

Embodiment in the Context of the Transmission of Vocal Tradition. School of Traditional Music, Poland

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Abstract

In this paper, the experience gained mostly at yearly summer schools of traditional music (primarily at one school in Poland) is reviewed, noting in particular the importance of embodiment in the second link of the transmission chain “native singer – teacher – student”. The main purpose of these workshops is to practise certain traditional vocal techniques and styles, thus actually “embodying Otherness” (Trimillos 2004). The individual experience of the author (working as an instructor) and the reflections of other school participants are considered.

A number of points relating to the topic are discussed, including developing a “corporeal vocal memory”, imitation (overt or covert), hermeneutic “lay” instructions, adequate environment as part of a cognitive system, and the proportion of verbal/non-verbal means. The application of these to group training introduces special problems. These include creating a “bioenergetic” group space (related partly to the group geometry), statics and dynamics in embodiment dependent on and manifesting in the song genre, the singers’ individuality, and certain roles of the singers. Special attention is paid to the role of intentional/unintentional gestures in group leading and communication. The rehearsing of one song is presented as an example of the interplay of various aspects of embodiment.

About the School

Two Polish enthusiasts of traditional music, Jan Bernad and Monika Mamińska, came up with the exciting idea of launching a somewhat unexpected, brand new event in the context of modern Poland. Bernad and Mamińska were the first who formulated the aim “to create the folklore movement in Poland”. Neither of them had any formal education in ethnomusicology; they came with backgrounds in theatre (Bernad) and philology (Mamińska). They were strongly attracted to the magnificence and values of traditional vocal techniques (such as “biały głos”, i.e. “white voice”, the intense, taut Slavonic technique) and of traditional culture in general. They gained inspiration from other Eastern European countries where the folklore movement already had deep traditions (which were lacking in Poland). In the beginning they invited Ukrainian teachers, the members of the distinguished folklore ensemble Drevo known for their careful attention to vocal techniques and styles. In this way, the start of “creating the folklore movement in Poland” was ideal, based as it was on the

essential qualities of traditional singing and on general cultural matters.

The first International Summer School of Traditional Music (Międzynarodowa letnia szkoła muzyki tradycyjnej; hereafter ‘the School’) took place in 1998, in a small camp of summerhouses called Rybaki nad Narwią in the countryside of Eastern Poland. Most probably the very location of the camp, situated as it is on a hill with a far-reaching, panoramic view over the small stream, calm wide meadows and swamps in the valley below, has influenced the reception of traditional singing as embodied through what might be called an authentic, homelike environment.

Since then the School has been held at different places in Poland (Fig. 1) and organised or led by Bernad and Mamińska (under the auspices of the Fundacja Muzyka Kresów and Ośrodek Rozdroża).¹ The singing teachers (instructors) are invited from Poland and the neighbouring countries of Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Lithuania, and also from Serbia. Some ten teachers participate; they are assigned separate groups of students. The teachers have remained more

¹ Bernad and Mamińska worked in both institutions (the Borderland Music Foundation and the Crossroads Center).

Figure 1. Majority of locations of the International Summer School of Traditional Music (diamonds).



or less the same since 1990s.² The information about the forthcoming School is disseminated through the internet, and anybody is welcome to participate as a student; no auditions are held. The students are mostly from Poland, but also from other European countries; there have even been participants from as far afield as New Zealand. The age ranges from children to seniors, but most of the participants are university-age students (see a typical group at rehearsal in Fig. 2).

The annual School event lasts two weeks. Two rehearsals of two hours each (in the morning and evening) form the nucleus of the daily schedule. The rest of day the programme includes lectures and video presentations. The democratic atmosphere of the School provides plenty of leisure time as well, some of which is used for spontaneous musicking and dancing. The two-week camp concludes with one or two evening concerts where all the groups present their achievements.

I have been attending the School almost since the very beginning of its existence. I mostly

like to take the men's groups; this is probably because of my prevalent background at home over the period of the twenty last years or so (see the section "The Teachers"). I also give lectures on Lithuanian traditional music in general, traditional vocal genres and styles, general voice acoustics, and some aspects of music perception. (The inclusion of this last subject, I would suggest, points to the fact that the overall involvement of the School participants goes well beyond purely vocal matters.)

I have already written two papers (Ambrzevičius 2007, 2012) about some aspects of the School, including the instructors' experience chain "fieldwork – deskwork – practice", basic technical matters concerning practising, and issues surrounding some concepts such as "authenticity", "natural voice", "copying", etc. Here I will focus mainly on various aspects of embodiment considered in a variety of contexts and related primarily to the strategies applied in vocal rehearsals. It should be noted that such schools or courses take place throughout Eastern European, more or less intensively.³ However, such events in Poland, organized by the people mentioned above, are probably the most profound reflection of the actual phenomena under consideration due to their wide profile (in the sense of number and professional level of the traditions practised / instructors).

Since embodiment is in the focus of the paper, some comments on the essence of embodiment may be pertinent here. "The embodied viewpoint holds that bodily involvement shapes the way we perceive, feel, experience, and comprehend music" (Leman et al. 2018: 747). "Several descriptive studies show, for example, that the expression of music is reflected in body responses (locomotion, arousal), or that expression is present in gestures that support music playing" (ibid.). At first sight, embodiment can be considered as a supplementary channel to convey the overall

² Some of the most "permanent" instructors: Jan Bernad (Lublin), Evhen Efremov (Kiev), Iryna Klymenko (Kiev), Yesenia Bessonova (Voronezh – St. Petersburg), Vladimir Ivanov (Moscow), Jelena Jovanović (Belgrade), Anna Koropnichenko (Kiev), Monika Mamińska (Lublin), Tetjana Sopilka-Zaczykiewicz (Kiev – Warsaw), Branko Tadić (Belgrade), Svetlana Vlasova (Moscow). Formal interviews were conducted and other information was gathered during informal conversations in 2007–2016. The thoughts of many of these instructors have been used in the preparation of this paper.

³ First of all, I refer to several examples in Ukraine and Russia. As for the Lithuanian cases, the creative camp-masterclass "Tradition" has been held in Palanga for twenty years; it is based mostly on Russian and other Slavonic vocal traditions. The first International Traditional Singing Course incorporating a wider geography of vocal traditions was held in 2019, in Antalkiai (Kaunas Dst.).

Figure 2. Hanna Koropnichenko (Ukraine) with her group; 2016.



complex of performance, including both musical qualities and extramusical values. However, as we know, very often it is actually the only channel since it is impossible or nearly impossible to verbalize what we intend to render. Jihad Racy notes that often he has no verbalized answer to the questions of students about performance technique: “Well, I wish I knew how to” (Racy, Marcus, Solís 2004: 158). “I always ask if they ‘feel’ what I mean... because I can’t [explain it verbally]”, says the instructor interviewed by Katty Kochman (2013: 119).

The Teachers

The majority of the School’s teachers are at the same time both theoreticians, professors of theoretical subjects at their universities and academies, and practitioners, leaders or members of folklore ensembles, with considerable

experience of both fieldwork and vocal training. The “suppression” of folk or world music in Western academia described by Nettl (1995) seems to have been less extreme in the East European academic tradition, though to varying degrees, not least because of the emergence of strong folklore movements in this cultural area (with the exception of Poland) during the 1970s and 1980s.

My Personal Experience and the “Patchwork of Experiences”. My own musical ancestry, as I remember, started from my grandparents, singers or song lovers, although representatives of the newer, substantially modified layer of songlore. Thus my initial background basically resembles that of Ted Solís, who remembers his grandfather and other relatives as somewhat “transformed” Mexican *marimbistas* (Solís 2004a: 232).⁴ Then it was a secondary musical school, Master’s degree in physics, and PhD in musicology. The turn from

⁴ This paper frequently refers to the landmark volume on world music ensembles edited by Ted Solís (2004c), the American ethnomusicologist and expert in world music ensembles. I consider this book as, in a sense, a chrestomathic source and contextual basis which makes it possible to organize the discourse on world music ensembles and similar cases in terms of similarities, differences, and perspectives for further insights.

studies in physics at Vilnius University to folk music was triggered by my involvement in the folk movement, becoming a leader of several folk ensembles, and the pre-independence “singing revolution” in the Baltics. Fieldwork in the Lithuanian countryside was probably the crucial moment; I absorbed the singing and the philosophy of singing mostly unconsciously, through embodiment.

The personal histories of the School teachers raise questions about their “bimusicality” or “multimusicality” (as defined by Hood 1960), i.e. are we really multimusical or only apparently multimusical? We have roots in our own traditional culture; nevertheless, we link to it through a gap of broken or semi-broken transmission. In most cases, we represent the so-called secondary tradition. In other words, we are outsiders, but “in a sense, culture bearers” (Rasmussen 2004: 226), or “approximate insiders” (Solís 2004a: 229), or “halfies” (Abu-Lughod 1991: 137).⁵

Not only a few of the world music teachers recount their previous experiences of playing rock, folk, blues, and jazz, or of singing in choirs (Netsky 2004: 191; Witzleben 2004: 139–140). Could such backgrounds facilitate success in world music teaching? The answer, I think, is that it depends. On the one hand, this broadens, on the surface level and/or unconsciously, through embodiment, the musical scope of the teacher and helps him/her “to develop skills in aural and oral learning, improvisation, interaction, and communication” (Witzleben 2004: 140). On the other hand, this is a crucial question of real competence, both formal and gained through embodiment. Frank London (1998: 40) argues: “I was already playing salsa, Balkan, Haitian, and other musics. Why not Jewish?” First, did he play real salsa or its questionable replication? Second, does he not “salsasize” the new style he enters? I wish to treat London’s case positively, but it is not always so.

As already mentioned, we at the School have a fairly wide experience of various musics as well. I played piano at the secondary music school,

sang not only in several choirs but also, with the accompaniment of a guitar, so-called sung poetry, and listened to various musical styles, mostly rock and jazz. I find it important that this experience taught me to discriminate, mostly via the subliminal mind and embodiment, between the styles. I sing the same song in a folk ensemble and in a folkrock band, yet in distinct ways, switching between them perhaps almost unconsciously. This is about switching between languages; I will return to this issue in the subsequent sections.

As Solís says (2004b: 8), “the formation and teaching of ethnomusicology ensembles has not yet reached any sort of canonical stage, in which methodologies and procedures have become standardized.” The same can be stated with regard to the case of the School’s teachers. It seems that everybody is confident in his/her own teaching methodologies. However, one can hardly find any comprehensive publication dealing with this topic, except for episodic and concise revelations of some teaching aspects (cf. Pokrovsky 1980; Vlasova 2003). Rasmussen’s concept of “a patchwork of experience” (2004: 225) suits us perfectly.

Embodiment in the Link “Native Singer – Teacher”. To sum up what lies between the lines of this section, I would emphasise the significance of embodiment in the first link of the transmission chain “native singer – teacher – student”. This is managed through extensive and multifaceted contact with native singers during field work,⁶ and our learning process goes almost exclusively through non-rhetorical (non-verbal) means as the singers in our oral traditions have not generally mastered the requirements of formal teaching (they simply never needed this). When spending a long time together with singers culturally akin to me, I not only covertly mimic the music qualities of their musical performances, but I am also induced to imitate their gestures and mime; actually, it is the embodied behaviour that helps me to capture the song and makes me sing. In this process I may even not sing literally, but the song imprints itself corporeally and can later be extracted without

⁵ In addition, I could join Donald A. Schön and repeat his perspective: “Due to my dual positions as an active ensemble performer and researcher I am able to serve as a reflective practitioner, critically examining both the internal and external processes involved when I play music” (Schön 1983).

⁶ “It is extremely important for the teacher to devote a large part of his life to traditional music, spend a lot of time in the field, listening to and being with country singers, learning many variants of songs and learning about traditional musical dialects” (Jovanović 2017: 36).

the burden of consciousness.⁷ Moreover, I absorb the whole aggregate of cultural qualities, habits, models of communication and expression. This is not merely because I want to feel the context of the music more deeply: I find the sociocultural environment very close, natural, and amenable to me. Even pragmatically, I find that this then helps me to order my routine of existence. So this process is strongly kindred to transmission in the “authentic” milieu. All this is an important element in our *modus operandi*. Then the question is how to transfer all this, as fully as possible, to our students.

Aims

The general *raison d'être* of world music ensembles – “learning (and, by implication, teaching) through performance” (Trimillos 2004: 24) – unfolds in somewhat different and multifaceted aims and aspects according to the individual ensemble teachers. Sometimes multiculturalism and the fusion of diverse musical traditions occupies a significant portion of the teacher’s wishes (Marcus 2004: 207; Averill 2004). It seems that such experiments directed at multilayered musical fusions constitute the majority of the various projects that take place outside academia as well (cf. Brunner 2016; Machin-Autenrieth 2016).

In short, the majority of the teachers at the School accept the value of a diversity of aims, with no axiological preferences for certain aims. At the School, we promote the deep learning of separate traditions and certain vocal styles. However, on different occasions we may embody dissimilar intentions (it is sufficient to recall the case of singing in a folkrock band).

For us at the School (at least, for majority of the teachers), vocal style is the most important aspect with which to engage. “Style has authority”, as Locke says (2004: 181).⁸ Similarly, just as Locke wanted the “musical personalities [of the students] to become Africanized”, we want them to be Ukranianized or Lithuanianized. However, I do not mean the mere learning of

the purely musical components of a style, that is, their copying and successful digestion so that the individual style in the frame of tradition is developed. I completely agree with Ali Jihad Racy (Racy et al. 2004: 162) that we should teach “the music as an experience rather than just as a surface structure”, i.e. the whole “musical-emotional package”. In other words, the style as a whole must also embrace certain paramusical elements – a “package” of musical emotions consisting primarily of experiences while singing. A contiguous issue is aesthetics. I believe that real immersion into the music to be learned is through acceptance of its indigenous aesthetic values, even if they contradict the Western mainstream paradigms. The learning of aesthetics, sometimes peculiar, is one of our aims. We will return to this issue in the chapter “Rehearsals”.

As for the one of goals proposed by Trimillos (2004: 28), the “*entrée* for cultural understanding”, we view this as a latent but not less important goal. First, the cultural context helps to comprehend the music practised more vividly and naturally; second, the *entrée* for cultural understanding is a goal that itself leads to a wider sphere of more general aims, such as acceptance of the Other’s nation and the dissolution of possible national frictions. On the surface, the acquaintance with the context starts from the examination of song lyrics as a certain context for the music. Then the description of genre, function and performance situation follows. The entire package of contextual elements (e.g. the associations between human actors and nature, the relations between the actors themselves, the abundant metaphors, softening diminutives and aesthetic models in Lithuanian song lyrics, and the communication of the singers in various sacral/profane situations) then embodies, feeds the realm of the subconscious; that is, it helps the performers to immerse themselves into the culture more deeply and to accept it as, in a way, their very own.

Thus I would agree completely with Vetter (2004: 119) and Rasmussen (2004: 225)

⁷ “Most of the instructors agreed that usually they gain knowledge of the vocal techniques and other matters of singing style rather unconsciously and paradigmatically – from direct contacts with the informants during an extensive fieldwork” (Ambrazevičius 2012: 325).

⁸ In fact, if we look deeper, it stems from nostalgia for the “living voice” (Zumthor 1985); see the notes of Jelena Jovanović (2017: 28).

in claiming that the “insights gained in this process will probably have greater application in my students’ lives after college than will the specific performance skills they hone while in the ensemble” and that “working at the music, not just striving for flawless performance” is crucial. “Process over product!”

This is how we, teachers at the School, see our main aims.⁹ The students come to the School with various goals and imaginations. Some of them come to explore the possibilities of their voices and to get acquainted with different vocal traditions, while others expect to gain some more general cultural knowledge and impressions or just to pass some enjoyable leisure time.

Strategies

(“)Imitation(“). There is a never ending discussion going on around the issue of “imitation” in the learning of traditional music, and in learning in general. While some contributors to the volume edited by Ted Solís accuse imitation of being a wretched unnatural “musical transvestism”, others argue that such a method is an organic stage in the process. I have touched on this problem in my previous papers (Ambrzevičius 2007, 2012; see there also the responses of other instructors). To put it briefly, I (and indeed all the teachers at the School) agree completely with Roger Vetter (2004: 119–120) that the issue is essentially the same as with foreign language study. Depending on the individual situation, we learn a foreign language (meaning its spoken “performance”), through imitation, either overt or covert. This process is not at all easy and we might never achieve the level of a native speaker, yet we can make considerable progress in approaching that level. The native singers in their natural environments also, mostly unconsciously, were and are tuning their voices and vocal qualities to the existing sonorities musically, aesthetically and emotionally. Nobody attempted to create his or her “individual style” from scratch; the styles developed grounded in the real immersion into the “imitated” tradition.

In short, imitation (overt or covert) is the basis for empathy with others. Natural (mostly covert, non-verbalized, embodied) imitation occurs in the case of a prolonged process in an unbroken tradition. “Forced” (overt and covert, verbalized and non-verbalized, straight and embodied) imitation occurs in the case of short courses, when results must be achieved in a short time.

Ewa Grochowska (2017: 70) distinguishes special nuances of this issue:

During work, I have repeatedly encountered the question of workshop participants and various people with whom I sing, whether the performance we hear on the recording should be imitated (but enriched with my ideas – then we have our own interpretation), with careful consideration of all the important elements (ornaments, rising pitch, voice timbre, dialect, manner of chanting, way of articulation, tempo, rhythm) or copied, trying to capture the most important features of the voice. I prefer imitation, which is a repetition of the same, with understanding of the essence (sometimes, however, technically we may not yet be able to discover for ourselves what the essence of the style we hear on the recording is). Copying without knowing what exactly we do, what the “copied” element consists of, does not develop us in a singer-like manner and does not enrich our knowledge about important components.

Here we should start from the nuances of the concepts. Grochowska uses two terms (in Polish): *naśladowanie* and *kopiowanie* which could be translated into English directly as ‘imitation’ and ‘copying’. But actually *naśladowanie* is not a simple “imitation”; it has a nuance of “tracing” or “following”. For general usage, I would probably translate these two Polish terms as two kinds of “authenticity”. In other words, I would rely on two definitions of “authenticity” – as, first, correspondence to the original source (*kopiowanie*, ‘imitation’) and, second, as “correspondence to yourself” (*naśladowanie*,

⁹ As I have already mentioned, vocal techniques and styles are in the focus in the Polish cases (the Ukrainian and Russian cases are similar). The case of Lithuania, for instance, was quite different. The strong folklore movement emerged there in the 1960s as a manifestation of national renaissance and latent resistance to the Soviet system. Thus the main purpose was simply to sing Lithuanian traditional songs, with no attention to vocal and stylistic qualities. So, in a sense, I find the Polish case to be more congenial, as well as the Ukrainian and Russian cases, which were also characterized by great attention to vocal and stylistic matters from the very beginning.

'personal adaptation'). We seek to achieve a situation in which the two "authenticities" work together, i.e. for the outcome when the original style is maintained but absorbed by a deeply internal expression.

Proportion of verbal – non-verbal means.

This is an extremely short section, but I present it separately as a very important one. Even when teaching purely musical characteristics, we tend to apply rhetorical means as little as possible. This is how we try to replicate the natural transmission of tradition. Of course, this depends on the skills of the students and their ability to receive non-verbal cues.

"Lay" instructions and hermeneutics. A certain type of embodiment works through "lay" instructions. For instance, sometimes I ask the students to make a dome of the hard palate, to sing through a hole in the rear of neck, inflate into the stomach or sing "from bottom of stomach". Although the shape of the hard palate cannot actually be changed, and nor does the hole exist, etc., etc., these instructions through imagination help to make the vocal technique more meticulous. To put it simply, in this way physiology is affected by conscious appraisal. If we widen the perspectives beyond the simple "lay" instructions, we come to a general hermeneutics methodology, i.e. interpreting music or creating a closer contact with the music to be performed by way of various metaphors and/or narratives; see the example of rehearsing the hay making song at the end of this paper.

Body–emotion–perception. "By using the term embodied we mean to highlight two points: first, that cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and second, that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context" (Varela, Thompson, Rosch 2016: 173).

"The folklore person is a smiling person", repeated Russian ethnomusicologist Vyacheslav Shchurov when instructing his group at the School. This is mostly about articulation in a certain vocal style, but the instruction to smile also serves as a good illustration of the classical concept of embodied cognition; the mime affects the emotion, perception, and the general mood. Of course, this type of instruction is culturally

dependent. Sardinian male singers, for example, never smile when performing.

Svetlana Vlasova, one of the instructors at the School, applies quite extended and rigorous physical exercises before beginning vocal rehearsal (other instructors do the same, but mostly at a lower level). These can be considered not only as a physical preparation for the rehearsals, but also as a precondition for body-mind feedback.

Environment. From the "classical" point of view, environment is a part of cognitive system (cf. Wilson 2002); environment works as an extension of body. In a way, this replicates the "back to nature" concept promoted in the School and cognates with the cohesion of a traditional way of life and nature. In addition, this link is reinforced by the significance of literally being "in the shelter of nature" already mentioned.

The aspect of nature is extremely important in the location of the School. It should be noted, however, that it differs for different song genres and circumstances. While it is crucial for "field" genres such as rye harvesting or hay making songs (since open acoustic spaces determine specific vocal techniques and specific forms of embodiment), it is not that important for "indoor" genres.

Learning process. As already mentioned, there are two daily rehearsals. They start with warm-up exercises for breathing, intonation, managing the range of vocal register(s), and pronunciation, trained through vocalized patterns. At the beginning of the School period, more extensive explanations are provided, but later on we prefer to use non-rhetorical means where a group tries to follow and mimic the teacher. At that point most of us also prefer to substitute the exercises with simple, recently learned examples of the repertoire or its elements. "Do they have warm-ups [in the traditional sense]? In our terms, they do not have warm-up exercises and muscle stretches. But in fact they do... They warm-up on relatively simple songs..." (comment of Ivanov; Ambrazevičius 2012: 336).

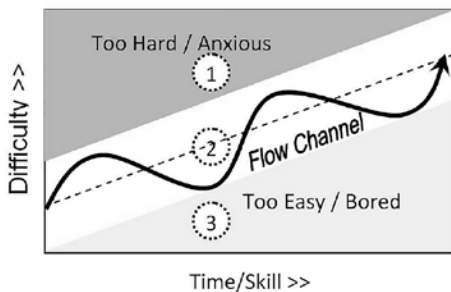
We switch back and forth from verbalized explanation to the Gestalt techniques embedded in embodiment. For instance, simple patterns can be easily mimicked, schemes of more complex patterns can be explained in detail and practised through a number of repetitions, but then stylistic

nuances such as flexible timing, ornaments, vocal technique, etc., are transmitted through non-verbalized channels by employing non-rhetorical means.

As time goes on, a variety and fluctuation of embodiment types unfolds. These depend on and manifest in the song genre, style, vocal technique and elements (intonation, articulation, timing, ornaments...), the singer's individuality, and certain roles of the singers.

Often we learn the first verse, repeating until it "imprints into the body", and then I sing the subsequent verses while the group follows me with "shadow singing" based on aural, visual, and corporeal cues. In this way a certain enhancing and establishing (stabilizing) of embodiment cues takes place. For this way of learning, and for embodied learning in general, rehearsal after rehearsal, the observance of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, 1997; Fig. 3) is substantial: a balance between the challenge of the tasks and the skills of the students is required.

Figure 3. Flow channel.¹⁰



Language, lyrics, and cultural embodiment.

The majority of the musics practised at the School are Slavonic. The languages are more or less similar to Polish, so they do not pose a noticeable problem for the Polish students. The problem appears with the Lithuanian songs as both Lithuanian lexis and phonetics are far from Polish. Nevertheless,

though it makes the lyrics of Lithuanian songs hard to memorize (which is why I try to choose songs with repetitions or small variations of lyrics), the learning of lyrics also goes through another channel of articulation which is somehow embedded in the patterns of performance. Thus the successful mimicking, either overt or covert, of the articulation partly solves the problem. As already mentioned, immersion into the meanings of the lyrics and context is of great importance. The students digest the whole complex of metaphors, symbolism and aesthetics and make their own associations that help to embody the value of the Other's culture. I apply some hermeneutic methods for interpreting the music and rendering the feeling for the native ways of thinking, behaviour, and character types, using various metaphors and narratives, examples of situations, and even anecdotes illustrating the regional differences of the native temperaments. I also pay attention to those texts which somehow embed moments of national tolerance. For instance, some Lithuanian war-historical songs mention Polish towns; one of them says that "Riga is a respectable town, but Warsaw is even better", thus referring to a common history.¹¹

At first glance it is paradoxical that non-native speakers learn dialectal pronunciation more easily than native speakers speaking standard Lithuanian. A closer look tells that it is obvious: Polish speakers are not biased with regard to standard Lithuanian (Serbian, Ukrainian, etc.), thus their pronunciation does not tend to gravitate to certain standard counterparts. The dialectal pronunciation is not a formal requirement for "copying" "authentic" vocal performances; it is tightly linked to specific vocal techniques and other stylistic phenomena (e.g. Ambrzevičius 2001; Ambrzevičius, Leskauskaitė 2008). As Grochowska points out (2017: 71),

even the tempo of rubato sometimes results from the dialect, which is the case in some

¹⁰ <https://www.thealternative.org.uk/dailyalternative/2018/4/21/revisitingflow> (retrieved on 2020-09-13).

¹¹ Similarly, as Harnish and Solís apply "guidance through kinesthetic memory" (Solís 2004b: 15) in the teaching of Balinese gamelan performance, we develop a corporeal vocal memory and, on a larger scale, an aesthetic and cultural memory. In this way I try to get the students to "break down the distinction between Self and Other, thus deconstructing distance" (Kisliuk 1997: 33–37; quoted in Harnish 2004: 136) and to move toward panhuman values (Locke 2004: 180), even though coloured with national nuances. At a technical level, the students deconstruct, to a greater or lesser extent, their initial attitudes towards the possibilities of their vocal techniques, general abilities, and the general ranges of the senses.

Radom chants. Singing in the dialect is an integral part of the song. If we want to “seriously” sing songs from a given region, then we must enter this dialect (then our language in the song does not sound artificial).

Notations and recordings. Teachers of world music ensembles often prefer to avoid notations or they use notations only as supplementary references. This is because notation does not convey important stylistic information. Sanja Ranković (2017: 19) cites Laurent Aubert (2016): if the student only reads the notes from the staff, then it “weakens his/her ability to understand melodies in a different way”. At the School, we also tend not to use sheets with notations or even with lyrics. After all, majority of the students do not read notes.

Learning without notations enhances group communication, aural and visual interaction, and the usage of embodiment and non-rhetorical means, through gestures and other corporeal activities (see below). On the other hand, I find the use of sound recordings of native folk singers to be extremely relevant. The recordings of good technical and performance quality provide an ideal case. Using these we can feel as if we are singing together with the native group and the transmission goes without a lot of complementary explanation, through real embodiment. In addition, in this way the style learned can be applied to other songs belonging to the style for which there are no recordings.¹²

Actually, we should start from understanding that the best option is learning from the source, i.e. from direct communication with the singer, with his/her entire “absorption”. “The dream situation is the ‘apprenticeship’ of a country singer, but when we work, for example, on the style of wedding singing from villages or regions where the archaic style of singing has already disappeared, we are ‘doomed’ to recordings” (Grochowska 2017: 70).

The second option is recordings. And the third and the worst option is notations. Yet these can give a positive result if applied in an intelligent way, such as the one used in the Voronezh case mentioned above.

Gestures

According to Leman’s definition (2008), gesture functions as the external mediator of internal sensory and cognitive processes. Naturally, gestures are among the most intense manifestations of embodiment linking action and perception and facilitating entrainment and attunement. As for the aspect of actual sound production movements (cf. Godøy, Haga, Jensenius 2006; Godøy, Leman 2010), these are probably more relevant for instrumental performance, though they still work somewhat less directly for vocal performance as well. “Gesture might be a useful tool for communication of vocal and musical concepts and asks about the role of gesture alongside or in place of verbal metaphors, imagery and scientific explanations in the communication of sensory experiences that is singing” (Nafisi 2010: 106).

Based on introspection, I could say that I use gestures in two ways. First, I move (mostly my hands, but, to a lesser degree, also other parts of my body) unintentionally when singing. The “corporeal singing” actually facilitates my vocal production; I cannot sing completely naturally if my body is forced to be “locked”. In addition, in this way I enact my environment. Second, when leading a group in performance or teaching a group, I gesture both deliberately and unconsciously to make my intentions communicated and predictable and to stimulate social interaction and corporeal imitation within the group (cf. Knoblich, Sebanz 2008; Mann et al. 2013).

¹² Here I would like to repeat the description of the methods of reconstruction of vocal styles applied at the Voronezh Conservatory (as told by Yesenia Bessonova). “The students are provided with several sound recordings representing a certain tradition so far unknown to them. They receive a large number of transcriptions of the same tradition. The task is to reconstruct the vocal style as precisely as possible, based on the materials available. The students try, in a sense, to see beyond the notes, i.e. to reconstruct the style based on the impressions from listening and analysis of the sound recordings and to implement the results in the transcriptions. Then the students are supplied with a considerably larger number of recordings, including recordings of the transcribed songs. They even do fieldwork to meet the informants. Subsequently, the results of reconstruction are analysed. In short, the interpretation of transcriptions is based on the revealed (or at least supposed) emics resulting from analysis of the sound recordings. This strategy of employing recordings for the adequate interpretation of transcriptions is widely applied” (Ambrazevičius 2012: 329–330).

The gestures are unconsciously or semi-consciously formed; in a way, they reflect the “tandem of brain and body”. No explanation of the meaning of the gestures is provided for the students. I have not developed such an elaborate system of gestures for vocal training as, for instance, that described by Julia Nafisi (2010), nor have I ever had any conscious intention of doing so. It has developed somehow intuitively and automatically as I have tested the gestures and received embodied feedback from the singer groups in my long practical experience. This is the first time that, based on introspection, I have “discovered” some of my own typical gestures (Fig. 4). To help the group follow my melody contour in “shadow singing” I show the steps and leaps by moving my hands up and down.¹³ An increase in volume is associated with increasing hand spacing, whereas the opposite effect involves a narrowing of the space and typically the movement of the hands to a lower position. A set of gestures facilitates the communication of vocal technique.¹⁴

I should stress that gestures in different situations may be very different, first of all, in terms of amplitude (intensity). In the case of group singing, we are dealing with a “larger and harder to manage mass” (compared to the case of solo vocal training). Thus naturally, when teaching a group, gestures usually become more expressed, to guide the whole group as effectively as possible. In a concert situation (e.g. the case of final presentations at the School), the gestures tend to be less expressed. They only

help to manage the overall flow of performance if something goes wrong or is unacceptably incorrect. This is a crucial difference with regard to Western academic (classical) performance: at least in Lithuanian and neighbouring traditions, “conducting” or similar conscious gestural actions are totally avoided or at least “dampened”; usually (except in some cases) they are seen as a sign of bad taste.¹⁵

In addition, or simply to stress the obvious phenomenon, gestures (including not only hand movements, but also other body movements, especially, mimics) act as signals for “predictive processing” (Leman et al. 2018: 750–751).

Group

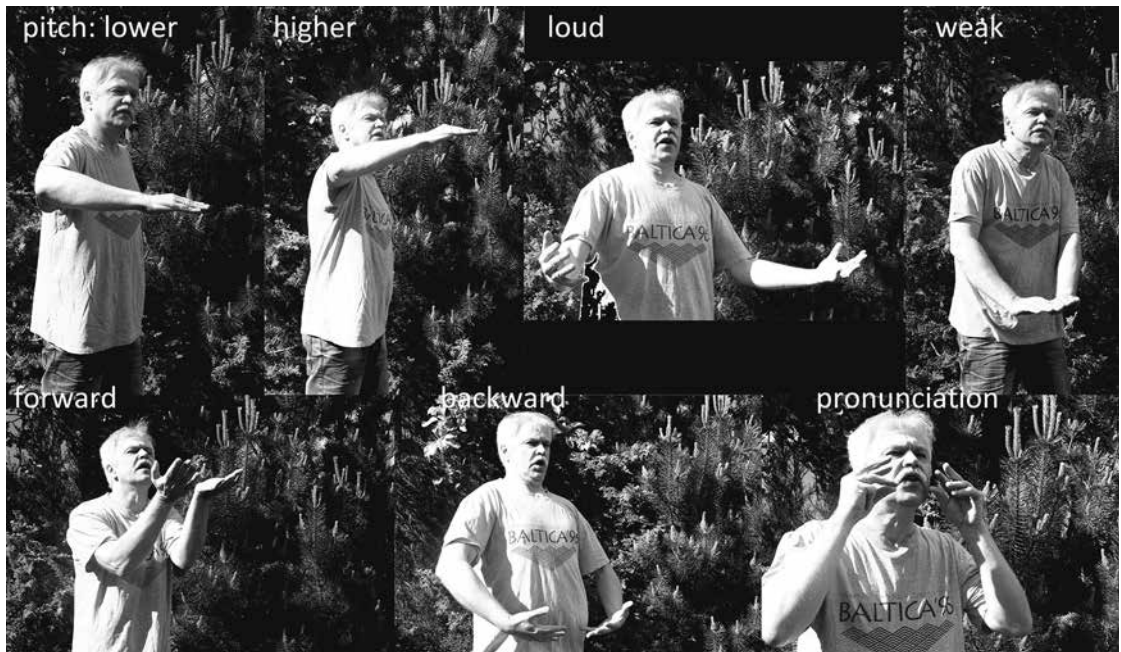
We find many musical and extramusical merits and fascinations in working with a group. “More aspects of competence are foregrounded in ensemble than in solo performance” (Brinner 1995: 4). First of all, the concept of group work is determined by the very sociocultural structures of our traditional societies, where communal life formed the core, resulting in ensemble-grounded musical expressions. Actually, the elitarian component existed as well (Morgenstern 2011), but the egalitarian component prevailed in the combination of the two. Thus even if we sometimes give some extra individual training and recommendations to the most skilled students who like to practise their vocal abilities, most of the practice is concentrated in the group. This is quite a hard trade-off since we have to

¹³ Especially with regard to these gestures I have received a lot of feedback from singers-students that they facilitate very much the comprehension of melody movements. Incidentally, this is the typical way to improve the performance of melody contour (cf. Liao 2008). Again incidentally, this shows a certain cultural bias to musical-spatial correspondence. Some other musical cultures use(d) other metaphors. For instance, ancient Greeks spoke not about “high” and “low” sounds, but about “sharp” (*oxytēs*) and “heavy” (*barytēs*) sounds instead (Barker 1989: 134). In non-Western musical cultures, the concepts such as “small” and “large”, “thin” and “thick”, “young” and “old”, “light” and “heavy”, even “weak” and “strong” are found (Zbikowski 1998: 3; Snyder 2000: 67; Shayan, Ozturk, Sicoli 2011; Dolscheid et al. 2013).

¹⁴ It can be concluded that, in our case, most gestures involve interpretation. Incidentally, Murphy McCaleb (2014) writing about gestures complains that “a large amount of the related literature, however, has addressed the effect of gesture and body language on coordination of timing, rather than coordination of interpretation”.

¹⁵ Therefore “expressive gestures” (as in Leman et al. 2018: 753–755) are used in a very reserved way. In addition, as we know, gestures as intentional actions are used not only in Western academic performance (cf. Clayton 2007). In musical cultures where gestures are an inseparable and obligatory part of performance, more detailed classification of gesture types could be introduced, as e.g. “illustrators” and “markers” in Clayton’s classification (ibid.). However, gesture classifications based (in a way) on proportions of conscious/unconscious and/or paying attention not only to hand movements (as in Trevarthen, Delafeld-Butt, Schögler 2011: 20; King, Ginsborg 2011) could be relevant to the cases of transmission of traditional vocal performance discussed.

Figure 4. Gestures. Upper row: A pitch step down; up; louder, full voice; weaker voice. Lower row: forward voice placement; backward voice placement, deep voice; more distinct pronunciation.



provide work (and amusement) for everybody while at the same time not losing the quality of process and result.

Singing in a group supposes interaction between the singers, and it is the interaction that makes the group. Since stronger or weaker flexibility and freedom of performance is a sort of marker of the vocal traditions we practice, the singers should entrain to each other in time,¹⁶ accommodating their intonation, volume, timbre, emotion and expression to each other; to sum up, they should create a certain, hardly verbalized, “bioenergetic” group space, e.g. so as to merge the voices in the centre of the group circle, so to speak.¹⁷ If several of the first elements in this list can, in part, be consciously detected and

managed, the remaining ones are communicated almost exclusively through embodiment. Perhaps it is obvious that such a “bioenergetic space” of a group embraces significantly more than mere musical qualities. The “unique sociomusical world” (Harnish 2004: 134) or even sociocultural world is developed, i.e. social bonding is actuated. Creating the space is reinforced by standing in a circle; this is usually the case at my rehearsals (Fig. 5).¹⁸ During the concert, this configuration has to be changed, but efforts are made to leave it in such a way that the singers have visual contact with the leading singer (Fig. 6).

A significant question arises with regard to the time scales (such as shorter, “immediate” and longer, “appraised”)¹⁹ in performer (or

¹⁶ Entrainment is “the process by which independent rhythmical systems interact with each other” (Clayton 2012: 49). In some cases, “they adjust towards and eventually ‘lock in’ to a common phase and/or periodicity” (Clayton, Sager, Will 2005: 4), though in other cases, especially in live music performance, entrainment will involve independent rhythmical systems interacting in ways other than just locking in together in this way.

¹⁷ Trimillos (2004: 31) mentions the use of “peripheral hearing” for being aware of the others. I could add that hearing (in a broad sense) combines channels of the conscious, the subconscious and embodiment to make the expanding spaces of “me”, “me in my vocal part”, and “me and my vocal part in the entire group”.

¹⁸ Incidentally, making a circle or similar face-to-face collocation is even necessary in some vocal styles, for fluid coordination and embodiment. Lithuanian *sutartinės* (female polyphony) and Sardinian *cantu a tenore* and *cantu a cuncordu* (male singing styles) serve as good examples (Fig. 7).

¹⁹ In other words, the pre-reflective embodiment and higher-level awareness and attention.

Figure 5. Group geometry at rehearsal.

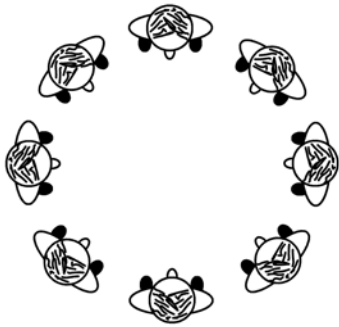


Figure 6. Group geometry at concert performance.

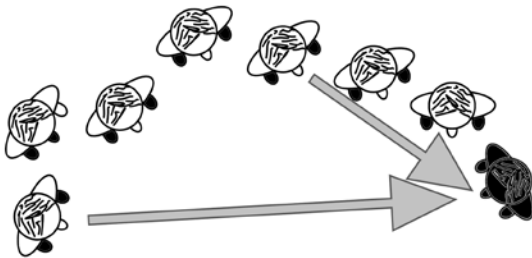
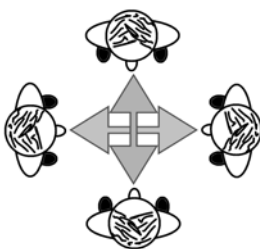


Figure 7. *Sutartinės* group geometry (case of *keturinė* / in four).



instructor-student) communication. Frederick A. Seddon and Michele Biasutti state (2009: 119–120) that “to reach empathetic attunement, musicians must decentre and see things from other musicians’ musical points of view”; similarly, Peter E. Keller (2008: 205) claims that “to produce a cohesive ensemble sound, the pianists must hold a common goal; a shared representation

of the ideal sound”. However, Andrea Schiavio and Simon Høffding challenge these positions, “maintaining that the cognitive processes at play in such an intersubjective context are grounded in the concrete (inter)actions of the players, and are not reducible to processes and structures ‘in the head’” (Schiavio, Høffding 2015: 366). Based on qualitative interviews with the Danish String Quartet, they propose that “joint musical behavior needs to be understood in dynamical, pre-reflective, and embodied terms. Only when these elements are in place, do the higher cognitive levels proposed by Keller’s and Seddon and Biasutti’s theses come into play” (ibid.: 17). “With the fundamental level of pre-reflective embodiment, interaction, and enacted meanings established, the role of higher-level awareness and attention may be elsewhere, for instance in the constant refinement of musical expression, instrumental techniques, or other concurring factors” (ibid.: 18).

Based on our experience, I would say that the proportion of the (two) mechanisms depends on several factors including the stage of learning, the skills of the students, the apprehension of the musical material, the perception and articulation of the lyrics, and so on. In short, it depends on the level of automatization of performance (among other possible factors). In the case of a polished performance, students often say: “you know, it seems that I do not think, I only sing”. But this is not the case in the initial acquaintance with a song or singing style.

An Example

Having discussed the central issues of rehearsal practice, let us take an example. We start from the simple two-part pattern (Fig. 8, top). One singer takes the first (higher, leading) part and the remainder of the group (3–5 people) sing the second (lower, support) part. As already mentioned, no notation is used; the singers are asked to follow the teacher’s voice. If necessary, intonation of the harmonic intervals is practised.

The voice timbre is dark, i.e. the position of the glottis is low. A short explanation of vocal technique could be given here, though I prefer to use non-rhetorical means and not to explain unless the group does not manage to “mimic” me. I encourage the singers to search for a resonating

voice by playing with the position of the jaw, lips, tongue, glottis... Good projection, “enacting with nature” is needed: your voice should fill the space and interact with the trees, the bushes, the wall of the forest.

Then we “mimic” the pattern with a special emphasis on certain transients (Fig. 8, the 2nd notation). Next we add something more before the pattern (Fig. 8, the 3rd and 4th notations). I check how the group manages breathing, vocal technique, pronunciation, and dynamics: the voices should not lyrically soften and disappear when rising (the first “valiuo”); instead, they should make a solid but not a sharp attack so as not to lose volume, and sustain the highest pitches, as well as relaxing and naturally prolonging the final pitches. They should exploit the apparatus of articulation to make their voices resonate and free from glottal tensions.

An important issue is flexible and quite free timing. It means that the group should entrain the leading voice, although some asynchronization is allowed. All these descriptions might seem rather technical; however, I am only trying here to introspect my “body feelings” and to verbalize them, that is, to translate them into objectivized technical language.

Again, I prefer not to describe all the technical details to the group, unless I see that the non-rhetorical means (visual, aural, corporeal) of overt or covert imitation (or, to put it better, following) are failing in their task, i.e. unless the tendency of the performance is wrong. I explain better the circumstances of the performance: now imagine that you are standing in an open meadow (actually this is the typical case at the School and needs no imagination); it is early morning and you are taking a rest from mowing hay. Again, your voice should fill the space and interact with the trees, the bushes, the wall of the forest.

At this point I introduce the fact that we are actually singing a fragment of a Lithuanian hay-making song. *Valiuo* (pronounced as *va-l'oo-ah*) stands for a refrain-word meaning something like ‘hurray’; this expresses delight with the situation: a nice landscape, a good scythe, and a hard but pleasant task.

Then is the time to immerse the participants into the character of the native singer. The song is from Samogitia (Western Lithuania), and the Samogitians are very reserved, reticent, stubborn,

Figure 8. Lithuanian hay making song “Valiuo, mona dalgeli”. Step-by-step addition of elements in learning.

The figure consists of four musical staves, each showing a different stage of learning the song. The lyrics are written below each staff. The first staff shows the basic pattern: uo(a), va - liuo(a). The second staff adds a melodic line above the lyrics. The third staff adds a second melodic line above the first. The fourth staff adds a third melodic line above the second, and the lyrics are expanded to include '- ge - li, va - liuo-uo(a), va - liuo(a)'.

and slow to make decisions, but sure to achieve their goals. It is said that what will be, will be, what won't, won't, but a Samogitian will always survive. During several centuries of warfare, the crusaders never succeeded in conquering the steadfast people of Samogitia. With this background knowledge the students can better reflect this firmness and slowness in the song; they are also closer to the embodiment of the character values, and there is a certain pleasure in feeling like that steadfast Samogitian.

Then the solo introduction is added, performed by the leading singer (Fig. 9, top), with pronounced tempo rubato. I instruct the singer that he should feel free with the timing, basing it entirely on his emotions. Also he is free to make some variations in the melody; Fig. 9 shows some examples. Of course, as far as possible, we try to make the variations not consciously intentional. In other words, the best option is automatization based on the variations showed by the instructor.

Finally, we proceed with the subsequent verses. The changing number of syllables in the verses (Fig. 9, bottom) encourages the breaking of the steady scheme, freedom of interpretation (first of all, for the leading singer), motorics, as well as empathy and embodiment in the group which should entrain the leading singer.

Figure 9. Lithuanian hay making song “Valiuo, mona dalgeli”. From above down: the “bone melody”; two examples of variations of the beginning fragment; the fourth verse with the different number of syllables.

Tempo rubato

1. Va- liuo, mo - na da - l(i) - ge - li, — va - liuo- uo(a), va - liuo(a).

Va - liuo, mo - na da - l(i) - ge - li, —

Va - liuo, mo - na da - l(i) - ge - li, —

4. Dal - ge - le trau - kiau, — pus - ry - te - lè lau(kiau).

Postlude. National issues and construction of narratives

In this paper, I have reviewed various aspects of embodied teaching and learning. I have tried to highlight the techniques facilitating immersion into the Other’s culture, acceptance of its values, and, even if not actually feeling as the Other, making the Other very close and confederate.²⁰

I see embodiment specifically as a powerful, though seemingly latent, tool for the dissolution of possible national misunderstandings. Ethnomusicological literature presents a variety of examples of musical experiments in zones of national antagonisms and frictions. The case of our School is not as formidable and problematic as, for instance, that described by Scott Marcus (2004: 210), faced with the need to resolve Persian-Iraqi, Lebanese-Jewish, or Turkish-Armenian frictions and to use musical projects as a means of resolution; or indeed as the one described by

the Jewish musician Henrik Goldschmidt (2017) teaching music to Palestinian children with the hope that at least some of them will grow up without regarding Jews as enemies.

In my experience, the younger generation, the students arriving at the School, have, in fact, no preconceived attitudes. The benefit of the School, of course, besides the main purpose of vocal training in tradition, lies in the strengthening of their friendly feelings towards the neighbouring nations and their cultures. We actually observe how a kind of “Pan-East-European” narrative is developing, with national “dialects” of manifestation. In this way, the students appear to be smarter than politicians. They are more cosmopolitan (in a positive sense), possibly more nationalist (in a positive sense), and less nationalist (in a negative sense).

A couple of the common elements resulting in the “Pan-East-European” narrative are worthy

²⁰ I have not touched on the question of cultural embodiment through dancing parties, a supplementary activity at the School. Obviously, this topic would reveal some additional techniques and examples of embodiment. The “hologram” of national character developed at singing rehearsals becomes brighter through dances and vice versa.

of mention. The School community is joined together by similar attitudes towards a style of “folk-life”; some of the students make this style their *modus vivendi*, similarly to us, the teachers. Many students arrive with their prior experience

of and practice in other musics, or they accept various musical soundscapes and are open to and tolerant of different musical styles. This “musical” tolerance makes them simply more tolerant in general.

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Kehastus vokaalse traditsiooni ülekandmise kontekstis. Traditsioonilise muusika suvekool Poolas

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Traditsioonilise muusika suvekoolid toimuvad igal aastal Poola eri paikades alates 1998. aastast. Tudengid Poola ja naabermaade ülikoolidest moodustavad suurema osa kogukonnast, kes osaleb igapäevastes lauluproovides, mida juhivad õpetajad Ida-Euroopa eri maadelt. Suvekoolide programmid pöörduvad lõppkontsertidega, kus rühmad esitlevad proovide tulemusi. Formaalselt on õpitubade peamine eesmärk praktiseerida teatud vokaalseid tehnikaid ja stiile, mis sisuliselt tähendab „Teisesuse kehastamist“ (*embodying Otherness*). Samas ei ole sugugi vähem tähtis individuaalne rõõm vokaalsete oskuste laiendamisest nagu ka rahvusvahelise kogukonna loomine, kes jagab ja rikastab ühiseid ideid ja suhtumist kultuuridesse ja rahvaste suhetesse.

Selles protsessis tekivad teatud küsimused. Kuidas toimub õpilaste ja õpetajate poolt kaasa toodud „kogemuste lapiteki“ (*patchworks of experience*; Anne K. Rasmussen 2004), algsete hoiakute ja narratiivide dekonstrueerimine, rekonstrueerimine või isegi uue ühisnarratiivi konstrueerimine? See küsimus puudutab nii kultuurilist (muusikalist jm.) kui ka rahvuslikku aspekti. Millised esituse „piiratud autentsuse“ (parafraaseerides Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimbletti) tasandid on asjakohased selleks, et saada ise poolenisti kultuurikandjaks ja selle kaudu paremini mõista „võõrast“ mõtlemisviisi? Selles uurimuses otsin vastuseid nendele küsimustele, kasutades seejuures oma individuaalseid kogemusi (tööst suvekoolide õpetajana) ja koolide teiste osalejate mõtisklusi.

Artiklis rõhutatakse „kehastuse“ (*embodiment*) olulisust ülekandmise ahelas „traditsiooniline laulja – õpetaja – õpilane“. Selle ahela esimest liiget vaadeldakse siin lühidalt; selle puhul tõstetakse esile elusat ja otsest kontakti traditsiooniliste lauljatega. Teist liiget analüüsitakse üksikasjalikult, rõhutades, et enamiku artiklis käsitletud juhtumite puhul on kehastus põhjanev aspekt nii traditsioonilise vokaalse stiili ülekandmises kui ka õpilaste isiklikus rahulolus.

Kehastus avaldub erinevates õpetamise-õppimise-esituse strateegiates. Näiline jäljendamise probleem laheneb, kui interpreteerida seda loomuliku kehastuse vaatenurgast. Mitteretoorilised (mitteverbaalsed) vahendid nagu ka teatud n.-ö. profaansed (*lay*) instruksioonid ja hermeneutilised vihjed aitavad jäljendamise julgustamisele kaasa. Tundub, et kehaliste reaktsioonide mõju (näiteks miimika, füüsilised harjutused) hääle kvaliteedile jääb tihti tähelepanuta. Looduse ja loomuliku keskkonna komponent on „keha laiendusena“ eriti tähtis vokaalse esituse puhul traditsioonilistes etnilistes agraarkultuurides.

Tegeledes proovide praktilise küljega on omaette teema ajalise protsessi organiseerimine, s.t. proovis rakendatud tegevuste astmeline ajakava. Laulmise eri elemente võidakse kehastada ja üle kanda erinevatel etappidel. Üks sellistest elementidest on laulusõnad. Need viivad erinevate väljunditeni – vähemalt hääldamiseni (juhul kui tegemist on võõra dialektiga) ning kodeeritud väärtuste mõistmiseni ja kehastamiseni. Üldiselt peaks eduka tulemuse saavutamiseks võtma aluseks nn. vookanali (*flow channel*) mudeli (vt. näide 3).

Muusika noodistused kujutavad endast tõenäoliselt üht kehastuse seisukohalt lihtsamini seletatavat küsimust. Tegelikult võib neid kasutada laulmisel teatud mustandina, kuid mingil moel varjavad need esituse olulisi omadusi ja blokeerivad kehastuse kanaleid ning sellepärast välditakse neid tavaliselt siin käsitletavat tüüpi õpitubade puhul.

Žestid on tõenäoliselt kehastuse kõige visuaalsemad ilmingud. Paljud teaduslikud artiklid ja raamatud käsitlevad žeste. Selles artiklis avaldan oma põhilised žestid, mida õpetamisel kasutan. On oluline mainida, et traditsioonilises laulmises (vähemalt Leedus ja naaberkultuurides) kasutatakse žeste ainult otsese vajaduse korral; see on oluline erinevus Euroopa akadeemilisest dirigeerimisest.

Peale üldise kehastuse probleemi eeldab laulmine rühmas teisigi tähtsaid aspekte, näiteks seda, mida võib üldistatult nimetada bioenergeetilise rühmaruumi loomiseks. Siin on lisaks muule väga oluline rühma geomeetria (lauljate omavaheline asetis).

Artikli lõpus tuuakse näide ühe laulu proovist (leedu heinategemise laul). See illustreerib praktiliste võtete loogikat, sealhulgas nende järjestust ajas ja avaldumist kehastuses.

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