

Collaborative tools in the development of opera singers' bodily expressiveness

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Abstract: *Opera performance has become a sophisticated environment, where direction and scenography are points of attraction for spectators who lack sufficient musical knowledge. We see performers who are increasingly well prepared from a technical point of view, but the simple opera lover also expects a performance to match. The shaping of a character's image involves intensive study before going on stage, which largely involves physical and emotional aspects. In this sense, a good result stems from body awareness, by building an effective posture and facial expressiveness. Exercises aimed at developing bodily expressiveness provide a foundation on which the performer can build and create the synergy between all the elements involved in the construction of a truthful character.*

Keywords: *performer; singer; movement; expressiveness; movement; posture;*

Introduction

„In singing, strength is very important. Most singers recognize the importance of the diaphragm and the muscles of the abdomen in singing. However, muscles that are contracted can produce tension through «shortening» the spine and tightening all of the muscles. It is very common to see the singer as he or she begins a difficult passage moving his or her hands upwards as the arms tighten and the abdomen contracts. By taking control of our body and increasing our ability to flex and stretch, we can make the muscles lengthen rather than contract during singing. We will have just as much strength, but with more balance, flexibility, movement of breath, and less tension”².

The simple desire to sing good opera technically implies considerable effort. It is the music that sets the mood for the performers, and charts the course of the characters, and movements of the performer on stage must harmonize with it. But before singing, it is necessary to be aware of one's body. Each person has a specific, unique allure, which is why the music and the story of the performance come to the singer's aid. For the opera performer, the physical character is achieved through study, practice and experience, because before going on stage, he has to achieve a clear coordination between the physical characteristics of the role and the vocal requirements of the score. Through the vocal warm-up that the singer does before performing, he becomes aware of his own body, breathing and facial muscles. The movement releases the tension that sometimes builds up while singing, initiates breathing, and gets blood to the muscles that actually help the singing and the movement itself. Gestures can be considered windows to the soul, so when used correctly, they add meaning to the performance. On the other hand, body movements on stage communicate

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² Mark Ross Clark. 2002. *Singing, Acting, and Movement in Opera A Guide to Singer-getics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 4.

expressive intentions, they convey information to stage partners or to the audience, and information about the performer's personality. Observing everyday life can be a lesson in human physicality, and an aid in defining a character.

1. Bodily expressiveness, a defining element in the construction of the opera character

The first acting teacher who contributed to the development of the cult of the body and its expressive possibilities was an opera singer, François Delsarte (1811-1871). Until his voice deteriorated, he studied at the Paris Conservatoire, and was briefly a tenor at the Opéra Comique. He then turned from musician to fervent researcher of the gesture-voice-emotion relationship and turned his attention to training theatre performers on speech. Unlike the technique of classical ballet (which was in vogue), Delsarte would intervene with a new approach to the body, giving importance to the torso, face, and arms, instead of the legs, which he considered only meant for movement and totally ineffective for expressiveness. From 1839 he taught according to his theory based on gesture and posture. The method was based on gestures that supported the respiratory flow, on balance control and on relaxation (limiting tensions in the body), all in the service of an easy and natural declamation. The system remains a first analysis of the relationships established between parts of the body, between movements and human feelings, and is the basis of both general physical education and some innovations in the art of dance. Considering the language of gestures as a direct expression of the soul, he will propose the term *semeiotics* to study the links between gesture and feeling. Starting from the idea that movement is the outward manifestation of inner feelings, he scientifically examined the ways in which emotions are reflected in gestures and poses.

Delsarte's legacy, which included generating powerful stage acting techniques, lives on in operatic acting, but to it is also added the contribution of the great pedagogue Konstantin Sergeevich Stanislavski (1863-1938), who focused on integrating the study and physical training of the opera singer.³ In his work with singers, he aimed to combine their vocal technique with the authentic living of their roles. And this involved, among other things, acquiring a strong sense of musical rhythm to support the performer's stage movement. He rightly believed that a graceful and fluid gait needed to be performed daily before any rehearsal, as a means of warming up and preparing the singer-actor's body. Moreover, physical exercises were worked on daily alongside vocalizes.

As an acting teacher, Stanislavski was primarily interested in achieving an expressive diction that would help the singers convey each word clearly to the audience, then he was concerned with releasing bodily tension in order to benefit from a body that could move easily on stage. Mindful of unnecessary tension in the body (particularly in the singer's face, arms, and legs), he thought that the focus should be on stage actions that were consistent with the character's inner feelings. (By learning to rest the body, to release the muscles and the mind, good control of the body is achieved, which prevents movements and gestures from being used unnecessarily, especially on a large stage. Moreover, relaxation in this case is

³ Stanislavski remained an important name in the world of theatre by developing psychological realism and by founding the Moscow Art Theatre in 1898. It was only towards the end of his life that he developed an opera studio, the Opera Studio (1918), in which young men from the Moscow Conservatory of Music and several singers from the Bolshoi studied. At first, his method of training was not accepted in theatres, especially by advocates of „pure opera singing”, who tried to prove that a singer with a good voice did not need to be trained in acting. In time, however, his method, which involved daily exercises in music, movement, dance, releasing muscle tension, singing arias and lyrical ballads, and productions, became accepted.

active rather than passive because it is alert and energizing, allowing the performer to concentrate). Of course, in the vocal process, the singer contracts certain muscles (of the diaphragm, of the intercostal muscles, of the larynx), and while these working contractions are necessary for singing, the purpose of the release exercises worked by Stanislavski was to allow the other muscles to be loose, thus avoiding unnecessary contractions and tensions.

Interestingly, he made a clear distinction between physical movement, which is merely a mechanical act, and physical action, which contains an inner justification, and which first takes place internally (as an intention) and only then externally (as an action). In training opera singers, he also attached great importance to the study of dance in order to be able to perform various dances such as mazurki, waltzer, polish, schottisches. He worked on various arm and hand exercises, similar to the study of ballet, except that the movements performed had to have an inner purpose. However, his methods of physical training in working with opera singers are insufficient, and if we add to this the emphasis on emotional memory, it becomes clear that focusing exclusively on such a training strategy is not exactly the most effective and complex approach for the physical training of an opera singer. This is why I believe that the opera performer needs a somewhat more comprehensive physical training, in which ballet exercises, historical dances, stretching exercises, and improvisation focused on movement all play their part in the development of the muscle tone, balance, awareness, and breathing which are so necessary for singing.

In preparing for a role, the physical and emotional make-up of the character is of major importance. Exploring it in depth helps the singer give a clear emotional imprint. Of course, character history is extremely important, and character study also involves the clues about the character's emotions found in the text. It is no secret that body language reveals important information about a person. It can tell us that a person is happy, or it can show us that they are a young person (who has a lot of energy, moves their hands a lot, and is generally fast-moving), or that we are dealing with an introvert.

Expressive stage behavior refers to the unique style of the motor skills, voice, gestures, mimics, posture, attitude, and gait of the performer. This gives details about the character, and not just from their actions, but also from the way they express themselves. In other words, the performer's means of expression are the instruments that give shape and life to the role. The way we sit in a chair, or the way a singer sits or moves on stage while singing is shaped by posture. When posture is aligned, it helps accomplish all of these tasks with purposeful, tension-free movement. A "good" posture is never frozen but is characterized by constant energy. Even if singers sometimes hold a gesture or pose while singing, this energy does not stop. Posture can also refer to an assumed stance or mental attitude, so it holds a distinct importance in the physical exploration of the characters the singers portray. Thus, when held correctly, posture can contribute to the success of a performance.

A faulty postural alignment during singing thus affects the flow of the breath, creates tension that affects the neck, and therefore the artistic act. There is a misconception that on stage, the singer should adopt a posture where the shoulders and chest should be up. On the other hand, pulled back shoulders create tension in the shoulders, back and neck. Also, postures adopted on stage that are different from the postures in the performer's everyday life look false, so it would be more normal to practice a correct posture in everyday life, which can then be taken up on stage. In any daily activity, the opera singer should ask themselves if they are balanced, and if they can breathe easily. Even getting up from a chair should be done using the legs and using the hips and not the back for support, as one would normally think. This is why it is often essential to distinguish between the singer's personal posture and the posture of a character.

Some experts believe that there is no such thing as a “correct” posture, but what is certain is that it does not simply mean sitting up straight. We can only talk about good posture when we are aware of the natural curvature of the spine, which feels free and extended all the way to the skull, and of the weight of the arms, which keeps the shoulders down. The extension of the spine should occur without any tension, keeping the knees flexible and the arms hanging under their own weight. In this way, the weight of the head on the spine is reduced and the body gains strength and balance. It is important for the performer to find the correct weight placement, which ensures stability and responsiveness while moving, to find that position in which they are in balance, from which they can move in any direction without losing their balance. The goal in aligning and centering the body is to be in a neutral yet energized, receptive physical-vocal condition, from which the performer is ready to move in any way the dramatic demands require. Postural alignment is not only important from an aesthetic point of view but is essential for freedom of movement and free vocal production. All of this can seem difficult to put into practice, especially when the singer is going through the most complicated vocal passages, and the tendency is to shorten the spine and arms rather than stretch and release them. As for walking on stage, this should be done with the head held high, free of tension, allowing the arms to swing naturally, and keeping the knees and ankles flexible.

Delsarte is the first theorist to notice the important role of gesture in communication, stating: „A hundred pages do not say what a simple movement may express, because this simple movement expresses our whole being”.⁴ By *gesture* we mean the movement of parts of the body (especially the hands, arms, shoulders and head) to express feelings, moods, ideas, giving expressiveness to words or even taking the place of words, and by *gestics* we mean all gestures. Unlike posture, which is more of a subconscious manifestation, gestures are characterized more by an awareness of how our emotions influence the way we act. For opera, gestures complement the words spoken or sung by the performers with new meanings, supporting the interaction with the stage partners. Before words, they lead the way. Gesture does not necessarily need to be emphasized; it manages to convey information in itself.

For singers, coordinating a gesture with the words of an aria is quite a difficult process, so an involuntary movement of the hands during difficult vocal passages can signal tension in the body. It is difficult to judge how often a gesture should be used during an aria, but it is clear that when a gesture pattern is repeated too many times, it turns into a predictable cliché. On the other hand, a gesture that is “characteristic” of a certain character is allowed to be used throughout the work, because it is like a signature, a movement typical of the person, or the mood.

Knowing the character and setting of a historical period is of paramount importance in building a character on stage. Documentation prior to the first rehearsal related to historical etiquette is an asset for the performer, because the information obtained relates to the social status of the character to be performed, the costume and accessories, the relationship between gender and social classes. Preserving the style, culture and customs of the era, rendering gestures and mannerisms that belong to the physical vocabulary of the time, leads to the creation of a truthful character. In many of the operas, the historical period includes a certain gait, certain bows, and behavior that is specific to social classes. Gender and class differences are revealed not only by the costume worn, but also by the bow performed. Operas are set in

⁴ Isabelle Ginot, Michel Marcelle. 2011. *Dansul în secolul XX*. București: Editura Art, 2011, p. 87.

different periods of history, but the best-known works are set in the 18th and 19th centuries. There are also instances where directors along with the designers place the work in a different era, usually later than the original, giving the audience a new perspective on the work.

For the audience, the key to communicating messages is the clarity with which the performer achieves the expression appropriate to the role. The main channels for communicating emotions are the eyes and the face. Some singers' attempt to feel exactly the emotion they want to express is not always the best "method" of acting, as it can lead to physical and vocal tension. Emotional performance can occur through an expressive face/countenance when the singer uses an expression of sadness without actually being sad, and thus achieves the emergence of that emotion while avoiding physical tension, the expression thus being controlled without interfering with the vocal technique.

„The expressive face is one way a performer can communicate his or her emotions. A clear focus, a specific expression, and a distinct shift to the next emotion guide the audience along the same path as the performer's. The emotional journey is no longer solitary; it is shared”⁵.

Exercising the face and practicing various expressions and changing focus are just as important as working with the voice and body. Think of the energy that comes from the eyes, face, and strong emotion. A powerful performance channels this energy and invites the audience into the emotional life of a character. The expressive use of facial muscles while opening the vowels without tension is a difficult task for the singer. Clark (2002) comes up with a solution, which he briefly describes as follows: „The best way to bring the face into full use is through using two different approaches. First, flex the facial muscles, sustain the mask, and then integrate that flex with the singing voice.... Next, try to sustain an expression while singing”⁶.

Also, the numerous battle scenes in operas raise the need to integrate various techniques of combat – hand-to-hand, with a sword, knife, dagger – into the singer's physical training, as well as the study of ways of falling and fainting. Stanislavski considered fencing to be absolutely necessary in physical training in order to achieve ease in the artist's performance of any stage action. He observed that rapier dueling involved combining the tension in the movement of the legs and in the whole body with the flexible lightness in the movement of the arms (especially the hands). But more than that, he believed that dueling was the best way to focus the will and attention, to study the opponent as necessary, and to create an inner relationship with him.

Last but not least, we can develop the singer's bodily expressiveness through improvisation exercises. They unlock, stimulate, and train the imagination, and these transformations lead to a greater power to communicate the meaning of a character on stage. These exercises also help create an environment in which artists learn to collaborate and support each other. The first improvisation exercises, meant to cast prejudices aside, are often laughably easy exercises, but they allow us to enter a fantastic life of imagination in which we communicate with others. It would be preferable to improvise both spoken, sung and physical scenarios, and despite the idea of freedom, there should be a predetermined structure with a beginning, middle and end. Playing scenes, with characters and voice, looking at props and scenery in new ways, releasing the voice through babbling, communicating without voice, playing with movement and tempo, and trusting others are elements often used in improvisation.

⁵ Mark Ross Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

2. Methodological framework

„The development of means of expressions is an interactive process that stimulates individuals and group achievements in terms of cognitive and affect-heuristic interchanges and decisions”⁷.

Interactivity is based on mutual relationships and involves active learning in which the individual transforms information into new, internalized, and personal information. All the expressive needs described above, which concern opera singers, lead me to the main inspiration which is training for young actors. That is why, as with actors, before proceeding to put together a program aimed at training opera singers, I ask myself questions to help me in my training strategy that will help with observation, differentiation, organization, and evaluation. Two key questions underlie my training strategy/method:

How can I improve bodily expressiveness through play?

How can I increase the contribution of the nonverbal in the process of creating dramatic characters by optimizing training?

On the other hand, this work method aims to determine the ideal values of several factors that influence the bodily expression of singers: attention, concentration, and relaxation, breathing, physical condition. A series of adapted exercises to help prepare singers to better respond to artistic requirements are presented below. They are chosen and adapted in some places specifically from exercises proposed by great theater and movement pedagogues (Stanislavski, Suzuki, Clark, Dale Girard, Anne Bogard and Tina Landau) and from my own experience as a choreographer, in order to improve flexibility, posture, expressiveness, physical condition etc.

2.1. Warm-up and relaxation exercises

I personally believe that there should be no rehearsal or class without a little warm-up at the beginning. Of course, unlike dancers, the opera performer needs a gentle warm-up, which can be followed by stretching and isometric exercises. Therefore, I would recommend warming up by body segments: neck (cervical area), shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers, pelvis (lumbar area), iliac area, spine, knees, ankles, toes. The same warm-up by body segments can be performed with rapid circular movements and movement through space.

2.2. Stretching

Is a form of controlled extension (gentle lengthening of muscles, tendons, and connective tissue). It is generally performed in sets of 3-5 repetitions, with a duration between 30 and 60 seconds. Although stretching is recommended at the end of a training session, when the muscles are warmed up and obviously more extensible, mindfully used stretching exercises can also be used as a warmup (for short durations of 10-15 seconds)⁸. They help increase body awareness, flexibility, balance, coordination between segments, concentration, and attention to breathing for moments when intense emotions occur. By stretching, we breathe and become more aware of our own body. I support yoga stretching exercises because

⁷ Kendra Cherry cites Paul Slovic et al definition of affect heuristic: a type of mental shortcut in which people make decisions that are heavily influenced by their emotions, in Kendra Cherry, (2019), The Affect Heuristic and Decision Making in Theories in Cognitive Psychology <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-theaffect-heuristic-2795028>; Slovic P, Finucane ML, Peters E, MacGregor DG. The affect heuristic. *Eur J Oper Res.* 2007;177:1333-1352. doi:10.1016/j.ejor.2005.04.006

⁸ It has been observed that stretching exercises (for over 15 seconds) at the beginning of a motor activity cause a decrease in muscle force, which persists for about an hour.

they keep the focus on breathing and on poses that are similar to the gestures performed on stage. Held yoga poses involve uninterrupted breathing, energy, and muscle release. By gaining greater flexibility and control over their own body, the singer can achieve a lengthening of the muscles rather than their contraction while singing.

2.3. Isometric exercises

Were developed (mostly) by the American B. Hoffmann. The term *isometry* is made up of *isos* - equal and *metron* – measure, length. These exercises involve anaerobic effort⁹ and are static exercises, which involve maintaining constant muscle fiber length (muscle length does not shorten) at maximum muscle tension. Some of the advantages and objectives of isometric contractions include increasing muscle mass; increasing endurance; increasing muscle strength; no special equipment required; not much time required (in most cases, the pose is held for 10 to 60 seconds, alternating with periods of rest).

Like stretching exercises, isometric contractions also require increased attention to breathing, which must be kept within normal limits. Although short in duration, isometric contractions intensely involve the muscular system, the central nervous system, the circulatory system, and the respiratory system. The duration of the exercises is increased gradually. The contractions are repeated 6-8 times during a training session, for 10-12 seconds at first, and with 90-second breaks, during which lighter movements can be performed to help relieve fatigue and rebalance breathing and circulation. The most complex isometric exercise is considered to be *Plank*. It tones the muscles, increases muscle strength, and helps the secretion of synovial fluid (the fluid that is indispensable to the joints).

2.4. Relaxation exercises

The aim is to help the body function lively and free of physical, emotional, and mental tension. Many singers suffer from poor posture or particular movements and tensions, and without proper relaxation, these habits increase during stage performance.

Pendulum

Throw your head back and forth and then, by moving your body, make it roll from one side to the other.

Relax the muscles of the hands so that they hang from the wrists as if they were caught on strings. Swing them back and forth, separately, and then together. The fingers should be so relaxed that they hang from the knuckles. Lift the arm to the shoulder, release the tension and then let the elbow hang from its joint. Shake the underside of the forearm from the elbow down.

Stand on one foot and relax the raised foot, mentally sensing the lack of feeling in your toes. Then make rotational movements with the foot in the air. Lift the leg, bend the knee, relax it, and slowly lower the leg.

Raise your shoulders as high as possible, then release them. Feel the weight of your arms. Let the weight of your upper body fall towards the floor, bending over your hips, swing by

⁹ Anaerobic exercise is a short-duration, maximal intensity exercise in which the heart rate changes significantly but quickly returns to normal during the recovery period between sets. During such exercise, the body produces a large amount of lactic acid and the body's oxygen reserves are used up.

sweeping the floor, then swing in a supported position with your back and arms parallel to the floor.

Smooth walking

To slow music (an adagio) take a very slow step in a very slow way (over two bars) so that you shift your body weight from one foot to the other smoothly and almost imperceptibly. The main purpose of the exercise is to achieve a smooth, gliding gait. Gradually, the pace of the gait increases to almost running, but even then, the smoothness of the gait should not be lost.

Yoga stretching

Sun Salutation, Cobra, Bolt pose, Tree pose, Virasana, Mountain pose, Child's pose.

2.5. Combined elements of ballet and historical dance performed at the barre and in the center of the room

Although the opera performer does not need to acquire the extended posture and the technique of classical ballet, I believe that a number of light combinations are necessary to meet the historical dances studied, for the evolution of which the art of classical dance was an important stage. The proposed elements of classical dance combined and performed at the barre are plié and grand plié, battement tendu, battement jeté, rond de jambe, fondu parter and en l'air. All exercises will be performed in the four positions of the feet of historical dance: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th.

The leg and arm positions of historical dance, the hall points, the dancer's placement in the dance hall, and seating in the dance will also be studied. Some technical elements of historical dance will be added to these: pas marché, pas élevé, pas glissé, pas de pompadour, pas chassé.

2.6. Historical dances

„Historical dance occupies an important place in the practice of dramatic theatre, lyrical theatre, films with historical subjects, requiring choreographers and performers to have an in-depth knowledge of these dances. This requirement is very important for the rendering of the specific styles and characteristics of a particular performance. Dance is a performance without words, and it focuses on the possibilities of bodily expression. Knowing how to behave in a performance anchored in a particular historical period, knowing how to understand the particularities of the costume appropriate to that era, is a great advantage for the performer, giving him the possibility to move easily and naturally even in the perception of very varied rhythms”¹⁰.

In every historical period, man has danced while guided by his beliefs, folklore, social rules, and mores. Dance has evolved with human society and has achieved virtuosity over time. However, the dances proposed for study aim to study the technique, manners, and to recreate those dances of past eras, most of which originated in folk dances.

Middle Ages: Basse-danse, La Farandole, Le Branle.

Renaissance: La Gaillarde, La Pavane, Le Menuet, La Gavotte, Polonaise

Romanticism: La Valse, Mazurka, Polka, Le Quadrille

20th Century: Charlestone, Rock'n'Roll

¹⁰ Magdalena Bălan. 2012. *Curs de dans istoric*. București: Editura Muzicală, p. 11.

2.7. Postural alignment

Standing

How does one transition from sitting to standing in a fluid manner, with momentum and tension-free?

Find a balanced sitting position with your feet firmly planted on the floor. When ready to stand up, first bring your head forward in one continuous motion and, with momentum, walk forward, using your legs for support. Avoid the tendency to involve your shoulders or back.

Long neck and jaw

Clasp your hands and place them on the back of your head. Spread your fingers towards your back and head to feel the length of the neck. Pull your hands from your ears down your jaw to your mouth, feeling the full release of your jaw.

2.8. The historical etiquette

The Révérencé is an elegant movement expressing respect, reverence, admiration, feelings, etc. Since in the past centuries this movement was present in everyday life and during court dances, it could have multiple meanings, and was studied with great care and seriousness. In general, the social position of the person performing the révérencé was taken into account. For example, if it was performed towards the sovereign, the movement was deep and rising from the bow was allowed either after the sovereign's departure or if asked to do so. On the other hand, while dancing, the révérencé was first performed by the knight, and only then by the lady. Sometimes, during the dance, it could be performed simultaneously. Over the centuries its form has changed, but it kept the idea of reverence. Clothing and accessories have an important impact on the dances and therefore the bows.

Révérencé 16th century; Révérencé 17th century; Révérencé 18th century; Révérencé 19th century.

2.9. Facial expressiveness

Focusing

Find an object in the room and examine it. Notice what your eyes and face are doing. Focus on a memory. Notice the change in the position of your eyes!

Observe a child's emotions

When a child is watching TV as if "hypnotized", the child takes in and reflects emotions without restraint. Observe them!

2.10. Stage fights, falls, fainting

Glove or hand slapping

When attempting a slap with a glove, (as in "La Traviata"), the glove should hit the bottom of the partner's shoulder, without moving towards the head. At the same time, the struck person should turn their head upwards at the sound of impact.

It is unacceptable for a performer to slap another actor on stage. However, if the libretto calls for it, the arm is extended to the side of the face of the person being slapped, and the

latter performs the “knap” or sound of the slap with a quick clap of the hands. The head turns during the knap.

Fainting

Fainting starts from an upright position, with the body twisting in one direction while lowering over one knee. Then the weight is shifted slightly to the other side of the body, while the supporting leg and toes are released forward. Aim to release the abdominal muscles and to melt into the floor. The sound of impact with the floor can come from the muscles of the arms hitting the floor along the body (not the hands!). (Preferably, one should not fall directly backwards as injury can occur from the fasteners on the ladies’ dresses).

2.11. Physical improvisation

Relays

The working group is divided into four teams of four subjects each (A, B, C, D). Each team is positioned facing point 1 (the audience) and has an aisle stretching out in front of them as their work area. The first person in each team is number 1, the second person is number 2 and so on. The teams work on their motor material in isolation, in their own lane, with no connection to the other subjects.

The exercise will begin when the coordinator gives the command: First one go! Subjects with number 1 will perform an action in their own lane, then to the right and they will sit at the tail of their team. Then the coordinator will give the command: Second one go! Number 2 will repeat the action(s) of number 1 and add their own action; (The coordinator must ensure that all subjects have seen what was worked on before them, if not, the previous subject’s action must be repeated to be reviewed). And the exercise will continue in the same way for the following subjects. When everyone has finished adding their first action, number 2 will be at the front of the aisle and will add an action at the beginning or end, and so on for the next subjects.

The four subjects of one of the teams (e.g., team A) will be lined up facing point 1, where they will be asked to perform the whole series of movements, in perfect sync. The memory of the other three teams will be tested in the same way.

The Magic If

Invent a circumstance, using Stanislavski’s formula: „if only things were so and so”. For example: you are a bride about to leave for the church to get married. How do you look at yourself in the mirror? How do you put on your make-up, fix your hair and clothes, etc.? What emotions do you feel? Does your mood involve any physical tics?

Take the same situation and try playing it out in twenty different ways. Answer the questions „Where, when, for what reason or purpose am I doing this?” but consider having a different goal each time.

Abstract movements

Create abstract movements with your hands, arms and legs, and then your whole body. By letting go of muscle tension, each movement should be broad and clearly differentiated from the others and leave an outline around you.

Perform the movements at different tempos and with different intensities.

Try the same exercise with flowing movements (the movements are mixed, one after the other, like a continuous line).

Add singing to the same movements.

2.11. Physical analysis

Zoo animals

This is an exercise that aims to pick up physicality from the outside.

Assume the role of an animal assigned to you. Observe the animal, and reproduce its movements in detail, paying attention to its spine, the shape of its head, and even the rhythm of its personality.

Exaggerated gestures

Four people sit in a line or semicircle on chairs.

Given situation: the four are waiting to enter a doctor's office (choosing the doctor's specialty can make the exercise more complex). Each of the four has to find a gesture of irritation or nervousness to repeat over and over. Suggestions: sweaty palms, tension in teeth and jaw, dirty glasses, stiff neck, etc.

Building a body

Try to understand the psychological profile of the character, and then add the imaginary body to it (physical characteristics, gestures, tics, etc.). In order to build its physical part, ask yourself the questions: What would they look like? How would they walk? What gestures would they use? How would they physically interact with the other characters?

To make it more interesting, choose clear and complex psychological profiles for the exercise, e.g. a king, an artist, a doctor, etc.

2.12. Ten ways of moving (diagonally) from the Tadashi Suzuki method

1. *Stomping;*
2. *Pigeon Toes;*
3. *Bicycle Walk;*
4. *Sidekick;*
5. *Tiptoes;*
6. *The Crab;*
7. *Side Stomp;*
8. *Cross Stomp;*
9. *Kabuki Shuffle;*
10. *The Cockroach.*

2.13. Physical fitness exercises

Physical fitness exercises are a necessity, which to some extent can compensate for the lack of a healthy diet and for a sedentary lifestyle, that are increasingly present in our lives. The objectives of these exercises are muscle toning; increasing strength; increasing muscle mass; increasing endurance; increasing mobility (this is achieved mainly through stretching, but dynamic exercises such as leg swings help in the same way); burning calories (losing excess weight). I would suggest a short list of exercises that include: *Rélévés*, Lunges, Lunges jumps, Squats, Crunches, Butterfly crunches, Bicycle crunches, Mountain climbers, Knee push-ups.

3. Conclusions

I believe that the artist who appears on stage has a duty to take care of their own body, first to appear in a physical form that is pleasing to the audience, and only then to help in outlining the character. An untrained body can only express itself within its own limits. This is true for both dancers and actors or singers. Although in the process of preparing for an opera performance, the discussions revolve around etiquette and stage fights, when viewed from a choreographer's perspective, the integration of movement into the performer's work process is somewhat left to the singer and is often insufficiently explored.

While singers work with a voice teacher to understand how their voice works, they work with a drama teacher to explore the methods of analysis of character and emotion, and the study of dance is absolutely necessary in order to understand movement and muscle function. All three of these areas of study are important for an opera singer, so it is important to find a safe place in their study time where they can experiment (before they get on stage) with the integration of voice, acting and movement. This paper attempts a brief presentation of the tools that help to achieve the expressive body in the synergistic approach to a role in opera performance.

4. References

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