

Observing and Analyzing the Quality of Coordination

Key to doing this is the verb *Appreciate*:

1. Recognize the full worth of
2. Be grateful for (something)
3. Understand (a situation) fully; recognize the full implications of

Essential to helping performers is the ability to appreciate what they are doing, in the full sense of the word. This includes: seeing, hearing, sensing, and analyzing subtle aspects of the process behind the result; imagining other possibilities; understanding how their coordination affects the artistic outcome, and future implications of a way of doing something.

This omni-sensory process is observing the quality of coordination --sensing the relationship between head and spine -- and how that relationship affects overall coordination and movement quality, including movement of the limbs and joints, and the overall execution of the task. It is possible to discern information about the quality of coordination through sound, quality of performance, precision, speed, liveliness, and spontaneity. All of these are clues about coordination.

Key to skill-building, performing and coordinating effectively are well-developed mirror neurons. Mirror neurons are neurons that fire both when one acts and when one observes the same action performed by another. The neuron "mirrors" the behavior of the other, as though the observer themselves were acting. It is argued that mirror neurons are the neural basis for empathy.

"Our mirror neuron systems becomes more active the more expert we are at an observed skill. When pianists listen to someone else's piano performance, the finger areas in their primary and premotor cortex increase their baseline activity. The same thing does not happen in the brains of non-musicians. While they can certainly appreciate the music deeply, their experience is inevitably shallower than the pianists in at least one way, because they are not experiencing what it is like to actually produce it. [...] When you learn a new motor skill, you see the world differently. You understand actions differently."

(Blakeslee & Blakeslee 2007: 169-167)

Mirror neurons also help us to imagine into the activity of another person, even if it isn't our particular skill. The extent to which we have experience with the components of an activity is reflected in our mirror neurons, and understanding skill-building in some expert way allows us to more effectively help performers.

"To imitate a complex act requires me to adopt another person's point of view." VS

Ramachandran

Analyzing the Quality of Coordination

Efficient coordination can be used to make an inefficient shape for artistic reasons.

Knowing the Alexander Technique has significantly increased my ability to observe and appreciate the performing of others.

“The hallmarks of the Alexander Technique are creativity, spontaneity, and adaptability to change”

A.R. Alexander

Clues about Coordination

Seeing the seams of the technique- if it seems someone is "doing a technique" rather than

If your attention “bounces”

If you can't follow the story

If something takes you out of the story, or seems “separate”

Their eyes are fixed

They seem not to be responding to what's happening

If you detect a conflict (they seem not to understand why they're doing what they're doing)

If you see/hear stiffening between head/spine, or in the action- one indicates the other

Experiments

1 The best way to develop this skill is to work with it- observe others and do your own work with curiosity and wonder

2 Play with with one of your pieces; be goofy and see what changes about your experience

3 Watch a few of your favorite performers dispassionately, and see what you pick up

Links:

Blog post and video of VS Ramachandran:

<http://kateconklin.com/blog/mirror-neurons-and-empathy/>

Michelle Kwon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x14RFdZXiVk>

Leontyne Price. Signore Ascolta- Turandot

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHyhXneLFvA>

Birgit Nilsson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l--ymFr2Ub8>

Luciano Pavarotti : Una furtiva lacrima

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2J7JM0tGgRY>

Celine Dion and Pavarotti

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otAu5twqDpk>

Moses Supposes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tciT9bmCMq8>

White Nights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImzkWZkaIIM>

Arthur Rubenstein

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTKVeEYSp9U>

Chico Marx

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Fx252AgYeM>