



Because a Lesson Is a Kind of Performance

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When I enter the class as a researcher/teacher trainer, I say to myself: Try to forget everything you know; try to look at what is happening as never before, try to see things that you have never seen. That's very difficult and one doesn't always succeed. Considering this difficulty and out of a desire to view things in another way, I try to employ this fresh view in other regions which bear a certain similarity to the classroom. I identify this similarity, for example, in the theater. This article presents three examples from live performances appearing on YouTube, and tries to use them to distill fragments of insight about teaching, about learning and about relations between students and their teachers.

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Usually, when the object of research is learning and teaching in schools, it is natural and also logical to try to find the answers to our research questions in the schools, where these processes take place. That is the natural place to find what we seek. But there is a catch. This search limits the research to within school limits and prevents us from looking past them to other areas where learning and teaching take place and to other places where there is interaction comparable to what goes on in a learning classroom. These realms could perhaps shed new light on learning and teaching, and brush up our thinking about them. One of these places is the theater.

As a lesson is a type of performance, which includes an artist (the teacher) and an audience (the class), I think that the various elements of the "classroom performance" can be investigated with an enhanced perspective or a clearer one, a more understandable one or a more focused one, if it is suffused with insights which have developed as a result of watching musical performances, and in the interactions which have been created between the artist and the audience. In my opinion, viewing musical performances enables enrichment of our perspectives about what we are doing, and enhancing our reflective ability, perhaps because in this case, it is intensified and also easy to watch. Yes, that is probably the reason.

In the classroom space, it is hard to perceive all sorts of phenomena; it is difficult because they are evasive and we often need the assistance of metaphors in order to talk about and to touch upon all of this elusiveness: The teacher is like a "gardener" caring for the trees in his garden; or the teacher is a full container, pouring its contents into the empty containers on the children's shoulders; or teaching is like a journey; or the teacher is the captain of a ship. A look into what goes on in the theater may serve us in the same way that these metaphors do. It may clarify and demonstrate abstract concepts that we usually use in order to say one thing or another about what goes on in the classroom, about learning and about teaching and their relationships.

During the last year, I demonstrated this to student teachers while I was instructing them on a range of educational issues. Here are three examples: The first is connected to the beginning of the year and to my attempt to tell them what I hoped their year would be like, a kind of greeting. The second relates to the end of the year and to my attempt to thank them for the year I experienced as a teacher of the class. The third was in between and was associated with the year's progress and my attempt to demonstrate the importance of preparing a well-constructed lesson



plan, but at the same time, the necessity of being ready to deviate from it at any time in line with what was occurring in the lesson.

Amy Belle Apparently Wants to be a Singer When She Grows Up

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w46bWxS9IjY>

Amy Belle apparently wants to be a singer when she grows up. She sings in Glasgow pubs. But Rod Stewart actually met her while she was singing on a Glasgow street. In the same way that he had been discovered a little more than fifty years earlier and five hundred fifty kilometers south of Glasgow, in London, while he was singing in the street. He heard her, was enchanted, and invited her to sing with him. At a performance. At his opening performance in Albert Hall in London in 2004, before an enormous audience. This song was the result of that meeting.

Stewart is almost an old man. He's already over 60. The years have done him well. From the height of his years, he gives ungrudging support and encouragement. Openheartedly. She is young. He gives her room. He leads her. She is excited, takes a deep breath, embarrassed. He gives her a supportive look. Encourages with a good word. Nods and looks at her with satisfaction at what he hears and sees. The audience, as well. She looks at him singing. Smiles as though she understands something. He moves away and gives her the center of the stage. Then comes back to be there for her. She gently leans her head on his shoulder. Only for a second. That will give her what she needs to continue. He is enjoying himself. You can see that. He guides her to give some room to the audience. He hushes the orchestra. Shows her how to develop a relationship with the audience. Stands at her side at the moments of success when she doesn't manage to hold back her smile, looking at the audience and at each other. He signals her to come in and continue to sing and physically gives expression to her entrance with his body as he stands at her side. He stealthily gives her a satisfied side glance. She thanks the audience. He calls her by name twice. Leaves her with a fatherly hug and sends her on her way.

That is apparently how Mentor behaved towards Telemachus; Mentor was entrusted with the education of Telemachus, son of his good friend Odysseus, who then set off on his voyages. I hope that your teacher trainers will behave towards you in a similar manner, and that is the way I will try to act, as well, during the year, so that you will be as ready as possible to get up on the stage



without Rod Stewart. Alone. And may it be an especially successful appearance. From all standpoints.

If-Then

[Http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-roGMGyFu0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-roGMGyFu0)

June 9, 2014, last class meeting,

A lesson has the characteristics of a performance. And if the lesson was really a type of performance, with a singer and an audience, more than anything I would like to have blond hair again (the way I once did) and I would like it to be long (as it once was) and a bit wavy (as it never was). And I would like to know French well (as I never did) and to be able to sing freely in French, as I do in Hebrew. And I would like to have a black chiffon shirt and long black pants (like I have in my closet but never wear). And I would like an upturned nose (as I never had) and delicate hands. And I would like a voice like the sound of bells, with a wide range. And I would like to be a woman (as I am not), and I would like to be forty-three years old. I would like to be Lara Fabian. So perhaps it will surprise you to hear that, to a great extent, that's what I am. And maybe it will surprise you to hear that it is thanks to you.

In many respects, for two hours on Mondays I have often become Lara Fabian. But not in the sense of the applause I have received or not received. I have certainly not been referring to that. I have become Lara Fabian thanks to what the meeting between us has released in me. You have been my audience, or if we bring the analogy of the lesson as a performance a bit closer to the lawns of Kibbutzim College, you have been the class. A warm class, reacting; a class that knows all the words by heart, and is skilled in the use of a cigarette lighter and lighting candles at the right moment. A class whose *triceps brachii* have been well skilled in making the right moves in synchrony with the music. You were a class that knows how to dedicate itself to the piano and to let it accompany you alone, like the "pros". You were a class that contained everything necessary to turn me into Lara Fabian, if only for two hours a week. A class that had everything necessary to extract from me and to grant me many moments of teaching pleasure, of real teaching enjoyment. May I wish that you gain students as you have been for me, students who will give you a Lara Fabian experience. You have given me pleasure. And I would like to thank you for that.



The Ability to Release Your Grip and Let Go

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5gm6QySG-k>

I know. I know that Karima Charni is not just another music fan who has come to see Patrick Bruel's performance. I know that she probably did not pay her own money to sit in the first row. I know that Karima Charni is a television star in France, primarily hosting music programs on channels 6 and 9. And she is also a producer, and actually a bit of a singer as well. And I know that Patrick Bruel is not just a singer; he is also a talented actor, who knows, among other things, how to act surprised. And despite everything that I know, I manage to put aside this knowledge and to enjoy the story told in this clip, and its unexpected contents.

A small band. Two guitars, a cajón, an electronic keyboard. They had obviously rehearsed the song many times before they got up on the stage (even if a small one) to sing it before an audience (even if a small one). Café des Delices begins quietly and calmly. Bruel almost whispers into the microphone, only him and his guitar. Afterwards, the keyboard and another guitar gently join in and the audience does as well. And then the cajón begins to beat like a pounding heart, intensifying the flow of blood to everyone present in the theater, to whoever is singing, whoever is playing, and whoever is listening. And to the woman who is listening. Bruel puts his guitar aside and leaves his chair. In the hand which has been freed from the guitar he is holding the microphone. And then it happens. He sees that the woman in the first row is "really into it", singing and dancing as well. (Let's assume that we don't know that she is Karima Charni). And in an instant decision, on the spot, he decides not to let her get away. And with his other hand, which has been freed from the guitar, he invites her to come up on the stage. He decides to abandon the performance as it was planned and prepared at home during many hours of rehearsal; decides to release his grip and to let go of the earlier secure preparation in favor of the unclear and unexpected. What will happen now? He will sing and she will dance next to him? He will sing and they will dance together? She will sing? She'll sing well? They will sing? He will dance and she will sing? They will dance and sing together? Will she succeed in meeting the expectations that she had created while sitting in the first row a minute ago? Will this carry the audience away? And the answers to all of these questions is yes, and in a big way. What is created on the stage and in the theater is magic, electrifying. It stands to reason that this is much greater than what would have occurred had he sung his song, having chosen not to involve the woman in the audience (and let's assume that we don't know that it is Karima Charni).



And when the cajón dies down and the guitar and keyboard have become quiet, towards the end of the song, he lets her sing the last word and she trills it in her lovely voice and beams the note towards him with a movement of her tightly closed lips accompanied by a light infinitely graceful movement of her head, a movement which I read as: "you see, it was worth it", Considering the result, I too move my lips and my head (much less gracefully, I assume).

Paraphrasing what Geertz said about the social code of the wink: "That's all there is to it: a speck of *behavior*, a fleck of culture, and —voilà!— a gesture", we may say that all there is to it is a speck of perception, a handful of imagination, and voilà, insight.