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While in Halifax, I saw nineteenth century performance come to life in surprising ways. One of the questions going into the workshop was: how might actors in this era have navigated the use of props, scenery, and costume pieces based on the demands of the play? In the case of *The Manager's Daughter*, the rapid speed of costume changes made it clear that Jean Margaret Davenport would likely have been wearing multiple layers of costume pieces, and that there was probably a “dresser” assisting her backstage. Dramaturgically speaking, dialogue may have been added in a second version of the play in order to make these costume changes possible.

Another question going into the workshop was: how did actors relate to the use of gesture? We began by working off of some of the ideas and illustrations outlined in Henry Siddons' *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*. We posted some of these illustrations on the walls of the studio and had the actors try to copy them precisely with their bodies. They then had the task of connecting three positions together with transitions. The objective was to explore what motivations or impulses might have accompanied these movements. After the initial explorations, the actors created scenes using their chosen gestures. Later, they employed gesture to various degrees (ranging from melodrama to realism) in scenes from *Angèle*, *The Manager's Daughter*, and *L'Aiglon*. Depending on the order of gestures used, the placement of the actors in the space, and the speed, energy and size of the movements, the meaning of these scenes shifted.

What I learned from observing these exercises is that “melodramatic” gestures were (and are) more than poses. Through them, it was possible for actors to express real emotion, just as actors today might express real emotion through “realistic” gestures. An observation frequently made during this workshop was just how large some of our “everyday” gestures are. This led to conversations about how nineteenth century acting may not have been as melodramatic as we like to think. Seeing contemporary actors make a variety of gesture choices (some large and melodramatic, others almost naturalistic) reinforced this, and allowed me to wonder about the choices nineteenth century actors and directors were making in the development of their performances. They likely did not venture to the same degree of realism as we might today, but perhaps they were not so “stuck” in these “melodramatic” gestures as one might assume.

As a theatre-maker, it is exciting to be reminded that, in a way, no style is “off limits.” The choice of how to use gesture simply depends on the moment. As a researcher, moving forward it will be interesting to look at the ways in which gesture factored into the training and performance of child performers in the nineteenth century.