

THE COMPLEXITY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CHORAL ART

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SUMMARY. The artistic act must be expressed technically and interpretatively. In the process of interpretation of a choral work, the conductor's mission is to attain a unity between the technical and artistic aspects. Attaining this unity is possible only when the conductor has established a mental approach of the work (the Technical Mental Approach and the Performing Mental Approach), which they can achieve after going through two stages: The syntactical – morphological analysis (SMA) and the Choral – Vocal Analysis (CVA).

Keywords: Sintactical-Morphological Analysis, Vocal-choral Analysis, conductor, choir, Tehnical Mental Approach, Performing Mental Approach.

In the process of interpretation of a choral work, the conductor's mission is to attain a unity between the technical and artistic aspects.

The survey of a choral score requires great specialized knowledge in the field. The stages of study are:

Stage I – *The Syntactical – Morphological Analysis of the work* (Stg I - SMA);

Stage II – *The Vocal - Choral Analysis of the work* (Stg II - VCA).

1. The Syntactical – Morphological Analysis of the work (a technical musical analysis) entails the following steps:

- identifying the era, the period of creation and style of the composer;
- reading the score, visually and accompanied by the piano;
- analyzing the architectural or formal aspect (assessing the form of the work; by understanding its construction, the conductor will manage to also understand its content);
- analyzing the harmonic aspect (it entails identifying the key, the tonal aspect, the semi-cadenzas, the cadenzas, the modulations, the chord progressions, etc.);

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- analyzing the polyphonic – melodic aspect (here, we must analyze the way in which the melodic lines are combined – from a heterophonic, polyphonic, homophonic or eclectic (complex) standpoint.

- analyzing the tonal features;
- analyzing the dynamic features;
- analyzing the agogical features;
- analyzing the metric features;

2. The Vocal - Choral Analysis comprises:

- identifying the conductor's melodic line (the melodic line that carries the musical theme, with the entries of the choral parts).
- identifying the range of the voices, the registers used frequently;
- establishing the vocality of the text and the vocal emission problems;
- identifying the breath marks and the *caesurae*;
- articulation and diction;
- the study of all the voice parts;
- identifying the conducting gestures;
- assessing the difficulties posed by the work: 1. during the individual study of the work; 2. while studying the score with the choir; 3. issues of prosody;
- the preparations for rehearsal (making up a plan to choose vocal exercises that would help solve the problems posed by the musical work, setting up a plan of studying the works, depending on the difficulties encountered, on the type of writing, etc.).

This is a stage in which the conductor's analytical abilities are developed. After these two stages, the conductor attains a clearer view of the musical work.

Stage III – The mental approach of the work (Stg III - MA)

The artistic act must be expressed technically and interpretatively. The musical work is in the hands of the conductor, who basically, from that moment on, becomes co-author and, in fact, merges with the composer's thinking. The conductor gives life to the musical piece, through its interpretation.

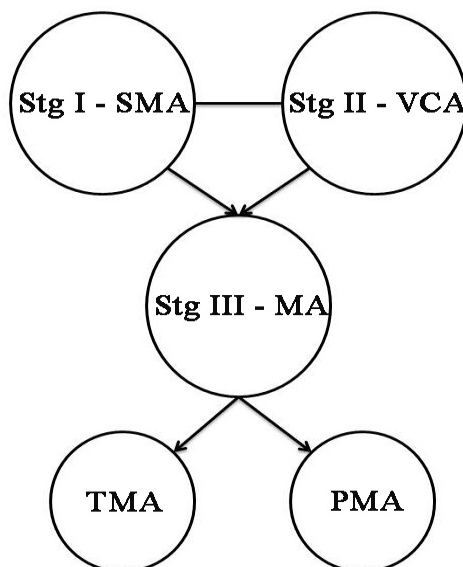
The purpose of this stage (Stg III-MA) is particularly the shift from simply executing a musical piece to performing it.

Musical execution → **Performance (interpretation)**

After carrying out the analysis of the work in the two stages (Stg I-SMA and Stg II -VCA), one can get only to the stage of actually performing the work. Indeed, we can only talk about all the aspects of the work

theoretically, as they are not yet implemented in terms of intention and, afterwards, of performance.

This is precisely the point where we can talk about the *mental* approach of the work (MA).



This mental approach comprises two well-defined sides: The technical mental approach (TMA) and the performing mental approach (PMA).

The technical mental approach reflects the intention to render the musical piece through a conducting technique and by summing up all the information gathered after analyzing the musical work, as in the two stages. The conducting technique is a tool to be used for the purpose of displaying the performing mental approach and for leading the musical instrument (the choir).

The technical mental approach → mental level → theoretical level.

The performing (interpretative) mental approach comprises two important aspects: The feeling and the intuition.

The performing mental approach → spiritual level → performance level

The feeling derives from creativity and the conductor's will. Basically, the feeling can be defined as a state of mingling with divinity, plus the inner energy of the conductor. This energy is visible through intention and intention, in its turn, generates the inner energy. The performing mental

approach is the moment in which the feelings, intuition, creativity, imagination and, of course, the spiritual depth of every conductor come together. By spiritual depth I mean their openness towards art, the universe and divinity. That openness is produced solely in the moment of mental calmness. *"The mind is essentially a survival machine. Attack and defense against other minds, gathering, storing and analyzing information – this is what it is good at, but it is not at all creative. All true artists, whether they like it or not, create from a place of no-mind, from inner stillness. The mind then form to the creative impulse or insight"*.²

Intention exists in both mental approaches (technical and performance - related). In the technical one, it is about the intention to execute the conducting technique (the upbeat stroke (Germ: auftakt), the cut-off gestures, etc.) and to carry out the dynamics of the work. In the performing approach, the music is being made (the phrasing, directing the sound, dynamics, etc.).

TMA → the intention to execute

PMA → the performance proper

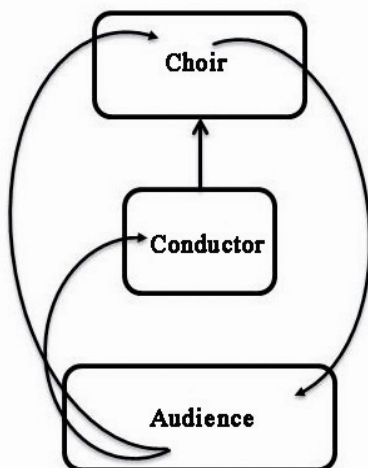
TMA → theoretical level PMA → emotional level (mood)

| | The Technical Mental Approach (TMA) | The Performing (Interpretative) Mental Approach (PMA) |
|-----------------|--|--|
| <i>Level</i> | Theoretical | Affective |
| <i>Dynamics</i> | <i>f</i> | the type of <i>f</i> |

We can notice that, in the case of the technical mental approach, the conductor knows that, for example, a "*forte*" indication of dynamics follows. In the mental performing approach, they are going to have to decide on the intensity of this dynamic indication, on balancing its intensity and this will be reflected in their conducting gesture, through the inner energy as well as transmitted to the instrument (choir). The transmission will be performed unconsciously, as the instrument will vibrate to that energy of the conductor. In its turn, this energetic flow will be transmitted to the listener, who will react involuntarily (also, through energy) to the performers, thus making an exchange of energy, a flow, a connection between the conductor – choir – audience, which is vital to the artistic act.

² Tolle, Eckart, *The Power of Now*, Curtea Veche Publishing, Bucharest, 2012, pg.39.

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Now, let us get back to that “*forte*” indication, only this time, let us make a connection between the dynamic indication and word. For instance, that “*forte*” indication appears with the word “pain”. How will this indication be interpreted? Will it, by any chance, be dosed similarly by all the conductors? Certainly not. There are plenty of factors that influence the final outcome of the artistic act. First of all, the individuality of the conductor is very important (their unique personality, temperament, character, hereditary traits and abilities. The individuality sums up all these factors (temperament, character, skills), in addition to the conductor’s imaginative universe (their inventiveness, fantasy, feelings, intuition and life experience). Underlying the concept of creative individuality there are two pillars: the rational and emotional intelligence.



The way of expressing that “*forte*” indication with the word “pain” will depend on the two pillars (factors).

The concept of creative individuality has to do with vocation, talent, skills, feeling, intuition, creativity, professional background, interdisciplinary study. The sum of all these aspects determines the style of interpretation. At this stage we can speak of conducting art, in itself, and about that specific “touch” that each conductor leaves upon their work. It is the style of interpretation that differentiates conductors. We must emphasize that we are talking about the conductors’ performing style, which normally does not

alter the work, from a stylistic viewpoint. We are talking about art. According to K. Stanislavsky³, “*Art is creation and creation, be it big or small, is accessible only to a talent. Therefore, we can conclude that there is no creation without talent, and there is no art without creation. Talent is a combination between several human possibilities and the creative will*”.

It is extremely important to become aware of and cultivate the creative instinct.

As Niccolò Paganini said, “*Bisogna forte sentire per far sentire*”, which means “*One must feel strongly to make others feel strongly*”. «*Artistic conducting (indication of the beat) is a complex process through which the conductor communicates his/her performing intentions to the choir*»⁴

Artistic conducting pertains to the conductor's creativity and imagination. In the process of interpretation of a musical creation (the leading of the choir), the conductor consumes a certain amount of energy. In moments of emotional tension, this amount increases. This is usually perceived both by the one who emanates it – the conductor, as well as by the ones who receive it – the choir members. In fact, it is a phenomenon that occurs at mental level. The psychological factors of a conductor are: logic, will and emotion. In the creative process, there are conductors in which one of these factors is predominant. Let us consider the repercussions that this phenomenon might have:

- if the emotional factor prevails, the conductor will affect the emotional aspect of the musical work;
- if the volitional factor prevails, it will partially affect the rhythmic part and also, the tempo of the work will have to suffer;
- in case the logical factor is predominant, the conductor will provide the musical work with a purely logical and intellectual character. However, an already developed factor will directly influence the progress of the others.

Artistic conducting requires that the conductor surpass all the problems related to conducting techniques. Hence, a step forward can be made, from simply executing a musical work to its interpretation – the artistic conducting.

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³ Stanislavsky, K., *Rabota aktera nad soboy*, Iskusstvo, Moskva, 1951.

⁴ K.Olhov, *O dirijirovanii horom*, L., Muzizd., 1961, p.26.