

# Decisive aspects of the vocal training

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**Abstract:** *Educating the voice, the singer's primary means of self-expression, is a complex process, characterized by progressive accumulations on the theoretical and practical fundamenting level, which is anchored to the natural god-given talent and to the organized instruction, and it develops into the direction of drawing certain concepts and a system of vocal training in order to facilitate a balanced vocal and artistic development. After this first step towards developing the possibilities of vocal, empirical expression which consisted in adapting some methods that could not get causable explanations and general legitimacy, there followed the theoretical step, where the empirical gathered facts were subjected to interpretations, phase which allowed formulating rules and expressing predictions. The multitude of aspects and sides of the vocal preparation may be interpreted as being a multidimensional process, considering the vocal training to be a dynamic, complex process of self-control and self-organizing, capable of optimizing its performances.*

**Key-words:** *vocal training; vocal pedagogy; vocal technique; exercises.*

## 1. Introduction

The education in bel canto embraces a particular large syllabus, founded on the progressive teaching, which is based on the teaching experience, where the subjects from the Teaching Curricula, although named differently, are fully connected synergistically, the activities being integrated and transdisciplinary. The contact with the singing teacher is intensive, since teaching happens daily, the professor supervising the student's individual activity and offering them permanent support. Training, with normal accent on developing the way of singing, comprises a much larger evolution area, considered to be necessary for the person who studies the art of singing.

The practical experience accumulated across time by specialists proves that performance can be achieved only by respecting certain laws that govern the process in a preparation which must be thought in a polyvalent manner. Analysing the practice of vocal training, it can be observed that the process must follow a set of priorities and requirements in order to get superior results.

## 2. Objectives

Forming and developing the abilities of the students and master students from the specialization Musical interpretation-Canto regarding the vocal technique, capitalising on the theoretical research and using certain instruments of theoretical-informative and practice-acting nature, through implementing a manner of training, in a future career in vocal art.

## 3. Vocal training, general requirements

The most important aspects concerning the priorities and requirements of vocal training are: Permanent improvement of the selection strategies; Obtaining a perfect volume of training; Considerably raising the interval where the singer can sustain vocal effort in the artistic act;

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Guiding the vocal training scientifically. In what the permanent improvement of the selection strategies is concerned, they must meet the following criteria: the perfect age of initiation in the vocal art; selecting through the most corresponding ways; the objective evaluation of the successes, in order to guide the young towards vocal genre according to their individual skills.

Achieving the best volume of training is determined mainly by the necessity of accumulating a volume of technical actions which must be taken in the different conditions of various vocal genres. The considerable raise of the interval where the singer can sustain the vocal effort in the artistic act is a rule that must be followed, especially since the contemporary show is defined by complexity and happens at maximal intensity. The scientific guidance of the vocal training. Analysing the polyvalent preparation of the singers along the training, one comes to the conclusion that progress happens only when the canto teacher places their activity on several essential aspects that characterise a scientific guidance: The guidance style and the student-teacher connection; The analysis, the self-analysis and the reflection on the vocal interpretation; The examination of the information and the analysis of its content.

#### 4. The means of vocal training

Some of them can be found in aspects related to vocal formation, shaping and polishing, some others relate to the way the student receives and does willingly or not the required exercises. In other words this aspect targets the affective side of the activity, which contributes eventually to motivating practicing this art.

Affection and polishing in the vocal practice are two notions of utmost importance, thus one can observe a few aspects that should be analysed among the means of vocal training.

The dialectical relationship between these two aspects of major importance in vocal training, both generally and particularly, leads to exceptional results. Hence one can appreciate that considering the complex activity required by the vocal preparing, all the aspects must be carefully studied, regardless of their degree of involvement in the student's entire conduct both in vocalization and interpretation.

The technical performing of any vocal exercise must be analysed mostly from the sound coordination point of view, but a decisive aspect is the affective side, which defines and delineates precisely its own modalities of developing the performances, between the two aspects existing a relationship of complementarity and determination.

By complementarity we understand the fact that the shaping exercises, the voice preparation, must be affectively accepted by the student. The determination relationship is achieved either by physical mobility towards the affective side, or the other way around, manifested under different aspects, the affectivity being under physiological aspect a functional component on which the value of the artistic act depends eventually.

Regarding the affective side,<sup>2</sup> the lyrical artist always resorts to internal resonant sensitivities, if we consider for example those produced by the laryngo-pharyngeal vibrations transmitted through the skull-facial skeleton or those concerning the vibration sensations of

<sup>2</sup> „Certaines parties du système nerveux ont la propriété de recevoir, transmettre ou percevoir des impressions. (The elements of the nervous system have the possibility to receive, transmit or perceive impressions.) Garnier, Marcel; Delamare, Valery. 1967. *Dictionnaire des termes techniques de médecine*. Paris: Malois Publishing House, p. 1087. These impressions, named by the terminology in the field of internal sensitivity, can be proprioceptive (which inform on the sensations of muscular, bone, tendon and articulation origin), interoceptive (the sensations appear after the action of the internal organs impulses), exteroceptive (that transmit the external stimuli to the nervous centers, for example tactile or thermic ones), somesthetic (generic term denominating the transmission of information which come from sensorial organs, the receptors on the body surface and from the profound somatic structures: muscles, articulations ), palesthetic (the sensations coming from the vibrations, for example those from the bones), kinaesthetic (perception of movements, effort and contractions of certain parts of the body) or algetic (perception of pain).

the hearing organ, the ear, thoroughly investigated by the famous biophysician Georg von Békésy who noticed that the different frequencies of sound wave are locally dispersed before exciting different nervous tissues that lead from cochlea to the brain.<sup>3</sup>

Jean Piaget, the Swiss psychologist, biologist, logician and philosopher, in the treaty *The Psychology of Intelligence*, asserts that the feeling is the one that guides the behaviour in attributing a value but this has to fit within the boundaries of an action energy which contributes to its knowledge, printing a certain structure.<sup>4</sup>

The composer and publicist Isaac Nathan (+1864) said that the genius, greatest secret is the power of expression. Due to the fact that it is rarely acquired, existing only in the presence of natural talent, it depends on the right feeling and perception and on their activation.<sup>5</sup>

Although the affectivity in the vocal technique may be considered a force of initiating a physical action, which manifests literally through the desire to acquire vocal equality, extention and flexibility, to always overcome, regardless of all the obstacles on the way, establishing the ardent sub-layer, nevertheless it cannot impose on the structure, form and content of the vocal exercise. Thus the method of approaching a vocal exercise is not entirely due to affectivity but to the just perception, to intelligence and good coordination of the vocal apparatus, to the implementation of knowledge and skill.

Seen from this point of view, each vocal action supposes an affective energetic aspect but also a structural, cognitive one, from which several other aspects stem in order to level and conduct the vocal actions, being known the fact that there cannot exist a vocal act or action without an effort energy being involved which will be as greater as the affective side of the execution involves more decisively.

In order for the vocal activity to be optimal, a compulsory condition is required that is the student's state of health and of mind. The means of preparation include exercises which contribute to influencing the capacity of extention, equality and flexibility of the vocal instrument.

Among these means of preparing we find the most diverse variants of exercises that have as main purpose to prepare the vocal instrument to be easily adapted to all kinds of specific effort. When choosing the preparation exercises the following criteria must be taken into account: to contribute to the complete development of the vocal instrument; to form general skills and habits that may lead to the improvement of the specific capacities; to be easily implemented and to be adapted to individual particularities; to be understood by the student and not become a source of exhaustion or means of regress for the vocal instrument.

The means of specific preparation have great importance in the vocal training, especially for the first year students, but they cannot be neglected by the more advanced students either, or by the consecrated lyrical artists. Thus, professor Mircea Duțescu, in the study *I have learnt not to shout*, about the vocal interpretative art based on older treaties of the Italian Canto School, still a manuscript, after a meticulous research of the old canto methods, talking about the professor-disciple relationship and the importance of establishing the right strategy regarding the vocal training, warns that the great professors believed it was a mistake to work from the beginning or too early on improvization.

There is no treaty that gives instructions regarding the way the vocal technique mixes with breathing, with the artistic musicality or about one of these three aspects being more present than the other in the vocal studying. Some educators emphasize, at least at the

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<sup>3</sup> Békésy, Georg von. 1949. „The structure of the middle ear and the hearing of one's own voice by bone conduction” In *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* vol. 21, no. 3: pp. 217 - 232.

<sup>4</sup> „... we must thus confine ourselves to say that it provides the necessary energies for the action while the knowledge imposes a structure.” Piaget, Jean. 1965. *The Psychology of Intelligence*. Bucharest: The Scientific Publishing House, p. 58-59.

<sup>5</sup> Nathan, Isaac. 1836. *Musurgia Vocalis*. London: Fentum, p. 199.

beginning, only the technique, the functional balance of the vocal cords, others mostly the breathing, others the expressiveness, in other words what lies behind the score and not within it.

The three elements do not contradict each other. It is the educator's job to treat them chronologically, quantitatively, predominantly or individually. Not even the most gifted students will succeed to concentrate simultaneously on attack and tone emission, on the larynx position, on mouth and lips, on breathing, on using all the resonators, on emphasizing the superior harmonic sounds, on vowels and tone similarity on the entire voice range, on the use of registers, on rhythm and colour a.s.o. If you chase after two rabbits you will not catch either one. The teacher's experience, the patience, the perseverance and the aesthetic sense are utterly important in choosing the manner of work based on the work plan and daily notes, both in teacher's and student's notebook."<sup>6</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

Being a vocal interpretation teacher implies a major responsibility since the educator, leaning on previous competences, must achieve the performance that his student, at the end of the studies, be able to holistically approach the interpretation field, that is to render through adequate means the content of an opera, a musical one in our case, but expressing at the same time a true *recomposition* of the musical and literary text, taking into account at least four essential elements: recognising the concepts which its composition was based on; authentic play (which involves serious preparation and confidence in vocal and emotional resources); creative imagination (achieved by vocal and mimic expressiveness); interpretative harmony. All the decisive aspects for the vocal training, analysed integratively, offer us a clear image of their efficiency, through the priority they give to the vocal activity. Approaching the vocal training from the scientific guidance point of view, closely connected by the content and form of developing the vocal act, allows a more precise diagnosis of the vocal disponibilities, verifies the efficiency of means and methods, orienting the improving of the polyvalent training components towards the compliance of the scenic art requirements.

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<sup>6</sup> Duțescu, Mircea. *I have learnt not to shout*. manuscript, p. 50.