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Analytical path on Voice BAPNE® method handling attention levels using a voice- music- movement association

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Abstract

One of the principal problems in the topical educational activity is related to the student's ability of keep the focus on what they're training on maintaining high levels of attention during the work; in relation to this the research project reported here is incident to music education. This study aims to expose here the results of an analysis conducted on attention levels in a particular choral activity called "circle singing"; from this analysis is highlighted a number of factors that support the thesis that the circle singing activity can produce a significant increase of the rapidity in learning and an extension of musical, vocal and choral singing skills, there's also an increase of the ability to work together; these results were observed in subjects with different backgrounds and entirely different interests so this kind of practice is intended for various fields, not just for music education. Furthermore the contribution of ethnomusicological research is constitutive in the process of individuation of many correspondences between some musical-dancing practices of North Africa and Central America groups and numerous exercises developed by Voice BAPNE® method.

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1. Introduction

Analysis conducted on the observation of several didactic activities revealed that numerous individuals (with

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different backgrounds, both adults and children/adolescents) have difficulty achieving and maintaining high attention levels while they are trying to focus on what they are doing. Therefore the Voice BAPNE Method proposes some exercises aimed at improving problems related to attention and memory (this analysis started from observations in the musical didactic and performing field). In combining circlesinging activity with body percussions all cerebral lobes are stimulated to obtain concrete increase in attention levels (according to Sohlberg and Mater and Michael Posner theories) and multiple intelligences (according to Howard Gardner theory).

2. Method

2.1 *The instruments used in the Voice BAPNE didactic method*

The voice BAPNE method is formed of some different techniques: circlesinging for choral aspects, body percussion to handle rhythm in music learning process and the work on voice and movement as a unified didactic element. Moreover an important theatrical reference is the Ken Robinson educational theory so that also in the voice BAPNE didactic method there's a particular attention to create an individual learning process for each student awakening creativity through alternative didactic processes.

2.2 *Circlesinging*

CircleSongs are a form of choral improvisation. A conductor (often also soloist), through a free improvisation process, progressively creates and allots to the choristers – standing in a circle, grouped by section, specific rhythmic modules – phrases made up of phonemes (without a sense of their own) which are then repeated in loop; So the harmonic structure is created on the interplay between these various phrases. Furthermore the conductor makes use of visual signals to handle the polyphonic performance, shaping it around the flow of his/her solo vocal improvisation. The CircleSong experience not only involves the vocal dimension, but also the corporeal sphere (movement, rhythm), the cognitive area (memory, attention, etc.) and socio-emotional aspects (listening, tuning and coordination) between the various sections. The ensuing experience is one of profound absorption in which the emotional and experiential dimensions become the basis on which to facilitate in participants a new and more acute awareness of the rhythmic, polyphonic, performative and anthropological aspects of choral work.

2.3 *Body percussion*

Body percussion is the activity of hitting the body in order to produce various types of sounds for didactic, therapeutic, anthropological and social purposes. Both in the field of musical cultures and in the world of shows and performances, body percussion has had different roles, which can be classified into their different uses, meanings and purposes in each culture. The body is used for these different purposes as an acoustic, rhythmic, dynamic instrument with distinct timbre because it is linked to movement and dance.

2.4 *Voice Bapne®*

Prof. Francisco Javier Romero Naranjo and the master Alberto Quarello alias Albert Hera have been working for the last two years to a common research that gave birth to the Voice BAPNE® method. Here the voice, on a choreutical level through the CircleSongs structure, the body and the body percussion technique, to relate the elements, take advantage of their whole potentials. The prosodic vocal accent with a very precise movement are the first elements to create a functional link between the Voice and the Body in the construction of the Voice- BAPNE®; later all of these returns into separation, mostly on a kinaesthetic level. What makes the Voice BAPNE® a peculiar method is the cognitive stimulation of the multiple intelligence as for Howard Gardner theory, on the basis of pedagogical elements from biomechanics, anatomy, vocal physiology, psychology, neurology and ethnomusicology. The method application provides the use of a wide range of exercises both in the circle and in the couple with the “mirror” function. Here the motional aspect and the vocal aspect are directed to destabilize the proprioception of one's singing voice so that it is possible to deconstruct the mechanisms brought by a binding vocal technique (as long

as it concerns the artistic use of the voice). This research comes from the PROEL method developed by Dr. Alfonso Borragna who obtained a good quality of vocal emission thanks to the destabilization of the postural balance. The Voice BAPNE® applies the concept of destabilization on the VAK (visual, auditive, Kinaesthetic) didactic model instead of working on the postural balance.

2.5 Definition of “attention” and related categories

Cognitive psychology defines *attention* as the ability to concentrate strong mental focus on a specific subject. It is quite important to underline the selective quality of attention, which can extrapolate a specific stimulus from a given context through precise mental processes. In particular, cognitive psychology itemizes this kind of research with the concept of multi-compositive attention (Posner, 1971) and multidimensional attention (Sohlberg and Maater, 1987). Multidimensional attention is composed of several elements, ranked according to a hierarchic principle and broken down as follows:

- Selective attention: ability to selectively pick out specific information from a mixture of messages elaborated by our sense organs
- Focused attention: ability to further analyze the information elaborated
- Sustained attention: (or vigilance) is the ability to keep high mental focus for the duration of a cognitive task – performance usually worsens as time goes by
- Alternating attention: ability to keep strong mental focus while switching between activities
- Divided attention: ability to pay adequate attention to different tasks simultaneously and respond to multi-tasking

3. Results:

3.1 Attention management in the voice BAPNE method. Practical aspects and theoretical proposals

The work on sustained attention is organized in the exercises of the Voice BAPNE Methods, at several levels – i.e.:

- Musical-rhythmic element
- Use of phonemes
- Intonation
- Basic motor coordination
- Bio-mechanical aspect.

This essay examines, in particular, the type of attention stimulated in exercises connected to basic motor coordination in relation to the musical-rhythmic element. The exercise aims to build up sustained attention through the alternating motion of the singer's body from right to left, with a 60-bpm rhythmic rate (marked by a metronome). Attention in this exercise aims to build up fluid motion with proper support on the two fundamental rhythmic elements: beat and upbeat.

The evaluation of this exercise primarily focuses on the ability to make the movement fluid and constant, and, as such, rhythmic. Fluidity is expressed in making movement without forced accents on lower limbs (especially beat), in harmonic biomechanics between upper limbs and lower limbs, and consists in postural stability that may also be useful if combined with vocal movement (postural stability means craniosacral realignment that allows for direct breath flow in relation to phonation).

Divided attention in the Voice BAPNE Method is mainly in the relationship between bodily movement, body percussion elements and sung vocal expression within circlesongs. During performance of circlesongs, the singer is

urged to build up a significant level of divided attention, as this type of musical practice requires high focus on basic motor coordination (mainly linked to rhythmic rate) and on phonemes, as well as on the degree of voice focus (hence attention on intonation handling). Regarding selective attention, the Voice BAPNE Method primarily uses ear training exercises (execution of specific musical intervals). In circlesongs, it is strictly necessary to pay attention to correct intonation, so as to build up a well-functioning polyphonic vocal set. At the same time, circlesongs require ability to focus on own specific vocal line autonomously managed despite simultaneous listening to other vocals.

Within the Voice BAPNE Method, alternating attention is used as to all of the evaluation parameters (musical-rhythmic element, phonemes, intonation, biomechanics, and basic motor coordination). The facilitator will propose sample exercises such as specific movements associated with vocal articulation, immediately reproduced by choristers antiphonally. The exercise (as well as that relating to sustained attention) will be supported by a metronome in order to maintain adequate rhythmic rate throughout the performance.

The Voice BAPNE Methods assesses attention levels as per the following parameters:

- Musical-rhythmic element
- Phonemes
- Intonation
- Biomechanics
- Basic motor coordination.

The Voice BAPNE Method also largely includes exercises aimed at simultaneous stimulation of various types of attention. Through *ad-hoc* exercises, it is possible to work on the various types of attention and, at the same time, on the cerebral lobes involved in handling the rhythmic-musical component (repeated rhythm patterns through body percussion elements or melodic cells performed simultaneously with rhythmic elements always produced without the aid of tools).

The Voice BAPNE Method also largely includes exercises aimed at: articulation of phonemes (melodic lines assigned to choristers), intonation associated to basic motor coordination (alternation of body weight on right/left side) combined with the need to focus on signals by the facilitator during the execution of circlesongs (functional signals to rhythmic-melodic-harmonic changes and thus supporting the architecture of improvised tracks), as well as possible stimulation of cerebral lobes also for alternating management at the level of body planes and axes (biomechanics). Consequently, it is possible to stimulate the degree of attention on the motor system through odd rate (e.g. 5/8) produced alongside regular rate (3/4, 4/4, ...), or attain an extremely high degree of attention (maintained) by working on the intonation (specific melodic patterns assigned by the facilitator) and, at the same time, polyrhythms created between the motor and the melodic element (e.g. 5/8 motor aspect; and 4/4 melody). In this case, attention will be paid to managing articulation difficulties due to polyrhythms combined with attention on intonation.

4. Discussion and conclusion:

In the Voice BAPNE® method, thanking to the influence of all the disciplines that are the basis of this didactic theoretical-practical approach (circlesinging, body percussion, Ken Robinson didactic theory, attention levels Posner, Sohlberg and Maatter theory), there's a great stimulation of the creativity in a free space that is just "organized" with some directions of the facilitator.

This methodological theoretical research gave us the possibility to observe an increase in the quality of the vocal and musical skills of our students. Furthermore is important the stimulation of a learning process with no hierarchies but in circle, in cooperation with a great benefit in the musical, vocal, psychological-emotional and body (motor) field. Thanking to all this the teacher can use a new way of working that can help him in the cognitive stimulation and in the work on attention levels

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