

Methacommunication in Conductor's Art

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Abstract: *This study aims to confirm the psychosocial function of art through one of its noblest displays, meaning, of a choral or instrumental conductor. It is an interdisciplinary study, as it involves multiple fields, such as: Humanities, Music, Psychology, Social Psychology, unveiling the conductor's modalities of expression, of the art of being in harmony with smaller or larger choirs. It is through art that man relates to Himself and Society; it is through culture that he improves his modalities of communication, by creating the aesthetic space which can define the behavioral models. The conductor is the sum of the abilities developed and refined in Music. Through his activity, the conductor uses a complex inter-human communication, thus, shaping interpersonal relationships. The non-verbal communication represents an inter-human relationship, molded by the conductor's psychological approach through the usage of language, the sender instrument. Expressivity creates gestural eloquence. It has the power to convince and impress through the force of imposition and the emotional charge diffused to the instrumentalists.*

Keywords: *conductor, music, psychology, communication, language, non-verbal communication.*

1. Introduction

This study aims to confirm the psychosocial function of art through one of its noblest displays, meaning, of a choral or instrumental conductor.

Music is the art and the science that shapes the human being psychologically, socially, culturally and spiritually. It is through art that man relates to Himself and Society. The purposes of art allow man to mould the psychic structure both of him and of the other individuals. As a social being, he enables the manifestation of the psycho-socio-cultural events and is involved in their apprehension. Man dedicates his time, attention and talent in the interaction with himself, with any other human being and with small and large groups: "... a person represents the only social cell

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that generates psychic life, the main reference framework of the psychic phenomena” (Borțun 2000, 6). This objective is the more important as the individual is oriented towards a socio-affective knowledge of his own behavior in order to generate a positive, balanced and harmonious interrelationship.

Psychology is the science that studies the creative potential of the Self. The social psychology is the science that studies the evolution of the individual’s cognitive and affective potential in relationship with other individuals. The contentment of an individual has an impact upon everyone else’s happiness. The social psychology of art analyses the psychological content of: the reality reported to the aesthetic attitude: the socio-historical factors’ influence on the artistic creation and on the approach of artworks; shaping the taste for beauty; the process of transforming the aesthetic principles into social attitudes.

Ergo, this is an interdisciplinary study, as it involves multiple fields, such as: Humanities, Music, Psychology, Social Psychology, unveiling the conductor’s modalities of expression, of the art of being in harmony with smaller or larger choirs, thus attaining inner happiness.

2. The art of communication in society

Man’s relation with himself and with the others starts with communication. The Latin language comprises in its lexicon the term *communico, comunicare*, meaning, to talk, to get in contact with someone. Maslow’s pyramid (Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist who stated that humans have needs that must be satisfied) emphasizes on the third floor of his *Hierarchy of Needs* the human necessity of being in contact with society, of belonging to a group. Man is dependent on society, as his social and cultural evolution is determined by his relation with the social system: “man can become a social being only by being involved in communication activities- which was demonstrated by various studies...” (Rășcanu 2015, 11)

Communication is possible only through the use of **language**. It is a combination of specific codes, for each psychosocial dimension, used in social interaction. The various languages, verbal, non-verbal or paraverbal, are “based on the capacity of symbolizing the human being: of replacing the meaning and of representing something through something else.” (*Dictionary of Social Psychology* 1981, 132)



Fig. 1. *Maslow's pyramid*

Culture represents the stocktaking of the entire values involved in human spirituality. It is the social component that gathers a “combination of values embodied as human specific modalities of projective, attitudinal and preferential reaction towards society and the process of creation, and of placing a new subjectivity upon values.” (*Encyclopedic Dicționar* 1993, 490). By assimilating spiritual values that aim to perfect his evolution, man becomes creative and, also, the permanent creator of other values that maintain and shape other cultural behavioral models specific to a group. Through culture, man refines his modalities of communication, by creating the aesthetic space which can define the behavioral models. The perceptions upon the exterior world are, thus, assimilated, refined and sustained in creating the objectives that build a group's socio-cultural reality. By culture, one includes the knowledge and convictions acquired by the individuals of a society in what concerns art, moral and justice.

Being a modality through which culture manifests itself, communication reveals itself in various forms in what concerns art expansion. Mielu Zlate (1937-2006, PhD professor at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Bucharest) analytically exposes two forms of communication as being “more investigated by psychology” (Zlate 2004, 219): **non-verbal communication**, with its particular areas, communication through space and territory (territoriality) and communication through images, and **verbal communication**, through language.

Through their education and activity, artists represent a permanent source of revealing all the above-mentioned modalities of communication. The conductor, meaning, the social individual who has the possibility to walk on stage, experiments and reveals himself only through non-verbal communication, an attitude which will be approached in the following lines.

3. Language reading modalities

The number of the individuals in a society shapes its psychological structure. The variety of the psychological profiles and their resonance in and through each individual's vocational training activates the group's degree of immersion or elevation.

The conductor of a choral or instrumental ensemble represents the sum of the abilities developed and refined in Music. Through his activity, the conductor uses a complex inter-human communication, thus, shaping interpersonal relationships. The single-field dictionary defines the interpersonal relation as being a "Psychic, conscient and direct union, based on a complex feed-back and which involves at least two people." (*Dictionary of Social Psychology* 1981, 208)

He is a social individual, having an artistic modality of communication. This is the more difficult, as the usual type of communication, the verbal one, is rarely used in his activities, permanently during rehearsals, but never during concerts. He exposes his talent, knowledge, technique and endurance to public's pressure and expectance by communicating only through body language. The musician must be the sender of the stylistic used by the interpreted composer, only through a certain type of communication. Science is not enough during concerts; a psychological approach is, also, needed in order to properly reproduce the interpreted score. The conductor's non-verbal language is the only type of communication used during concerts, without any verbal intervention (indication, correction), that allows us to feel musical fluency.

It is only after a certain period from the beginning of the conducting act, that the conductor can convince the instrumentalists and the public of his professional abilities. The conductor psychologically influences the ensemble and the public not only in the beginning of the artistic moment, but during the entire performance. The emotional trait is vital in such type of communication. Expressivity creates gestural eloquence. It has the power to convince and impress through the force of imposition and the emotional charge diffused by the instrumentalists. Music is the image created as a result of interpretation, and this image is vibration ally built only through the powerful capacity of the non-verbal communication.

3.1. Brain Activity

The brain coordinates the entire body, the left hemisphere coordinating the right part of the body, and the right hemisphere, the left side of it. The left hemisphere is the one that elaborates rigorous, mathematical, conceptual contents, such as: speech, writing and reading. "The expressivity and the decoding of emotional meanings are part of the complex process of communication (alongside speech, writing and reading), which are an important method of diffusing the information, being realized

through human special neural mechanisms, placed in the right hemisphere.” (*Dictionary of Social Psychology* 1981, 142). Both hemispheres' activation is emphasized in various reports, distinct for each artist's personality, by identifying in a conductor's performance the multitude of the technical (decoding the score in its complexity, instrumentation and orchestration aspects), and the interpreting aspects (stylistic interpretation, artistic recreation).

There is another coordinate that justifies a conductor's interest, will and dynamic, and, also, the number of men, higher than the one of women, that perform this task. The psychological difference is determined by the level of some hormones, testosterone and cortisol. The first one, through its androgenic and anabolic functions, determines the dominance, force and impetuosity. The cortisol, the hormone released by the suprarenal glands as a result of stress in small quantity, also sustains a conductor's competitiveness. As a result, the proper amount of these hormones determine the confident, severe, volitional and demonstrative reaction of a musical group conductor. This aspect reveals the way the physiological structure generates psychological reactions.

3.2. Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication precedes the verbal one. It is first inborn, then refined through education. The non-verbal communication represents an inter-human relationship, molded by the conductor's psychological approach through the usage of language, the sender instrument. The non-verbal language implies a set of human gestures that send a message, once decoded by the interlocutor. In this case, the receiver's answer is not imminent. Communication is non-verbal and non-intentional, the other one's answer being determinant. The conductor, by communicating non-verbally with the group, indirectly, sends his message to the audience. The duplicity of the message reception (the professional group, but also the culturally inclined public) imposes a social education process in the social field of manifestation. The common conventional signs (the conductor's body language) allow an accurate score reception.

The human relationship that strengthens this communication is extremely important “as, without human social interaction, intentionality and an interlocutor, the purpose of the messages and the communication finality (n/a language) is inconceivable” (*Dictionary of Social Psychology* 1981, 132).

The conductor's non-verbal communication has three values: human body, space and time. Once the conductor masters these three elements, the musical group and the audience, as well, can heartily enjoy the performance by paying full interest in it and recognizing the composer's work and its harmonies.

3.2.1. *Body language*

Being a projection of thought structures and operations, the non-verbal language reflects itself, consciously or unconsciously, in the body language. In this case, the active maestro's effort sets operations, face and body mimic gestures, body positions, clothing and tactile communication.

3.2.1.1. *Face expression*

Face expression is the one that reveals most accurately a conductor's emotional states. His virtuosity when performing a score is, also, given by a suggestive mimic, that expresses emotion, happiness, surprise, sadness, disesteem, fear. The melodic, the nuances, terms of movement, rhythm and timbre are, almost, synchronic with the movement of eyebrows, of nose and lips. The obvious change of face color and sweat suggest the emotional component, implication and respect for the performed act. These attitudes are frequently accompanied by abundant modifications (breath, pulse, vasomotor reactions) that accentuate inner states (deduced from the rapid and extensive change of face expressions and sweat).

It is the smile that accompanies the gracious, the ludic or the serene passages. The romantic and post romantic works frequently set up a frowning, affected and reactive mimic.

Look also has a profound impact on the conducted group. <<In what concerns mimic, the look plays an important role, as it is, somehow, "the key of face expression">> (Rășcanu 2015, 45). It, instantly, sends the conductor's message. As he has a large gama of communication styles, due to the limited amount of time of a score's performance, the eyed send metaphors that the instrumentalists, must decipher in the same manner. The various genres and aesthetic trends impose on the conductor a firm and rapid visual expression, full of passion: insistent, serene, passionate, profound, surprised, detached, etc.

3.2.1.2. *Body expression*

Gestures represent the balance of the psychological traits through arm movement. "Their role is to reestablish the harmony with the environment or to realize the harmony with the outer or inner environment." (Rășcanu 2015, 39). **The arms** represent an important motivational factor in a conductor's performance. Their mobility, acquired in time through constant and conscious exercise, reveal a variety of meanings which are necessary in decoding the score's stylistic. The most important is the one of the music rhythm, the dimension that organizes the sonorous universe, which is expressed through the use of the right hand (which is connected to the left hemisphere, the one that is based on languages, concepts, analysis, and materiality). The left hand (which is connected to the roght hemisphere, the one that coordinated creativity, inspiration and profound knowledge) marks the intentions of expression, determined by the score and by the psychological traits. "the conductor's

gestures will be expressive enough only when they will be related, through association, to everyday gestures: invitation or finger pointing – in the beginning of a play; calling- when emphasizing a play; request- in augmentation or musical expressivity; rejection – in diminution; defense- for an intensive sonority, etc.” (Gâscă 1982, 260) when thrown in the air, the arms illustrate sobriety, authority, intimacy, rhythmicity, enthusiasm, tempo vivace, etc.

Palms accentuate and sustain the conductor's intention, which is expressed through his arms. Closed and opened palms, handle rotation, finger-arc drawings, are unique and extremely plastic and expressive, completing the series of the previous movements.

Body posture is the first one noticed among the body expression, and, also, the one that determines from the beginning the conductor's involvement in the next non-verbal communication. Balance, confidence and naturalness, displayed in the beginning of the performance allow a future proper focusing for the performed act.

Clothing also has a psychological connotation through its unnoticeable sobriety that disciplines the receivers' minds and makes the group and the public focus on the musical audition, which is the reason for the gathering. The conductor's authority is emphasized by a simple, formal, but, nevertheless, distinguished clothing. Its message of power and prestige is sustained by the colors' sobriety. Color language has physiological and psychological meanings. Black, the permanent component in a conductor's clothing, is the non-color that allows the total absorption of light. Black sets the psychic into a state of inhibition, of mental moderation, necessary for reaching another universe.

The wand is the extension of a musician's arm. This stick made of wood, bone or ivory, and which is, usually, carried in the right hand (which is coordinated by the left hemisphere, the base of the logical thinking and mathematic rigor), has the gift to harmonize the work's fluidity, to print measure and rhythm. The detail precision and the magic of the performance are the result of the conducting act sustained by the wand.

3.2.1.3. *Space language*

“The American anthropologist Edward T. Hall was one of the first people to study the human need for space and was the one who invented the term ‘proximity’ (nearness, vicinity). His researches in this field lead to a new theory in what concerns the relation with our fellows.” (Peace 1997, 25)

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Intimate zone 15-46cm | Personal zone 46 cm -1, 22 m |
| Social zone 1, 22-3, 60 m | Public zone over 3, 60 m |

Fig. 2. *Zonal distances* (Peace 1997, 27)

As a result of the researches done by the American psychologist Alan Peace, the comfortable and decent distances one should keep in order to live in harmony within society are those in the figure above. One must mention that in the international context, there are slightly space differences in what concerns coexistence in other cultures, which, they too shape an individual's psychological profile.

The conductor's need of expressing himself is to be found in the public are, over 3,60m. The musician has a tempting visual perspective from the conducting place, having the possibility to psychologically and artistically dominate and lead the entire group. The audience, also, recognizes the conductor's attitude and poise, who is being delimited by the group's leader, and sometimes, by a balustrade fixed on the podium and by the scene.

3.2.2. Time language

Time is a fundamental concept in physics and philosophy. It cannot be seen, but it can be perceived. This type of perception is distinguished through the personality of the one who defines it (I. Newton- Principia; A. Einstein – The theory of relativity-space-time concept, $E= mc^2$; the theory of quantum physics – The universe comprises an infinity of different kind of universes). Time can be visualized through the proposed actions and neural programming. The nervous central system integrates what could be perceived at the levels of hearing (acceleration km/h/time unit) and sight (km/h). The difference between those two defines time. We are the one that feel and define the concept of time. Chronocentrism is the new term proposed by scientists, following geocentrism and heliocentrism.

It is on this notion, the chronocentrism, that the conductor creates his own time. The refined musician, having a genuine knowledge of music, gives value and authenticity to the work he performs, by carefully selecting his repertoire and by interpreting works belonging to various music genres. He has the power to dilate or to comprise time. Time represents the compression of the trinity past-present-future, the conductor recreating, through it, the musical creation and history.

4. Conclusions

The conductor of a choir or of an orchestra walks on a permanent educational path during his life, undergoing a systematic study of the always-renewed repertoires. The shows, the concerts and the contests are opportunities for an in-depth incursion in the life of an artist who worked hard to build himself a career and set the record in the music space.

“The conductor has a complex personality that has shaped and has formed only during a long musical practice.” (Popescu 2008, 220). In order to master the art

of communication, one needs to have musical culture, tenacity, to be professional and profound intelligent. The conductor also perseveres in finding emotional balance and professional awareness in order to be in communion with instrumentalists he conducts, to make them feel comfortable and enjoy the artistic performance.

Music is the image derived from a performance, and this image is vibratile built only on the conductor's strong capacity of communication. The non-verbal communication is harder than verbal one "is a complex process that includes the human being, his message, his inner state and his body movements." (Peace 1997, 5)

The conductor's psychological structure determines his preferences for a certain type of repertoire and conditions his music communication. The conductor can lead, transmit and impress only through arms and body movements, through face mimic and attitude. Phrase, meaning, the emotional content of the melodic line and the content of ideas are aspects manifested on stage by the conductor's expressivity through the non-verbal language.

The progression of the universal music is also the merit of the conductors who have elevated the non-verbal language through their virtuosity, intelligence and the passion of diffusing the sound.

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