

Adjusting Gesture Volume by Mary Hamilton

Adjust your gestures/movements to match the audience space. The telling for an audience of five, seated side-by-side right in front of you, should be different from telling for 50 or 500. Lower the volume on gestures for a smaller audience and raise the volume for larger audiences. No, the gesture for an audience of 500 will not be 100 times bigger than the gestures for an audience of five.

Sound too artificial? The truth is, we adjust the volume of our gestures all the time. Try this experiment. Imagine you are sitting at a banquet, and someone you know is at the next table. You've made eye contact; now wave to them. Note the volume of your gesture. Now, imagine you are walking down a street. You see someone you know on the opposite side of the street. Wave to them. Notice the change in gesture. How will your gesture change if you imagine you are walking out of a store and spot someone you know on the far side of the parking lot? With each scenario, your entire body changes to help you communicate.

Storytelling is a communication art. Listeners are invited to use their imaginations to enter the stories. To gesture as if for an audience of 500 when telling to an audience of five is likely to be over-powering, not inviting. Likewise, concentrating on a small portion of the audience, directing all your eye contact to them and gesturing so only that small group could possibly see what is going on when you have an audience of 500 is likely to turn the bulk of the audience into onlookers rather than participants.

So, give yourself permission to adjust the volume on your gestures. Both you and your audience will be glad you did.

Brief Bio: Mary Hamilton has earned her living telling stories and pondering how the art of storytelling works since 1983. www.maryhamilton.info