

Commentary on Mikael Kindborg's Rosen Movements and Words

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Back in spring 2012, when I was looking at the program of the Rosen Method Global Congress in Stockholm/Sweden, I was immediately attracted by the title of a workshop, "Rosen Movements and Words," to be presented by Mikael Kindborg from Sweden. Since I was scheduled to present a workshop in the same time segment, I was unable to attend Mikael's presentation. Consequently was I very happy when I found Mikael's article on the theme of his workshop in the *Rosen Method International Journal*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, 2013.

During my training to become a Rosen Movement Teacher, what our teachers communicated to us concerning the words to be used in Rosen Movement class seemed quite evident to me at that time: use soft words for soft and slow movements, short and precise words for faster movements, and a very soft and quiet voice for movements on the floor. I tried and took care to repeat and reproduce the words I had heard and which seemed quite adequate to me but at the time, I really did not give much thought about the why and how of these words.

After some more years of experience, and then starting to be trained as a Rosen Movement Training teacher, words became more and more interesting and challenging. It was only with my first disastrous experience that I became aware how words could influence the ongoing process of a movement class. I was volunteering to lead the sequence on the floor, when I suddenly observed that with my instructions to lift the legs, some legs went straight up towards the ceiling, others to the side, and some heads were lifting with hesitating and questioning eyes. Needless to say that the flow of my sequence was completely disrupted as well as my self-confidence! This experience showed me how, particularly with the movements on the floor where the participants cannot see the teacher modeling, precision and clarity of the words are an indispensable requirement.

In my role as a Rosen Movement Training Teacher, I more and more reflected on and tried to experiment with how to transmit the appropriate use of words to the students who were learning how to teach Rosen Movement. Mikael Kindborg's article came just at the right moment and has become for me a great support and help.

In my opinion, this article can quite successfully figure as a guideline and check-list to learning and teaching the use of words in Rosen Movement. All the elements and reasons for how and why we might use words in Rosen Movement are presented, as well as how they underline the goals teachers may want to achieve in the different segments of a Rosen Movement class.

Mikael Kindborg's article is long, so I can fully understand the difficulties and hesitation of Rosen Movement students to work themselves through this large amount of material. On the other hand, there is not one paragraph that seems boring, off of track, or needless. To me, it is not an article to be read necessarily through from the first to the last page in one passage. I see it much more as a tool for Rosen Movement learning and understanding, so that one can read only a few parts at a time as they apply to a particular question or segment of the movement class.

Each paragraph describes one or more aspects concerning the choice of the proper words, the adequate intonation, or the harmonious input of the voice. All these elements are not only listed but always underlined with very clear and understandable examples. These make it easy to imagine the affirmative and supporting outcome, or on the contrary, a more insecure or disruptive effect in a Rosen Movement class.

I really want to encourage Rosen Movement students to apply these tools with the goal to refine their ability to accompany their movements with appropriately chosen words. In choosing to read only one paragraph at a time, Kindborg's excellent and clear explanations will support students and teachers to understand the underlying principles and experiences, and then help them to explore, play and experiment in class so as to discover new possibilities and the effectiveness of their words.

One can say that the use of words can be compared to the choice of the music in a Rosen Movement class: use slower and softer words to inspire and allow flowing and stretching movements. Choose short, clear, staccato-like words for stepping, followed by more melodious and rhythmic words and music for dancing across the floor, etc.

I am regularly asked to teach either in English, French or German, so it was interesting for me to find out if these rules are applicable in different languages. I would say yes, most of the time. It is, however, fascinating to feel the subtle differences in each language and culture. It seems to me that the English language has more short and precise words available than French or German, where you need often to circumscribe a concept with several words, which takes more time for the words to be understood and tends to render it more complicated. The time factor is especially annoying when teaching in two languages with simultaneous translation. In that case, it is required for the participants to carefully listen, to wait until the corresponding language comes, to hear and understand the instructions, and finally to transform them into action. All these steps tend to bring people into thinking rather than being able to surrender into the feeling and flow of the movements.

With all the "theory" that Mikael Kindborg presents, I appreciate that he doesn't impose it as a professional must. I like his sentence, "*being confident is not the same as perfection!*" In the end, the best guide for the use of words is probably *authenticity*. While gaining more and more experience, the maturing learning process will lead to a lessening of thinking, imitating, and wanting to do it so perfectly. Over time, this process will show more and more the student's ability to feel, live and embody his own personal and unique words. Then the movements become free, light and joyful.

At this point I would like to make a remark concerning words in Rosen Method Bodywork in comparison to words in Rosen Movement. In my opinion there exists an additional difficulty in teaching movement. In a bodywork session the practitioner is one-to-one with the client. When the practitioner's choice of words is not accurate, he or she can immediately feel or see the result by the presence or absence of a reaction in the client's body, e.g., a change in the breath, or a softening or hardening under the hands. In a movement

class however, the movement teacher is confronted with a whole group, where each participant might understand and translate the instructions slightly differently. Hesitating or unclear verbal instructions can easily lead to a general disharmony, a breaking of the flow, or even to chaos in the group. It is a difficult task then for the movement teacher to bring the attention back to the core, so that the participants can leave the class with a feeling of wholeness and overall well-being. It is precisely in these occasions where we need this particular and rich quality of Rosen Movement and Bodywork to succeed, a quality which lies in the art of simply welcoming and being with what is, rather than in feeling faulty and guilty, and trying with tremendous effort to reverse the situation.

I want to thank Mikael Kindborg for his rich and helpful contribution. I am looking forward to working, experimenting and playing more on the basis of his research and experience. I am curious to discover even more how it can facilitate and make the learning for my students interesting, joyful and attractive. The only regret I have at this time is that I was not able to participate in Mikael's workshop at the Global Congress!