and follow the suggested ways to approach study so as to allow your own revelations to unfold.

Speech and Drama as Living Arts: Introduction

Speech and drama, in their truest forms, give artistic expression to all of the varied aspects of human nature and existence—from the most earthly to the most subtle, refined elements of the human soul and spiritual experiences. The great writers and poets throughout the ages leave doorways to human experience through their plays, poetry, and songs. It is through their distilling these myriad and complex dimensions of human existence that we can find meaning, connection, and purpose within the greater context of life on earth. If poetic works of art are to be embodied in such a way that they are brought to life through the human being, certain effort must be applied to mould the human being into a vessel through which great words and characters of master writers can come to their truest expression.

In this sense, the human being can also be thought of as an instrument by which greater forces work into earthly life through music, poetry, and drama.

“This is why it was quite justified when people who understood such things spoke, more or less figuratively, of poetry as a language of the gods: for this language of the gods does not speak the mysteries of the transient human “I” it speaks in human consciousness, speaks musically and plastically the cosmic mysteries—it speaks when the super-sensible worlds play, through the human heart, upon the human breath.”

- Rudolf Steiner¹

From this perspective, the arts could participate in furthering human evolution and development rather than primarily being utilized as an arena for self-expression - as is often the case. An actor therefore does not only “play dress up” or “pretend to be someone they are not” or “train to be a convincing liar” as some of the common understandings postulate. Rather, they train themselves to live so completely into the various expressions of being human with such honesty and truthfulness that compassion and understanding of humanity’s spiritual mission towards love on earth may be revealed and ever more clarified.

Therefore the work of mastering these art forms is composed in its entirety by tuning and aligning one's instrument, learning the laws or principles that live within the art forms, and orienting one's will into harmony with the will of those principles that work through the arts. This training is undergone in order that a honed and tempered—though imperfect—instrument of an artist may be placed with humility at the feet of the muses and masters of the arts. Thus the artist is in fact never fully a master but can be more accurately thought of as a servant of masters. A most devoted, highly skilled and willing servant, who thrives and

¹ Steiner, Rudolf. “Poetry and the Art of Speech- Recitation and Declamation.” Lecture II. Dornach. 6 October 1920. Print. GA0281.

delights whole heartedly in their vocation. A true artist is therefore fully devoted to the tasks of self-training in much the same way that a servant might devote themselves to polishing silverware, knowing full well that the King and Queen may come home to dinner at any point and must have untarnished utensils with which to dine. There is in this sense no worldly glory to be found in the arts, besides the unparalleled fulfillment of being an active participant in and witness to a great and royal banquet: a banquet brought about by the divine spiritual world, in which humanity is given the great potential of fulfilling its spiritual task. Rudolf Steiner spoke of this task as being a task of freedom and love.

“Thus you see in humanity the two great ideals, freedom and love, grow together[...] Freedom and love are also that which human beings, standing in the world can bring to realization in themselves in such a way that through them, the one unites with the other for the good of the world[...] Thus do human beings stand within the great process of world-evolution, and what takes place inside the boundary of the skin and flows out beyond the skin in the form of deeds, has significance not only for the individual but for the world, the universe. Humankind has its place in the arena of cosmic happenings, world-happenings.”

- Rudolf Steiner²

The first two lessons are dedicated to establishing a practice that is rooted in giving you a strong foundation for ongoing, individual work. We decided to give this in two parts, so you can experiment and take your time to deeply understand each aspect of the suggested exercises and reach out to us with any questions that arise along the way.

With gratitude,
Séamus Maynard and Meaghan Witri

² Steiner, Rudolf. “The Bridge Between Universal Spirituality and The Physical Constitution of Man.” Dornach. 17th-19th December 1920. Lecture. GA0202.