

Secrets From the Stage III: The Eloquent Speaker

Practising & Mastering the Fundamental Skills of Public Speaking

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Session Overview:

We all know *what* we're supposed to do when we speak, but *how* can we actually get better at it? What separates the "natural speaker" from the rest of us? What makes some speakers eloquent, influential, and riveting to hear? In this session of the *Secrets From The Stage* seminar series, we look at what goes into great speaking, how to work on the fundamental skills behind powerful and influential public speaking, and how to practise effectively for lifelong, lasting improvement.

Speaker Bio

Iain Duncan's transformative sessions on the intersections of performance and business combine deeply researched content with exciting performing demonstrations and engaging comedy. In the *Secrets From The Stage* seminar series, Iain draws on his experience on stage and in the boardroom to help audiences become more confident, eloquent, and influential public speakers. Iain has been performing as a circus entertainer, musician, and variety comedian for over 25 years, and has worked for 15 years in software, as a consultant, manager, sales person, and start-up director. His background uniquely qualifies him as a trainer and speaker able to bridge the worlds of business and soft skills. Participants learn, improve, and have fun!

Learning Objectives:

Participants will learn about the fundamental skills of rhetoric, analysing the use of rhythm and space, vocal variety, and body language. They will learn how to break the complex act of public speaking down into learnable component skills, and they'll be introduced to techniques from the performing arts, sports psychology, and the neuroscience of skill acquisition to learn how to practise fundamental skills effectively. With demonstrations of practise techniques and take-home exercises for improving long-term, participants will leave equipped to transform their public speaking and become more powerful, engaging, and influential presenters.

Technical Details:

The session may be presented as either a talk, round-table discussion, or interactive workshop, with length ranging from 1 to 4 hours depending on format. The content in the detailed outline will be adjusted as needed for session length; the outline targets a 1.5-2h presentation. Slide projection is optional as participants will receive a paper hand-out with notes, exercises, and further reading.

High-Level Outline

- **Introduction**
 - Iain's background, what will be covered, why practise fundamentals
- **What is Eloquent Public Speaking?**
 - The nature of a talk, great public speaking, a look at the fundamental skills of speaking
- **The Science of Real-Time Skill Acquisition**
 - What are "real time" skills? The neuroscience of learning and what it means for practising
- **The Play-To-Performance Spectrum**
 - 7 types of practising & rehearsing, practice vs rehearsal vs performance
- **Deliberately Practise - The Key To Mastering Fundamentals**
 - The drill cycle, attempt goals, & the Difficulty-Accuracy-Duration Triad
- **Decomposing the Art of Speaking**
 - Breaking down the complex skill of public speaking into components we can master
- **Speaking Fundamentals 1: Pace and Space**
 - Rhythm, pace, & space - demonstrations and how to practise
- **Speaking Fundamentals 2: Vocal Variety**
 - Variety of pitch, amplitude, and tone - demonstrations and how to practise
- **Speaking Fundamentals 3: Saying It With Our Bodies**
 - Breath, carriage, gesture - demonstrations and how to practise
- **Tying Them Together to Create Impact**
 - Tension and Release: creating arcs of intensity in our speaking
- **Conclusion: Building a Learning Lifestyle**
 - Building a life of ongoing practise and improving forever

Detailed Outline

- **Introduction**

- Purpose of the session
- Iain's introduction, his work in the performing arts and in business
- Iain's training and education in performing arts of various disciplines

- **What is Eloquent Public Speaking?**

- The nature of a successful talk: performance, conversation, influence
- What this means for the art of public speaking
- Fundamental skills, and the myth of the "natural"
- Fundamentals: pace & space, vocal variety, body language
- Why work on fundamental skills

- **The Science of Real-Time Skill Acquisition**

- What is a "real-time skill" and how does it compare with other forms of learning?
- Your brain on skills: what happens when we execute real-time actions
- The neuroscience of how we learn and master skills
- What this means for practising productively
- The fundamentals of public speaking as learnable real-time skills

- **The Play-to-Performance Spectrum**

- Introduction to the 7 types of practise, rehearsal, and performing
- Differences between the Play & Drill side vs the Simulation & Performance side
- Blind spots on the spectrum: why most people never improve their fundamentals
- The right type of practice: the importance of Play & Drill for improving fundamentals
- In Practise: the spectrum's influence on attempt goals, approach to mistakes, mental state

- **Deliberately Practise - The Key To Mastering Fundamentals**

- Deliberate Practise: what it is and its use in the performing arts and athletics
- The importance of play and experimentation in discovering technique
- Attempt goals and the Difficulty-Accuracy-Duration triad
- The Drill Cycle, the rhythm of effective deliberate practise
- Mistakes: the value of them, how we deal with them, when we minimize them

- **Decomposing the Art of Speaking**

- The art of breaking the complex into practiceable components
- A look at several different ways of decomposing complex skills
- Decomposing speaking: what are the component skills we can master?
- Pace & space, vocal variety, and body language

- **Speaking Fundamentals 1: Pace and Space**
 - A look at rhythm of speech, pacing, and use of space
 - Their effects and importance, what they do, why they matter
 - Demonstration of effective use, and how to practise them
 - Take home exercises to work on
 - Sources for inspiration and further study
- **Speaking Fundamentals 2: Vocal variety**
 - A look at vocal variety: pitch, volume, timbre, intensity
 - Their effects and importance, what they do, why they matter
 - Demonstration of effective use, and how to practise them
 - Take home exercises to work on
 - Sources for inspiration and further study
- **Speaking Fundamentals 3: Saying It With Our Bodies**
 - What is body language? Why does it matter?
 - Breath: they breath when we breath
 - Carriage: the attitude we project, and the feedback cycle
 - Gesture: natural vs artificial, how to use effectively
 - Demonstration of effective use, and how to practise them
 - Take home exercises to work on
- **Tying It Together: Using the Fundamentals to Create Impact**
 - Tension and Release: how the elements interact to create the arc of intensity
 - What our audiences need from us, why it matters
 - Putting tension and release to work in our talks
 - Studying the masters and other arts
- **Conclusion: Building a Learning Lifestyle**
 - Creating a life of ongoing practise
 - Finding time to practise, good and bad scheduling habits
 - The right mental attitude for improving over the long haul