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Gesture & Breath

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Gesture & Breath

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Abby Leigh Huffstetler

Committee in charge:

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair  
Professor Marc Alexander Barricelli  
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2023

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The Thesis of Abby Leigh Huffstetler is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2023

## DEDICATION

To all the gentle, wistful souls  
who have given kindness, conquered monsters  
& laughed themselves silly

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis Approval Page.....	iii
Dedication .....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Abstract of the Thesis.....	vi

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Gesture & Breath

by

Abby Leigh Huffstetler

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California San Diego, 2023

Professor Ursula Meyer, Chair

*Gesture and Breath* are the language of the body. They are powerful and informative instruments for storytelling, creative exploration and emotional sustainability. While exploring gesture and breath, I noticed my body responding with profound access to untapped depth. Our bodies are far smarter than our minds can ever be.

In my second year, I learned that punctuation, rhythm and breath played an important role in the exploration of classical text. Tone and tension, story and relationship can be created by the manipulation of these instruments. Simple tools to gain access to profound expression. Adding

gesture to this exploration provides an embodied punctuation and rhythm. Dynamic storytelling can be demanding on the emotional and physical body.

There are many techniques designed to recall sense memory to feel something, but this? Can it be as simple as gesture and breath? I learned the job is not to feel, but to tell the story. I can quicken my breath, lower my center and cover my head. I don't need to feel fear to tell the story of fear. Breath can also swoop in to calm, regulate and soothe. Storytelling can be sustainable through its mindful integration with an informed, embodied process.