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Reflection on the Santorini Voice Symposium

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Back in Berlin, I'm not finding it easy to get my feet on the ground! But the fact that I had to plunge into work at once supports my return to ordinary life from our "extra-ordinary" experience in Santorini. How lucky I am that my work allows me to integrate and sustain the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of those days with that group of passionate, highly qualified, alert, and sensitive people. What a gift!

The most impressive gift for me was the discovery that "thinking" is not a skill of cool control but of authentic and deep research—if it is connected with the human being who "thinks," with sensibility, body, and emotion. I realized that all of these "thinking" philosophical people are deeply sensitive and, in a positive way, thin-skinned, transcendent, touchable, deeply interested in the mystery of life! Their "thinking"—their reflections or "papers" on themes such as the silent voice, space, mouths of expression, identity, per-sona-lity, our destiny as social-beings, and the question of being "natural"—affected me in a very physical and emotional way. In Kristin's terminology, sometimes I felt a profound pang deep in my body.

Almost from the first moment, I sensed a deep willingness in every member of our group to find ways of participating and communicating thoughts, impressions, doubts, and feelings in a very mature and passionate way. Also I felt deep respect and fascination about the “being-different” of the person opposite, the interest and endeavour to overcome strict definitions, to open up—as Alessandro said the last day, “to stretch” our minds, the own view on life, especially on the aspect of voice and on breath as an “interface” between mind and body.

I was also impressed by the courage and the emotional and personal depth of all of the young (from my point of view!) actors in allowing themselves to confront the intellectual world; this widened and stretched my definition of “intelligence” in a profound way.

As for myself (being neither actress nor philosopher), I experienced in a very new, and somehow even astonishing way, how fortunate I am to be able to remain all day aware of and in contact with my body, and with the body of others working on voice and breath, which gives me a very concrete connection to the phenomenon of “life” and of “personality.” I discovered in Santorini that, if I succeed in keeping this connection, I need no longer doubt who “I am,” even if, perhaps, I don’t know, and even if I have yet to face overwhelming and chaotic struggles of emotions and thoughts coming from I-don’t-know-where.

At Santorini I learned that, for most people, it is new to experience speaking as a bodily function, intimately connected to breathing. It is new to experience breath as a *schnittstelle* between body and emotion, and speaking as a process that needs and concerns the entire personality. To confront this work with one’s body is often to confront one’s personal history, which lives in the body, especially in one’s breathing patterns. I found more *durchlässigkeit* transparency concerning the perception of sensual, emotional, and intellectual input and an opening for greater capacity of sensual, emotional, and intellectual expression. In this, language becomes again more lively, more filled, more connected to the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual sources of speech; it’s about more than transmitting information.

—Luitgard Janßen