

Psychological-Research coordinates upon the student – future opera soloist

Cristina SOREANU¹

Abstract: *The opera-operetta performer is a person who dominates his/her environment, by his/her vocal and soul perceptions and qualities, connected to the psychical and intellectual ones. All these are facilitated by the structure of the human brain. In the search-process for the image of music performance, the leading role is held by imagination, which has a special importance in the psychical life. A genuine nucleus of the image afferent to performance, is considered to be intonation. Usually, the opera singers aim not at performing, but at understanding; not at reintonating, but at finding the most adequate intonations to the spirit of the studied musical oeuvre. The manner in which the opera singers conceive the task of performing, displays manifold individual differentiations, strictly connected to the artistic personality of each of them. The performance is related to the artist's frame of mind and mood of soul.*

Key-words: *opera, operetta, performance*

1. Introduction

Music psychology has its reason for existence as a branch of the general psychology, serving the purpose of knowing the psycho-physiological particularities of a determined collectivity, with a view to organizing the educational system and to watching over the development of the aptitudes, as well as over the evolution and selection of the vocal artistic talents in the platform of music professionalism.

2. Native endowment and study

The choice of one's profession, including the one of musician, with its various sub-branches, must be scientifically made and it can only be achieved with the support

¹ Faculty of Music, *Transilvania* University of Braşov, cristina.soreanu@unitbv.ro

of music experimental psychology, through clear research methods. One of the methods concerns *the hearing*. The *absolute hearing* (absolute pitch), the *melodic hearing* and the *harmonic hearing* are the basic components of the musical hearing, in its totality, as a system, as well as of the musicality.

The absolute hearing (absolute pitch) is used as a term, according to the definition of the German psychologist Otto Abraham, so as to designate the aptitude of accurately naming a heard tone, with no connection to other tones, as well as of precisely reproducing by vocal intonation, the heard tone. The absolute hearing (absolute pitch) is not possessed by all professional vocal performers; it is a rare native aptitude, yet extremely useful for the opera soloist, as it facilitates the study of the opera and operetta role, as well as the recognition of the orchestra tones, without comparing them to other tones. It has been proved that, at a mental level, there is a close connection between the tone and its name, in such a way that, every time the tone is heard, the attention turns towards the pitch, its name immediately occurring in the inner language. Therefore, the absolute hearing is a native endowment; yet it is sometimes obtained by exercise and it depends on the individual psychical structure.

The conclusion of the psychologist Carl Stumpf, in his work “Tonpsychologie” is that if the exercise is brief, the effects disappear sooner; and if the exercise is continuous, the correct answers are very precise and rapid. Therefore, the future opera soloists are favoured by the study of an instrument, previously to beginning the study of the voice.

Stumpf stated in “Tonpsychologie” (1883), that musical talent was both inherited and cultivated, offering several examples of talented children, who enjoyed this talent and who were also instructed by their parents, musicians in their turn.

As a canto professor, I have had the possibility, over my 25 years of teaching, to watch over the musical evolution of the student opera singers who have enjoyed native vocal endowment and who, due to their intense study, have outreached those who have only relied on their extraordinary talent. The latter ones’ special voice, musicality, absolute hearing, unless accompanied by assiduous study, have not offered them a professional evolution on the lyrical stages. Unlike these students, the ambitious and hard-working ones have progressed to the superior study years and have succeeded in distinguishing themselves, being appreciated as soloists on the national and international stages.

This observation makes me state that the absolute hearing is truly an important stage in the student’s musical development and evolution, offering him/her extraordinary premises for the scenic manifestation; yet his/her deep involvement, by study and ambition, is equally important.

3. The young vocal musician's physical and psychical development

The physical development of the student – future opera soloist, continues, for the female vocalists, until about 20-21 years old; and for the male vocalists, up to 24-25 years old. In the same period, the youth attain their psychical development; their perception, sense of observation, attention and verbal-logical memory reach maturity. Image holds an important place in the youth's psychic life. (S)he exerts his/her imagination, in order to create his/her own future. This is the period of the daring dreams, which convey a unique mobilizing power; they visualize themselves on international stages, playing illustrious roles and singing renowned arias, a fact which offers them a podium of high professionalism. The youth's thinking is preponderantly abstract-logical. The educational process directs this type of thinking towards knowing the laws and essences in things and phenomena, in terms of scientific principles. J. Piaget refers to adolescence as "the age of the theories", the age when not only understanding, but also creating theories, become possible. The youth show interest in philosophical, ethical, social-political issues, orienting themselves towards the discovery of the social meanings of behaviour.

The manifold and varied relations between youth and society lead to an enrichment and differentiation of the affective processes.

The intellectual development and particularly the development of the abstract thinking, as well as the formation of the conception upon life, render possible the adolescent's aware attitude towards his/her feelings; and thereby the formation of the superior, intellectual, aesthetic and moral feelings. This is the age when the human being's character, his/her moral beliefs, lifestyle, personality features, take shape.

The rise in awareness, the critical and self-critical spirit, as well as the varied relations render possible the self-education process.

The student can now bear criticism, takes into account other viewpoints, and values action.

The youth's will is strong; (s)he experiences inner conflicts, provoked by his/her successes and failures. Therefore, the help given by professor and parents, is very useful. The guidance should have an individualized, definite, objective nature. The canto professor contributes to a great extent to the formation of the student's character and personality, discussing and developing an educative-creative environment, exerting a positive influence upon the future adult musician.

3.1. The student's type of intelligence

Knowing the students' individual particularities helps the canto professor apply different methods and procedures for each student in part, meant to stimulate each one's development. The particularities of the highest interest considered by the canto professor include each student's type of intelligence. In this respect, psychological studies have been conducted, which have demonstrated there are several types of intelligence. In this way, Prof. Howard Gardner, PhD, at Harvard and Boston University, in the United States, has described eight types of intelligence.

1. Verbal-linguistic intelligence
2. Logical-mathematical intelligence
3. Motor and tactile intelligence
4. Spatial and visual intelligence
5. Musical intelligence
6. Social intelligence
7. Intrapersonal intelligence
8. Naturalistic intelligence

He states that intelligence is a potential that may be activated by the experiences lived by the child in his/her entourage.

4. The importance of positive emotions and thinking

Throughout his/her musical training, the student singer undergoes physical and psychical changes. The artist is a *summum* of features existing in a unique combination, features which contribute to his/her formation, in time, as well as to his/her spiritual triumph.

The emotion of the student-singer must be oriented so as to follow a positive trend, characterized by the transmission of feelings and message. The positive emotions are connected to the processes of rebalancing and assimilation; whereas the negative emotions are linked to the processes of destruction, disassimilation in the organism. The positive emotion is that artistic emotion, which conveys the student, an utterly special disposition, favourable to publicly showing him/herself, to displaying his/her exquisite talent to the audience, as well as a disposition of optimal artistic expression, of joy and delight to sing in front of the audience.

The negative emotion is reflected by physiological and affective disorders. voice blurriness, hoarseness; heavy, jerky breath; chest pain; mouth dryness; lapse; awkwardness in the scenic attitude; dizziness; hand and leg tremour etc.

Pedagogical experience has shown me that many students sing very well in class; yet, they experience a destructive stage fright, which reduces by 50% their capacity of vocal and scenic expression. In this case, a very important role is held by exercising, previously to the concert, as well as by positively educating the stage fright. Some great artists' incurable stage fright originates in a deficient, unbalanced nervous system, following nervous diseases. The prophylaxis of stage fright consists, first and foremost, in thorough preparation and in the force of positive thinking; likewise, in a solid and balanced nervous system.

The positive thinking of the future opera singer generates optimism, self-confidence; as well as a generous attitude towards the audience. It demonstrates great power of concentration, as well as perfect balance between the two systems - the internal and the external one.

5. Conclusions

Profession and personality are two realities that seek and accept each other, given that an affinity or complete-coverage possibility occurs.

The formation of artistic personality supposes discovering one's own valences, by manifold and varied artistic tests, as well as continuously developing these ones, so that other new valences might be discovered, a process that stands for the effervescence of talent.

The quintessence of artistic personality lies, therefore, in the balance between intellect and affect.

References

- Bentoiu, Pascal. 1975. *Gândirea muzicală [Musical Thinking]*. Bucharest: Musical Publishing House.
- Biemel, W. 1987. *Expunere și interpretare [Exposition and Performance]*. Bucharest: Univers Publishing House.
- Bradu-Iamandescu, I. 1997. *Dimensiunile psihologice ale muzicii [Psychological Dimensions of Music]*. Bucharest: Romcartexim Publishing House.
- Delacroix, H. 1983. *Psihologia Artei [Psychology of Art]*. Bucharest: Meridiane Publishing House.

- Ionescu, C.A. 1982. *Istoria psihologiei Muzicale* [*History of Musical Psychology*]. Bucharest: Musical Publishing House.
- Șchiopu, U. 2002. *Psihologia artelor* [*Psychology of Arts*]. Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House.
- Vâgotski, L.S. 1973. *Psihologia artei* [*Psychology of Art*]. Bucharest: Univers Publishing House.