

Transforming Conducting: Conducting for Transformation

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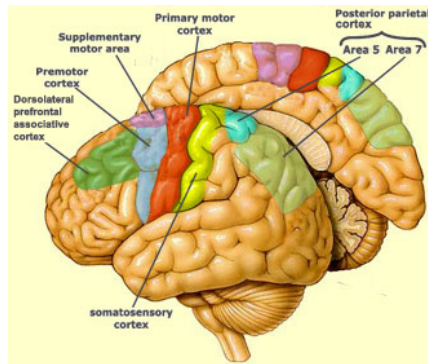
Minnesota Music Educators

I. Remembering Transformation: Spirit and Soul in rehearsal

- A. Remember and Share Your Story
- B. Reflections
- C. Can there be a TECHNIQUE OF TRANSFORMATION?

Interlude 1: Rehearse with Weston--focus on spirit, rapport, imagination

REFLECTION



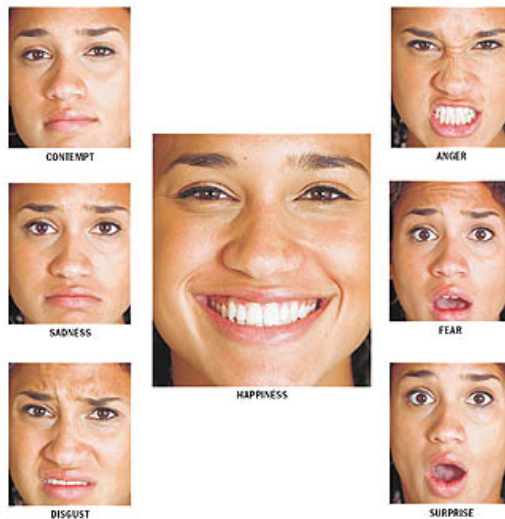
II. Mirror Neurons: The Next Leap Forward

A. Discovering a path toward Empathy and Transformational Experience: Removing the skin that separates us!

B. Understanding the Mirror, Dali Lama, Mind Reading Neuron

C. Communicating With and In: How do we inspire them to work? Face, Eyes, Imagination, Hands (prior to gesture)

1. Mothers and Mirroring



2. Seven Faces

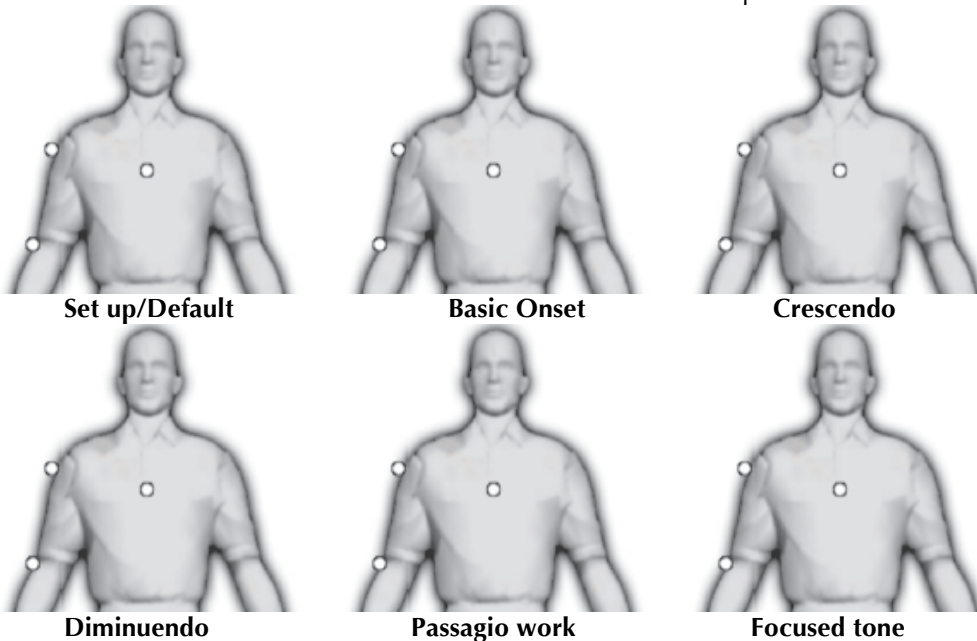
3. Choir Directors and Mirroring: What is Your Face Saying?

- a. vowel, intensity, emotion, reaction,
 - 4. The parental mirroring face for the conductor
- D. Empathy and Vulnerability

REFLECTION

III. Mirror Neurons: Empathy in Gesture

- A. Clearing the Intent: Soul work
 - 1. New gesturing to have a better choir
 - 2. New Techniques to manipulate more effectively
 - 3. A path toward inner growth
- B. Conveying Intent vs. Rehearsing the piece
- C. Building up the choir vs. Fixing the Music
- D. Affirmation—what is now possible vs. correcting
- E. Mirroring vs. Directing
 - 1. Outward directives fire motor cortex-conscious engagement, intellectual processing is involved, adapts (wears down over time), and the singer is subject to not engaging due to attitude, health, or lack of motivation or value (value good music, a concert, or special event, or respect you)
 - 2. **Mirroring creates an “intuitive” or empathetic response, essentially skipping the intellectualization process!**
- F. Connecting Empathy into Gesture: Resonating Spaces and Breath
 - 1. The importance of conducting together, breathing together “Neurons that fire together, wire together!”
 - 2. The importance of conducting warm-ups: wiring for them, re-wiring for you.
 - a. Woops, MMM, OW, Zip
- G. **THE NEW SET UP: Diagonals and the “Ninja” Position**
 - a. Less than 50% of gesture needed to convey intent when mirror neurons are active!
 - b. DEVELOPING A LEXICON OF GESTURE: Samples



PRACTICE: 1. Sing all vowels through new set up. 2. Practice Breathing and ONSET in new set up. 3. Practice all six samples from new set up using a variety of vocalizes.

Interlude 3: Rehearse with Weston--focus on affective teaching
REFLECTION

IV. Empathy in Rehearsal:

A. The Transformational circle: We can work to create a learning atmosphere to incite mirror activity. As we connect with choir, our OWN mirror neurons react, the choir inspires our own growth!

1. Gestures change
2. Language changes
3. Connections and relationships changes
4. We continue the path of personal transformation so that intent can be

even more clear.

B. The positive rehearsal

1. Goal is to develop mirror connection allowing the choir to intuitively respond to your intent at a greater level, leading to more profound rehearsal experiences.
2. When something goes wrong, the desire becomes to find a way to help the singer experience your intent more clearly, rather than fixing the surface problem.
3. When addressing the choir, we speak not of what to correct, but what is now possible!
4. Negative attitudes become more rare, and can be met with empathy?

B. Non Musical rehearsing

1. I AM and YOU ARE chair

Extras and Opportunities:

I. A Major Argument Against Mirror Neurons: "A controversial paper asserts that mirror neurons may not exist in humans, at least not in the same sense. Psychology professor Alfonso Caramazza of Harvard University and his colleagues used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to test for the presence of the cells in healthy adults. The team employed the theory of adaptation—that the brain response to a given action decreases for a repeat occurrence, at least during a short window of time.

The results showed that adaptation occurred when people performed the same random action several times or when they saw the same action repeatedly. It also occurred when they saw an action and then performed it. But adaptation did not occur when people first performed an action and then saw it, demonstrating a mismatch in how action and observation affect the brain.

"What we found is that there is an asymmetry in adaptation. The signal decreases when you go from seeing to acting, but not when you go from acting to seeing," he says. "I would argue that this is evidence against mirror neurons." The paper was published online June 2 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*."

Boers: Current research at the University of Washington by doctoral student Janessa Anderson, is finding anecdotal evidence that learning and retention (non-adaptation) is occurring when singers DO and SEE *simultaneously*. Further, students must be taught cognitively for repetition in motor cortex, AFTER they have intuitively performed the technique by mirroring.

II. Introductory Videos:

A. Neuroscientist Vilayanur Ramachandran:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0pwKzTRG5E&feature=related>

B. Eric Ericson, prototypical mirror neuron conducting technique:

http://www.realgroup.se/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52%3Aeric-ericson-conducts-trg&catid=12%3Avideo&Itemid=50&lang=en

III. Introductory Reading:

Iacoboni, Marco. *Mirroring People: The Science of Empathy and How We Connect with Others*. New York, Picador/ Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

IV. Opportunity for Summer Study: Three-Day Immersion Workshops

A. University of Washington Summer Choral Academy with Geoffrey Boers and Giselle Wyers. June 26-28, 2012. Transformation and Empathy Study for Conductors: Conducting Study, Laban Techniques, Rehearsal Techniques, Repertoire

B. Geoffrey Boers and Richard Nace Choral Workshop, Tacoma, WA, TBA July, 2012. The Total Conductor: Technique and Teaching, Servant and Spirit

V. Graduate Study:

Under the leadership of Geoffrey Boers, the graduate Choral Conducting Program at the University of Washington has become a national leader, well-known for its innovation and creative approach to educating choral conductors for future leadership. The choral faculty, Geoffrey Boers, Giselle Wyers, and Steven Demorest, collaborate to provide students with an holistic and individualized approach the choral art. Current students are engaged in leading edge study of the brain and music perception with Steven Demorest; the *UW Repertoire Project*, a colloquium of faculty and students, is developing a website for the purpose of providing reliable grading and quality rubrics to promote music of the canon for all ability levels; studying forward thinking Laban conducting techniques with Giselle Wyers; and researching implications of this mirror neurons study in conducting and pedagogy with Geoffrey Boers. Students are gaining notoriety in numerous ways developing non-profit organizations such as *Chorosynthesis.org*, growing as notable composers, and are winners of significant awards and grants. Recent students are teaching in universities, colleges, public schools, and churches across the United States, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

For further information contact: Geoffrey Boers, boersg@uw.edu, or visit our website, www.music.washington.edu/choirs/

