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## **HOW TO BECOME CONSCIOUS SINGER**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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As we learn singing we should know the voice as an instrument and all its needs. Often singing education is limited to the technical mastery of the instrument and the psychological aspect is omitted. Hence, the psyche needs to be tamed by the singer himself. A teacher preparing a singer from the technical and interpretive side can only trust in the psychological resistance of the student and his inner positive motivation to perform.

The aim of this thesis was to find an answer to following question; what has an impact on the consciousness of the singer-artist? The study was implemented as a literature review by reflecting to the author's own experience as a singer and classical singing teacher.

It was found out that issues like emotion, memory and knowledge may affect the singer's performance via his consciousness.

The result of this thesis is thoroughly discussed with a help of map of singer's consciousness in order to help to understand the main issues related to the consciousness of a singer and elements connected to it. The map helps to identify the level of singer's consciousness.

Keywords: voice, singing, performance

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with a story and an adventure with singing, with teaching strategies and their different influences on voice. There is not so much about how to become a famous singer (author is not famous) but maybe a bit about how to realize a hope of just being a singer and how to fulfil a dream of experiencing the joy of performing music alive in our soul.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand and accept the fact that we cannot do things we would like to do while other people are talented enough to realize our dreams, yet they have different dreams than ours. Nevertheless, it is possible that with adequate help and hard practise a lot can be changed in one's voice technique. After years I can say that nothing is so satisfying as things that come to us very slowly and so often with a lot of sacrifices. We should always keep healthy distance to all things we do and most importantly: we should trust our teachers.

What is the value of a teacher's ear? We should know that singing is learned by feeling and not by listening to the sound of it. Of course, everybody must learn to sing in tune. However, it is impossible to hear the true sound of one's own voice as the singer's instrument is his/her whole body. This is why the teacher's ear is priceless in the process of learning how to sing. Since singers come from different vocal histories and have different concepts of singing, the teacher's ear is extremely valuable. Every singer has individual and specific needs as everyone has individual and distinct voice with own "voice print" (it is because every person has individual throat as his or her face). This is why talented teachers do not teach every singer in the same way. Singers always need those expert guiding ears to help one learning through healthy mirroring and become more conscious of one's own technique. Once we realise how special we are with our individual voice, it is very important to develop an awareness of what our voice feels and sounds like without imitating any other voice.

It could be said that singing is easy - at least by somebody who has never tried it. Everybody who can speak or produce any kind of sound can sing because the voice is given by nature. But how about knowledge of what is good singing, what is the most important in singing and how to become a better singer? Is produced sound natural and do people have pleasure to listen to it? I would like to explore this process: from the beginning at school to the stage – from unconscious beginner to a conscious singer – a performer.

## **2 DEFINITION OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

The aim of this chapter is to present a definition of consciousness from different perspectives from various sources, but also provide a specific definition of singing. Based on the practical experiences a new definition will be constructed, as the singer's consciousness will be seen from a practical point of view. In this thesis two terms will be used interchangeably, consciousness and awareness.

### **2.1 Definition of consciousness from different perspectives**

In this thesis I would like to discuss how to become a conscious singer. But who is a conscious singer? To answer that question, one needs to first understand what it means to be conscious. What is consciousness?

The term "consciousness" is relatively new and it had not been used until the seventeenth century, at least as far as English language concerned. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the fundamental word for this term – conscious - meant "having knowledge". Consciousness is, therefore, the state of or the ability to be aware, which is a condition of thought, feeling and will. It is the recognition of one's own actions or feelings by the thinking individual. (Gregory 2000, 12). The famous sentence of John Locke from 1690 is: "Consciousness is the perception of what is going on in the mind of man." Much later, in 1866, T.H. Huxley wrote in his book *Science and Morals*: "Sensations, similarly to emotions and manifestations of will or thought, are all considered to belong to a common category of conscious states. We do not know, however, what consciousness is. One might wonder how something as extraordinary as the state of consciousness can be the result of irritation of nervous tissue. This is as equally incomprehensible as the emergence of Genie when Aladdin rubbed his lamp or as any of the fundamental natural phenomena." (Gregory 2000, 14-15.)

But there are many definitions. Consciousness can also be defined as (Szymczak 1989, 459.):

- the ability to be aware of the object of perception or experience in conceptual categories
- the highest level of mental development, characteristic of the human mind
- the ability to reflect objective reality, conditioned by the social forms of human life and shaped the course of human's historical development.

Yet, medicine defines consciousness in a different way. (WIEM 2006) In medicine it is a physiological state of a central nervous system which is conditioned by normal functioning of cortex and reticular formation and characterised by the maintained sense of the place, time and situation.

## **2.2 Specific definition of a conscious singer**

Drawing on the above definitions of consciousness and all the literature about singer's awareness reviewed in this thesis, as well as on the own experiences of the writer, a definition of a conscious singer-performer will be constructed. As included in the above definitions of awareness, the singer should also be aware of reality, feelings, emotions, knowledge and psyche. The relation of them to music or to music performed by a singer is being tried to find out after a careful analysis of several elements on the subject.



### **3 SINGER'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF VOCAL TECHNIQUE**

If a singer would like to use her/his voice as an instrument as long as possible in good condition, he or she should know about vocal technique. Of course, knowledge is not enough because a good singer should also have good vocal technique. Otherwise the beautiful voice may disappear one day and without the knowledge and technical skills may be lost forever. What should we know about ourselves?

If we want to give our audience some content, the most important is our interpretation. Its importance however diminishes if we do not have the appropriate voice technique. If we want to use our instrument consciously we should know the basics of voice anatomy and physiology. That can be learnt from books or from the teachers of singing. A deeper understanding can be reached, for example, through consultation with a doctor specializing in vocal chords.

#### **3.1 The concept of voice technique – premisses for the definition**

*"Technique is nothing else as than a set of ideas hence creations of human imagination, which can be used multiple times. As such technique must be the product of creative inspiration." (W. Lutosławski)*

Searching for clues to the definition of voice technique, we should refer to the voice as an instrument, shaped by the principles of nature and subjected to strict rules of speech and music.

### 3.2 Basics of voice technique

1. The ability to mimic sounds and voices	2. Perception of composition of verbal and musical utterance	3. The ability to build stage creation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sensitivity to the sound, its height, dynamics, duration and manner of articulation</li> <li>• improvement the clarity of speech</li> <li>• inventiveness in the performance of voice exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• efficiency of reading the text and score</li> <li>• recognition of rhetorical figures in text and music (reading with comprehension)</li> <li>• perception of work form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ability to associate acquired experience and knowledge</li> <li>• ability to apply the acquired experience and knowledge</li> <li>• ability to maintain a permanent good disposition of voice</li> <li>• awareness of professional ethics</li> </ul>

Table 1. Basics of voice technique (Musialik 2010, 21-22)

The basis of the skills required on the stage of a singer and actor has always been a beautiful voice - expressive pronunciation, precise intonation, rhythm, and above all artistic creation. Outstanding abilities and voice skills have had influence on the aesthetic of implementing regulations of the spoken word, vocal and instrumental music in all ages. Clear confirmation of this fact can be found, for example, in European musical practise of the eighteenth century - in shaping the form of opera, in the composition and the rules of performing the aria da capo. (Stanford 1979, 48.)

Regardless of the historical and cultural conditions, a singer's professional disposition has always been formed on the basis of his inherent, natural abilities, comprehensive education and daily exercise.

"The real immediacy, inherent in every artist, it explodes with renewed force after a systematic and hard work, (...) after getting rid of dirt, bad habits and platitudes." (Czechow 1995, 25.)

The voice and the body become a tool for transmission of the content expressed in words and music. The content of work determines the composer's technique and differentiates the technique and level of demands required from a performer. (Lipka 2000, 26-34.)

In an artistic experience, voice technique will always be referred to particular sensitivity and a singer's/actor's ability to recognize his comprehensive, extraordinary mobilization "of the body, mind and emotions."

Discovering voice predispositions, we discover unique opportunities that nature has endowed us. "Her instrument" is just waiting for inspiration. It is waiting until our soul plays it. This is probably the essence of technique. (Musialik 2010, 14).

## **4 CONSCIOUSNESS OF SINGER-STUDENT**

### **4.1 Vocal development**

To develop one's own instrument, a singer should know how to work with it, how to use it in the morning before a lesson, during daily exercises or before and during a concert. It is important to remember that not only physical condition is important for a good sound of a singer's instrument but even more important is psychological approach and attitude to him/herself.

#### **4.1.1 Warming up and practise**

Just as a professional athlete would never push his body to its physical limits without first stretching and loosening muscles and joints, a singer should never put his vocal apparatus to the test without first "stretching" it. A proper warm-up involves gentle and systematic preparation of the voice for the demands that are about to be placed on it. After the initial warm-up, it is still prudent to tackle vocal exercises in order of difficulty which may involve putting off those which are designed to broaden a singer's range until a little later in a lesson.

Exercises must not be too difficult to not inhibit a sense of freedom during the extraction of voice. In the optimal situation, patterns of correct phonation are provided by a teacher, who comments the exercises, corrects, shows, often also encourages repeating on the principle of imitation. Unfortunately, voice emission cannot be based solely on the perceptions of a sound. It takes time to be able to control our voice by hearing, to learn to hear it as from the outside. At the beginning of our learning process we observe mainly the mobility of the voice apparatus action. Control is possible here by the sight (observation of various parts of the body) and touch (muscle testing). It is good to work then in front of the mirror in which you can see the whole figure. Also video recording is very helpful in the analysis and evaluation of our vocal apparatus. We must carefully observe the whole body to unlock redundant tensions. It is necessary to acquire the skill of the exact relaxation at any time. This is the basis of phonation action. We must realize that muscular rigidity it is not the same as

natural tension associated with their work. Working on the muscles, it is important to have their flexibility and freedom of action. Muscular work is most efficient when their mobility is used to an extent no greater than 50 percent. (Sielużycki 1962, 10.) It is good to operate on the principle “minimum effort - maximum effect”.

In course of our work on voice, we become aware of various sensations which accumulate in the places called by Raoul Husson sensory fields. The sensory fields are particularly rich in sensory nerve endings. According to Husson (Bregy 1974, 61.) there are nine:

- front part of hard palate (1)
- rear of the hard palate (2)
- the soft palate (3)
- larynx and its surrounding (4)
- upper part of the face (5)
- trachea (6)
- upper chest (7)
- around the diaphragm and ribs (8)
- stomach and abdomen (9)

Sensory fields 1-3 are places of reflection of sound wave.

Sensory field 4 is the source of the sound.

Sensory field 5 includes mainly the bones of the skull, where we feel a strong vibration, particularly important for the development of resonance.

Sensory fields 8-9 are associated with the work of respiratory muscles.

The next step is to obtain the corresponding resonance for the sounds. We can say, that we can produce sounds correctly if we will start feel that the experiences in resonate areas we feel with the work of respiratory muscles.

The aim of our work is to develop a voice, unconditional and conditional reflexes. These are formed in various areas of the brain where stimuli are associated, and direct coordination of activities depends on this activity. (Sielużycki 1962, 15). The sound is formed in the larynx, because there is the sound source. However, "we speak and sing knowingly with the participation of the brain". (Sobierajska 1972, 8).

#### **4.1.2 Practical advice how to practise**

In working on acquiring vocal skills, systematicity and consistency are very important. If defective resistances are not removed at the beginning of learning, they will return like a boomerang when you least expect it. Then their removal might require up to several years. Recognized authority in vocal pedagogy - Franziska Martienssen-Lohmann claimed that the introduction of the basic problems (relaxation of the vocal apparatus, the freedom of breathing, alignment of vowels, the work of head resonance) takes one and a half year, provided that a student is working every day. An undisciplined student, abrogating from the daily work needs much more - three or four years. (Martienssen-Lohmann 1953, 73-74).

Work on voice should start from working on one sound, then over a small segment of the scale. The exercise should be very simple. First of all, we should grasp the principle of combining sounds in legato articulation. When we want to warm up our voice, the sound should not be forced, exercise *mezza voce* "act like oil, with which massages the muscles that gained flexibility". (Martienssen-Lohmann 1953, 78). The exercises should be started in the middle of voice registry or in the best registry for a student, gradually extending to other heights. We constantly have to take care of maintaining the same feelings.

We need to remember that the previous sound determines the sound of the next. It is difficult to unlock the clamps and tension of the next sound, if they are already on the previous ones. It is much better then stop the exercise (or work) than to sing in tension to the end. Each pause and each breathe in should be used to correct any errors.

It is important also to remember that we should not be under the impression of ease. The muscles must be mobilized at any time and active in order to properly realize the emerging problem.

What is probably most important, though, is that sounds must be always outpaced by imagination. Before they are sung, they must exist in our imagination in compliance with all regulations. As Oren Brown says: "Think what you want and let it happen. Then trust the result." (Brown 1996, 46.)

## **4.2 Caring for your voice**

The voice is a highly delicate instrument. It is important for a singer to care for his/her own voice so that fatigue, strain and injury may be avoided, and so that it may function at its optimum. Different aspects of voice caring, discussed thoroughly in a subchapter are below,

- Medical check-up
- Psychological well-being
- Hydration
- External environment (temperature, air pollution, noise)
- Sleep
- Foods
- Vocal fatigue
- Practical advice what to avoid.

### **4.2.1 Voice caring**

Singers must remember that the voice is given only one for life, so it is extremely important that we as singers take care for our instrument. Any protracted voice ailment should be consulted with a doctor specializing in the vocal cords. In this way we can avoid many chronic diseases.

During the learning process singers need to take care of not only the voice but also about good psychological condition. It is important to remember that the whole human – his body and psyche - is involved in phonation. Voice apparatus is in us, so it receives our emotional states and any mental fluctuations. Psychic experiences have a major impact on the voice, which is not always positive. Stress and mental tension might adversely affect work of the respiratory muscles and voice organ. (Łastik 2002, 32.)

The vocal folds vibrate against each other in order to produce a sound. In order to vibrate properly and to work effectively they need to be well lubricated with moisture. Hydration should be a priority throughout the day. A singer should give the body at least half an hour before a lesson, audition or performance to benefit from fluid intake. It is not sufficient to wait until the lesson or performance to drink water. Ideally, a singer should drink enough water during a

twenty-four hour period to make his urine run clear. Room temperature water is ideal, since cold water can have a numbing effect on the throat and mouth.

Apart from not drinking enough water, the vocal apparatus gets dry for a number of reasons, including environmental dryness, (mainly from heating and air conditioning systems removing much of the humidity in the air), medications (e.g. antihistamines), diuretics (e.g. caffeine, alcohol), illegal drugs, cigarette smoke and other air pollutants. Before singing, it is not only recommended that a vocalist drinks an adequate amount of water, but that he also avoids these sources of dryness.

The entire voice organ is lined with a soft mucosa. It is particularly vulnerable to desiccation when air is moving because the dry air we breathe in absorbs some of the water of mucous membrane. Dryness gives a sense of discomfort and is also the cause of many phonatory ailments. At temperatures around 20 degrees Celsius humidity should be 60-70%. This humidity would allow getting closer to the parameters of the air leaving the nasal cavity. When air humidity is low, it is also recommended to drink beverages during phonation. Water or chamomile tea are the best choices. Also very moist air, such as during fog, adversely affects the voice organ. Then excess moisture is deposited in the upper airways and causes phonation problems.

The singer's voice is also affected by various factors of external environment such as temperature, air pollution and noise.

While working with our voice we are usually indoors. In this situation, we can control the ambient temperature. The air reaching the larynx in the physiological process of respiration has a temperature of about 32-34 ° C, which is close to the body temperature. In our climate this temperature causes considerable discomfort. The optimum temperature should be 18-21 ° C. The air is warmed in the mouth and throat, and there it may reach desired parameters for the larynx. The temperature much lower is too shocking for our throat and, in particular, for



the larynx. Whether it will cause throat diseases resulting from cold depends on the individual immunity.

High levels of dust or other contaminants affect very negatively the voice organ since they are deposited on the mucous membrane causing cough or hoarseness which is very harmful for the vocal cords. The air pollution is closely related to the issue of numerous allergies. Nicotine also causes unfavorable congestion of the mucous membranes. Therefore people using their voice professionally should avoid being in smoky rooms.

High noise levels will automatically increase volume during phonation. We should avoid unnecessary burdens on the voice. When increasing the volume of the voice takes a long time, even with correct emission, we are exposed to fatigue of the voice organ.

One of the worst “irritants” for many singers is insufficient rest. When body is tired, the voice will often show signs of fatigue, such as overall weakness or loss of control, diminished range and poor tone, and a singer may lack energy and concentration needed in order to be able to perform at his/her best. These symptoms of inadequate rest may be difficult to hide from a listening audience. Being overly tired can also decrease a singer’s ability to effectively concentrate on his/her technique while singing. For that reason, a singer should get a full night’s sleep before performances or lessons.

Furthermore, certain foods, such as spicy dishes, greasy fried foods and faddy diets should be avoided prior to a performance because they can create an upset stomach which may cause gastric reflux. In this situation, acids in the stomach rise up the esophagus to irritate the tissues of the vocal folds. Dairy products will not harm the voice, but are known to stimulate mucous (phlegm) production in the throat and sinuses which may interfere with clear vocal production. They should, therefore, not be consumed within two hours prior to the start of a singing task (e.g., a lesson or a performance).

A vocal fatigue is the inability to speak or sing for extended periods of time without experiencing a change in voice quality. Signs of vocal fatigue may include a “cracking voice” – this may also be a sign of insufficient hydration – a throat that feels strained and sore, a diminished natural vocal range, a changing timbre (tone quality) and hoarseness.

#### **4.2.2 Practical advice what to avoid**

A singer taking care of one’s own vocal cords needs to know what to avoid:

- do not sing/talk too long - during long singing have breaks to rest
- do not sing too high – continuous singing high notes of scale, even with good technique, make us tired. It is easier to sing one very high sound than more sounds a bit lower but from higher part of the voice scale
- do not sing/speak too loud - loud singing and speaking fortissimo dynamics typically becomes a shouting and is detrimental to vocal cords
- do not speak/sing in a high emotional states – excitement or strong affection, may cause loss of control over the voice
- do not sing in the incapacity of the throat - when our voice is sick with colds, hoarseness, we should restrict the use of it to a minimum

Before a concert:

There is a lot of well-intentioned advice for singers about what they should avoid eating or drinking but in the end food and drink never come into contact with the vocal cords unless it goes down the wrong way. It can be more a psychological effect of relaxing and supporting for some singers. So, it can be the choice of a singer to avoid or not: to drink milk, tea, to eat candies, especially chocolate and nuts, large and heavy meal because a light nutritious meal is better (there is a tradition of eating one egg before singing). But smoking and drinking alcohol is very harmful and it is also recommended to avoid sudden temperature changes and drafts and consuming too hot or too cold food and drinks. Grunting and coughing are also very bad for our voice.

## **5 CONSCIOUSNESS OF SINGER-PERFORMER**

This chapter addresses several issues related to a singer's awareness on stage. It will be explained what determines vocal performance, what psychological conditions should characterize a conscious singer, what should motivate a singer to achieve the best performance and how awareness of repertoire, knowledge of a text, style and character of the performed works affect creative interpretation and thus the emotionality of the singer, by which he can express himself.

### **5.1 Consciousness on stage**

What does it mean to be conscious on stage? To be a conscious singer means to know one's own instrument - voice which means to know how to use, practise, and protect it, and to know how all body functions support the voice and its control. It also means knowing how to show emotions by using the voice and to know which emotions we want to express. For that we need to have a good voice technique but strong sensibility may often help to gain a better technique, too. Being a conscious singer entails also knowledge and understanding of what we sing which is particularly important when we sing in a language other than our native tongue. And it is not enough to know something about the content but we must also understand the full context and every word from the performed work. One needs to know, what the most important word in every sentence, how to build all phrases and which colour to give for each phoneme. The most difficult for singers, however, is to find out how "to sell" their performance. Maybe "to sell" is not the most adequate word, but it simply means how to make our performance as attractive as possible. I remember one of my colleagues who was very disappointed after a performance when received following comment – "Well, you sing almost well, nicely, but I do not want to listen you a second time". So, probably it is not enough for our listeners that we sing well. Of course, also listeners feel what we feel during our performance. Our comfort and well-being is the basis. But we must also realize

how important it is to be aware of our own motivation and interpretation of the song. We need to know what, why and how we are going to sing.

## **5.2 Dependence of vocal performance**

Implementation of a musical work taking place in terms of time pressure, where it becomes impossible to correct an error exposed to social exposition and an evaluation of audience is always carried out by two separated but mutually interacting tracks: specific track and track a kind of non-specific.

The success of a performance depends not only on the potential opportunities and the championship of the performer, but also on training conducted by professionals with psychological preparation in a period prior to the performance. Some talents have a good vocal technique, a great preparation, but they do not have enough strong mental toughness and the ability to function under conditions of mental tension. The high level of performance in the classroom and during exercise, then disappear during a hearing, a competition or an exam.

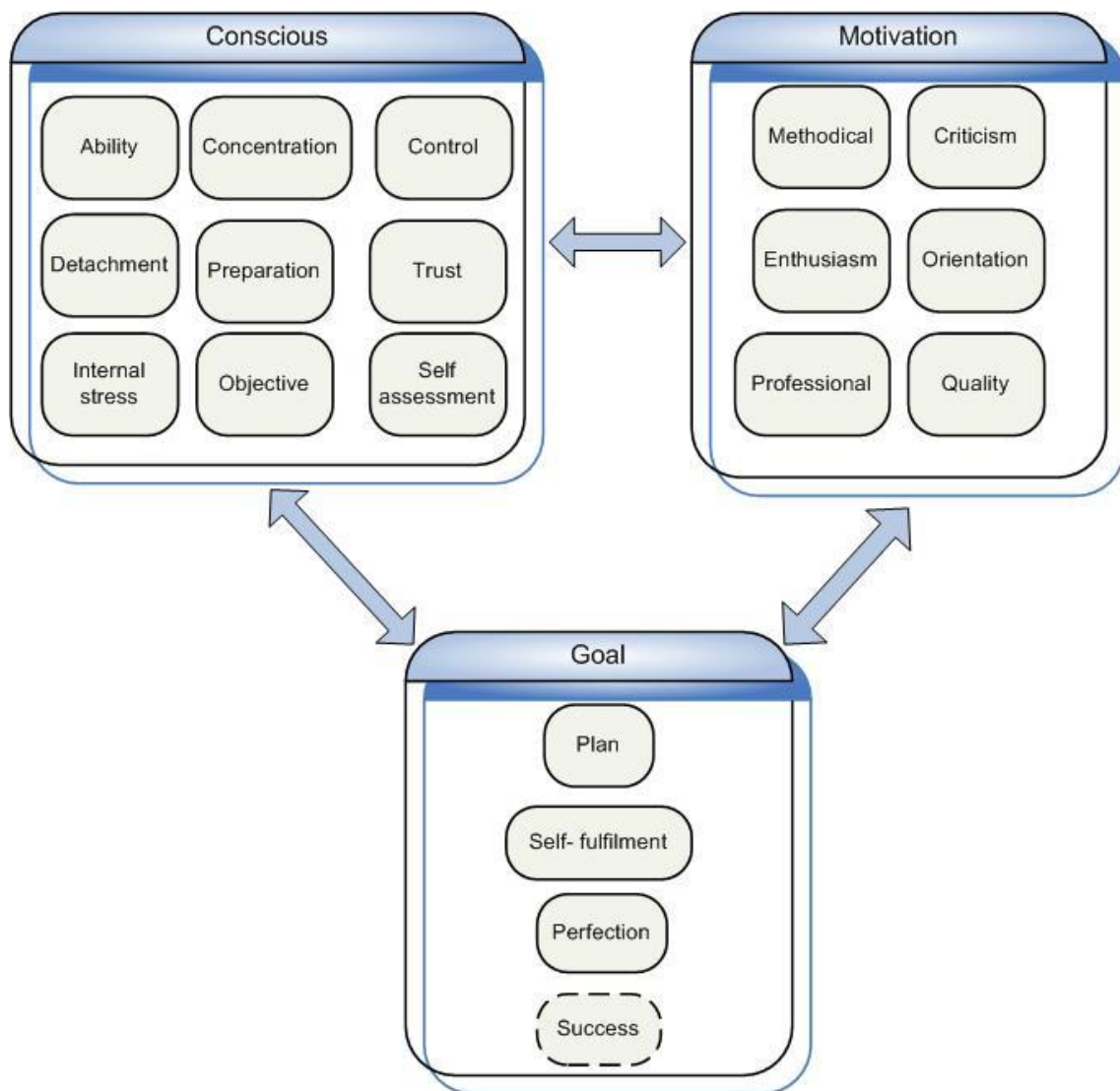
Specific track of vocal performance depends on the musical talent, on all the technical means and artistic works available to a singer, on his vocal skills, broadly defined the level of musical competence, on the stage experience, workload and, what maybe the most important, the method of accumulating and type of used learning strategies before the performance.

Non - specific track of vocal performance depends on psychological factors, like the current mood, mental attitude, a singer's personality traits, the level and type of stage fright, on the experience of experiencing pleasure and pain accompanying vocal performances, on psychological preparation before the concert, the possession of psychological and social support. A capable singer does not only move under the music influence but is also able to evoke in the audience aesthetic and emotional reactions and is also sensitive to the music structure and can read the sense of music. (Welbel 2000, 15-17.)

### 5.3 Psychological conditions of conscious singer

The basic condition for singers to operate at the level of their potential is adequate psychological preparation. Just as was overthrown the myth that without work it is possible to get mastery in the singing, the same it should be considered that getting adequate mental skills to public performances require long training.

According to Emmons and Thomas (Emmons, Thomas 1998) in order to bring out during the performance its own maximum potential, in addition to a high level of competence to perform the musical repertoire, the singers should have the following psychological conditions:



Picture 1. Psychological conditions of a conscious singer-performer

### Conscious:

- of one's own musical abilities, systematic work and a good, conscious preparation, which results in a positive but realistic attitude towards each other
- of the need to trust in their own skills as the artist and co-partners the work performed, which reduces stress and impact on the implementation of spontaneity
- of the need to control emotions, to disconnect, while singing, from the experience of anxiety, fear or anger, and the possibility of transforming experienced anxiety into means of artistic expression
- of the need to focus on the internal structure of a musical work, its sonic layer, the colour of sound
- of self-assessment without narcissism but with tolerance of criticism of one's own person which reduces the level of devastating musical performance stage fright
- of goal.

### Motivation:

- to achieve the high performance level, despite setbacks and the sustained absence of current successes, thanks to an ongoing, own, independent, enthusiastic and consistent implementation of one's own plans.

### Goal:

- Goal is the pursuit of self-fulfilment through perfection which guarantees (or not) success; using its own plan of action.

## **5.4 Emotionality due to awareness of repertoire (text, style, character, interpretation)**

Technique is not the most important aspect of singing. Technique is only the means of expression. The singing technique should not be the main issue. However, we need to remember the wisdom of an excellent singer and teacher Salvatore Marchesi that "every art consists of a technical-mechanical part and an esthetical part. A singer who cannot overcome the difficulties of the first part can never attain perfection in the second, not even a genius." (Marchesi 1902, 5).

Considering the esthetical part, the most important aspect is expression which comes from our soul. To express oneself, what to convey and how to convey are artistic choices which every singer has to make for himself. And the artistic choices depend largely on our awareness and knowledge about what we perform and why we perform. We should know the lyrics of the performed works and understand each transmitted word (especially when we sing in a foreign language). We should be able to properly articulate each phoneme, reflect style and character of the work. We should not be followers. Rather than imitate famous singers, it would be better to create our own fully conscious interpretation of the performed work. First, interpretation demands an interpreter adequately illustration of the composer's statements contained in the music material. Then the essential elements of the content and work form should be transferred as a coherent whole by the expression of the executive. It requires from a performer intellectual and emotional predisposition, imaginative, and not only imitative but also creative and artistic intuition.

In vocal music, particularly songs, the text is one of the prime considerations of the modern composers. Correct accentuation, clarity of pronunciation, emphasis of important words, etc., are basic requirements for good vocal style and indispensable for conveying musically the general character of the text as well as subtle nuances. Any song, from Schubert's to those of the present day, will show the composer's concern about the text. In fact, since 1880, one finds a tendency to emphasize a text at the expense of melody, the latter frequently being reduced to a mere "recitation" (Hugo Wolf, Debussy, Schoenberg). Modern composers have been very discriminating in their selection of poetic texts, choosing only those of outstanding literary value. (Apel 1974, 840-841.)

In arts, style means the mode of expression or of performance. In music it refers to the methods of treating all the elements, like form, melody, rhythm, etc. In practise, the term may be applied to single works (e.g., the style of Tristan), to composers (the style of Wagner), to types of composition (operatic style, church style), to nations (French style, German style), to periods (Baroque style, Romantic style), etc.

## **5.5 Awareness of our weaknesses**

It is good to be prepared for surprises that might occur on the stage. They are usually the result of anxiety, stage fright, stress which engulfs us just before or during the concert. For one singer it will be a dry throat, the other will have an excess of saliva, legs trembling, shortness of breath or momentary loss of memory. We need to know what to do with these problems. It would be best to be prepared so well that we do not need to worry and be stressed because of something. Our teachers usually know our instruments and technique skills, so they know how we can sing best with comfortable psychological condition. But very often they can be surprised more than us by our performance, because the new situation on stage makes a big difference in our confidence, psychological well-being and behaviour. Only a very good teacher, with great observation skills, can help us to prepare for a stressful situation during a performance. Usually this means a repertoire adequate to our vocal skills – not too easy but also not too difficult. But there is no time, no possibilities and no specialists to practise our reaction on stress during singing. We need to find our own methods of dealing with our weaknesses. For example, for bad memory it is advisable to write the text of our songs 30 times on paper and then read it also 30 times.

## **5.6 Art of perfection**

If a singer could combine all the necessary elements on stage that he is aware of at the particular moment of his vocal development into one indivisible whole, it would be for him the art of perfection, which gives full satisfaction of the performed concert. Unfortunately, these elements are so numerous that we rarely manage to achieve complete complacency, especially because we work under stress which is usually mobilizing but may also act destructively. It all depends on our preparation for the concert. If we have a weak spot in the repertoire, which for some reason we can be afraid of (it may be a problem to remember the text, or a problem with the attack of a high sound, or lead a long phrase, or uncertain entry into intricate rhythmic accompaniment), then we can certainly expect that the jitters and anxiety will reveal the audience our fears. However, we need to strive for perfection. We must be prepared so well that we can trust ourselves and think positively about our performance. Sometimes it



may happen that, although our memory surprises us and we forget, e.g. the text or the moment of entrance, our well-prepared instrument continues to play correctly, since our body works automatically as during exercising. This automatic response can be possible as a result of very good education provided that we do not panic.

## **6 REFLECTING LITERATURE ON THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

In this chapter literature and personal experience are combined as a whole. Personal experience comes from the writer's times as a student.

### **6.1 Writer's own background**

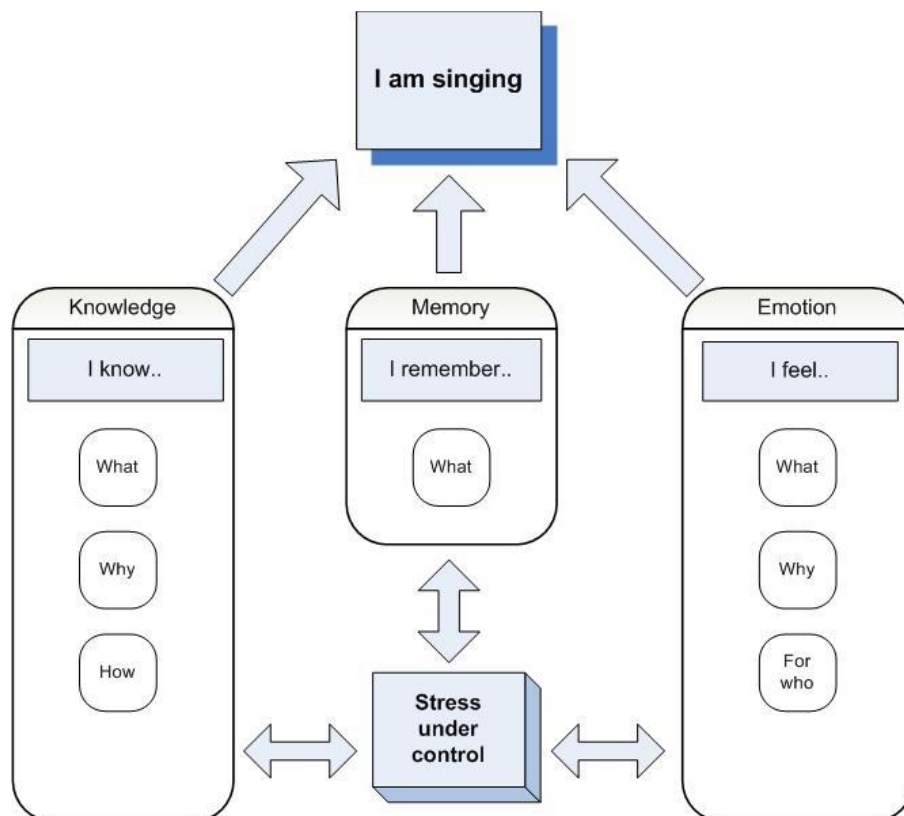
I always liked singing but I never had a sufficiently large voice scale, so I had to sing second voice not the main melody of songs or the songs had to be transposed for me. There was no problem when I was singing in the choir as an alto but when I decided to develop my voice in a musical school, it turned out that I am not able to control my muscles and I sing unaware of what is happening with my voice. Moreover, it was difficult to find any song for me because of my scale. I was lucky that my first singing teacher taught me the basics of vocal technique, and the important role of the work of my facial muscles in voice production. And all this thanks to the systematic work in front of the mirror, simple exercises based on the speech more than singing in the beginning, but a proper, relaxed speech. I also learned from my first singing teacher how important it is that singing must never hurt or feel uncomfortable. If it does not sound right, if something feels wrong or if it feels uncomfortable, your voice is telling you that you are doing something wrong. You should always trust your feelings - they are better and more direct than even the best teacher's ear. And just because of that one day I decided to look for a new teacher. Sometimes the next level in music/ singing education does not allow us to grow. I felt regress in my voice, so I needed to find help. There are many different ways to achieve the same goal and they are all good if as a result we have a pleasure to produce a healthy, free, natural sound. And there is something else very important for a singing student, maybe even more important than a good teaching method. It is our peace of mind in the surrounding environment, positive emotions, acceptance and support from our closest persons.

## **6.2 Summarizing the writer's experience**

One cannot achieve a good singing technique if one works in mental tension and is not able to relax and enjoy one's own performance by being aware of technical imperfections. Still, it is really difficult to master the mind and enjoy singing if we are aware of our own technical imperfections. At the beginning of a learning process, the more often we hear that we have to relax the muscles, the more we try to force it and instead of a natural relaxation we get an unnecessary muscle tension. The more ambition we have and the more we want to apply all the counsellor's instructions, the more difficult it is to gain distance from our own instrument and understand that getting to know our instrument, the voice, takes a lot of time. The sooner we understand this simple truth, the easier it is to get to the next level in singing. Therefore it is important that a teacher carefully and gradually makes a student realize how one can work on voice alone, and in some cases it would be even advisable not to train on one's own at all, as to not to perpetuate bad habits of one's own muscle work.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

In relation to the definition of consciousness and all the material about a singer's awareness collected in this study I would like to introduce my own definition of a conscious singer-performer on the stage (picture 2). Each of the elements of the diagram is discussed in subchapters below.



Picture 2. Definition of Conscious Singer-performer

### 7.1 A conscious singer

Performer who has consciousness of:

Reality: **I am singing**

Will: **I want to sing!**

Technique: **I know how to sing**

Sensibility: **I feel – I'm singing**

Memory: **I remember what I'm singing**

Emotions: **I feel why, what and for whom I'm singing**

Knowledge: **I know what I'm singing**

Motivation: **I know why I'm singing**

Psychic: **I control my stress**

REALITY: **I am singing** - this means that he realizes the reality of time and place – in this moment is on stage in order to sing.

WILL: **I want to sing!** - this means that he wants to sing, to give the audience something with his voice - the content, emotions, which are an expression of his free, inalienable right to sing.

TECHNIQUE: **I know how to sing** - this means that he has good technical preparation, gained during his education, knowledge of how to sing and consciously control one's own voice apparatus during performance.

SENSIBILITY: **I feel – I'm singing** - this means that he feels that he sings, is aware of the work of his muscles and feels the vibrations, resonance and respiratory support.

MEMORY: **I remember what I'm singing** - this means that he has good preparation in memory of performed pieces.

EMOTIONS: **I feel why, what and for whom I'm singing** - this means that he expresses his emotions in songs, he feels what he wants to impart, to know why and for whom he sings.

KNOWLEDGE: **I know what I'm singing** - this means that he has knowledge of the works that he sings, knows the contents, structure, historical background, style and character.

MOTIVATION: **I know why I'm singing** - this means that he has an internal, not forced by anyone, motivation to sing, he knows why he sings and feels joy in spite of the awareness that every performance is unique and there is no chance to improve mistakes.

PSYCHE: **I control my stress** - this means that he is able to control his own psyche, to minimize the impact of stress on the attractiveness of the performance.

Limitations:

- Theory is based on literature and the real world examples on the writer's own experience
- Does not cover psychological theories to backup findings

Future research directions:

- Reflection of Psychology theories to the case of consciousness singer
- Creation of "psychology of conscious singer" map based on those findings and qualitative research to backup those theories.
- Can performance consciousness be build artificially?
  - How to balance different elements of consciousness in different singer categories (singers are categorised to different groups)

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