

The musical-dramaturgic analysis of an opera, theoretical assumptions of applicative research

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Abstract: *The opera stage has the singer as a power centre, he having to display on the stage a superior level of tangible, so as to convince the audience of the reality of his performance. From all the work steps, the one reserved to the dramaturgic and musical study of the opera takes the largest part in the calendar of preparing a show, hence the crucial role of the director in defining the performance, because the actors-singers must be initiated in the specific opera role play, the theatre-musical one. The interpreter, guided by the director, the professional who must blend the theatre person with the musician, should pay attention to the fact that the opera he performs contains emotional and intellectual information and that the public's reactions are part of the show. If the public remains still, this means there is something missing there.*

Key-words: *opera; analysis; musical dramaturgy; applicative research;*

1. Introduction

The idea according to which a show is a way to condense the destiny is more than obvious in the case of the opera, and the interpreter, from whom stems the information, must build his means of communication on a technique.

Sometimes, the difficulty of understanding leads to panic, to mental jam, that happens in the process of receiving the score. Here the director steps in, as the show „does not have only one but several collective creators. Our art is produced by the work in common of poets, artists, directors, scenographers, musicians, dancers...” (Stanislavski 2014, 545) The ideal is that this fact is not detected on the stage by the public. Even if it cannot be seen, it is part of the brilliant mix of physical actions and mental activities of the singer

2. Objectives

The abilities formation for the students from the specialization Vocal Performance in projecting, organizing, unfolding and harnessing the theoretical research in the artistic creation, by elaborating and using some theoretic-informative and practical-actional instruments, and by implementing a way of training in a future staging of an opera as well.

3. Theoretical assumptions of the applicative research

Beyond his given talent, beyond his love for art, the singer is...*himself*. Here is the point where Stanislavski's questions start, instigated by *Paradox about the actor*, (Diderot 2010,94) the work of the French philosopher Denis Diderot, who asserts that „the words, may they be written by the finest and more precise writer's pen, cannot be but signs, symbols which express a thought, a feeling or an idea. These symbols nevertheless need actions, gestures, intonations or an entire complex of circumstances to offer them a full significance. (...) If one sets the problem that way, in the most rational form, it comes to the question how an singer can, if indeed prepared properly, to play the same role twice, producing the same

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emotions and having the same succes with the public. Filled with passion at the first representation, he could be less impetuous at the second and *cold as stone* at the third.” (Diderot 2010,127)

Thus, Diderot felt that the actor, as well as the actor-singer, should experiment on himself, being intuitive about the nature of inspiration. The question rises logically: if the singer must be himself during acting, how can he be somebody else at the same time? Diderot's conclusion is that sensibility is that quality of exaltation which thrills the artist, comprises his senses, touches his most intimate corner of the soul and prevent him from behaving normally, leading him to the most tragic situations and to the most terrible passion torments, as they were his. Still the intelligence, he says, should always double the sensibility, so as to sort the feelings, arrange and calculate them exactly.

The only pattern in creating a scene character is our daily life. If the character's behaviour is similar to the real one, then it may become human and from this we can extract as a conclusion, the first condition of the structure of such singer: self knowledge.

The human condition of self knowledge is, as always, in interaction with the actual living. Thus, all the gestures, mechanisms and messages we achieve, create or transmit have a motivation, a purpose. This is how Stanislavski understood that interaction with life is needed, as on the stage only the results of human unsealed operations are noticed.

These operations occur as a result of outside stage experiences, life, subjective ones. Inside communication, the way the actions manifest themselves is without doubt much more obvious to the intrinsic message. Thus, Stanislavski appreciates that 90% of the human actions are part of this category. The reflexes are movements which, beyond rational motivations, occur as an answer to a physical condition, reevaluating our conscious decisions. This reevaluation defines, in Stanislavski, the sequence of human actions by the term *organic actions*. The organic actions are those actions which have their own logic and which - as a result - must be taken in a certain order.

The art of the actor-singer suposes a created behaviour, a well trained spontaneity, something that looks like real life but which, in fact, is an aesthetic selection of it. „The daily life cannot be cut out of reality and simply transfered on the stage and that is all. This space demands some rules of existence. We must not mistake the *theatrical* for the *theatrical truth*. The stage, without doubt, requires special things, which do not exist in real life. So the solution would be to bring life on stage, leaving the theatrical out and, at the same time, respect the laws of the stage.” (Stanislavski 1955, 116)

In order to make this happen and to remain true, the singer must create the dramatic ego, a superego which would behave like the real one. The way to accede from the real ego to the dramatic ego is achieved by following two steps:

- Until he does not know the action of the entire play, with all its concrete situations and their requests, the singer must understand he cannot create anything;

- Deconstructing the action, discovering the physical actions needed in certain situations and believing in the authenticity of these actions, the singer unleashes his creative energy. The emotions emerge then naturally, organically, without being forced or falling into a platitude danger. This is the trajectory from conscious to subconscious.² (Stanislavski 1955, 25)

The first moment of the becoming of the consciousness of the dramatic ego is receiving the score, this first action being also the beginning of structuring it. In a dramatic text, the situations and characters await for the introduction - by the singer - in a convention

² The ideal actor: *to know the character's life better than the author, analyse it better than the cristics, study the play better than the director, know better than anyone his own capacities, instruments of thought and expression, develop a brilliant vocal technique, train his body, understand the art, painting, literature theory and everything necessary to an actor. In a nutshell, the actor must lead his work and creativity to perfection.*

(*what if...*). If accepts and gives them certainty by believing in their existence, then the dramatic signs shape up.

The singer's own physical and mental resources alter the conventional signs into a theatrical act and this is achieved by devotion. If the singer (the transmitter) truly believes in their reality, then the public (the receiver) will step into the convention and will receive those signs as a form of reality. Thus, we can speak about the singer's attitude towards the character, stage or object, which determines the reality of the stage situations.

The true construction of the convention has as a first step, the most important, exploring the plot of the play. This can also be divided in turn, in order to organize the work, in ten steps of preparation.

Highlighting the sequence of the musical-dramatic text. In the beginning the actor-singer works alone, then together with the director, they discuss the musical and literary text, he tries to understand, beyond musical and letter signs, the actantial animation of the text and set this way the circumstances they offer.

Filling in the empty spaces. The singer must imagine the context of the dramatic actions described in the text, in order to fill in the dramatic picture. Each character has a part of imaginative construction before and after action, so as, at the end of the exercise, the singer be able to describe, thoroughly, the life of each character and to support the character's actions in the dramatic web.

The singer is not allowed to remove the character from the context, having to use only the details given by the dramatic author.

The superobjective. In Stanislavski's manner, the singers must fix, exactly, the theme of the play.

Structuring the text into episodes and facts. After the singer masters the entire story, he must move to the next level of interpretation, that of details.

Components which decompose the action must be identified. These two operations are not necessarily simultaneous. The plot of the play will decompose in episodes which, in turn, will be decomposed in facts. This way the plot becomes possible, up to the most intimate details, of the stage action.

Establishing the necessary actions and their purpose. After establishing the action in its whole, the singer can move to establishing the segments of the action. Each episode needs an actantial unfolding and each stage fact needs a task. So, the singer must discover the necessary actions to fulfill the stage tasks. This can be done only through the creative capacities of the singer. The stage task comes naturally, like an answer to the singer's own experience disimulation. In other words *If this situation were real, what would I do?* And it must not be forgotten the essential condition of the status: in order to transform fiction into reality, the singer must not lose for a moment the contact with himself! Stanislavski's recommendation is that the answer be found very concrete, at present tense: the three words - *here, today, now*. In order for the singer to behave as authentically as possible on the stage, he must understand perfectly the dramatic situation.

Stanislavski's recommended questions to help the singer's decoding work are:

"From where?" From where does the character come before the given stage situation?

"Where?" Where is the character at that moment, in the dramatic frame?

"What?" What does the character do in the given dramatic frame?

"Why?" Why does the character do that?

"When?" When does the action take place? What time? What hour? What day? What month? What year?

"Which way?" Which way will the character go after ending the dramatic action?

If the singer manages, within the time limit - here, today, now - to answer all these questions so as his character to become authentic, it means that the stage task is half done.

Establishing the trajectory of the stage actions. The student singer must be able to synthesise all the discovered actions, in order to obtain a logical sequence, to assure his character a coherent and true evolution.

The interior monologue. After establishing the line for the stage actions, the singer must analyse and discover as much as he can of the thoughts hidden behind the actions, in each moment of his stage existence. It is important that main images be extracted from trifle ones, and the model is found *here, today, now*.

Affective memory. The life experiences lie on the basis of discovering, on the stage, the particular feelings and emotions. Memorising these experiences involves attention, artistic sensibility and intelligence, because this is the only way dramatic situations receive heaviness, through using the affective memory. (Munteanu 2017, 141)

The subtext. The subtext always accompanies the main level of stage affective expression and it is made of interior monologue, images and affective memory.

The emotional route. The logical actions are permanently accompanied by emotions and feelings, them being in constant interaction. Walking in that direction, the singer finds himself in the middle of the action. The situation becomes real to him, he ends up being convinced of this reality, and his mental devices start working that way.

This is the moment when the border between the real ego and the dramatic ego, between the singer and the character, becomes extremely thin. Stanislavski calls this status *I am*, meaning *I am... that character*.

4. Conclusion

The position of directing teacher implies a great responsibility, because „only the constant training in the field of the art show, and of musical-technique area, can contribute to fulfilling the different demands that young singers male and female are confronted with.³ (Heinz 2014, 9)

The process of assimilating a score, from the first reading, solmization, up to understanding, discovering the hidden meanings of literary and musical elements, the interpretative and creative process, is a long and sometimes deviuos. The responsibility consists in respecting and complete rendering of the musical and literary text, in making an understandable show, first by yourself, as a direction teacher, then by the students and finally by the public.

From the deconstruction of the process of vocal interpretation, starting with the text and style analysis, going through the specific training, oriented towards singing, musicality, rhythm and body language and then, exploring the various performative formulae of staging the final product, young interpreters are offered subjects, suggested emotions, giving them the possibility of developing their musical-theatrical means. This process must be realized step by step, and once the certainty having been obtained, it should be looked upon like a whole. Finally this is our purpose, the teachers, to sensitize and pass on technique data and not only, for the students to achieve some memorable roles, through sympathetic transposition.

³ „Eine stabile Ausbildung im Darstellerischen, ähnlich der musikalisch-technischen, kann helfen, die verschiedenen Anforderungen, denen sich junge Sägerinnen und Sänger heute gegenübersehen, zu bewältigen.“

5. References

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