

Singing schools

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Abstract: *Manner of singing is the mark of any performer from any part of the world, regardless the vocal music field which his art acts. This mark, of unsuspected complexity is largely the result of the function and conformation of the anatomical vocal tract and of the conformation and overall functioning of the human body, of the degree of sensitivity of individuals. It is the result of the geographic areal individuals belongs to, of the mother tongue and, not least, of the country and school singers learn to use their voice. Specialists believe that there are three major categories of emissions voice in the world: Throaty-laryngeal, nasal, palatal. Native predispositions determined by the country of belonging and mother tongue manifests themselves in a number of characteristics of the voices recognized in the interpreters technique of singing trained in a school or another.*

Key words: *voice, respiration, emission, timbre, singing technique*

*“God respects me when I work;
but God loves me when I sing.”*
Rabindranath Tagore

Introduction

Born with the human species, voice was, is and will remain the most expressive, the most fascinating instrument of artistic expression or of current communication as long as humans shall live. Both ordinary (it belongs to any individual) and precious, fragile and strong, hesitant and convincing, incisive and extremely subtle, it is the instrument with limits impossible to guess, it is the living and sophisticated instrument in a perpetual transformation and evolution; It is the instrument art can be born of - the art of singing - without the need of something extra or any outside artifice or any support other than the human body in its totality and complexity, because voice is not only the product of vocal cords vibration - as unfortunately some still believe - but of the perfect whole that the human body is.

For those gifted with a beautiful voice and attracted by the art of singing, there are high chances to achieve success as interpreters if they double their native endowment with serious musical study. Those who were not gifted with a quality voice at birth but want a career as a singer will have to "work" it over a "genuine initiation road". What is this road can be deduced in large part from European singing schools presentations.

Italian school

Relying on a language with clear, open vowels natives can easily perform bright and well connected vocal lines, in which prevails the beauty of timbre and strength of voice over understanding texts which few singers educated in Italy have granted their full expressive value. Italy, the country of bel canto, counted and counts on two major schools of singing:

- School of Milan (clear and outward projected emission, handles sopranos and tenors)
- School of Naples (closed emission deals, handles contralto gravelly and some tenor voices).

Singing technique promoted by the School of Milan has been approved in most of Europe for clarity and projection of the voice. At first, the Italian school, sought to obtain force and volume, by supporting respiration to vocalize long sentences; therefore the expiratory

mechanism prevailed, and not the glottis agility. Beginning with the nineteenth century, the Italian school of singing developed voice coating that allowed the passage from one register to another without changing the timbre; what is known as "voice passage" was sung compulsory in falsetto.

Italian voice is a projected and extroverted voice by excellence. General dynamics is simple and straightforward, with oblique orientation, slightly upward, depending on the intensity and registers. It shows the whole spectrum of harmonics from low to high and its color is clear. Italian singing is based on breathing and support located in the epigastric region. Larynx goes up and down in line with changing registers. Sound attacks are accomplished through supporting the coup de glotte (shock of the glottis) and the throat should be open. Palatal voice requires a median opening of the mouth and lips, the opening intensifies only on acute.

Spanish school

Organic and spontaneous, with a hot timbre, Spanish voice is based on a very natural emission, caring more about melodic contours and less about text articulation – like the Italians - whether singing opera, folk or popular music.

Power and volume depend on the diaphragmatic breathing supported on top of the chest cavity, causing therefore less clear and less round acute than the Italian voice, sometimes even scream. This manner of singing practiced by Spanish avoids voice coverage. Mouth increases opening as the voice goes to acute. The larynx is usually up, moving according to the registry. The shock of the glottis has an important role.

French School

In France, the essentially nasal language put a deep mark on the singing style, while the first singers concern is not to make good emissions, but to make the text intelligible. Rarely you can meet a French singer and not understand what he says singing. This approach fundamentally separates the French school from the Italian school. French School is the school of nuances, of the almost watercolor painter sonorities. Formed in achieving a very neat diction and in agreement with the character that lacks aggressiveness / incisiveness of the French language, the overall dynamics of singing is less animated than in other languages. Sound direction is horizontal, the voice is more labial than buccal, and the silent E letter and nasal sounds make more difficult the sung emission. Breathing is made predominantly through a very fast movement of the ribs which causes a certain lack in support. (It is known that short breathing causes both lung fatigue and generalized fatigue.)

German school

German singers have a very similar problem to the French; they must face a guttural idiom and this creates difficulties regardless the vocal technique they use. Cased singing - voice in the posterior part of the mouth, the soft palate - it's almost a natural feature of the German performers, because of the large posterior lingual consonants favoring resonance in the area behind the mouth and use throat and head cavities, unlike the Italians which, in addition to their bright language, use frontal cavities of their faces or masks. German voice direction is vertical. Low sounds prevail in voice's ambitus. The color of the voice is quite pharyngeal and only sometimes covered, and the vibrato is poor. Position of the larynx is down, with increased pharynx and soft palate up. Breathing is low: the air is supported vertically on the abdominal muscles.

Singing schools in Central and Eastern Europe

Voices of Central and Eastern Europe are those that use the Czech, Bulgarian, Romanian, Hungarian, Polish, Russian, etc languages. If the Romanian voice has a similar sound to the Italian and Spanish voices and the Austrian voice is almost totally lacking vibrato, the other voices have common features: they are cased and with vertical direction. They rely on the larynx, with great vibration in the chest. Low harmonics are dominant. Especially in Russia and Bulgaria the bass voices have the highest quality. The column of air is deep, with a very low resting abdominal breathing. Position of the larynx is also low, and the mouth is wide open in both grave and acute registry. While slave schools achieved notable performance in grave voices management and emission, they do not demonstrate the same skills and emission control in soprano and tenor voices, whose acute sounds are almost disfigured by a marked (and very disturbing) tremolo.

English School

For English speakers there isn't a certain school of singing. They use for the classic singing the main European vocal techniques, especially the Italian and German ones, but adapted to the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon idiom. Of the two Italian singing schools, English prefer the School of Milan – due to their affinity for the countertenor voice, considered closest to the emission style favored by English language. This emission - lighter and delicate - oscillates between the Italian obliquity and German verticality, creating, in general, a clear and velvety timbre, and sometimes cased sounds. The larynx is positioned below (yawn position), thus making sounds half covered and creating the conditions for a particular vibrato. As for the air support, English voice has the typical characteristics of the Italian school. Exhaling is characterized by an average retention with chest support without producing vigorous sounds. The text has many balanced vowels (neither closed nor open) and is suitable for a vocal technique that allows it to be well understood. This singing technique can hardly be used in singing in other languages.

Northern School

Northern School combines specific voice elements of French, German and Italian schools. Swedish and Norwegian voices are characterized by force and clarity. The emission is covered without the sounds to be much closed. Direction is oblique or vertical, depending on the sounds that need to be obtained. Larynx position is slightly lower in low register and stable in the middle register. They use the resonators of the back of the nose, like in France. If the projection in the extreme acute is made towards the front of the mouth, obtaining sounds like those of the school of Milan, in the middle acute areas the projections is German style, in the soft palate. Regardless of the intensity of the sounds to be emitted, breathing has abdominal support in the epigastric region.

In the voice singing studies are often made references to four frequently encountered types of emission: the mask, *moirée* (bright), the folk singing, children singing.

• Voice in / of mask

It is a technique commonly used in France, Germany, Austria and in the Northern countries. This technique produces nasalized emission by projection towards the back of the nose, between the eyes. The concept of mask voice is confusing as long as on one hand it suggests French nasal resonance, and on the other hand the Italian palatal resonance. Terminology related to this type of emission suggests the situation of unclosed nasopharynx which makes the pharyngeal constrictor muscle to function freely and avoids problems of closing glottis and high sounds production.

· **Bright voice**

It is a flexible voice, rich in possibilities which activate the emission mechanisms according to the music type, whatever that is (opera, oratorio, song etc.). It involves using a technique based on individual physiological characteristics that allows appropriate adjustments to the language, music style, desired interpretative style, interpreter's temper.

· **Voice in folk singing**

Folk singing doesn't follow the same principles of classical singing. Voice is a spontaneous, natural and highlights characteristics of the regional singing. It is a mean of expression that does not try to intellectualize or to reveal the mechanisms that must work in professional cult music.

· **Voices in children singing**

Choirs of children both male and female include voices of soprano and contralto. To avoid vocal inconvenience, the choir conductor should make a good voice classification, sometimes requiring the comparison with a phoniatic specialist's, singing teacher and phonoaudiologist point of view. The best age to sing a wide repertoire is from 9 to 13 years old. The study of singing at children must to be more artistic and hygienic than scientific and technical. It is useful to take advantage of the great imitative and assimilation abilities that they possess. In general, children sing with a light timbre and "white" voice. Best children's choirs in the world have their own school and boarding school system where children remain for four or five years, and have halls of music education, vocal technique and repertoire. Training the voice involves working with the entire phoniatic apparatus by taking into account relaxation techniques, costo-diaphragmatic breathing, coordination, resonance and emission. Voice is considered impostors when it can produce full, firm, round, vibrant, homogeneous sounds throughout the emission.

Conclusion

This material brings interesting and useful information on the particularities of the various singing schools in Europe. But beyond the specifics of each school, voice training and education is based on principles considered by any specialists as generally valid, through specific exercises for a particular field of singing and at the same time taking into consideration all the characteristics exclusively related to the individual: constitution and natural way of functioning of the fonator, resonator and auditory system, general physical constitute, level of intelligence and sensitivity of the individual, ambitus and voice color and, not least, empathy disciple - master.

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