CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Memorizing and reciting poems: A literary perspective
Authors	Widmer, Urs
Publication date	2025-12-31
Original Citation	Widmer, U. (2025) 'Memorizing and reciting poems: A literary perspective', Scenario: A Journal for Performative Teaching, Learning, Research, 19(2), pp. 151-152. https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.19.2.9
Type of publication	Article (non peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	10.33178/scenario.19.2.9
Rights	© 2025, the Author(s). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. - https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/
Download date	2026-11-07 10:47:57
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/19231

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Volume/Jahrgang 19, Issue/Ausgabe 2
https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.19.2.9

TaT – TEXTS AROUND THEATRE
This section features literary texts that highlight aspects of performativity.

Memorizing and reciting poems

A literary perspective

Urs Widmer

When we recited poems in front of the class—we memorized a lot—we could choose whether we wanted to recite "without gestures" or "with gestures." Without gestures meant just the text, without any meaningful emphasis, and certainly without any hand or body movements. Looking up to the sky, placing your right hand on your heart. "Without gestures": the maximum grade you could get was a 5, the second best grade. Never the best grade (6), even if you knew the text perfectly. Of course, I always recited my poems with gestures. "Good day, Mr. Gardener" – a reserved nod, because the speaker was a fine lady – "do you have cabbage?" – questioning raising of the eyebrows – "tangerine and nectarine" – ditto – "and perhaps some lovage?" A new voice, deep, because now the gardener was speaking: "Yes, madam, we do, out in the garden. Would madam be so kind as to wait a moment?" And so on, I have the whole poem in my head until the end. Even today, I still wave my hands around during my readings as if Mr. Graber were sitting in the audience.

Widmer, U. (2013). *Reise an den Rand des Universums*. Diogenes, 115-116.

Please note that the English translation is a slightly adapted version of the original.

Text included with kind permission of Diogenes Publishing