

BRIEF REPORT

A Response to Moreno's Organic Form of Psychomusic in a Psychodrama Training Course: First, Warm Up the Singing Voice

In Latin America, as a psychodrama graduate student who had a previous conservatory degree in singing, I realized that Moreno (1977) in his organic form of psychomusic had unwittingly omitted warming up the singing voice before participation. Nonetheless, a slow vocal warm-up should be a routine practice; if participants become hoarse after a sung psychomusic session, the responsibility for that lies with the director. To prevent abuse, misuse, and overuse of the voice, psychodrama participants who are nonprofessional singers need to receive at least minimal basic instruction on this subject (see Feder, 1991; Levine & Finnegan, 1987). If participants are taught good posture and correct breathing and if they explore the range of their singing voice while refraining from belting and harmful excessive volume, they may be more eager to participate in experimental singing than otherwise.

To warm up the voice, the director instructs the group (participants and audience) to begin to hum slowly from the most easily produced middle range downward and then upward. Vowels are sung on one note and then are sung ascending and descending scalewise within a middle range in the most comfortable dynamics. Singing must be as natural as speaking, with the singer avoiding any type of rigidity. Practice should be fun.

Next, the following nontraditional exercises, based on Schafer (1970), are used as a cappella as preparation for future participation in psychodramatic musical sessions. Participants are free to use the whole stage and add body movement. Those insisting on continuing to use the speaking voice are urged to sing. Because some may linger on one sound before progressing to another, a cacophony of sung sounds is soon produced. "Now let the reed of your voice express itself. Let it go free. Discover its scope, its expressive potential. Discover the shapes of the things you can draw with your voice" (Schafer, 1970, p. 3). Using their imaginations, the participants should gently produce the following sounds: the lowest, the softest, the highest, the smoothest, the funniest, the saddest; the sternest; the most boring. They should follow these with a loud sound, an interrupted one, a sound repeated rhythmically, and then an unrhythmic one. They should continue with the highest one again, followed by the softest, with a gradual modulation to the funniest. Variations include imitating the sounds of nature and of whispering, echoes,

or laughter and singing the person's name or surname at different tempos and intensities (Schafer, 1970).

Two or three notes are added to variations, always without forcing the voice, on expressing different emotions, including anger, crying, joy, happiness, and others excluded in the above list. If participants are initially too inhibited to initiate the exercises a cappella, a cassette recording of ocean waves or rain fall can be used as background sound instead of silence, but no music, other than what is produced by the individuals, is used (as in Moreno's organic form). Videotaped playback is instructive. Homework for the group members should include practicing, alone in front of a mirror as if a professional singer, to observe facial expressions while listening to the different sounds produced (Díaz de Chumaceiro, 1985a, b).

At the time I realized Moreno's omission, I believed that it was important for psychodrama participants to learn to use their vocal instrument safely while exploring their psyches and that it would be beneficial to offer nonprofessional singers a few preparatory lessons. A decade later, I still believe that.

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