

## WAYS AND MEANS OF TRAINING AND EDUCATING THE VOICE

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### Abstract

Voice is the tool that can create art - the art of singing - without any complement because voice is not only the product of the vocal cord vibration but the product of the whole perfect human body. Although in educating any type of voice, the benchmarks taken into account are considered the same, they still require adjustment submitted by a certain type of voice.

Native predispositions determined by the country of origin and by the spoken language manifests in a number of features of the voices, recognized in the singing technique of the singers trained in one school or another.

Voice training and education is based on principles considered by experts as generally valid, on exercises specific to a field of singing and taking into consideration all the features that exclusively regard the individuals.

**Keywords:** *voice, schools of singing, training, education, singing techniques*

### I. Voice

Born with the human species, the voice was, is and will remain the most expressive, fascinating tool of artistic expression and current communication, as long as humans shall live. It is the tool whose boundaries are impossible to guess, that's alive and sophisticated and in a perpetual transformation and development; It is the tool that can create art - the art of singing - without any complement, any outside artifice or any support other than the human body in all its complexity, because voice is not only the product of the vocal cord vibration – as, unfortunately, some still believe - but the product of the whole perfect human body.

Although in educating any type of voice, the benchmarks taken into account are considered the same, they still require adjustment submitted by a certain type of voice. In determining the type of voice, three main defining aspects were taken on board: source timbre (male or female), voice ambitus (the area of sound that a voice can cover without any difficulties) and specific timbre of each voice (those qualities that differentiate a voice from another, coming from the same type of source and having approximately the same ambitus). For music teachers and theorists, this resulted in various classifications, simple or complex, depending on the benchmarks considered in their efforts.

## II. Schools of singing

The manner of singing is the mark of any performer from any part of the world, regardless the vocal music field in which his art manifests. This mark of an unexpected complexity is largely the result of the vocal tract function and anatomical conformation, of the conformation and overall functioning of the human body, of the degree of individuals' sensitivity, is the result of the geographical area of the individuals, of their mother tongue and, not least, of the country and of the school where singers learn to use their voice.

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### Italian School

Relying on a language with clear, open vocals, Italy, the country of bel canto, built and builds upon two major canto schools:

- School of Milan (clear an outward projected emission, trains sopranos and tenors); the promoted singing technique was approved in almost all Europe;
- School of Naples (inward emission, trains contralto, deep voices and some tenor voices).

### Spanish School

Organic and spontaneous, with a hot vocal timbre, the spanish voice is based on a very natural emission, concerned more about the melodic contours and much less about the text expression – just like the Italians - whether singing opera, or country music.

### French School

In France, the essentially nasal language leaves its deep mark on the singing style, while the first concern of singers is not to make a good emission, but to make the text comprehensible. You can rarely meet a French singer and not understand what he says singing. This way of approaching fundamentally estranges the French School from the Italian School. The French School is the school of nuances, defined by sonorities that are almost aquarellist. Built towards achieving a very neat diction and pursuant to the character lacking of aggressiveness/incisiveness of the French language, the general dynamics of singing is less animated than in other languages.

### German School

German singers have a very similar problem to the French; they must face a guttural idiom, which creates difficulties regardless the vocal technique. The cased singing – the voice in the back of the mouth, in the soft palate - is almost a natural characteristic of the German interpreters, because of the large posterior lingual consonants favoring resonance in the cavity behind the mouth and because of using the throat and head cavities, unlike the Italians, which in addition to their bright language, they use for resonance the frontal cavities of the face or of the mask.

### Schools of singing of Central and Eastern Europe

The voices of Central and Eastern Europe are those that use Czech, Bulgarian, Romanian, Hungarian, Polish, Russian languages etc. If the Romanian voice sounds like the Italian and Spanish voices and the Austrian voice almost lacks vibrato, the other voices have common characteristics: they are cased and have a vertical direction.

### English School

For English speakers, there isn't a certain school for singers. In classic singing, they use the main European vocal techniques, especially the Italian and German ones, but adapted to the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon dialect. Of the two Italian school of singing, the English prefer the school of Milan because of their affinity for the countertenor voice, considered to be the closest to the emission style favored by English language.

### Northern School

Northern School combines specific elements determined by the specificity of voices with elements of French, German and Italian schools. Swedish and Norwegian voices are characterized by force and clarity.

## **III. Ways and means of voice training and education.**

Voice training and education is based on principles considered by experts as generally valid, on exercises specific to a field of singing and taking into consideration all the features that exclusively regard the individuals: the constitution and the natural way of functioning of the vocal, resonator and auditory tract, the overall physical constitution, the level of intelligence and sensitivity of the individual, the ambitus and color of the voice, the empathy between apprentice and master. If all the issues above are in favor of the student, before he starts the course itself it is necessary for him to find out what in his daily habits and general conduct of life is favorable to his approach, what are the negative elements of his behavior and how willing is he to give up some habits or to create new ones in order to help him in his career as a vocal singer. The following table presents the conclusions of the experts regarding the good or the bad key issues for a vocal career.

<b>Good for voice</b>	<b>Bad for voice</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficient and restful sleep</li> <li>• easy and varied food</li> <li>• good functioning of the digestive system</li> <li>• good oral hygiene and regular dental control</li> <li>• gentle physical exercises (eg. walking, swimming, tai-chi-chuan)</li> <li>• vocal warm-ups before playing</li> <li>• relaxation voice exercises after singing</li> <li>• body awareness techniques (eg. Yoga, Alexander technique, anti-gymnastics)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sedentary life</li> <li>• self-medication</li> <li>• drugs / toxic substances especially before and during singing</li> <li>• difficult physical exercises (ex. boxing, karate, exercises for muscles)</li> <li>• polluted environment</li> <li>• Involvement in sound competitions (eg. hard or excessive talking, screaming, singing uncontrollably and in any conditions, whisper)</li> </ul>

- development of music knowledge and musicality
- drinking water at room temperature
- ease of articulation in speech
- cozy clothing according to the climate / season
- regular vocal exercises
- perfect airways health
- singing in good acoustic conditions
- thermal shocks (ingestion of hot or very cold liquids or food, in particular before, during or after the performance)
- excessive exposure to air conditioning, rain, wind, sun)
- excessive usage of salt
- permanent cough
- singing on pain
- use of pills containing anesthetic without a prescription, candy and / or nasal decongestant vasoconstrictive and vasodilator substances, diets based on amphetamines, hormones

For a singing course to reach its goal, it is necessary to fulfill several conditions:

- clearly setting the genre of music that the student wants to prepare for, as singing technique is not the same for "a muezzin, a Roman church singer or a diva of the Milan Opera";
- the correct classification of the student's voice in a particular category and subcategory; wrong classification of voice leads to the impossibility of achieving a certain quality and uniform registers, or, in unfortunate cases, can cause damage to the vocal cords (lumps, swelling, painful areas) or even to the larynx;
- the student must have detailed knowledge about his own vocal, respiratory and resonator tract anatomy and physiology, and must be aware of the ways his body as a whole can contribute to the emission of quality sounds.

According to the opinion of most teachers, the study involves the consistent completion of the following steps:

### Relaxation Exercises

#### Vocal gymnastics

- diaphragmatic breathe exercises - full breath singing;
- sustaining or support exercises.

Gymnastic exercises strengthen and develop muscles serving phonation. The phrase "vocal musculature" refers to: neck muscles, face muscles, tongue muscles, abdominal belt etc.

### **Vocalization**

Once determined the vocal type, teachers approach customized singing exercises according to the rules of Italian-type emission based on sustaining and covered - uncovered support. This phase of the study is considerably eased by previous activities that help avoiding any confusion or damage that may be produced to the vocal mechanism. Vocalization aims for homogeneity of the voice structure entirely. The voice must be worked throughout its extent and all vowels, with and without the support of consonants. Individualized exercises proposed will cover:

- spun sounds;
- attacks of various types;

- legato on vowels;
- working with consonants;
- performing difficult passages.

By vocalizing, the voice, supported by a graceful and completely diaphragmatic breath, perfectly homogenized, will act in all its beauty and overcome easily and without fatigue the obstacles related to acute sounds, legato, staccato etc., found in the repertoire.

### Interpretation

Depending on the achievement level of the above-mentioned steps, the selection of the repertoire is performed and customized, applying specific aspects of interpretation, fully consistent with the style every piece of the repertoire belongs to. In the play, one of the key issues, if not the most important, is the one concerning the breathing. Breathing techniques are diverse, as are various schools of singing, and maybe for this reason the problem has always been and continues to be controversial. According to the specialized work of Manuel García and Jacques Chuilon, in the old school of bel canto singing, thoracic muscles were intensely used (inspiration was deep and the chest was thrust out), while the technique called diaphragmatic breathing (discovered by Dr. Mandl in the mid-19th century and nowadays very often taught) only works the abdominal muscles (in this case, the inspiration, the abdomen is pushed out), without applying stress to the thoracic muscles. Some teachers of singing believe that both techniques are faulty, the free movement of the column of air is disturbed and therefore the support is flawed. They support the costo-diaphragmatic breathing opting for lower (also called deep abdominal breathing), believing that it meets all the qualities for a very good broadcasting voice.

- In the process of learning the respiratory technique, prospective singers must consider the following issues:  
forced breathing damage the emissions;
- inspiration shall not be superficial or exaggerated, but dosed according to the "play area" they must cover;
- on inspiration, chest and shoulders should not rise, giving the impression of effort and creating a disagreeable image of the interpreter;
- during the singing, the air should not be pushed; it must be constantly dosed, in order to make a continuous contact with the articulator system;
- the air distribution must be executed without dispersion off the sound (hence the idea of bel canto singers of achieving vocals before a lighted candle);
- inspiration must immediately precede the attack sound (filling the lungs with air in advance waiting for the moment of attack produces contractures that deform the attack);
- in fast tracks, inspiration is performed lingual (oral) to avoid making it audible or noisy.

Breathing exercises, that should not miss from the curriculum of any artist, regardless of where they are, lead to the automatic activation of the diaphragm, which

provides the energy that the singer needs in order to complete his performance and achieve the desired punctuation for the text that is sung. If the support during singing is correct, the abdominal belt won't need to be operated voluntarily; it shrinks or expands automatically, constantly adjusting the breathing. On inspiration, the belly bulges slightly especially on the epigastric level (stomach), the good breathing involving whole area around the base of the bust.

During the study, the position of the interpreter - especially the pose of the back and the pelvis flexibility – has a great effect on the respiratory process. Later, after the automatism set up, as a professional, he will be able to complete the respiratory process in the most various ways required by the director.

In his treatise (6th edition, 1872), Manuel García, one of the greatest singing teachers, expressed his thoughts regarding the total breath: "To breathe easily, hold your head straight, shoulders down normally, without stiffness, and open chest; smoothly lift off the diaphragm and raise the chest with a slow, regular movement. Thereafter, this double process which I insist on completing increases the base lung cavity, then the circumference and allows lungs to achieve their full extension and receive all the air they can contain." However, it goes without saying that breathing this amount of air is useful only when we need to sing very long lyrical phrases, situation that makes any stop for breathing impossible. But those cases are rather uncommon.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, in the contemporary lyrical singing is not desirable to full up with air, but it is enough to know and to properly dose it. In most of the cases, a simple abdominal relaxation and a correct posture are enough to complete a deep and proper inspiration, absolutely sufficient for singing the next phrase.