

Remember the Elocutionists!  
The Rantings of a Seminary Speech Teacher

Francis-Clare Fischer Ph.D.  
Divine Word College Seminary  
Epworth, Iowa

The speaking style of the modern preacher needs to be larger than life; thereby lifting the listener out of the confused world of the everyday into a place of awe. Late elocutionists like Bishop Fulton Sheen demonstrate this style. It is inspiring and gripping. The understated style which began in the 60's does not lift the listener but attempts to meet the listener "where they are." They come go be lifted out of "where they are."

"Whatever contributes to adorn a discourse,  
must either give life and beauty to the sentiment,  
or harmony to the diction"

Joseph Priestley  
(1777, p.72)

Moments from a day in the life of a seminary speech teacher: "Try to move a little more - no not that much - no try to stand still a bit more - oh well that's better, I guess." "Now try to gesture, that's good, now make it bigger, good now can you do another kind of gesture?" "I can't hear you, speak up! No, don't shout, just project your voice - no, that's shouting." "Ok, you sound a little bit monotone, let's try to get some variety into your pitch - well, not that much variety - but that's really neat that you can do a falsetto voice!"

The elocutionists did some strange things – but elocution teachers were far less likely to have the kind of day I just took excerpts from. Elocutionists had specific ways to define and teach the many things that go into good performance. I'm not suggesting that we all start kneeling to show "beseeching" or flinging our arms to our foreheads to show "grief;" what I am suggesting is that modern teachers who train young seminarians could take a few well used lessons from the elocutionists and be much the better for it.

When I was a young speech student in the 60's we made fun of the elocutionists. They were, after all, our grandparents and we felt entitled to think they were quaint, if not funny. We looked at the elocution books with their exact diagrams of how to use this gesture or that (always large and dramatic) and laughed. In the 60's and 70's speech teachers told their students to "look natural" and to "just have a conversation with your audience." Now we are reaping the harvest of that advice in speakers and preacher who do not know how to show the passion in their hearts,

are unable to move a congregation and often, are just down right boring; and worse, teachers who do not know how to help them. To be fair, there are wonderful preachers who give their whole heart and soul and are deeply moving. Too often though, these are what I'd call natural speakers. This person just has the gift. Or they were lucky enough to find a teacher who still insisted on teaching performance – sadly such teachers are becoming the minority. But the vast majority of people who need to speak and preach were not born with this gift and the advice they have been given to “just talk to the audience” leaves them hopelessly lost, uninspired and uninspiring. They need, and their teachers need, techniques to help them as performers.

The Elocutionists were dramatic, by our standards, overly dramatic; but I bet people stayed awake when they preached! Elocutionists worked for perfect diction (often pronouncing words in a prescribed way that they would never otherwise use); but they were clear and understandable. Elocutionists often projected voices that we would now call too theatrical; but no one had trouble hearing them. I don't suggest that we go back to the literal prescriptive “science of elocution.” What I would like to suggest is that we take a lead from the elocutionists and be far more intentional in training preachers as performers. We need to make it clear to seminarians that speaking is not a conversation with an audience; it is a performance. And the gestures, voice, articulation and projection used for performance are different then those used in conversation. The speaker must be, at least a bit, bigger then life.

Despite the many negative critiques (well represented by Dwight Conquergood's Marxist evaluation, “Rethinking Elocution,”) of the impact of the elocutionists in their own period, I would like to consider the elocutionists strictly for practical reasons. I'd like to consider what they have to offer the modern seminarian striving to bring the Lord's teachings alive in the midst of his own struggles to become an accomplished and at least somewhat fearless speaker. It is not enough to say that the elocutionists represented a middle and upper class image of the speaker and provided a mode of critique in which the lower classes could be deemed just that. The elocutionists may have been all of that and more. They were also dynamic and they had a system by which to teach the most reluctant speakers ways to become effective speaker/performers. We should not refuse to look at their techniques because they might represent a middle or upper class vision of public address among the Victorians and Edwardians. We should mine their techniques for what they have to offer this very new and different world into which we send our students to minister.

The elocutionist movement began in response to exactly the kind of performance restraint we are seeing too often today. “The founders of the elocution movement in the late eighteenth century deplored the fact that reading in the churches, the law courts, and elsewhere was flat, colorless, and artificial.” (Parrish, 1932, p.17) The elocutionists were a backlash to earlier “Puritan restraints...the public which had been starved overlong demanded a generous and hearty dramatic fare in all public speech.” (Robb, 1954, p.178) While the backlash against the elocutionists of the 1960's and 70's could hardly be called Puritanical, it was a time when people called for behavior that was “natural.” Since the drama of the elocutionists was considered unnatural; performers began to think of restraint as natural. This was taken even to the extreme of the Oral Interpretive performers, dressed in black, sitting on a row of stools performing literature with almost no emotion. The result was not unlike the Puritan speaking style which created overly restrained speakers and readers. The possibility that the elocutionists may, in the end have taken

their own drama a bit too seriously should not stop us from looking to them for help in solving the very problems to which they themselves were responding.

Clergy were among the first to call for elocutionist training. Rev. Ebenezer Porter, Bartlett Professor of Sacred Rhetoric in Andover Seminary, was one of the pioneer teachers and textbook writers. He believed that the worst faults in elocution originated from a lack of feeling but recognized also the faults of diction, monotonous inflections, inappropriate stress, and timing. (Robb, 1945, p.181)

Clergy should be among the first again to call for a rejuvenation of speech performance in the ministry. For there is no place where that performance is more important or more vital than at the pulpit. In a world that is over stimulated by that which turns the heart from God, let good hearts find in honest speech performance a way to turn hearts back to the source of goodness. We will never compete with Spiderman or the Internet and we should not try to do so. We have all the tools we need in the honest art of elocution. Elocution teaches the speaker to bring his or her heart fully and openly to the audience. The love of the preacher's message, if given the chance to glow is more powerful than any media bombardment could ever be, because it is the connection of hearts and souls in the love of the Lord.

One of the last well known, and taped, elocutionist speakers was Bishop Fulton Sheen. Whether one agreed with him or not, one was not likely to fall asleep in one of his sermons! He was dynamic and a bit of a ham; just enough of a ham to keep the audience involved and excited. He used his well trained voice and articulation in a way that felt both natural and a bit theatrical. He was just larger than life to keep him interesting (small in stature though he was). His gestures were large and embraced the audience. His movement was graceful and well intentioned. I use DVD of him as an example of a dynamic speaker and my students inevitably respond to him as exciting; even the students who disagree with his message. I urge the use of his speeches as examples for students; most especially his early speeches in the 50's. Though his later speeches were no less animated the filming style of the 60's included too many head shots to show off the full drama of his oratory. My favorite for class use comes from the *Great Speeches Series*, DVD number 8: *Communism in America*.

Taking tips from old elocution books, I've been using a variety of their techniques to train my students at Divine Word College Seminary. We literally practice large and embracing gestures; we experiment with different tones of voice to create different moods; we use the old elocution exercises to learn articulation (specifically those used by the Norman Brace school of Elocution which I will discuss later); and we learn to project our voices so that if the students are sent to Botswana and do not have a microphone they will not be at a loss. My students are encouraged to see public speaking and preaching as bigger than life. Because a good sermon should be bigger than life. It should inspire and lift. The not so old adage "take them where they are" is not enough. Our students are graduating and leaving us to preach the most precious and important message that has ever been preached; we want them ready to take people where they are only in order to lift them up higher. We need to teach our students to be performers; honest and true to what they are saying, but with enough flash to get and keep the attention and hearts of their audiences. The message they have to impart is more important than life or death, it is a

matter of eternity; we must not let it be mumbled and given without passion or grace. We must not allow it to be ineffective.

Bold gestures, appropriate movement, good diction, strong voice projection, good speaking voice, passionate tone and vocal variety do not come naturally to most speakers. They must be taught in specific ways and with intention. With the help of some old elocution textbooks and handouts I'd like to explore ways that we can help our students become more dynamic, confident and convincing speakers.

Let me be clear, this is a proscriptive paper. I want to suggest ways that any teacher who trains young speakers can help them become more than what they are; bigger than who they seem to be; exciting and dynamic preachers. You are not going to learn a great deal about the history of elocution in this paper (and it is a fascinating history; worthy of the many papers written on the topic). You are going to be given methods of teaching that I have used for thirty years and in which I am confident. The inspiration for these methods and very often the methods themselves came from the elocutionists. A large exercise packet will be given at the conference presentation. Useful examples from the packet will be included in this paper and should anyone who is not attending the conference (or my presentation) wish me to send them a packet I would be happy to do so. The largest part of the exercise packet is from the Norman Brace School of Elocution, 1937. This packet was given to me by my father who attended the school in 1937. It was then housed in the Carnegie Hall complex in New York City. I do not know how long the school survived and I have never been able to find a reference to the school's existence; my sense is that it was a brief existence. I would love to see this treasured packet of exercises widely used and the name of Norman Brace revived and remembered. I feel free to use the packet and duplicate it. You must do as you think best. I have added several things to the end of the packet (noted within packet) that I find useful and will make reference to those as we go along. To the very best of my knowledge nothing in the packet is under copy write. The Norman Brace teaching packet has never contained a copy write notice and it has passed the requisite fifty-six years after publication (Chicago Manual of Style, 2003, p.596); I think it is fairly safe to say it now resides in the public domain. Nothing I have written for the packet is under copy write and I would be happy to see all of it used and copied.

I am breaking elocutionist training into parts. When I actually teach, I teach all of them at the same time. It's not a good idea to spend too much time on any one part of the process as voices in training can get sore and it is extremely important to avoid stressing these small muscles. If throats do get sore ask the students to avoid practice for a few days. They can also gargle with a mixture of salt water and a tablespoon of vinegar and this will speed up the recovery (my mother's old remedy – it works! I've coached speech teams and never had a student miss a tournament because of a sore throat!). Let them play a bit and move back and forth from movement training to voice and articulation training throughout the class period. It all comes together in the end. This is a discussion only of techniques to train performance; there will be no discussion of the actual creation of a sermon text.

#### Articulation

“Elocution should always attend to articulation, as the primary object

; and in the first instance, it should be prosecuted alone, as a distinct branch of the art, and prosecuted until perfection in it is attained.” (Barber, 1830, p.13)

“A person who speaks hastily may omit final consonants, and thus mar the effect of his speech.” (Law, 1929, p.139) Certainly as Mr. Law says, haste causes problems in articulation and we all urge our students to speak at a clear and normal pace; in part, this helps articulation and we must not overlook it or hesitate to urge students to (most often) slow down. However there is more to the issue than pace. We rarely teach diction to our students; sometimes we are even afraid it is politically incorrect to teach diction! After all we are a country of immigrants; accents and dialects are beautiful and we shouldn’t discourage them. Yes in one sense this is true; the point at which it becomes untrue is when meaning is lost to an accent or dialect. Accents and dialects are wonderful and I am sad to see many of them falling to the mass media. People hear what they think of as the standard Midwestern dialect (there is no standard Midwestern dialect; it is a creation of the broadcasting media) so often that even those in other areas of the country have come to imitate it. Lovely and curious dialects are being lost. I would never for a moment suggest to someone that they need to “get rid of” an accent or dialect (unless they are going into broadcasting - sadly a young broadcaster often must create an artificial “standard” dialect). What I do suggest is that diction often needs to be modified so that the individual is easy to understand. This is true both for American students and International students. The practical key to helping a student develop good articulation involves, as Mr. Law noted above, emphasis upon consonants; but not just ending consonants. One of the reasons our country has been able to tolerate so many different accents and dialects over the years is that English is more dependent upon consonants for clarity than it is upon vowels. We tolerate a great deal of variety in vowel production so long as there is some attempt to articulate the surrounding consonants clearly.

The first thing I do with a student is video tape them reading a silly diagnostic piece I wrote which means nothing but involves every sound in the English language (it can be found on page 18 of my handout; but I will reproduce it here for those who do not have the handout):

Diagnostic  
(Contains all the sounds in the English language)

Instructions: For video taped diagnostics, please say your name, read the paragraph below. Then, say your name again and read the paragraph below one more time.

The famous liar was in a hurry at prayer, the day father brought sauerkraut and bread to me. People did homage with many a fine sigh. But the liar was a yeoman to the devil. Soft words and coin pulled the wool over eyes and moved seven women to love the liar. Venom robs the righteous of rest. Would you laugh to see the ghosts left by the love of the liar? Who could pick the soul’s gem that shines like Hanukkah or lower the shroud of battle over the once calm heart? For me to open, alone, so sudden a ringer of death would ape red Satan’s nauseous night. But light cometh with the morning of goodness. This thin hope of a way back to life brings hallelujah days to the troubled heart. In the end the liar is found out and truth is victorious.

They read this piece twice. At the end of the semester we will tape over the second reading and they will have a before and after tape. As I listen I look for problems that may impede clear articulation and cause loss of meaning. The most important problems involve dropping consonants and word endings. As just noted, our language can tolerate a lot of variation in vowels (that's why people from the South and the North generally can understand each other) but if someone does not share an accent or dialect our language does not tolerate loss of or reversal of consonants. Meaning is lost.

“But wait!” you might say, “Everyone in my town drops ending consonants!” And I bet you're from Iowa or Minnesota! Yes, they do. But they all share the same dialect so they unconsciously add in the missing sound. When they go to work in New York City, people will ask them to repeat themselves because the new listeners do not predict which sounds are going to be dropped. Our students in the ministry will no doubt be preaching to people who do not share their dialect or accent. The way to get around this problem is to clearly pronounce consonants. Consonants largely define words in English

So, how do you help your students more clearly pronounce consonants? One of the old techniques of the elocutionists which I actually learned from my father (a speech teacher) is to have students over emphasize sounds. Take a poem and have them practice hitting every consonant as hard as they possibly can - they will sound silly. That's just fine. Remind them that you will not let them leave the class sounding silly. When they can easily over articulate (and part of this practice is training lazy muscles), have them pull their articulation back to what I call performance mode; clear and crisp but not overly noticeable articulation. Push them too far then bring them about half way back and you will have nice clear but unobtrusive articulation. Monrow emphasis this method when he writes: “Bite off your words in an exaggerated fashion for a time until you find you are developing the habit of precision.” (1935, p.118)

There also is an exercise I've been using for years and my father used it before me. He was given it around 1937 at the Norman Brace School of Elocution in New York City. As I said, I've tried to find references to this school but it seems to have been long forgotten. I call these exercises the pata-patapas; you will find them on pages 5 and 6 of the handout and reproduced below. They are a series of nonsense sounds and include almost all the sounds in the English language. The reason they work so well and so quickly is precisely because they are nonsense sounds. When we speak, we tend to be more aware of the meaning of a word than we are of its sound. So in training articulation it is helpful to take the sounds out of context and work simply on the sound without any attached meaning (though I'm told by my students from Vietnam that one of the nonsense sounds means ‘an old woman chasing a chicken.’) This exercise has proven itself over and over through the years both with American students who just need to clean up their diction and with International students who need to modify their accents enough to be easily understood. Students should devote at least 10 to 15 minutes a day to the pata-patapas and they will see improvement. They will begin to unconsciously use the clarified sound in their speech in place of the incorrect or blurred sound of poor diction.

Pata-Patapas – Articulation Exercises

## A.

1. pata-patapa
2. tapa-tapata
3. paka-pakapa
4. kapa-kapaka
5. taka-takata
6. pataka-pakata
7. tapaka-takapa
8. katapa-kapata

## B.

1. pafa-pafpa
2. fapa-fapafa
3. faha-fahapa
4. hafa-hafatha
5. pahafa-pafaha

## C.

1. fatha-fathafa
2. thafa-thafatha
3. thasa-thasatha
4. satha-sathasa
5. shasa-shasasha
6. thasha-thashatha
7. shatha-shathasha

## D.

1. bada-badaba
2. daba-dabada
3. бага-bagaba
4. gaba-gabaga
5. gada-gadaga
6. bagada-badaga
7. dabaga-dagaba

## E.

1. vatha-vathava
2. thava-thavatha
3. zatha-zathaza
4. thaza-thazatha
5. vathaza-vazatha
6. thazava-thavaza
7. zavatha-zathava

## F.

1. rala-ralara
2. lara-larala
3. nara-narana
4. rana-ranara
5. lana-lanala
6. nala-nalana
7. ralana-ranala
8. lanara-larana
9. narala-nalara

## G.

1. bava-bavaba
2. vaba-vabva
3. bawa-bawaba
4. waba-wabawa
5. vawa-vawava
6. wava-wavawa
7. bawava-bavawa
8. clacra-clacracla
9. cracla-craclacra
10. thrashra-thrashrathra
11. shrathara-shrathrashra
12. slasna-slasnasla
13. snasla-snaslasna

## H.

1. thazahk-thazahkta
2. zahktha-zathzahk
3. zazahk-zazahkza
4. zahkza-zazahkza
5. zathazahk-zazahktha
6. thazahkza-zazahktha
7. zahkzatha-zahkthaza

## I.

1. blabra-blabrabra
2. plapara-plaprapla
3. plapra-plaprapla
4. prapla-praplapra
5. flafra-flafrarla
6. glagra-glagragla
7. gragla-graglagra

## J.

1. tradra-tradratra
2. dratra-dratradra
3. spasma-sfaspasma
4. sfasma-sfaspasma
5. staska-stasksta
6. skasta-skastaska
7. splaspra-splaspraspla

## K.

bidika, pitika, kitika, didika  
 tidika, gidika, midika, ridika  
 sidika, quisika, zidika, vidika

## 8. spraspla-sprasplaspra

### Never Underestimate a Good Tongue Twister!

Tongue twisters have fallen out of fashion but they are terrific. There are several web sites that have long lists of tongue twisters for different sounds and a simple Google search will give you more than you could ever use. There are wonderful old tongue twisters in the Normal Brace handout you'll be given at the conference. I've needed to supplement them at times with international students who are having trouble with sounds Norman Brace had not thought about. And for this I either make them up or look to the internet. Tongue twisters are silly, they make students laugh, and when the student learns to say the twister quickly s/he has mastered the sound. There is a wonderful sense of play in teaching twisters and we all respond well to play and learn quickly when we play.

### International Students

Most of the students at my seminary are from Vietnam and the Sudan. Articulation is often a huge issue for them. I do a form of accent reduction (I prefer the term accent adjustment or modification) in order to help them become more easily understood both by Americans and other Internationals. It is never my goal to take the distinctiveness of their accents away from them. That's part of their identity and, as I tell them, Americans love accents. Accents are exotic and interesting. Problems occur when the accent gets in the way of understanding. I use the same exercises for International students as I do for American students.

However, one needs to keep in mind that if a sound does not exist in the student's language they often, literally, cannot hear the sound when it is said in our language. In these cases I work individually with the student helping them feel the production of the sound inside their mouths and gradually they will learn to both feel and hear the sound. Expecting them to eventually just hear a completely foreign sound is not always realistic. People with a good ear can do it but most people have a fairly ordinary ear and need to feel the sound before they can hear it. Use a diagram and show them where their tongue should be for the sound and the position the mouth should be in – I normally just sketch something out quickly but I understand that there are wonderful moving diagrams on the internet. This seems an extra bother to me since I get my message across successfully with the sketch; but you might find them useful.

### International Students and Rhythm

Every language has an underlying rhythm. Some students do not quickly catch the rhythm of our language; which is iambic pentameter. Obviously we do not use strict iambic pentameter but it underlies the rhythm of our speech - we break it and we syncopate it, but it's still there. If you think the problem the student is having in creating clarity has to do with rhythm use the poem *Trees* by Joyce Kilmer and clap it out with them. I use this poem because the iambic pentameter is so heavy that it cannot be missed. Have them continue to work clapping it out. They will begin to feel that rhythm in our language and will adjust their speech to it. I used this with a

Japanese student who, for his whole four years at my previous college, had been sent from ESL teacher to ESL teacher and no one could help him. At that time I was teaching Broadcasting and he'd heard I might be able to help him. He was very skeptical when I had him clapping this poem. But it worked and after he left I got a lovely note thanking me for helping him to speak clearly.

### Pause

“One of the most effective devices for providing emphasis is the pause. It focuses attention on what is to be said or on what has been said. It gives time to feel and comprehend what has been said.” (Larson, 1957, p.146)

Because a student is nervous s/he may forget the importance of pausing. As Parker wrote in 1860, “Pauses are suspensions of the voice in reading and speaking, used to mark expectation and uncertainty, to give effect to expression. They are often more eloquent than words.” (Parker, 1860, p.61) Pausing is hard to practice while giving a speech. The student is thinking more about what s/he is going to say than the use of a pause. In order to practice pausing, use poetry. Give all the students the same poem and then, literally, conduct them as a chorus. Gesture for pauses and have them pause at least three beats (it will feel like ten to them); have them practice this on their own until they feel the sense of drama contained in the pause. While your hand is raised asking for the pause, urge the students to feel the emotion that the writer is trying to convey and ask them to fill the pause with that emotion. Do this with different emotions or reasons for pausing (emphasis or sarcasm are often portrayed with a pause), have them experiment with the facial expression or gesture that may become part of the pause. Once they have this sense they will start to use pausing in speeches with ease and to good effect.

### Breathing

“As good breathing capacity and control are of such importance to orators and elocutionists, deep breathing exercises should be assiduously practiced.” (Samuels, 1932, p.17)

Before we can train the voice we have to teach students to breath properly. This is, naturally, diaphragmatic breathing. I have several techniques and I'm sure you have others (which I'd love to hear about!). The first thing I have them do is lie on the floor and just breath. Unless they are under an enormous amount of pressure at the moment, they will naturally breathe from their diaphragm when they are lying down. Next I have them go to a wall with a hard backed book and lean into the edge of the book with the other edge against the wall. Have them place the book on the upper part of the diaphragm as that is the easiest to move in the beginning. Have them push themselves away from the wall when they breathe in and fall back toward the wall when they breathe out.

Caution them that at this stage it is very common to “top off” by adding more air using their chest. This can result in hyperventilating so students should be encouraged to sit down if they

feel the least bit dizzy. The elocutionists called this clavicular breathing and is to be avoided not only because the student may hyperventilate but because it restricts diaphragmatic breathing; in the words of Samuels, “Never raise the shoulders during inhalation (clavicular breathing), as that movement will constrict the waist-line (where the greatest mobility should be), thereby preventing a deep breath being taken.” (Samuels 1932, p.18)

Diaphragmatic breathing does not happen overnight. Most students feel like they are breathing backwards and it feels wrong. Have them work in their rooms lying down until they are very sure of how it feels. Then urge them to work at the wall for only a few moments at a time. You don't want anyone passing out alone in their rooms.

In a few weeks, they should find that proper breathing begins to feel natural. I urge all my students to think of this as their primary method of breathing and to use chest breathing for athletics, which is really what it is for. Remind them that chest breathing releases adrenaline into their system, causing anxiety (and an urge to run - pretty important if a tiger creeps up behind you). As speakers they want and need the calming effect of diaphragmatic breathing, not the sudden release of adrenaline. They also need it for breath support as we train their voice.

### Voice Training

Most people's everyday voices, especially young people's voices, are not properly pitched and so lack resonance and the capacity for projection. Women in our culture tend to pitch their voices unnaturally high. Men are getting better but when I first started teaching I used to encounter what I called the John Wayne syndrome; male students pitching their voices lower than their natural pitch. This can actually create damage to the voice and should always be discouraged. Watch your international students. For many male students from East Asia a higher pitched, soft voice is considered genteel and courteous. However it is almost impossible to project without shouting and shouting will do long term damage to their voices. Remind them as you train their voices that this is their performance voice. They do not have to use it all the time. Dan Rather is a great example of someone who had to profoundly adjust his dialect and voice to do the work he wanted to do; but when he is relaxed and talking with friends (even interviewers) he reverts naturally back to his Texas dialect and voice placement. This is normal and unless their everyday voice is creating physical problems for them (such as vocal polyps), it can be left alone. Few people stay in their performance voice at all times.

Training the voice has always had a kind of mystique to it. People say that the voice trainer has to have an excellent ear and know exactly what they are doing. It really isn't a mystical or magical process; nor is it terribly difficult. A tin ear may be a problem but most of us can hear the difference between a voice with resonance and one that is nasal. If the voice sounds a bit like it has an echo, especially to the speaker him or herself; they are creating resonance. Most of us can only create resonance when we are speaking at our true natural pitch (unless we have become very well trained actors). It is possible for a poor voice teacher to do damage. I'm going to teach you very simple methods that are harmless. I will remind you of this again later, but the “silly voice” should not be used more than a few moments at a time as it will create a sore throat.

As with diction, when training a voice we take the student too far and then pull them back. The first thing I ask them to do is create a “silly voice.” My father taught me this technique and I’ve found it far more successful and quick than any other technique I’ve been taught or have read about.

1. Have the student’s yawn
2. As they yawn have them vocalize on the way down to the end of the yawn using an “ah” sound.
3. When they are comfortable doing this have them vocalize a phrase (with as few nasal sounds as possible; I use “Now is the time for all good cows to come to the aid of their country” - no offense meant to cows or the military but “men” has two nasal sounds in it and that will cause them to drop the soft palate which you don’t want at this stage).
4. Remind them to try to feel what is happening at the top and back of their mouth (their soft palate) and with their throat. Their throat should feel like it is opening up; almost like a tube is being inserted down the throat. The soft palate should be raised. Most students do not know they have a soft palate so be patient and focus on the throat. If the throat becomes very open the soft palate will naturally lift. Have them place their tongues up into the cavity created by the lifted soft palate so they understand what it is they are doing.
5. Now have them keep the soft palate raised as high as they can and the throat as open as they can – now have them pitch their voices as low as possible and say “Now is the time for all good cows...” The effect will sound punch drunk or hollow. This is their “silly voice.” They should use it for brief periods only. The goal is to get them to learn to lift the soft palate and open the throat. If the silly voice is used too much it will give them a sore throat.
6. They are now ready to try to produce a natural full and resonant voice. Have them place the soft palate and throat in the positions needed for the silly voice but instead have them aim for a voice that is pitched half way between the silly voice and their “normal” voice. Listen for resonance. Help them adjust their pitch until they have resonance. At first they may only find resonance in a few pitches- I call it the space of resonant pitch. That space will grow as they work.

All of this happens over a period of about two weeks and naturally we are working on other things at the same time. Again, do not work the “silly voice” more than a few moments at a time. Do voice work then switch to diction, gestures etc... Part of training the voice is waiting for the “a-ha” experience the student has when s/he finds their natural voice. Some students have described it as a feeling of dropping through a trap door to find a huge room where they never expected one.

To check resonance; have them put their hand in front of their face and speak. If it sounds to them that the voice is echoing back to their ear, they are creating resonance. Encourage them to create this same feeling without the hand in front of the face (called speaking into the mask) to increase their resonance.

Once they are clearly in their natural voice with nice resonance stand at one end of the room and have each student practice projection using any phrase you like (but until they are very sure of

what they are doing those nasal sounds will create problems for them. This passes as you encourage them to touch the nasal sound and get right off of it by lifting their soft palate back up).

Stay on the alert for sore throats at this stage – and encourage them to practice their “silly voice” just a few moments at a time and only to help them place their throat and soft palate in a good position for a performance voice. Urge them constantly to combine good breathing with their performance voice and their “silly voice”. It will give them the voice support to create and project a beautiful voice. When they can consistently create a resonant voice they are ready to work with their performance voice.

What do you do with a beautiful voice?

“Variety is as much a necessity in speech as it is in life, of which it is the “spice.” There must be no sameness in position, no sameness in manner, nor in gesture nor in voice.” (Law, 1926, p.117)

Ok, now they know how to control their voices and are creating some very nice sounds. But they are monotone or lack expression (we’ll talk in a moment about the dramatic use of monotone; it isn’t always a bad thing). All of their attention at the moment is on creating that lovely voice. Some may be starting to use the vocal tone differentiation appropriate to conversation (unless they are still terrified then they might be utterly monotone). We need to urge much more variety in tone and volume in a speech performance than we would in conversation. And again I turn to the elocutionists. Elocutionist teachers would have a student take a poem or reading and go up and down the scale in a spoken voice (not sung) until they truly understood how large a range they had. The teacher would then ask them to take the vocal variation they would normally use to create an emotion to an extreme – overact the emotion using more vocal variety than needed. Or the teacher might give them an emotion and ask them to deliver that emotion with their voice saying something silly like “Now is the time for all good cows to come to the aid of their country.” The goal is to make them far more conscious in their use of tone, volume and pitch and to learn to associate different usage with the projection of specific emotions; and not to be afraid to do so. On page two of the Brace handout there are several quotes from Shakespeare with which the student can practice creating different tones in the voice. Each quote expresses a different emotion. But you can easily find passages yourself that express a range of emotions and have your students use those. I will note this technique again when we discuss the forms of modulation.

When Monotone is Useful

“Monotone consists of a degree of sameness of sound or tone, in a number of successive words or syllables....the monotone, is to be used in reading either prose or verse which contains elevated descriptions, or emotions of solemnity, sublimity, or reverence.”

(Parker, 1860, p.58)

Our students must learn to read scripture as well as preach. Monotone is used to good effect both in reading and speaking. No one, perhaps, demonstrates this as well as Dylan Thomas reading his own poetry or James Earl Jones reading scripture. I use both to demonstrate the restrained and occasional use of monotone to give emphasis to an emotion too delicate or too awe inspiring to be expressed with more vocal variety. Often the very awe which is being put forth by a scripture reading is so enormous that to express it in any way but the understated use of monotone makes the passage sound silly. To practice the dramatic use of monotone, have them listen to the fine readers mentioned and then practice this style in reading scripture out loud. Remind them that this is a technique to bring attention to a moment of awe and should not be the norm either in reading or speaking.

### Suspensive Quantity

“Suspensive Quantity means prolonging the end of a word, without actually pausing after it and this suspending without wholly interrupting the progress of sound.” (Parker 63)

Again, two masters of this technique are Dylan Thomas and James Earl Jones (most especially in his performance of Paul Robeson); Richard Burton used suspending tone in his rendition of Hamlet; and naturally, no one used it to greater effect than Martin Luther King. Have students listen to these greats and give them scripts with which to imitate these speakers. Do not expect them to be able to produce this sound in their own speeches until they have practiced it with a script. The technique, though very effective, is unusual to most students and they will not immediately take to it. Let them practice with poetry or drama. Again, let them get silly before they settle down and try the technique seriously. The elocutionists did this with flourish and drama; let the students experiment with going too far and then pull them back to a quantity of suspension which would be appropriate to our time.

### Slur

“Slur is that smooth, gliding subdued movement of the voice, by which those parts of a sentence of less comparative importance are rendered less impressive to the ear, and emphatic words and phrases set in stronger relief.” (Parker, 1860, p.35)

Obviously the elocutionists were using the word slur in a different sense than we are when we ask our students not to slur their words together. Yet this is an important thing to practice, especially since some of your students, as they learn to emote will tend to overemphasize all parts of a sentence. These students tend to be a bit mechanical in how they learn oratory; but the elocutionists were well gifted in dealing with exactly that kind of student. They left nothing to chance and did not throw such a student into the deep water, hoping for the best; they used a technique to teach exactly what they wanted the student to do. Many students will do a “slur”

without thinking about it, they will do it naturally. Practice this, all the same, for the benefit of those who need such things “spelled out.” Again, practice with scripts. I recommend the following taken from Parker’s book; but any reading can be modified in the following way and used for practice;

The parts which are to be slurred in these exercises are printed in italic letters, the prominent ideas appear in Roman, and the emphatic words in CAPITALS.

1. The stomach (*cramm'd from every dish a tomb of boiled and roast, and flesh and fish, where bile, and wind and phlegm, and acid jar, and all the man in one intestine war*) remembers oft the school boys’s simple fare, the temperate sleeps, and spirits light as air.

5. If there’s a Power above us (*and that there is, all nature cries aloud through her works*), He must delight in virtue.

6. CAN HE who, *not satisfied with the wide range of animated existence*, calls for the sympathy of the inanimate creation, REFUSE TO WORSHIP with his fellow men? (Parker, 1860, p.36)

### Inflections

“Inflections are the blends or slides of the voice, used in reading and speaking. There are three inflections or slides of the voice; the Rising Inflection, the Falling Inflection and the Circumflex.” (Parker, 1860, p.39)

Unlike many modern speech teachers who tell students they need more inflection and then hope it will happen; the elocutionists (naturally) had a technique for teaching inflection. Keep in mind that with any technique, at first the student may sound or behave in a mechanical or wooden way when they first execute the skill. Give them time; normally this passes. For those few who continue to be wooden use the old technique of pushing them way too far - making them over perform the skill - and then pull them back to a more natural rendition of the skill.

Take a poem or the text of a great speech and mark the rising and falling inflections as well as the circumflex. Have the students practice this in chorus. Later they can mark something of their own choosing and perform that piece. Parker’s notes were as follows: rising inflection /, falling inflection \, circumflex /\. Let me digress briefly to let Parker define circumflex since it is a word we no longer commonly use: “The circumflex is the union of the two inflections of the voice on the same syllable or word, either commencing with the rising and ending with the falling, or commencing with the falling and ending with the rising, thus producing a slight wave of the voice.” (1860, p.40) Scripts for this practice can be hand marked. As always, take the

students to the extreme and then pull them back. Anything is easier to do in a natural way if you have first done it to excess.

### Modulation

“Modulation is the act of varying the voice in reading and speaking. Its general divisions are, Pitch, Force, Quality and Rate.” (Parker, 1860, p.47)

I know I’m repeating myself, but one of the best ways to teach students to do things they feel funny doing, is to push them too far and then pull them back. This is true for each of the divisions of modulation. If you want them to use a variety of pitches; take them up and down the scale speaking sentence after sentence until they can use their full range with some ease; just as you did when you were trying to get rid of the initial monotone that often occurs when students first find their performance voice. When this becomes easy; pick out emotions that would call for a change in pitch; point to a student, say the emotion and have them say a stock phrase back to you using the pitch variations s/he feels best create that emotion (it does not matter if the stock phrase should have that emotion connected with it – they could do the same thing reading the names out of the phone book or counting). Have students learn a few stock phrases that can be used for these kinds of exercises. Do the same with force and rate. Make sure the students understand that the rate of speech is not simply a matter of speaking at a clear and slow rate in order to be easily understood but that rate should change according to the emotion or importance of the message. Again - have them experiment with extremes and use scripts to try varieties of modulation. Quality has to do with the quality of the voice. You will have already dealt with this when training their voices. But show them actors who change the quality of their voice to create different feelings or even different characters. Robin Williams is a favorite since he has such remarkable variety. Have them experiment; let them get silly.

### Movement, Gesture and Expression

“A very important thing for every student of speaking to remember is that “the whole man is present in every speech.” This means that we do not react “piecemeal” to a situation but that the whole human organism is present in every reaction. It will do little good (and may do harm) to practice assiduously some gesture of the hand without bringing the whole body into harmony with it. Likewise to practice facial expression without attention to general posture and movement of the arms and hands would, in general, be folly. Posture, movement, gesture, facial expression - all should be coordinated.” (Watkins, 1928, p.59).

I could not more strongly agree with Professor Watkins. Yet at the same time I am going to urge you to practice specific parts of movement, gesture and facial expression separately. But do so only so that the student can focus on the use of a part of their body they either are not using or

are using so unconsciously as not to impart meaning. Never leave them working on one part of the body without finishing the exercise by bringing in the entire body.

Before I go further, let me indulge in a moment of ranting - take it for what it is worth; if you disagree with me, let it go and give it no more thought. Let me say, before I rant, that the finest speaker of the last century, Martin Luther King, rarely got out from behind a podium. That being said; I abhor podiums. We get stuck behind them and do not move. Humans like to see movement; it helps keep us interested in a speaker. There are some greats, as I said, like Martin Luther King who could galvanize an audience from behind a podium; but face it, how many of us are Martin Luther King? I urge my seminarians to start at the podium if they wish and if it's what a congregation expects but to quickly get out from behind it and interact more directly with the audience. The podium is a barrier between the speaker and audience and it's a prop to hide behind. We should not be hiding from our audience! I do not encourage speaking from scripts (except in exercises), it's one of the hardest ways to give a speech. I encourage the use of 3 x 5 cards that fit nicely into the hand and do not restrict gestures.

### Stand Up!

“Stand erect, then, because you yourself will be more courageous and the attitude bespeaks courage to your audience, and courage is a manifestation of superb physical well being, which is magnetic.” (Watkins 1928, pg.53)

I know it isn't fashionable for teachers to tell their students to stand up straight but it is necessary. When I was a girl my mother had my sister and I walk around the house with a book on our heads to learn good posture. As Prof. Watkins says good posture shows a sense of courage; it makes the speaker look in control. It also opens up the diaphragm sufficiently to assist with good breathing. If it was good enough for my mother; it's good enough for me. My students walk around with books on their heads. In these days where posture is never discussed students really don't know what we mean when we say stand up straight. They throw their shoulders back and attempt a military stance that is as unnatural as it is uncomfortable. In demonstrating what the body feels like when it is standing straight have the students reach as high as they can; then drop their shoulders and then drop their arms as far as their shoulders. Most people are now standing straight. If they have been working on diaphragmatic breathing they will also find that it is far easier to breathe from the diaphragm in this position than when they are slouched. All discussion of movement should start with good posture.

Professor Watkins cites Professor James of Harvard in the common belief among the elocutionist that the position of the body impacts the emotions. I don't know that this can be scientifically proven in the present age; but I have seen it work both in myself as a performer and in my students. If they stand straight, they feel less frightened. Watkins says, “This is the attitude of natural courage, and if you assume this posture you yourself will feel more courageous and your audience will think you more courageous.” (1928, pg.53) I have found this simple advice extremely effective both in creating the image of a strong speaker, in good breathing and in dealing with speech anxiety.

## Movement

“But action is the very emotion of the soul,  
and moves all alike”  
(Adams, 1810, p.374)

Since most students would either shift feet or stand stock still I start with a set method of movement just to get them going. This method of movement was widely used in elocutionist training and often no other movement was suggested for the beginning speaker. However, I prefer to emphasize that this is only used until they feel they have control of their movement and are not going to be ruled by nervous movement or no movement at all. When they become more comfortable they will use movement in more creative ways. Have the student begin by looking at the audience, trying to catch as many eyes as s/he can to signal that the speech is about to begin and then take one step forward. From this position (and without shifting feet), say the introduction. For each main point (not for sub points) after that take several confident steps to one side and then the other. Begin the conclusion by taking one final step towards the audience. This will look stiff and overly rehearsed at first. When they get used to it they will use it comfortably and will naturally start to use other movement and this is what you want them to do. Some few who struggle with a great deal of speech anxiety never get past this method; and for them I am grateful that they master this simple movement and normally do not ask more of them.

However, do not expect the students to use this method just because you explained it to them and showed it to them! They are terrified; some of them really can't imagine moving! They need to practice the movement in class the same way they would practice a dance. This is what the elocutionists did and they did it to good effect. Public speaking does not come naturally to most people. They will feel silly practicing the moves with you, and so will you. Let them laugh, bump into each other, and get it out of their system, but make them practice until it is second nature.

## Gestures

“To secure facility and grace of gesture, a short preliminary exercise, employing both arms simultaneously, is of great advantage. Every exercise in gesture should be preceded by several whole-arm-movement combinations.” (Brown 1901, p.18)

Small gestures commonly used in conversation are not sufficient for a public address or sermon. We told our students in the 70's that they were. We were wrong. A speaker needs to be bigger than life and gestures need to be larger and have more variety than what is used in conversation. The elocutionists knew this and they actually codified gestures for specific emotions. This may shock you but I'm going to suggest that you do exactly the same thing with your students. You will find such codified gestures at the end of my handout. I'll include a few here just so you get the idea. Any dramatic gestures will do; you can make up your own. The difference between what you will be doing and what the elocutionists were doing is that you aren't really serious. You are using these often silly gestures to break down the student's inhibitions. They will get silly and giggly and that's fine. As long as they do the exercises until the movement feels easy.

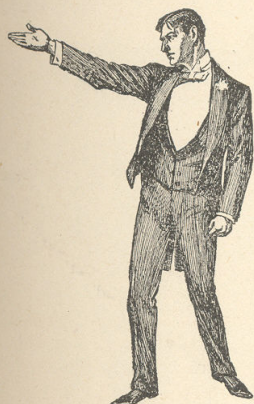
You want them to create large, varied, and dramatic movement. Once this becomes easy for them, pull them back to large but not overly dramatic movement - as always, push them too far then bring them back to about half way between “too far” and where they were at the start. Obviously, you don’t want them to place the back of their hands on their foreheads for the rest of their lives to indicate distress. But you want them to be able to do something so silly that the large and somewhat theatrical gesture they actually do use to demonstrate distress will be easy and natural.

Start your practice simply by using some simple warm up exercises - stretches - get them comfortable moving. Then practice the elocutionist’s gestures together in class, over and over, until they get past the giggles. Have them use several gestures together and urge them to create a fluid motion. They will tend to be very wooden in the beginning.

I had a student in Performance of Literature some years ago who delivered a turn of the century speech using all the codified gestures of the elocutionists. It was beautiful! While I don’t suggest our students go this far, I do urge them to learn to be comfortable with some sense of drama. Drama and theatrics hold the attention of the audience and make the message exciting and vibrant.

The following pictures are a few examples of codified elocutionist movement and are from *American Star Speaker and Elocutionist* by Charles Walter Brown (1901, pgs.21,15,17,16,28 consecutively).





ACCUSATION.

And Nathan said to David,  
"Thou art the man."



REVEALING.

The way she kept it was,  
of course, to tell it  
all and made  
it worse.



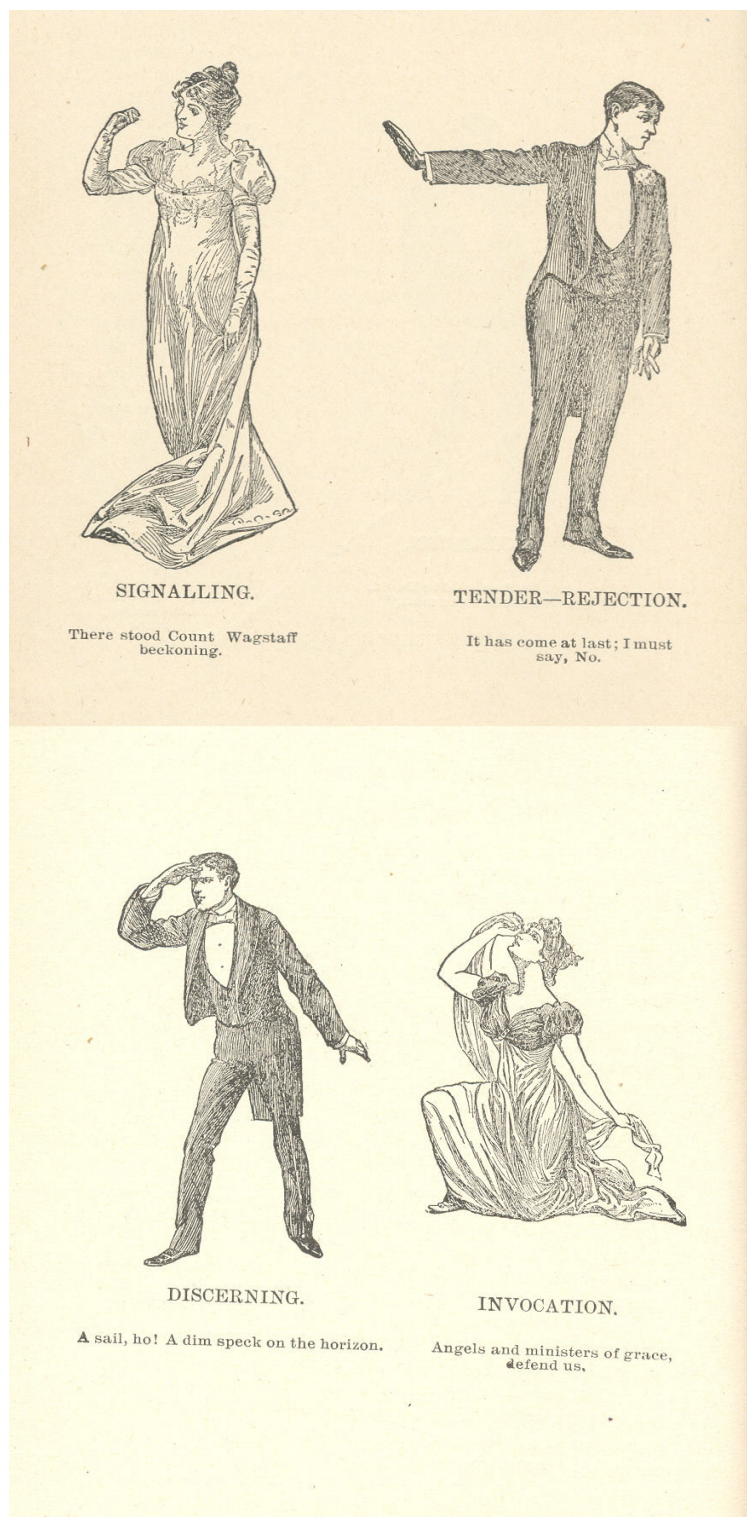
PRESENTING—RECEIVING.

Welcome the coming, speed the  
going guest.



HORROR.

Down went the corse  
with a hollow plunge,  
and vanished in  
the pool.



### Facial Expression

Many speech teachers see the dominant facial expression in students as stark terror. To help students get beyond this; play with the students. Make them grimace and wince; create a wide

variety of facial expression; overact. Again, get silly. As they begin to remember that their faces normally are very active, they forget a bit of their fear and begin to use normal facial expression. Again, I urge the technique of using overly exaggerated facial expression, as did the elocutionists, as a method of training; but not for the final performance. As Professor Watkins wrote; The face is man's most expressive agent for communication of his feelings....Do not imagine that I am advocating the perfect galaxy of grimaces that the elocutionist of former days demanded. Far from it! But there should be sane, conservative changes in the expression on a speaker's face according to the emotional demands of the situation. (Watkins, 1928, pg.63) This is not too much to ask. As always; take them too far, and then pull them back.

The most important aspect of facial expression for an American audience is eye contact. Some of you may have encountered students from cultures where eye contact is discouraged and even considered rude. We must make it clear to these students that in this country eye contact is so important that if they do not use strong, steady eye contact the audience will think they are dishonest, terrified, or emotionally ill. It is as important a cultural adjustment for them to make as to give their speech in English. It simply cannot be faked or avoided.

#### Putting it all Together

I video tape my students regularly and have them watch themselves and each other. If you've taught them what they need to do to be a dramatic speaker, they will see what they are doing wrong when they watch the tape. And their ability to catch themselves will change their speaking techniques far more quickly than simply telling them what needs to happen. Do tell them, but show them using their own tapes. Have students watch each other's tapes - they need to know they are all in the same boat.

They will see when they are emphasizing gestures over facial expression or they will hear when they are dropping consonants or lack vocal variety. In short, the "putting it all together" stage happens here - when they watch, critique themselves, and then go back and practice. They become their own best teachers. It is harder for some students to watch themselves than for others and for representatives of some cultures more than others. But if you are consistent, they will get used to it and use it as the good solid tool that it is; and they will improve quickly and dramatically.

This is an intense way to teach public address and obviously I've not dealt at all with content; nor do I intend to do so in this paper. But these techniques yield fast and dramatic results. The best speech, if not presented in an exciting way, is wasted. The most important message of life; the message of our Savior; will put an audience to sleep if not well delivered. Let's take a page out of the elocutionists many books and teach our students performance as well as what it means to create a well crafted speech. That well crafted speech will only be heard if the speaker's performance is exciting.

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