

## Gestures

Ted Shawn, **Every Little Movement** :

“Nothing is more deplorable than a gesture without motive, without meaning.”

“The most powerful of all gestures is that which affects the spectator without his knowing it.”

“Outward gesture is only an echo of the inward feeling that gave birth to it and rules it, and must be inferior to it.”

“Let the face foretell what the gesture will later make obvious.”

Larry Ajer, **The Ballad, Its Magic and Mystery** :

“Establish the meter of the upcoming song in the space between applause and first sound. If a pitch is used, further confirm the meter with the pitch taking technique. The downbeat occurs after the singer’s first breath and after the singer’s first expression of the song’s mood. The first note and word sound cannot coincide with the first expression. If the expression occurs before the sound, it will throw emphasis on the sound and enhance the effect.”

“Not moving in harmony with the forward direction of thought and mood is fundamentally wrong. ....When a performer sings a ballad without moving, he tells the audience that he is simply reproducing words, notes, rhythms and harmonies with no more value than had they been left as dots on a page of music.”

“What of the gesture that is without movement? Can mood be projected in silence? Yes, of course it can and gesture is no different. The held breath is expressively important in many ways. It indicates suspense or emphasis--it is the eloquent moment of any gesture when at its culmination the attitude is sustained and the breath is held. As we move from the mood at the end of a verse into an entirely new theme in the chorus of a song, there is frequently the opportunity to sustain one and anticipate the other. The pause, if there is one, immediately following the climax of a song is another place where planned absence of movement allows us to feel the carry over of emotion contained in the previous phrase. The next line to follow is thereby given a powerful value as our audience fully absorbs the first thought and is ready for the next.”

Francois Delsarte, **Law of Sequence**

There is no communication without gesture. Every song we sing has it and every thought we wish to convey demands it. Note that the term “gesture” is not restricted to movements of the limbs. In fact, it is quite the contrary. Gesture is our very body posture, facial expression, angle of the head, tilt of the torso, position of the feet and so on. Delsarte identifies the completeness of expression with his Law of Sequence:

**The thought comes first, then the expression of the face and attitude of the body, and the gesture is a result of this and only last does speech come.** Yes, the gesture precedes the speech.

