

Vocal Composition in Creating the Commedia dell'Arte Characters

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Abstract: The paper presents a possible approach to the construction of a comic character from both a vocal and a verbal point of view, by using various language disorders. For the scenic procedure of language composition, voice and pronunciation as well as rhythm and influence disorders can be important tools for students in their creating a comic character, since these techniques have a significant potential also outside the Commedia dell'Arte. Hence, conscious training and practice of speech/language disorders, such as dyslalia, as well as of rhythm and fluency disorders, develops and improves both the students' voice usage abilities and their vocal creativity, so that they can manifest themselves artistically in a more expressive way.

Keywords: acting, character, training, speech/language disorders, rhythm and fluency disorders, Commedia dell'Arte.

*"Working with the body and the mind, with each and every muscle and each and every vocal, with each gesture-expression of an idea, health of the body and soul have been and will always be the roots of a representation"*².

Preparing a role for a Commedia dell'Arte show implies constant and sustained physical and vocal training. It is, most likely, the most demanding period of professional training for the young aspirer to the title of actor and

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² Andrea Perruci, *Despre arta reprezentației dinaintea gândite și despre improvizație* (București: Univers, 1984), 22.



artist. It's the show where the student becomes aware that talent alone is not enough, but technique and work sustained by daily exercise, physical and vocal, are the essential ingredients for success and accomplishment of the role. Now they understand the need for technique and instruments in order to develop their bodily and vocal expressions, so they can speak powerfully, clearly and confidently on stage. Now they understand that preparation for this profession cannot be made by leaps and bounds, it is a constant. From simple to complex, each step precedes another.

Voice training during the first year of professional preparation of an acting student presupposes the student becoming aware of the body-mind-voice unit. Amongst the most important acquisitions of this first year of vocal exercise there is the Centred Posture,³ the point of balance from where we extract out physical, mental and vocal power. Thus, Centering is a point of start and return, a point of reference helping us connect to our inner energy, our breathing and our voice. The Centred Posture enables breathing and voice to work freely at high levels of efficiency, hence the act of uttering to be naturally sustained by the anatomical structure of the body. Thus, Centering becomes a vital principle not only for acting, but also for working with the voice and the body.

We breathe and speak naturally, without thinking or being aware of the mechanism/ process of breathing or speech. The first step in working with the voice is very physical, we use our entire body in order to expand sound and voice. The students learn to pay attention to how they breathe, how they move, how they talk. The body and the voice are instruments they learn to use appropriately. It becomes clear that working with the voice compels us to use our entire body, from head to toes. Speaking and singing are the results of reflex physical actions and the position/posture of our body influences the way sounds are emitted. Voice modulations are tightly related to the expressive actions of our body, imagination and emotions affect our muscles. Vocal improvisations develop the student's capabilities of vocal emission, the diverse sonorities and intensities their voice can produce. Mind, body and voice act together and thus Expressivity is born.

³ Patsy Rodenburg, *The Actor Speaks* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 28-35.

Another important objective of voice training in close relationship to the body is a stable and balanced voice or the Natural Voice – a voice free of any restraint, of any tension. For an adequate workout with our voice we need to *eliminate any tension* that contract our breathing, blocking and limiting the voice. Thus we reach another objective of the first year of voice training – *recognising/identifying speech patterns* that block Natural Voice (tense shoulders, rigid or weak spine, tense/tight cheeks, clavicular breathing, etc.). This target is hard to reach for at least two reasons: on the one hand, learning to renounce bad habits in order to discover new voice possibilities and, on the other hand, knowing them you will be able to use them, consciously, in building your character.

Theoretical knowledge, i.e. the anatomy of the respiratory and phonatory system, the articulation mechanisms along with physical warm-up exercises help the acting student to be aware of and understand the Breathing process as vital element, the key to working with voice. Physical and voice training is mandatory in reaching one's vocal potential and vocal development as, Patsy Rodenburg says, "You don't train to consolidate what you can already do, but to move into new and dramatic areas of change."⁴ Therefore, what is essential during the acting student's first year of training is work on Breathing, on developing the respiratory and articulation abilities: increasing breathing precision (dosing the inhalation and exhalation), increasing breathing volume (the diaphragmatic rib cage breathing put in practice), increasing muscle tone, increasing elasticity and flexibility of muscle groups in order to ensure a functional articulation base (lips, cheeks, jaw, soft palate), differentiating mouth breathing versus nose breathing (becoming aware of the nasal nature of pronunciation and differentiating mouth breathing from nose breathing), prolonged exhalation in verbal breathing⁵.

Becoming aware of how sound is produced, of the resonance boxes (chest and head vocal registers), what are the components of articulation mechanism and what are the phonetic rules or features, the correct pronunciation

⁴ Ibid.,11.

⁵ Carolina Bodea Hategan, *Tulburările de voce și vorbire. Evaluare și intervenție* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2013), 125-135.

of vowels and consonants in Romanian are aspirations of the first year's acting students.

Therefore, the goal of voice and speech training in the first stage of the acting student's training is to discover, experiment and be aware of the parameters of a Good/Functional Voice,⁶ as they are reminded by Carolina Bodea Hațegan in the volume *Treatment of Language Disorders. Open Structures*: pleasant quality of voice (musicality), solid resonance, adequate pitch range (pitch corresponding to voice and gender), appropriate volume (relation to space and context of communication), properly managed exhalation, accurate pronunciation of sounds and combining the mentioned parameters (vocal flexibility).

We have so far made a summary of the most important acquisitions obtained by the acting student during their first stage of professional training, from a voice and speech standpoint. It is necessary to remember this information because, next, we are going to briefly analyse and give example of how *vocal composition in Commediei dell'Arte roles* can be achieved. However, we want to underline that our approach is just a possible approach in working with the role, not an exhaustive one.

Specialist literature (Vito Pandolfi, Andrea Perruci, Mona Chirilă) maintains that in the Commedia dell'Arte show, the text was schematic and the intrigue simple, the weight and value of the performance belonging, to the greatest extent, to actors, more precisely to the way they embodied the interpreted characters. The show was a satire, and characters lacking a psychological load are created on a single idea, with a single development direction. The Mask characters represent human characters and typologies. The parody style therefore allows for exaggerations, exacerbations, the comic being one of situation and of language. Practice (pedagogical, but not only), confirms the fact that creating a Commedia dell'Arte role or character is a touchstone for an actor in terms of physical resistance, body and voice expression. We will mainly refer to voice and speech expressivity and, here, we need to reconfigure a series of articulation and breathing, resonatory and phonatory behaviours specific to the type of interpreted Mask. This is, therefore, a possible

⁶ Carolina Bodea Hațegan, *Logopedia. Terapia tulburărilor de limbaj. Structuri deschise* (București: Trei, 2016), 87.

definition of what we can understand by *vocal composition*. To be more specific, we will say that by *vocal composition* we understand the result of actions knowingly conducted for distorting or altering the voiced and unvoiced sounds uttered by the actor, conscious actions on breathing, on sound intensity and pitch, in order to obtain a comic effect and, in the case at hand, in accordance with the features of the Mask (as they are mentioned in the aforementioned specialist literature). To be more clear: we believe that vocal composition (in theatre) is an artificial voice, unnatural but functional for a limited period of time, hence opposed to Natural Voice and which modifies the parameters of the Good/Functional Voice.

Commedia dell'Arte is a representation where what is important is the actor's play, and the charm and the comic come from the unexpected manner in which actors use their body and voice. Physical resistance, fluidity and plasticity of the body, the easiness to use diaphragmatic rib cage breathing, the effortless use of resonators, speech on effort are the elements that highlight the talent and the physical and vocal transformation ability of the actor. Talent does not exclude technique, it protects it, so Technique becomes the main ally in the process of creation. We mean here the *Imitation Technique* as theoretical point of start in the creative process and the *Vocal and Speech Technique* as practical procedure, applicable to the role building. Defectology and speech therapy are of great use to us in the achievement of the latter.

In the chapter dedicated to *Imitation Technique* of the book *Fundamental Techniques of Scenic Creation*, Diana Cozma offers us details and examples concerning several imitative procedures we can appeal to in the creative process:

(...) we discern, as concerns the imitation of the actions of a person, several imitative procedures, i.e.: imitating the way of speaking, imitating the way of walking, imitating the way of behaving, imitating the particularities specific to such individual.⁷

Attention is paid to each procedure presenting different ways to walk, postures, gestures and attitudes that can make the object of imitation and

⁷ Diana Cozma, *Tehnici fundamentale de creație scenică* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2016), 27.

that, we believe, also find their utility in the building of a Commedia dell'Arte role. What has drawn out attention, however, is the following opinion of the author: "As for imitating the way of speaking, we need to focus not on identically transposing their speech, but the extremes of that speech. Extremes can be pronunciation errors or speech disorders. Errors are the direct result of reflection into our body of inner life, psychological phenomena that usually betray hidden intentions."⁸ We are offered a few examples coming from speech therapy, more precisely *voice and pronunciation disorders and rhythm and influence disorders* according to specialist terminology.

We find this idea of using speech disorders in the actor's work with the role/character and in Valeria Covătariu's volume *Words About the Word*, in the chapter "Non-literary Speech."⁹ Copying, simulating, imitating any type of non-literary language (archaic, non-local, neologist and hypercorrect, popular regional, vulgarised language or speech disorders) implies, first of all, knowledge by the actor of their own vocal capacities. We think it is important to be aware of any phonetic change on vowels, consonants or syllables, etc. and monitor it for the actor's vocal health.

Given our theme, we will focus our attention on the possibilities defectology and speech therapy can offer us as theoretical and practical support in achieving a vocal composition adequate to the Commedia dell'Arte roles. (Our approach today can be, in the future, the point of departure for an elaborated interdisciplinary research, applicable in theatre pedagogy and practice).

Any deviation from the natural breathing process, from the normal functioning of the voice-producing and speech mechanism is included in the category of voice and speech disorders. Quoting Emil Verza, Iolanda Mititiuc and Ana Maria Lăzărescu, they mention in their book *Defectology and Speech Therapy* the six categories of language disorders: pronunciation, speech rhythm and fluency disorders, voice disorders, reading-writing language disorders, polymorphic disorders, language development disorders. Those that interest us and that can be used in achieving the vocal composition are the first three mentioned categories. This is possible because the characteristics of such disorders usually imply neither anatomical deformities of the phonetic and

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Valeria Covătariu, *Cuvinte despre cuvânt* (Târgu Mureș: Casa de Editură Mureș, 1996), 57-99.

articulatory apparatus, nor mental problems. With a lot of exercise they can be simulated, imitated, the purpose being that of offering individuality and more flavour to the character/role.

Further on, we are going to make an overview of these three categories of speech disorders, with the intention of identifying what we could apply, what we could use as an element in the vocal composition of Commedia dell'Arte roles.

Dyslalia (lispings) is the most well-known form of pronunciation disorders. The specificity of this deficiency is incorrect pronunciation or missing sounds. The alteration comes from either *deformation, substitution/replacement, omission or inverting sounds* in spontaneous or reproduced speech. When consonants are affected, dyslalia has a specific name. For example, where the sound B is changed or omitted dyslalia will be called BETACISM, if the sound B is replaced with another one dyslalia bears the name of PARABETACISM.

We think that dyslalias that can be mostly used in acting are: *sygmatisim/parasygmatisim, rhinolalia, rhotacisim/pararhotacisim and uvular trill*.

SYGMATISM/PARASYGMATISM is the name of dyslalia affecting the sound S or Z, Ş [sh] and J, (sibilant/whistling consonants) and Ț [tz], CE, GI (partial occlusives/ affricates). Sygmatisim can be the result of:

- incorrect positioning of tongue (apex of the tongue) in the mouth. Thus, instead of the apex of the tongue being at the base of the inferior incisors, the tip of the tongue is positioned interdentially (lispings).

- replacing the consonants Ş/J with S/Z; CE/CI with ȚE/ȚI; GE/GI with DZE/DZI - replacing S/Ş/Z/J/CE/CI; GE/GI/Ț with D or T (f, v, h).

RHINOLALIA refers to nasal emission, the so-called "hypernasal speech" produced by sending a large amount of air in the nasal cavity, at the same time with descending of the soft palate. We can find in the speech of those who suffer from this dyslalia the replacement of consonant B with M, or D with V. T can be also omitted from speech.

RHOTACISM – is a speech disorder consisting in omitting the sound R in speech, mainly due to an incorrect positioning of the tongue (intradentially or tongue pressing the soft palate - uvular trill) or vibration of the uvula instead of the tongue apex. Pararhotacisim is the replacement of the sound "R" with other sounds (L, D, H, I or U).

According to specialist literature in the speech therapy field, the *accent and intonation* component of the rhythm and fluency disorders category is of great significance. Due to this human language has fluidity, fluency, naturalness and quality. Of this category we mention *stuttering*. What is specific to this disorder are “repetitions and extension of syllables and words, uttering hesitation, pauses.”¹⁰ Stuttering can be articulatory, phonatory and respiratory. The first affects the consonants P, B, D, T, C, G so that stumbling, blockages or spasms can occur at their level. In making an imitation of this disorder, exercise implies the immobilisation of the phonetic and articulatory organs: lips, tongue, jaw, soft palate. In phonatory stuttering spasms, blockages affecting speech fluency happen in the larynx. In the exercise of copying this deficiency it is the throat that is intervened upon (tensing, straining) and in the coordination of the breathing flow. Respiratory stuttering “can also be the result of lack of coordination of inhalation and exhalation, emitting sounds on inhalation,”¹¹ speech is jerky, although the exercise will be oriented to using a small amount of air and abnormal, unnatural coordination of inhalation and exhalation. We must mention that in our approach of composing an unnatural but functional voice, in the sense that the spectator should understand what the actor is saying, *clonic stuttering* is what we recommend and exercise, mainly:

this type of stuttering implies repetitions of sounds, syllables, parts of words, words, sentences, prolongation of sounds, coming back on some words, sentences and self-reviews, dysrhythmias. Clonic stuttering is characterised by less severe symptoms, so that speech intelligibility is not significantly compromised.¹²

Other two deficiencies ought to be “copied”/imitated, namely: bradylalia and tachylalia. Both are related to speech rhythm. Thus, bradylalia is defined by a very slow, dallied rhythm, the mouth barely opens. Diction is affected.

¹⁰ Carolina Bodea Hategan, *Logopedia. Terapia tulburărilor de limbaj. Structuri deschise* (București: Trei, 2016), 298.

¹¹ Ibid., 316.

¹² Ibid.

Sounds are unclear and incompletely articulated. Vowels are pronounced in a dallying, blurred manner. Consonants are weakly articulated. (...) In general, bradylalia is accompanied by bradypsychia, thinking processes being very slowed down, as well.¹³

Tachylalia is speaking very fast. Some people can have a faster speech rhythm but also speak correctly, with clear sounds, adequately articulated but the opposite can exist as well.

As concerns voice disorders (aphonia, dysphonia, phonasthenia) we must understand that in order to obtain these deficiencies (in the vocal construction of the role) the intervention should aim at the sound spectrum: intensity, pitch and resonance of the sound. Carolina Bodea-Hategan, in her volume titled *Treatment of Language Disorders. Open Structures* offers us important information that we can take into account during our creative artistic approach:

voice disorders at the level of pitch imply exaggeration in both directions, up or down, in relation to the frequency the voice is issued on; disorders related to voice intensity imply either too weak a voice, or too strong; disorders in the range of flexibility parameter imply a monotonous voice or a too emphatic voice, or a voice incongruent as related to the communication context.¹⁴

The information provided by Carolina Bodea Hațegan in the same book, in chapter *Types of voice disorders*, and which refers to the details offered by The National Center for Voice and Speech concerning voice disorders sub-types, also indicating the deficient phonatory mechanism, is really valuable. Here are a few: “covered” voice, “breathed” voice, “screeched” voice, “high” voice, nasal voice, “smooth/prolonged” voice, “discordant” voice. Another array of terms describing voice disorders are found in the 2005 medical publication *Clinical Voice Disorders*, whose authors are Arnold Aronson and Diane Bless: tired, asthenic, monotonous, infantile, passive, sober, tense, discreet, rough, metallic, strident, thick, thin, weak, whispered voice, etc.

¹³ Iolanda Mititiuc, Ana Maria Lăzărescu, *Defectologie și logopedie* (Iași: Editura Alfa, 2011), 118.

¹⁴ Carolina Bodea Hategan, *Logopedia. Terapia tulburărilor de limbaj. Structuri deschise* (București: Trei, 2016), 89.

Beside all these speech disorders there are, of course, other elements that can become savoury ingredients in the vocal composition of comic characters, such as *verbal tics* or *speaking with a foreign accent* (non-native language). An appropriate example to compose foreign voice and speaking the language with a foreign accent is the character Il Capitano. It is described by the specialist literature as being a bragging and swaggering soldier, fearful when fighting is involved, a satire to foreign power. He is usually a Spaniard, hence the actor interpreting the role can add this element also considering that in Spanish the consonant H and the interdental S sound are predominant in speech. His posture is open when he is bragging, closed when he is afraid, his walking and attitude allow the use of the chest and head register achieving by this sliding of the phonatory air a voice disorder (in pitch and intensity). A notable performance could be obtained by adding a tachylalia as, Olga Mărculescu says in the foreword to the *Commedia dell'Arte* anthology, "he talks excessively, words with no sense, a rushed logorrhea."¹⁵

Gli Innamorati/The Lovers – dreaming natures, sentimental and peaceful, lacking inventivity, or arrogant, authoritarian and insolent. The actors' play for this stock character can be centred on exaggerating the moody, pouty, spoiled behaviour. Passing from one state to another, from agony to ecstasy and the other way round is often accompanied by onomatopoeia, the head register is predominantly used, and completing the vocal composition with a pronunciation disorder can borrow a plus of fun to the character. However, the shyness variant can also be considered. The following information in the speech therapy field can be useful in this sense:

The emotional constitution of the shy is also the premise of language disorders. The shy individual has troubles of external verbal language, the pronunciation, rhythm, tonality, as well as the actual language disorders being of interest, manifested by verbal and logical incoherence, imprecision and indecision in picking words, in correlating then in a unitary semantic structure, as they also betray an internal language disorder, characterised by emotional instability, fragmentation and even disruption of informational message.¹⁶

¹⁵ Andrea Perruci, *Despre arta reprezentației dinaintea gândite și despre improvizație* (București: Univers, 1984), 21.

¹⁶ Iolanda Mititiuc, Ana Maria Lăzărescu, *Defectologie și logopedie* (Iași: Editura Alfa, 2011), 118-119.

Therefore, a type of respiratory stuttering can be used (talking on inspiration, reduced air column) with rattling speech that can also justify and make believable a series of fainting, tremors, wide-eyed looks (acted, obviously). Or, why not, even slow speech, bradylalia, can be used, if the lines are short. To avoid the sound monotony of the bradylalia a dyslalia and a sliding of the phonatory air in the resonance chambers (for example, nasal, chest register) could be added.

Of the Old characters group, we learn that the Mask Tartaglia is fat and his name comes from the verb *tartagliare* which means 'to stutter'. Because of his big belly, his posture with dorsal extension spine causes a tensing of the abdomen, which makes the breathing effort to be quite big. Our suggestion is of using an articulatory stutter and a grave tone, in a chest or normal register, because the dorsal extension, anyway, forces neck tensing by pushing the chin towards the chest. This latter remark is also valid for the character Dottore, with the mention that paradoxical expressions, the dilettante language, the use of Latin phrases randomly quoted that characterise the manner of expression of this character, could not have the same impact to the public if the stutter was used. A rhinolalia or any dyslalia is preferable.

Vito Pandolfi in volume II of his *History of Universal Theatre* affirms about Pantalone – the old decrepit, lewd, greedy and stingy, haughty and ridiculous merchant, always on the look for a beautiful young wife, that “he jumps and sings like a clown.”¹⁷ The semi-closed posture, leaning towards the front, limits the use of diaphragmatic rib cage breathing. The mask with a long, hooked nose favours rather a pronunciation disorder, a nasal voice and, maybe, a verbal tic.

The mask character Zanni portrays two types of servants: either astute and clever, intrigant, shrew, or dumb, funny and greedy. Along him, the most well known servant characters are Brighella, Arlecchino and Pulcinella. There is one more category of servants of lower importance, i.e. the so-called “small masks.”¹⁸ Mezzetino, Trufaldino, Scapino, Coviello, Beltrame. We learn from Vito Pandolfi’s research that Brighella does not have Arlecchino’s

¹⁷ Vito Pandolfi, *Istoria teatrului universal*, Volumul 2 (București: Meridiane, 1971), 43.

¹⁸ David Esrig, *Commedia dell'Arte. O istorie a spectacolului în imagini* (București: Nemira, 2016), 104.

agility and graceful gestures, but, Mona Chirilă says in *Central Figures in Commedia dell'Arte* "His natural idleness does not prevent him from being skilful in his movements, like a monkey"¹⁹ and his voice is raucous and his speech is jerky. Nonetheless, he is a good serenade singer.

We can find a wider study dedicated to Arlecchino and Pulcinella in the aforementioned volume belonging to Mona Chirilă. One of the most well-known theatrical figures, Arlecchino, can be interpreted either in the version of a ragged servant, rude, even violent, with unbridled lust – reminding by his black mask of his devilish origins, or as he transforms along history, becoming a joyful, goofy mask, ingenuous and bright. Over time, language and gestures change in the Arlecchino character, too, giving birth to precise interpretation requirements. In no other character is it perhaps as evident that body rhythm is in direct relation to speech rhythm:

In Arlecchino movement, that nonsensical back-and-forth, those baffling drifts end on brisk stop angles (lying, kneeling, elbow-propped, etc. positions) and recover by *kinetic arabesques* (jumping, spinning, pirouettes, dancing or disarticulated movements). He has all the types of walk specific to the *zannis*, but more elegantly performed. In addition, he has three types of toe walking (...). He describes everything with precision, by both words and gestures even when or especially when he improvises or fabricates something (...).²⁰

shows Mona Chirilă, quoting John Rudlin, the author of *Commedia dell'Arte. An Actor's Handbook*. Due to the physical effort implied by the interpretation of this character we recommend a voice training along with the physical one. Arlecchino talks mostly with his body, physical dynamism, gestures, body plasticity are the forms of expression he is characterised by. His vocal composition presupposes variations of rhythm and moving from one vocal register to the next, according to the context, the relationship with the other characters. Arlecchino is in love with Colombina. She is his feminine double. The merry and intriguing female servant knows how to use her feminine

¹⁹ Mona Chirilă, *Figuri centrale în Commedia del'Arte* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2010), 54.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

charm, her voluptuousness, her power of seduction to reach her purpose. Chatty and full of life, her speech is energetic, lascivious or not, strident at times (cephalic resonance). It is worth mentioning that often the course of action requires that the servant pair use the *dressing up/disguise*. This interpretation hence implies a vocal technique as good as possible, a special ability in using speech disorders.

The last Mask character we are talking about is Pulcinella, "The servant character who kept his peasant nature the longest and with most stubbornness (...)"²¹ as David Esrig says. In his vocal composition we will take into account, as with the other characters, on the one hand the specific body expression: humpback and pot belly, beak-like nose. His body is heavy, but he talks with his hands a lot, his gestures are large, open, caricatural, he has a special mobility of his shoulders and feet, what is specific are his footwork and goat jumps. On the other hand, we can consider the description made by Mona Chirilă:

(...) Pulcinella's lively gestures corresponded his logorrhea vocation: he talked without pause, with onomatopoeic interventions, comic repetitions and dismantling of words, which he then put side by side according to rules of sound and not of meaning, just to suddenly nosedive in pantomime, where soundless mouth went on forming unheard words.²²

We also point out that a vocal composition taking into account the "gallinaceous symbolism" would be possible to this mask, or other bestial images he is associated with (donkey, black cat, parrot, rooster, monkey, dog) and even its hermaphrodite nature. Details on this subject can be found in Mona Chirilă's book.

Before ending we would like to add that we have not made any reference to the dialectal language specific to each Mask as we have attempted to approach the theme from the perspective of professional training of the acting student, a pedagogical and practical approach. As long as the student

²¹ David Esrig, David, *Commedia dell'Arte. O istorie a spectacolului în imagini* (București: Nemira, 2016), 99.

²² Mona Chirilă, *Figuri centrale în Commedia del'Arte* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2010), 171.

uses a Romanian text we consider that the attention should be directed to the phonetic features of this language. Certainly, if wished, an accent specific to Italian language could be added to each mask in the vocal composition.

To conclude, we mention that, regardless of the Mask stock character we refer to, vocal composition presupposes a series of changes of the natural characteristics of the voice. In order to handle this exercise with full success – creating and interpreting a role in the *Commedia dell’Arte*, the following are required, as starting point: knowing one’s voice and body capabilities, knowing and acquiring the rules of correct pronunciation of vowels and consonants in Romanian, a breathing capacity as large as possible, and physical endurance. In parallel with practising voice and speech disorders we also recommend them to continue the voice training, strengthening of the abdominal muscles, phono-articulatory muscles and diction. Physical effort is constantly accompanying the means of expression used in this type of performance. Due to the fixed mask on the actor’s face, their body and voice take over some of the expression tasks of facial expression and amplify the body and voice expression. Wearing a mask also has an impact on the mobility of facial muscles with consequences on voice emission and projection, pronunciation, even without adding any voice and speech disorder. We underline that our proposal of approaching voice and verbal language for the *Commedia dell’Arte* characters, from the perspective of defectology and speech therapy, is wished to be an informational and practical plus for students, a source of inspiration for studying these roles. Studying speech disorders opens unsuspected possibilities of using voice in the creation process and we support Valeria Covătariu’s opinion, who maintains:

Simulating speech disorders is becoming a scenic procedure of language composition, without hindering intelligibility and penetrating ability, which are basic features of an actor’s speech; the choosing criterion, if no director’s order intervenes, is simple: speech defect that is the most easily obtained (what ensures credibility) and that is the most suitable to the character.²³

²³ Valeria Covătariu, *Cuvinte despre cuvânt* (Târgu Mureș: Casa de Editură Mureș, 1996), 86-87.

We complete and affirm that an acting student's talent, imagination and creativity are needed for walking, voicing, look to appear natural and symbolic at the same time, be in harmony and make a whole.

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