

Understanding didactic strategies based on the Laban-Malmgren technique when developing technical and musical proficiency of singers

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I assisted **Prof. Bo Rosenkull** (Royal College of Music Stockholm, Academy of Music and Drama University of Gothenburg) with the language editing of his doctoral thesis while he was preparing the draft manuscript for examination at the School of Music, North-West University. The title of the thesis is **Understanding didactic strategies based on the Laban-Malmgren technique when developing the technical and musical proficiency of singers**; his supervisor was Prof. Santisa Viljoen (North-West University).

I went through the thesis making corrections and suggestions with respect to language usage, and restricted my editing to addressing such issues. Given the nature of the process, it is not necessary for me to see the final version, but I always remained available for consultation as long as necessary.

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We are all one, and what is at stake is the universal soul out of which and for which we have to create. Such a realisation does not bear fruit overnight. Our endeavours towards this goal and the way we paved only became visible as our art developed.

(Laban, 1975:94)

SUMMARY

The Laban-Malmgren technique (LMT), and especially the way it might inform a pedagogical approach when working with singers who specialize in Western art music, is largely unknown to most people who work in the fields of vocal performance and voice pedagogy. Therefore, the purpose of this multiple method study was to understand how an understanding of the use of didactic strategies based on the Laban-Malmgren technique (LMT) might enable a voice pedagogue to develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers who specialize in Western art music.

Fourteen singers from four different universities and contexts participated in this research study. The universities were the Academy of Music and Drama of the University of Gothenburg (UGOT) and the Stockholm University of the Arts (SKH) in Sweden, and the South African College of Music University of Cape Town (SACM) and the School of Music and Conservatory of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) in South Africa.

The strategies of inquiry in this research involved exploring my own teaching approach, as well as the manner in which I might employ didactic strategies based on the LMT during the teaching and learning sessions at the various research sites (self-study), participatory action research (PAR) and interpretive description (ID).

Various methods of data collection were used, such as conducting a systematic literature review, observing and recording participants' responses while presenting lectures, workshops, vocal masterclasses and individual singing lessons. The coding and categorising of the data obtained from the literature review, my own teaching approach and the teaching and learning sessions at the four research sites, were guided by concepts related to the LMT, namely Laban's three dimensional planes, the working actions, the externalised drives, shadow moves, the four grades of intensity, the inner attitudes and Malmgren's ten questions.

The research results have shown that the use of didactic strategies based on the principles of the LMT can enable a voice pedagogue to develop the technical as well as the musical development of a singer who specializes in Western art music. The

participants' vocal development showed how the use of such strategies contributed to, for example, reducing unhealthy physical and muscular tension, improving their posture, establishing a breathing process conducive to singing, the embodiment of sound, onset of tone, legato singing, phrasing, register equalisation, vibrant timbre, rich resonance, secure intonation and a controlled vibrato. The use of the didactic strategies based on the LMT also contributed to the participants' improved understanding, internalisation and depiction of characters.

KEYWORDS: interpretive description; Jung; Laban; Laban-Malmgren technique; Malmgren; movement and singing; participatory action research; self-study; singing technique; Stanislavski, voice pedagogy; Yat Malmgren

OPSOMMING

Die Laban-Malngren-tegniek (LMT), en veral die wyse waarop dit 'n pedagogiese benadering kan belig wanneer daar met sangers gewerk word wat in Westerse kunsmusiek spesialiseer, is meestal onbekend aan mense wat binne die gebied van sanguitvoering en sangonderrig werk. Die doel van hierdie studie wat deur veelvoudige metodes gekenmerk word, is om te bepaal hoe die gebruik van didaktiese strategieë gebaseer op die LMT 'n sangpedagoog in staat kan stel om die tegniese en musikale vaardighede van sangers te ontwikkel wat in Westerse kunsmusiek spesialiseer.

Veertien sangers van vier verskillende universiteite het aan hierdie navorsingsprojek deelgeneem. Die universiteite het die Akademie vir Musiek en Drama van die Universiteit in Gothenburg (UGOT) en die Stockholm Universiteit vir Kuns (SKH) in Swede, asook die Suid-Afrikaanse Kollege vir Musiek van die Universiteit van Kaapstad en die Skool vir Musiek en Konservatorium van die Noordwes Universiteit (Potchefstroom Kampus) in Suid-Afrika ingesluit.

Die ondersoekstrategieë in hierdie navorsing het die volgende behels: 'n ondersoek na my eie onderrigbenadering, sowel as die wyse waarop ek LMT gebaseerde didaktiese strategieë tydens die onderrig-en-leer-sessie by die verskillende navorsingswerwe (selfstudie), deelnemende aksienavorsing en interpretatiewe beskrywing sou kon gebruik.

Verskeie dataversamelingsmetodes is aangewend, soos 'n sistematiese literatuuroorsig, waarneming en opnames van deelnemers se verbale en nie-verbale reaksies en terugvoer tydens die lesings, werksinkels, meesterklasse en individuele sanglesse. Die kodering en kategorisering van die data wat tydens die literatuuroorsig, die besinning oor my eie onderrigbenadering en ook die onderrig-en-leer-sessie versamel is, is deur die LMT verwante konsepte gerig. Hierdie konsepte behels Laban se driedimensionele vlakke, die werkaksies, eksterne dryfkragte, skadubewegings, vier grade van intensiteit, innerlike houdings en Malngren se tien vrae.

Die navorsingsresultate het getoon dat die gebruik van didaktiese strategieë wat op die beginsels van die LMT gebaseer is 'n sangpedagoog in staat kan stel om die

tegniese en musikale vaardighede van 'n sanger wat in Westerse kunsmusiek spesialiseer te ontwikkel. Die deelnemers se ontwikkeling het laat blyk dat die gebruik van sodanige strategieë onder andere tot die volgende bygedra het: die vermindering van ongesonde liggaamlike en spierspanning; 'n verbetering in die sanger se postuur; die vaslegging van 'n asemhalingsproses wat voordelig vir sang is; die beliggaming van die klank; 'n verbetering in die toonaansit, legato-sang, frasering, registervermenging; helder en ryk, resonante klank; goeie intonasie en 'n beheerde vibrato. Die gebruik van die didaktiese strategieë wat op die LMT gebaseer is, het ook bygedra tot 'n beter begrip, internalisering en uitbeelding van karakters.

SLEUTELWOORDE: beweging en sang; deelnemende aksienavorsing; interpretatiewe beskrywing; Jung; Laban; Laban-Malmgren tegniek; Malmgren; sangtegniek; sangpedagogie; selfstudie; Stanislavski; Yat Malmgren

SAMMANFATTNING

Laban-Malmgren-tekniken (LMT), och särskilt på vilket sätt den kan utgöra ett pedagogiskt förhållningssätt i arbetet med sångare specialiserade på västerländsk konstmusik (klassisk sång), verkar i stort sett okänd för många sångare och sångpedagoger. Syftet med denna multimetodstudie var därför att undersöka hur en förståelse för användningen av didaktiska strategier baserade på Laban-Malmgren-tekniken (LMT) skulle kunna göra det möjligt för en röstpedagog att utveckla den tekniska och musikaliska skickligheten hos sångare som är specialiserade på västerländsk konstmusik.

Fjorton sångare från fyra olika universitet och sammanhang deltog i denna forskningsstudie. Universiteten var Högskolan för scen och musik vid Göteborgs universitet (GU) och Stockholms konstnärliga högskola (SKH) i Sverige, samt South African College of Music University of Cape Town (SACM) och School of Music and Conservatory vid North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) i Sydafrika.

Forskningsstrategierna i denna studie involverade utforskandet av min egen undervisningsmetod såväl som det sätt på vilket jag kan använda didaktiska strategier baserade på LMT i undervisnings- och lärandesessionerna på de olika forskningsplatserna (self study–självstudier), deltagande aktionsforskning (participatory action research–PAR) och tolkningsbeskrivning (Interpretive description–ID).

Olika metoder för datainsamling användes såsom genomförandet av en systematisk litteraturgenomgång samt observationer och inspelningar av deltagarnas respons under föreläsningar, workshops, mästarklasser och individuella sånglektioner. Kodningen och kategoriseringen av data som erhöles från litteraturgenomgången, min egen undervisningsmetod och undervisnings- och lärtillfällena på de fyra forskningsplatserna, styrdes av koncept relaterade till LMT; Labans tredimensionella plan, working actions (bearbetande handlingar), externalised drives, shadow moves, de fyra intensitetsgraderna, de inre attityderna och Malmgrens tio frågor. Forskningsresultaten har visat att användningen av didaktiska strategier baserade på

principerna för LMT kan göra det möjligt för en röstpedagog att utveckla såväl den tekniska som den musikaliska förmågan och skickligheten hos sångare specialiserad på västerländsk konstmusik. Deltagarnas röstliga utveckling visade hur användningen av sådana strategier bidrog till att exempelvis reducera ogynnsamma muskulära spänningar, förbättra hållning, etablera en för sång främjande andningsprocess, förbättra stödarbete, tonansats, legatosång, fraserings, registeregalisering, resonans och intonation samt utverka ett naturligt vibrato. Användningen av de didaktiska strategierna baserade på LMT bidrog också till deltagarnas förbättrade förståelse, internalisering och skildring i karaktärsarbete.

SÖKORD: deltagande aktionsforskning, Jung, Laban, Laban-Malmgren teknik, Malmgren, rörelse och sång, sångpedagogik, självstudie, sångteknik, Stanislavski tolkningsbeskrivning, Yat Malmgren

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION

This thesis explores how an understanding of the use of didactic strategies that are based on the Laban-Malmgren technique (LMT) can enable a voice pedagogue to develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers who specialize in Western art music.¹ The LMT is a method used to train actors. The ideas on which the training is based are a coalescence of ideas that derive mostly from the works of Rudolf Laban (1879–1958), William Carpenter (n.d.–1954), Yat Malmgren (1916–2002), Konstantin Stanislavski (1863–1953) and Carl Jung (1875–1961) (Mirodan, 2015:30). The technical and musical development of singers involves developing several aspects of singing. For the purpose of this thesis, the concept of technical development includes aspects such as different types of phonation, intonation, the breathing process, extension of vocal range, register unification, vocal agility, vocal stamina, powerful singing, articulation and legato singing. Musical aspects refer to phrasing, interpretation of the music – depicting the lyrics by means of verbal and non-verbal communication, including body language and facial expression. In order to be a versatile and proficient classical singer who has the ability to sing expressively, it is essential to develop the technical standard as well as the musicality of the singer.

1.1 Problem statement

My first contact with the LMT was in the 1980s when I was a student at the Academy of Music and Drama in Gothenburg in Sweden. At that time the opera and the drama students attended the same classes and the prevailing method on which the acting and some of the movement training was based, was the LMT – also referred to as the YAT technique. In 2017, I was further exposed to the technique when I returned to my

¹ Defining Western art music is somewhat challenging because it is not just limited to a geographical or cultural scope. In this thesis the term Western art music refers to the musical compositions that originated during the 18th century in Europe when notations of a specific art music started to take shape (Ling, 1999). It is often referred to as Western art music since the heritage, the roots of the aesthetics and the educational systems are still the ones originating from Europe and North America (Nooshin, 2014:10). However, while colonisation and globalization led to Western art music being spread worldwide, it also has roots in other parts of the world.

alma mater in order to attend the course *Deepened understanding for the Laban-Yat Malmgren technique*. The course was led by a senior lecturer at the academy, Per Nordin, who had been a student of Malmgren.

Laban encouraged people to take what they could from his work and to make it their own (Hodgson, 2001:236) and that is what I have been doing. As such, during my initial training in Gothenburg, as well as during my career as a singer and as a voice pedagogue, I have used some of the tools I had learned about in studying the Laban-Malmgren technique. However, since attending Per Nordin's course, I have endeavoured to work with an even richer toolbox. Besides using, for example, the traditional vocal pedagogical terms and exercises in breathing, posture, phonation, phrasing and intonation, I have implemented more of the ideas based on the LMT, such as gravity/levity, strong/light weight, quick/sustained gestures and direct/flexible directions in my voice pedagogy. I have worked with a combination of movements and gestures originating from Laban's vocabulary with singing, as well as with singing without movements while keeping Laban's ideas in mind. Laban (1975:87) stated that all sound production – speaking, as well as singing – originates from physical actions.

One must always remember that all sound productions, such as speaking, singing and shouting spring from physical actions, or in other words from movements. Whether I bang on a table and make it resound, or vibrate in the air with shouts, it is always the same thing – movement made audible (Laban, 1975:87).

He refers to *Ton als Gebärde* (a sound as a gesture) and how the sound, as well as the movement, swings (Laban, 1920:14).

I have also lectured and presented masterclasses on the technique at conferences such as those arranged by the International Society for Music Education (ISME), the Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education (PASMAE) and the European Voice Teachers Association (EVTA). My presentations of these lectures and masterclasses on the LMT and my approach to it were met with great interest. However, the problem seemed to be that the technique is largely unknown to most people who work within

the field of vocal performance and voice pedagogy. Furthermore, in my attempts to reach a better understanding of the LMT and how it might be used within the field of training singers who specialize in Western art music, it has been challenging to find sources focused specifically on singing. This lack of available scholarly literature has left me with the perception that vocal pedagogy has seldom looked into other art forms for things from which to benefit and for alternative ways of teaching and learning singing. It seems as if the field of study is mostly guided by tried and tested approaches. I hope that this research will address some of the correspondences between vocal pedagogy and other transdisciplinary fields.

1.2 Contextualisation

1.2.1 Good singing

Before investigating how a singer's technical and musical development might benefit from using didactic strategies based on the LMT, it was essential to reflect on what is considered to be good singing. Suggestions of what constitutes good singing have been offered as early as the 16th and 17th centuries with, for example, Guilio Caccini (1551–1618), a composer, teacher and singer, describing good singing as involving the voice's ability to express specific emotions (Stark, 1999:xxiv). The music theorist, Johann Andreas Herbst (1588–1666), claimed that good singing requires a singer who possesses “a beautiful, lovely, trembling and shaking voice” (Stark, 1999:129). Today good classical singing is often described as powerful, vibrant and resonant (Fisher & Kayes, 2016:136, Sundberg, 2007:264, Titze, 2010:4), consisting of a balance of bright and dark aspects of colour – *chiaroscuro* (Miller, 2004:64).

As mentioned in the introduction, there are several vocal aspects that a singer needs to develop while training. Friedlander (2019:31), for example, claims that “classical singing requires the development of maximum vocal range, projection, flexibility and stamina, as well as superb control of dynamics registration and color”. Other authorities in the field of vocal pedagogy, such as Bunch (1997), Chapman (2016), Doscher (1994), Miller (1996a; 1996b), Smith (2007) and Williams (2013), emphasise other qualities that need to be developed, namely resonance, unification of the vocal

registers and flow phonation. It is essential for a classically trained singer to be heard over a large orchestra. Therefore, a resonant voice with a balanced *chiaroscuro* and good projection or *squillo* is essential. Also, sufficient stamina and a wide vocal range are often required, especially when singing opera. A wide range of dynamics, agility and the skill to sing with a variety of different timbres – adapting to the music at hand – is required in order to express emotions through the singing.

Friedlander (2019:37) also regards breath management, phonation, resonance and articulation as “essential elements of a comprehensive vocal technique”. Breath management forms the foundation for the whole instrument and the articulation is of greatest importance to communicate with an audience, to tell a story. A singer with keen and eager articulation and communication also directly informs the quality of the instrument in different ways and, thereby, develops different types of phonation and timbres. Herbst *et al.* (2019:136) claim that a good singing voice can take advantage of “the freedom to create various voice timbres at will during a performance”.

Scholars such as Bunch Dayme (2005), Miller (1996a; 1996b), Kagen (1960) and Chapman (2016) also underline that, in addition to purely technical aspects, other dimensions such as musicianship, a strong personality and artistry are undoubtedly necessary for good singing. Based on my personal experience as a veteran voice pedagogue, I deem a number of characteristics to be very necessary for developing musical proficiency, namely the singer’s

- personality and a good sense of self,
- musicality (agogics, precise phrasing and a sensibility that can produce the affective value of the lyrics),
- good intonation and a strong feeling for pulse, and
- sensitive ears (the ability to hear finer nuances in sound).

Based on the opinions of scholars such as Arder (2009), Blades (2017), Bunch Dayme (2005), Callaghan (2014), Chapman (2016), Doscher (1994), Friedlander (2019), Miller (1993; 1996a; 1996b; 2000; 2004; 2008) and Sundberg (2007), the features listed below are basic components not only for learning good singing technique, but also the

requirements for singing with musicality.

- Posture.
- The breathing process (different breathing patterns, breath support, breath control, subglottal pressure and air flow).
- Voice production (different aspects of balance, vocal freedom and aspects of movements and gestures and their impact on technique, musicality and artistry).
- Sensations and perceptions – visible, audible and kinaesthetic.
- Emotions and imagination.
- The interaction between technique and communication.
- The teaching and learning process.

Each of these aspects will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two of this thesis.

1.2.2 Laban and Malmgren

Rudolf Laban was a dancer and a dance theorist, known for what is now known as *Labanotation*. Labanotation, also known as kinetography, is a written language for describing, analysing, interpreting and documenting human movement. Laban had no formal dance training. His movement theories were mainly inspired by the Greek philosopher Plato and the Sufi dervish dancers (Hodgson, 2001:115). Laban's beliefs were also informed by the ideas of the psychoanalyst Carl Jung of human cognition (Hodgson, 2001:73).

Yat (Gert) Malmgren, a Swedish dancer who was famous for his solo recitals, had his first contact with Laban's work in 1939, when he was a member of the Kurt Jooss ballet. Laban invited Malmgren to observe a rehearsal of his own composition and from that point Laban's ideas strongly affected Malmgren's work (Fettes, 2015:322). Together with his co-developer, William Carpenter, Laban started working on *Theory of Movement Psychology*, a work that was interrupted when Carpenter passed away in 1954. Laban then passed the manuscript on to Malmgren, as he thought it might have some bearing on training actors, something for which Malmgren was widely known at the time (Fettes, 2015:330). Malmgren organized very much of what Laban had written and brought new ideas into the field of acting (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:264).

Furthermore, he incorporated the psychological aspects of acting inspired by the Russian actor and theatre theorist Konstantin Stanislavski into the technique (Hayes, 2010:44).

The LMT is known as a useful tool for acting, especially when it comes to character work in creating a role in a drama. This technique has been used in higher education, such as in acting schools in the UK, Australia, Denmark and Sweden. Watson (2001) offers a simplified way of describing this very complex technique by using the image of a tree. The tree trunk consists of six inner attitudes – *mobile*, *awake*, *near*, *stable*, *adream*² and *remote* (Watson, 2001:51). These inner attitudes can be explained as a way of considering oneself as an actor, as well as your relation to the world around you (Hayes, 2008; Nordin, 2017). Then there are eight working (effort) actions, which form the crown of the tree. These working actions consist of different combinations of *weight*, *time* and *space* and they have a *flow* that can be either *free* or *bound*. At the bottom of the tree are the roots – the externalised drives³ – *doing*, *passion*, *spell* and *vision*. All these components of the technique, and how they can be linked to singing specifically, will be unpacked in detail in Chapter Two of this thesis.

The LMT is very complicated and takes a long time to learn. Malmgren himself warned that one should not “try to explain it, it takes three years just to understand” (Berggren, 2016). Berggren (2016) believes that the Swedish actor Gunilla Nyros, who worked a lot with Malmgren, provides a good explanation of the technique when she states that it “make[s] the subconscious work...in a conscious way [in order] to reach the subconscious in a conscious way” (Berggren, 2016).

A lot of Laban’s work has become so fundamental for our current understanding of movement that it is often considered to be common belief (Hodgson, 2001:63). Laban’s work was informed and shaped by other scholars. Hodgson (2001:70) claims that many

² From the start Laban used the word *dreamlike*, but Malmgren changed it to *adream*. One could argue that this was the result of “Malmgren never fully learn[ing] English – It was a kind of device that he used – his own style of English” (Hayes, 2008).

³ “Laban and Malmgren have taken some seventy English words to which they gave new or altered interpretations” (Mirodan, 1997:262)

ideas in Laban's work were inspired by Francois Delsarte (1811–1871) and, according to Williams (2019), Laban was taught directly by Delsarte's pupil Morel. Delsarte, who quite interestingly was a professor of singing and elocution (Taylor, 1999), formulated scientific principles of expressions by studying the relationships between physical behaviour, emotion and language (Shawn, 1963:18; Marsella *et al.*, 2006:82, Vertinsky, 2009). In his teaching he emphasised physical movement as a vital force. Not only did he state that the expressions were depicted in the movements, but he also pointed out how the movements create and evoke feelings (Morely, 1972:5). He depicted *nine laws of expression* – laws that involve gestures and movement which can be used to enhance expression during performance. These laws include, among others, the law of altitude, the law of force, the law of motion and the law of direction (Fischer, 2021). It is evident that there are resemblances between Delsarte and Laban, when Laban describes his concepts in terms such as effort (Laban, 2011:169), inner participation (2011:115), motion factor (2011:115) and grades of intensity (2011:173), as well as when he explains the roots of mime (2011:96) and its impact on his ideas. There are also similarities in that they were both inspired by Plato's philosophy (Williams, 2019; Preston-Dunlop, 2008:102).

Working with movement and singing as a unit is often found in work with small children. Göktürk Cary (2012) points out that this was an essential part of the work of music educators such as Orff (1895–1982) and Kodaly (1882-1967). When working with more advanced singers, techniques such as the Alexander technique, tai chi, Feldenkrais and yoga are often recommended as helpful to increase body awareness as a tool to help improve vocal technique (Nafasi, 2013). A more subtle way to combine (hand) movements with voice was invented by Jo Estill (1921–2010) in her pioneering work (Steinhauer & McDonald Klimek, 2019).

There are examples in the literature that cover the relationship between Laban movement and music making, especially in the field of choral conducting. Two postgraduate studies that focus on the Laban-based principles of movement are by Billingham (2001) and Yontz (2001). Billingham's (2001) study explored the relationship between Laban movement theory, along with Bartenieff Fundamentals, and body movement, as well as how they could be applied to conducting gestures. Her

study focuses on developing a vocabulary of conducting gestures from the effort and body elements of Laban movement analysis (LMA) (Billingham, 2001:32). She found gestures based on some of the Effort elements to be more successful than others (Billingham, 2001:72). Slash, Wring and Press proved to be problematic for a variety of reasons, including musical aspects, a lack of clarity in the conductor's movements when applying the movement, and a discrepancy between the gesture and the lyrics of a passage (Billingham, 2001:72). However, she found that adaptation of some of the gestures, such as Press, were more successful when made "more three-dimensional and less pattern-like" (Billingham, 2001:72). Billingham (2001:72) asserts that "the strongest case for the implementation for [sic] the Laban-based gestures was a persistent observation that the expressiveness and overall presence of the conductor vastly improved over the course of the study".

Yontz (2001) divided 91 tertiary undergraduate students into two groups and subjected the one group to LMA and the other to expressive gesture instruction, with the purpose of determining how effective both LMA and prior training in music will be on novice choral conducting students. The research included not only choral conducting students, but also instrumentalists. Three professors who specialise in choral conducting assessed the videos presented as a post-test. Based on these assessments, Yontz (2001) found that, while the research did not offer results that were predictably clear-cut, LMA did affect the expressiveness of the participants positively. He concluded that prior musical and conducting experience, as well as the conductor's personality and coordination, affected their non-verbal communication. Gambetta (2005:12) also claims that new, more effective approaches to conducting can be achieved with the LMA method. LMA can serve as a positive force to find the dynamic "connection between conducting and musical expression".

Another field of study that links with the LMT is Dalcroze Eurhythmics. Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950) was a Swiss music educator who invented eurhythmics – an approach to music that emphasises listening and body awareness in music-making (Kennedy, 1951). Even though Dalcroze and Laban just met briefly, according to Hodgson (2001:72), Laban denied any influence by Dalcroze. Hodgson (2001:72) argues that there are so many common points between the two men that it is

impossible to exclude any consideration of Dalcroze in studies about Laban. Chapter Four will discuss similarities and differences between the two scholars' approaches and, as well as how several other people's work in singing (opera), dancing and acting, such as Delsarte and Stanislavski had informed and contributed to the LMT. It is interesting that these experts were trained in singing, as was other musicians with whom Laban worked very closely, namely Adda Heynssen (see Chapter Six) and Laban's own wife, Maja Lederer.

Laban (2011:1) claims that a "[m]an moves in order to satisfy a need". He asserts that every movement originates from an inner excitement that results in voluntary or involuntary impulses to move (Laban, 2011:19). As mentioned earlier, Laban believed that both music and speech are produced by movements which have become audible (Laban, 2011:90). According to Laban (cited by Newlove & Dalby, 2013:168; see also Preston-Dunlop, 2008:31), all sounds are created by some sort of movement, and he also claimed that "[t]o move is to tell" (Mark & Muchin, 2010:41). I have found it useful to include these statements in my thesis to explore how movements – in the body, mind and voice – are, or might be, connected or affect one another. I have investigated how using movements based on the LMT and different perceptions/ways of thinking about vocal technique connected to such movements affect the sound and musical phrasing. More specifically, I have explored what sensation, awareness and proprioception might arise in the singer's body and mind when experimenting with different settings. It has been interesting to explore how perceptions/thought processes or body movement can promote effortless and effective singing, and what impact the motion factors – weight, space, time, and flow – suggested by Laban (2011:115) have on the singer's vocal onset, phonation, timbre, phrasing, intonation, legato, etcetera.

Hodgson (2001:35) points out that Laban noticed that when he moved his body, his mind followed, and he explored how, where and when the manner in which changing the body affected individuals. According to Laban (2011:v), there is an almost "mathematical relationship between the inner motivation of movements and the functions of the body". He states that the body is subordinate to the inner feeling (Laban, 2011:3) and he further claims that "it is important not only to become aware of the various articulations in the body and of their use in creating rhythmical and spatial

patterns, but also of the mood and inner attitude produced by bodily action” (Laban 2011:22). He also emphasises the importance of dealing economically with the effort required by movement of the body as well as in the voice where the effect of the movement is heard, but not seen. Laban (2011:6) points out that less effort creates less strain.

At the core of Malmgren’s technique lies a map of precise concepts for physical movements (which came initially from Laban and Carpenter, the man with whom Laban collaborated later in his career). Malmgren developed the map into a theory which indicated how the vocal, the physical and the emotional were all aligned (Mark & Muchin, 2010:37). Malmgren co-founded the Drama Center London in 1963 with Christopher Fettes and John Blatchley. Fettes was a renowned actor, writer and pedagogue who had worked closely with Malmgren for almost fifty years. In 2015, 13 years after Malmgren had passed away in 2002, the Giles Forman Centre for Acting (GFCFA) published a book by Fettes, commonly known as *A peopled labyrinth*; the book is considered to be the most comprehensive source on Malmgren’s work, especially as Malmgren had not produced any publications about his own work. Given this lack of first-hand publications by Malmgren himself, Chapter Two of this thesis relies significantly on Fettes’s recollections and experiences of Malmgren’s statements, perceptions and beliefs.

1.3 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was not to criticize or reject traditional voice pedagogies, but rather to build on and enrich existing practices. Attempts to understand and improve practice “can contribute to the development of not only new practices but also deeper understanding of practice that hold promise for future research on practice” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:49). As mentioned in the section on the problem statement, I had already made some attempt to reach a better understanding of the LMT in order to understand how didactic strategies, based on this technique, might reach beyond developing dancing and acting skills but also facilitate singers’ vocal and musical development.

Therefore, the purpose of this multiple method study, involving self-study⁴, participatory action research (PAR) and interpretive description (ID), was to understand how didactic strategies, based on the principles of the LMT, might enable a voice pedagogue to develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers who specialize in Western art music. The quest to achieve this purpose involved self-study (exploring the manner in which I applied the strategies) and employing the strategies during teaching and learning sessions, using various steps of PAR. During these teaching and learning sessions, I used various methods to gather data, such as conducting a systematic literature review, observing and recording participants' responses while presenting lectures, workshops, vocal masterclasses and individual singing lessons during which I observed the participants, took notes and also recorded the singers' verbal and non-verbal responses. I then described and interpreted these responses in order to determine how the didactic strategies benefited the singers' vocal and musical proficiency. I worked with 14 singers at four different tertiary educational institutions. All aspects regarding the participants and the research methods are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

1.4 Research questions

The main question of this thesis was: How might didactic strategies that are based on the principles of the LMT enable a voice pedagogue to develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers who specialize in Western art music?

Answering the main question involved addressing the following sub-questions:

- What, according to the literature, does the LMT promote?
- What strategies, based on the principles of the LMT, do I as the researcher apply to facilitate technical and musical proficiency of the participants?
- How do the singers who are involved in this study respond to the use of the didactic strategies based on the principles of the LMT?

⁴ This qualitative strategy of inquiry is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

1.5 Research participants

The recruitment and the sampling of the participants have a great impact on the contribution towards collecting useful data (Creswell & Poth, 2018:148). The study relied on the involvement of 14 singers as participants. While this was quite a large group of participants, the need for purposeful sampling was important. The vocal instrument is integrally part of the singer – physically, emotionally and psychologically. Furthermore, one could even argue that the way the instrument sounds is informed by socio-cultural contexts. Because of the uniqueness of vocal character and the diversity of social-cultural contexts, it proved to be a wise decision to involve more participants rather than too few. The intention was to work in both group and individual sessions with these singers. The singers were asked to reflect on their actions and describe their experiences. Given the nature of self-study, I was an active participant. My own participatory role in the research investigation, as well as in the PAR, proved to significantly inform the findings.

As mentioned before, the participants were singers from four different universities and contexts, namely the Academy of Music and Drama of the University of Gothenburg (UGOT) and the Stockholm University of the Arts (SKH) in Sweden, as well as the South African College of Music University of Cape Town (SACM) and the School of Music and Conservatory of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) (hereafter designated as NWU) in South Africa. The singers were individually recruited by someone connected to the different institutions, such as a voice pedagogue or the directors of the respective schools of music.⁵ The recruiters took care to assure participants that their involvement in the research would have no effect on the assessment of their academic work and that I would not allocate marks based on their performances during our contact sessions. Recruiters were also asked to reassure

⁵ Recruiters included Monica Danielsson, head of the opera department at the Academy of Music and Drama of the University of Gothenburg; Ulrica Juvas, senior lecturer at Stockholm University of Arts; Patrick Tikolo, senior lecturer at the South African School of Music of Cape Town University; and Conroy Cupido, associate-professor at the School of Music and Conservatory of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus).

prospective participants that their identities will be protected and that each participant will be given a pseudonym when the research report was written.

The recruitment process was designed to mitigate any possible perception of an unequal power relationship between myself as the lecturer and the participant as a student. The recruiter was accordingly asked to

- approach singers who are being classically trained;
- approach singers who have previously participated in master classes with visiting lecturers from abroad and are familiar and comfortable with the processes involved;
- avoid approaching participants who are only in the beginning stages of their training;
- approach singers who are at various levels of technical and musical development;
- approach singers who are representative of various voice-types, genders, ages and races;
- approach singers who
 - have the ability to work without prejudice;
 - are eager to experiment with new ideas about developing vocal technique and general musicality;
 - are open to learning new things; and
 - can grasp new ideas relatively quickly.

The recruiters secured 14 participants for this study, comprising nine undergraduate and five postgraduate students. There were five sopranos, four mezzo-sopranos, two tenors, one baritone, one bass baritone and one bass. Seven singers were black and seven were white. The level of technical and musical proficiency of the singers with whom I worked varied greatly. I met singers who were at undergraduate level, but who had come a long way in their musical and technical development and who also had a clear awareness of their strong points or shortcomings as musicians. However, I also experienced the opposite, namely students who were studying at advanced level, but still had a lot to learn in order to become full-fledged artists. What all the participants

had in common, however, was that they were open and curious about exploring, experimenting and learning new things. The participants' attitudes helped me to get reliable and precise results.

I endeavoured to ensure professional courtesy at all times during the research process by keeping the participants' regular voice teachers fully informed and getting their approval to work with their students. Furthermore, participation in the study was voluntary and could be terminated by the participant without any further explanation or effect on the participant's studies. Participants did not receive any monetary compensation for their participation in this research project. However, I anticipated that the direct benefit was that they would learn innovative strategies that they could apply while practising. A further benefit of their participation was that they would gain insight into innovative didactic strategies that can be used by a voice pedagogue.

The situation brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic necessitated taking extreme care when working with singers. I made it clear that I would adhere strictly to COVID-19 guidelines, which included wearing of face masks throughout, social distancing and regular hand and venue sanitising, as well as a screen between myself and the singer when presenting the master classes or singing lessons.

Once the participants had agreed and I had received their contact information from the recruiters, I sent them an informed letter of consent (in which I explained what the research was about and what exactly was expected from them), as well as the NWU Confidentiality Agreement to sign. I also gained Gatekeeper Approval from all the relevant institutions to conduct this research once I had received approval from the NWU Basic Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC).

1.6 Target audience and value of the study

The target audience for this study is substantial. The outcomes can have great interest for voice pedagogues in Western art music, but also in the field of non-classical singing – also known as contemporary commercial music (CCM) (LoVetri, 2003). Furthermore, singers themselves will benefit from the study, since the findings will provide them with innovative methods that they could use to develop their vocal technique and musical

proficiency. The study will hopefully also contribute to the field of choir and ensemble singing, which means the study might be useful for conductors and ensemble leaders. In my previous work with choristers, especially amateurs, I have noticed how – in a relatively short amount of time – there were distinctly audible differences in, for example, the choir's timbre. Beyond that, I expect that it might be possible that insights gained from the research might be transferred into music making in general. The human voice is often the role model for other musicians such as brass and woodwind players and they are often urged to play as if they are *singing* on their instrument, that is, to play *cantabile*. Therefore, my surmise is that the findings could be of interest also for them. I also anticipate the possibility that, when the research is done, other target audiences, even from other disciplines, might also emerge in ways that are currently difficult to predict and might adapt the results in their art form.

1.7 Narrative structure

This first chapter has introduced and contextualised the research topic and stated the problem statement, as well as the purpose statement and the questions which the research will address.

Chapter Two offers insights into the research design and multiple methods used in this qualitative research study. It explains the philosophical perspective from which the study was conducted, as well as the strategies of inquiry that were employed to collect and analyse the data; it will address issues related to self-study, PAR and ID. The chapter also explains how observations, reflections (by the researcher and the participants), document analysis and audio-visual materials informed the type of data that were collected and how that, in turn, informed the way that the data were analysed. The role of the researcher, the measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and the steps taken to gain ethical clearance are discussed.

Chapter Three will communicate my understanding of various concepts of vocal pedagogy, as informed by my personal experience as a vocal pedagogue and my implicit knowledge of this discipline, as well as derived from the theories of renowned scholars in this field of study. The chapter considers aspects such as posture and

balance, the breathing process for singing (including breath support), the muscular, artistic, spiritual and emotional freedom needed for singing, and the correlation between voice, movements and gestures. Chapter Three also discusses the importance of singers' sensory awareness and emotions. The role of imagination in singing and in vocal pedagogy, as well as of technique and communication, artistry and psychology in singing, forms an important part of this chapter. The chapter also offers some thoughts on approaches to teaching and learning.

Chapters Four and Five offer an overview of the literature on individuals whose beliefs, perceptions and theories informed the LMT. Chapter Four focuses on the two theorists commonly associated with the LMT, namely Rudolf Laban and Yat Malmgren. It also introduces the reader to those whose work had inspired Laban, thus ultimately informing the LMT. Chapter Five focuses on the principles of the LMT. It explains and illustrates the features of the three-dimensional planes, motion factors, mental factors, working actions, inner attitudes, shadow moves, grades of intensity and externalised drives.

Based on the fact that one of the strategies of inquiry in this study involves self-study, I deemed it important to share the theories that inform my personal teaching approach. Throughout this part of Chapter Six I endeavoured to substantiate my perceptions, opinions and statements by referring to respected scholars within the field of vocal pedagogy. I present my understanding of reflective thinking and the need to acknowledge the metacognitive perspective on learning, the power of positive reinforcement, using imagery as a teaching tool, combining singing with movement and the role that one's knowledge acquired through one's own artistic experience can play in the teaching and learning environment. The chapter also offers some thoughts about my own questions and assumptions, as well as information about the didactic strategies I planned to use at the various research sites.

The four chapters that follow are written in a narrative style, relating the events that occurred during the teaching and learning experiences at the respective research sites (see 1.5 Research participants). These chapters present a narrative record of

information based on the strategies of inquiry – self-study, PAR and ID, including consideration of:

- which didactic strategies were used during the teaching and learning experiences;
- how the didactic strategies were employed during the teaching and learning experiences;
- my own perceptions, experiences, observations, reflections and interpretations; and
- the perceptions, responses, reflections and interpretations of the participants during the group lessons, one-on-one lessons and the master classes.

An integrated process of data collection (reported in these chapters) and data analysis (coding and categorising) leads to the discussion in Chapter 11. This chapter presents inferences based on the integration of data collected from the literature on concepts relating to vocal pedagogy and the LMT, as well as my own teaching philosophy and the data collected during the multiple visits to the respective research sites. The chapter offers my interpretation of the results, as well as the possible reasons thereof, and how they relate to the relevant literature.

Chapter 12 presents the conclusions reached in this research study and offers some thoughts on possible further research on how to use the principles of the LMT to facilitate technical and musical proficiencies in, for example, singers who specialize in contemporary commercial music, the somatic vocabulary of conductors, creating an ideal sound for specific vocal and instrumental repertoire.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The researcher's role in any research project is to work in a planned and systematic way to investigate a research question (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:3). Research has to be organized in a clear and incremental way. According to Durrheim (2006:34), systematic observations, guided by the researcher's defined question, have to be done during the whole research. The researcher has to be aware of the possibility that the research question can change or needs to be re-defined over time. Also, the design planning might change because of new, innovative ideas or questions (Durrheim, 2006:34). This thesis followed a qualitative research design. The sections that follow discuss the various elements of a qualitative research design (paradigm, strategy of inquiry, methods used to collect and analyse data) in general, as well as those of this thesis in particular.

2.1 Qualitative research

In all kinds of research, investigations are undertaken to let us know more about a phenomenon than we did before (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:5). Such a purpose can include, for example, drawing new conclusions based on available data, improving prevailing practices, or to establish additional relevant facts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:3). The research contributes to the scientific or artistic field and, by deciding what or how to draw conclusions based on the data analysis, as well as what type of conclusions will be drawn, the researcher can achieve a clear purpose. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:3) further state that applied research creates new knowledge and different perspectives on the world, while basic research is conducted to understand a phenomenon and to increase knowledge about such a phenomenon.

The purpose of this study required a qualitative research design – a design suitable for applied research. In qualitative research the main interest is to reveal “the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:5–6). Feyes and Thornberg (2019:18) emphasise the importance of the relationship between the researcher and that which is being researched in this type of research. The researcher does not present uninterpreted access to reality, but describes an interpretation of

reality, based on an interpretation process in which the problematization of the researcher's own pre-understanding is an important tool (Feyes & Thornberg, 2019:20; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:5). Merriam and Tisdell (2016:5) further state that a qualitative researcher is interested in how people interpret their experiences, how their worlds are constructed and in what way they attribute meaning to their experiences. Creswell and Poth (2018:43) claim that there are many elements to consider when conducting qualitative research. The research is done in a natural setting, where the researcher talks to the participants and watches their behaviour (Creswell and Poth 2018:43). The natural setting in my study was a teaching and learning environment within a tertiary institution that already has established practices. Interpretive description (ID), one of the strategies of inquiry used for this thesis, is often used by researchers who are interested in human experiences in their natural context where they can observe what consequences it might have for the applied work (Thorne, 2016:14). The research for this thesis was conducted within the context of tertiary education and I communicated with the participants and observed their behaviour. The process was inductive and consisted of complex reasoning. Feyes and Thornberg (2019:24) describe an inductive approach as one where conclusions are drawn once the researcher has studied several individual cases. According to Creswell and Poth (2018:43), the aim of qualitative research is to present a holistic account and to achieve this multiple methods can be used, including interactive, collaborative work with the participants. The research methods for collecting and analysing data for this thesis are discussed under 2.4 and 2.5.

The assumptions and characteristics applicable to a qualitative research project determine the frame constructed for the research. Both the researcher's and the participants' voices have to be heard. Creswell and Poth (2018:48) point out that it is preferable to focus on one phenomenon when beginning a good qualitative study. Following their advice, this study explores a single phenomenon (the use of didactic strategies based on the LMT when developing the technical and musical development of singers). The rich descriptions in the research report present the reasoning, the reflections, the observations and the inferences that emerge from this exploration. Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018:49) assert that the research report should be

written with the greatest accuracy. The way of writing should be engaging, clear and persuasive, and should offer unexpected ideas. The credibility of the findings should be high. In this sense, I tried to carefully to report the findings of this study as clearly as possible, while offering new insights into innovative teaching and learning strategies within the field of vocal pedagogy.

The link between that which is researched, and the researcher is important for the findings and the interpretation of the results is highly dependent on the researcher. Durrheim (2006:57) asserts that the way in which the researcher controls and manipulates the research environment will affect the research environment, the type of research and the research design and methods. He further believes that the “role of the researcher in the research situation are influenced by the paradigms and purposes of the study” (Durrheim, 2006:56). Feyes and Thornberg (2019:37) also claim that the researcher's awareness of his own skills, education and creativity is paramount, as these aspects can strongly affect the analysis both positively and negatively.

As mentioned earlier, I have extensive experience both as a singer and as a voice pedagogue, and I have used some of these strategies and tools for quite some time. Therefore, I already had some implicit knowledge that was useful for the research. I have seen, for example, how the motion factors (weight, space, time and flow) can change the singer's internal and external energy and, thereby, affect the degree of urgency, vocal fold compression, intonation and phonation patterns. Based on my previous experiences as a voice teacher, I am of the opinion that other parameters from the LMT, such as the grade of intensity, external drives, perceptions of gathering and scattering in the kinesphere, the yielding and contending working actions, the three different planes and the inner attitudes, etcetera, affect singing in an auspicious way. On the other hand, I had to keep in mind that my tacit and implicit knowledge might pose a risk (bias presumptions) and hence sought to be vigilant to negate any presumptions concerning the participants that might have occurred unintentionally. The process had to be flexible and interpretive, meaning that, over time, the research question might be modified or re-directed (Durrheim, 2006:36).

2.2 Research paradigm

The philosophical perspective, also known as the paradigm, constitutes the underlying beliefs on which research is always based. According to Rheman and Alharti (2016:51), a paradigm “is our way of understanding the reality of the world and studying it”. Durrheim (2006:40) explains the paradigm as an intertwining of ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. In qualitative research, that weave of scientific concepts means that the way in which the investigations are done and whoever is participating, how the data are being analysed, how conclusions are drawn from it and how the report is written are all informed by the participants and the researcher (Creswell & Poth 2018:15). Creswell and Poth (2018:17) also assert that the four parameters of a paradigm – ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology – should all be taken into account. Moreover, there might be implicit assumptions based on the researcher’s ontological or epistemological beliefs of which the researcher should also be aware (Rheman & Alharti, 2016:51–59). Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009:19) point out that researchers who engage in self-study are better situated when adopting an ontological position. Within the context of self-study as a strategy of inquiry, ontology can be regarded as the reality of the experience and the researcher employing self-study as a strategy of inquiry is committed to creating experiences in accordance with what we value (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:19). These two authors believe that there is a reciprocal relationship between ontology and epistemology: “we can know what is only in so far as our epistemological stance tells us” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:23). My ontological stance was to adapt the teaching and learning experience within the context of vocal pedagogy (the reality) to conform to the expectations (the value) of innovative and excellent teaching practices, specifically in this case, the ideal vocal sound and vocal performance practices in Western art music.

The philosophical underpinnings are important when conducting research (Creswell & Poth, 2018:9). Hence, it was necessary to pay serious attention to which paradigm I used to approach the research question because, to a large extent, it informs the framework for the research problem and the outcome thereof. A researcher’s perspectives, assumptions, experiences, concept of life and beliefs, as well as possible

shortcomings and successes in life, can affect the whole research study. Because a researcher's assumptions might direct the formulation of the question asked and the answers found, it is essential to critically examine such assumptions to ensure that they do not contribute to any bias.

Different scholars describe different ways of looking at paradigms. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:8), mention Prasad's (2005) five philosophical perspectives, namely an interpretative, a critical, a postmodern, a post-structural and a postcolonial perspective. According to Carr and Kemmis (1986), there are three philosophical perspectives, namely a positivist, an interpretative and a critical perspective (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016:9). Merriam and Tisdell (2016:9) claim that the most common philosophical perspective used in qualitative research is the interpretative perspective, also called constructivism.

In my research I used an interpretive paradigm. It is described as an 'open' paradigm in terms of which the research is trying to describe, understand and interpret the findings (Merriam & Tisdell 2016:13). The interpretive paradigm is a perspective entailing, amongst other things, observing the interaction between people, such as between me as the researcher and the individual participants, and the consequent subjective understandings can be many and varied. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:13) point out that the researcher who has adopted an interpretive paradigm can consider multiple realities, taking into account the context of the research. The purpose is to engage with the complexity of the field, rather than setting restrictions and limitations on the meaning of something (Creswell & Poth 2018:9)

I chose an interpretive paradigm as it can serve as a vessel whereby different ways of looking at the research question can exist side by side, interact or pull in different directions. My duty as a researcher was to look for a range of understandings and interpretations and to examine different beliefs and assumptions, including my own and those of the participants, and consider how such beliefs and assumptions might affect the outcome of the research. In the end I drew my conclusions from what I had seen, heard and in other ways observed and, ultimately, found ways of using the LMT as a tool for improving a singer's vocal and musical development.

2.3 Strategy of inquiry

2.3.1 Self-study

The strategies of inquiry for this thesis were self-study, participatory action research (PAR) and interpretive description (ID). The sub-question that relates to self-study as a strategy of inquiry was: What strategies, based on the principles of the LMT, do I as the researcher apply to facilitate technical and musical proficiency of the participants? Self-study is a qualitative strategy of inquiry often used in teaching and teacher education research. Self-study in teaching and teacher education research appeared in the early 1990s. The origins of self-study are largely attributed to the ideas of John Dewey (Dinkelman, 2003:8; Hauge, 2021:4; Loughran, 2006:43). Dewey (1859–1956) asserted that knowledge emerges when we proceed by trial and error in work and action – *learning by doing*; without action the theory is incomprehensible and without theories it is impossible to understand the actions (Egidius, 2009:67). Dewey (1916:153) strongly emphasised reflective thinking and claimed that “thinking *is* the method of intelligent learning”. According to Dinkelman (2003:8), there is an unequivocally intertwining between the two: reflection and teaching. Also, Donald Schön’s (1930-1997) idea of the impact that metacognition plays on our cognition (Egidius, 2009:124) and the “reflection-in-action” approach, has played a huge role in the emergence of the self-study design (Dinkelman, 2003:9).

Besides leading to a better understanding for practice, a self-study of teaching and teacher education practices (S-STTEP) also contributes to a more “vibrant educational theory” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:18). The method is used to understand how to improve one’s own practice or ways to articulate one’s acquired knowledge about such practices (Loughran, 2006:43; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:53). A self-study is conducted in an intentional and systematic way and the inquiry is aiming for a deeper understanding of the researcher’s practice (Dinkelman, 2003:6). Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009:17) state that self-study means that the researcher has an inevitable obligation to also seek to improve the learning situation of others. Moreover, the goal with the findings of self-study is also to directly inform teachers, students and schools (Feldman, 2003: 27).

In self-study there is a strong focus on the relation between self and others as well as self in relation to practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:76). There is also a focus on making the teacher's tacit knowledge explicit (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:18). The starting point in self-study is to use what you already know and to connect with findings from education research; to use the research tools in a meticulous way and then to consult experienced others (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:234). Kortjass (2019:6) underscores this interaction between colleagues from different fields of study who also use self-study as a strategy of inquiry. Dinkelman (2003:11) claims that the outcome of a self-study is new knowledge and understanding about the researcher's own practices within his immediate context, as well as about a general knowledge about teaching practices for the sake of other educators.

Self-study is always practice-based⁶ and is situated at the intersection of self and others (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001:15). Furthermore, PAR is considered to be a process closely associated with self-study (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Therefore, I put great emphasis on ensuring that I considered the singer's opinions, experiences, feelings and reflections. I created the required collaboration with others necessary for this study by asking questions to which the participants' responses provided insight into their own knowledge and understanding. This collaboration created a safe environment and encouraging the singers to be subjects of research, as well as to contribute actively, in a democratic and inclusive process.

Inasmuch as the researcher in self-study is encouraged to interact with others (Dinkelman, 2003:12; Hauge, 2021:8; Loughran, 2006:49), I regarded all discussions, not only with my supervisor and the singers with whom I had worked, but also with a number of experienced colleagues (actors and directors) who worked directly with Yat Malmgren during their education and training in London and Gothenburg as highly significant.

⁶ Candy and Edmonds (2018:63) explain that "[a] basic principle of practice-based research is that not only is practice embedded in the research process, but research questions arise from the process of practice, the answers to which are directed toward enlightening and enhancing practice".

Self-study aims to improve personal professionalism and collective professionalism as well as contributing to improvements in practice (Hauge, 2021). According to Hauge (2021), self-study is an appropriate and sound strategy “for experimentation, trying out methods [and] moving out into the unknown”. There are, according to LaBoskey and Richert (2015), five characteristics of self-study. Self-study is

- self-initiated and focused;
- aimed at improvement;
- interactive;
- includes multiple, mainly qualitative, methods, and
- defines validity as a validation process based in trustworthiness.

Self-study research is a hybrid research method in that it borrows from all kinds of other research methods, such as autoethnography, action research and phenomenology. However, Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009:70) take care to also point out the differences between self-study and the methods mentioned above.

- Self-study *is a look at self in action, usually within educational contexts.*
- Autoethnography *is a look at self within a larger context.*
- Action research *is a look at technical practice.*
- Phenomenology *is a look at lived experience from the subject’s own point of view.*

2.3.2 Participatory action research (PAR)

The action research cycle associated with action research is considered a process that is close to self-study (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:86). PAR is considered a subdivision of action research and originates from the work of the German-American philosopher and psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890–1947). Lewin was a follower of philosophical pragmatism and he claimed that humans learn by doing (Egidius, 2009:121). He stated that there is a pulsating continuum between inner reflections and external practice – theory and practice are parts of an energy field where they both nourish one another (Egidius, 2009:125). Another scholar who is considered as a great contributor to PAR

is Paulo Freire (1921–1997), a Brazilian adult educator who expounded the crucial importance of critical reflection and conscientisation for uplifting marginalized and poor people (MacDonald, 2012:36).

Participatory action research (PAR), the second strategy of inquiry used in this thesis, is defined as “a philosophical approach to research that recognizes the need for persons being studied to participate in the design and conduct of all phases (e.g. design, execution and dissemination) of any research that affects them” (Vollman, Anderson & McFarlane, 2004:129). The strategy can be explained in terms of a cycle of steps: observe, reflect, act, evaluate, modify and then “move in new directions” (Choo, 2018). Furthermore, PAR is considered to have the capacity to incorporate reflections about political, historical and geographical contexts (McDonald, 2012:38). In my study I found it important to take these aspects in account, since I conducted the research at four different tertiary settings in two different parts of the world.

The philosophical paradigm on which PAR is built is a dialectical approach, where objectivity is not possible but where “multiple or shared realities exist” (Kelly, 2005:66). According to Koch and Kralik (2006:28), action research is always democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing. The strategy emphasises all human values and everyone’s capacity to take part in the research, its power to provide freedom from debilitating conditions, and its ability to find the full potential in people’s expressions (Koch & Kralik 2006:28). Coghlan (2014) asserts that the core principle of PAR is collaborative participation.

I regard PAR as a way not only to explore (through self-study) my own practices within and contributions to the context of singing education, but also as way to gain insight into and improve the participants’ knowledge and allow them to reflect on their own practices in a democratic and inclusive learning process for all involved in the study. As such, my participatory role was significant in this strategy as well, along with the responses of the participants. I applied participatory action research (PAR) as the strategy of inquiry to investigate the sub-question: How do the singers who are involved in this study respond to the use of the didactic strategies based on the principles of the LMT?

Different models of action research serve as ways to reach the core of the inquiry. The action research model can be explained in terms of a cycle of steps: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The process of the cycle is iterative, in that it starts over again and again, and goes on in a “spiral of action” (Kemmis *et al.*, 2014:18): re-planning, acting, observing and reflecting, reaching new insights, ideas and assumptions. A later, more refined action research model by Whitehead and McNiff consists of five steps: observe, reflect, act, evaluate and modify, and thereafter “move in new directions” (Choo, 2018). Thus, the common denominators in these and other similar models are the re-reflections and the re-thinking as powerful and essential tools in the strategy.

2.3.3 Interpretive description

The third strategy of inquiry employed in this research involves ID, a strategy of inquiry designed to unveil, illustrate, articulate and spread the knowledge and outcomes that applied research needs to formulate and clarify in areas such as education, nursing care or in the service sector (Thorne, 2016:13). In this research, ID was used to further increase understanding of the issue raised the sub-question: How do the singers who are involved in this study respond to the use of the didactic strategies based on the principles of the LMT? Using ID in this research, I interpreted and described the participants’ verbal and non-verbal responses, as well as their written and spoken reflections within the context of the teaching and learning environment. These interpretations and descriptions not only offered additional data on the efficacy of the didactic strategies, but also led to understanding instances where the use of the didactic strategies did not result in positive change and to an adaptation of some of the didactic strategies in order for them to be more effective. Ultimately, ID allowed me to elucidate, demonstrate and disseminate information on how the singers experienced the didactic strategies while using them.

This interpretive way of understanding grew from a tradition of thinkers like Paul Ricoeur, Martin Heidegger and Hans-George Gadamer. Research built on this tradition strives to refine the knowledge and catch the experiences reflected in others’ perspectives. At the same time, it aims to present the social and cultural circumstances that might have formed these perspectives (Thorne, 2016:46). The discussion of ID in

this thesis rests very strongly on Thorne's (2016) seminal publication about this strategy of inquiry. While other scholars have also written about ID (Oliver, 2011; Menzies, 2014), they all base their understanding thereof on Thorne's work.

In ID the word *interpretive* means that the inspiration originates from a philosophical basis (Thorne, 2016:44). The word interpretive is inspired by the interpretive hermeneutic tradition. However, ID recognizes that the applied research thinking of hermeneutics tends to be satisfied with solely a pure description. ID, on the other hand, has a wider horizon and rather endeavour to discover patterns and associations within the phenomenon that has been described (Thorne 2016:48). The purpose is not to see an object as it exists in reality, but to identify how people's experiences of these objects contribute to constructing their social identities and perceptions (Thorne, 2016:46). Hence, one could argue that ID is a fitting strategy for my research, since it enables an understanding of the singers' experiences and perceptions.

ID has its origin in the need to generate an understanding of a complex phenomenon within the field of study (Thorne, 2016:25). According to Thorne (2016:13), understanding a plethora of insights, approaches and perspectives and the intersection between them is necessary. Originally, ID was designed to help nurses, who, like educators who engage in self-study, also have a great need of practical knowledge to translate the theories into their actions. They had a need to find a strategy for action beyond the purely theoretical methods.

Thorne (2016:13) asserts that ID is neither an objective nor a subjective strategy of inquiry. It takes its place somewhere in between and considers the whole picture of factuality and social constructions to obtain a relevant and meaningful understanding of ideas and problems of importance in relevant to applied research. Thorne (2016:25) claims that dealing with the dialectical tension between theory and application is a central feature of the design.

ID is suitable for research that entails an inductive approach when researching a phenomenon using specific interpretive lenses. The inductive process moves from studying patterns in specific data to develop general theoretical constructions of the

observed phenomena (Thorne, 2016:44). Since different strategies of inquiry will lead to a range of outcomes, it is essential to find a design that is thoroughly based upon the purpose of the research, as well as why it is worth finding (Thorne, 2016:40).

In investigations that draw on ID, the researcher, as is the case in self-study, is encouraged to borrow from all kinds of strategies. It can be considered more like an open option and the question asked is more important than the method used. However, Thorne (2016:33) points out that the importance of the question does not mean that the theoretical underpinning can be peeled away. The strategy is designed to strengthen the applied qualitative research in order to adapt it to the epistemological basis of the discipline.

According to Thorne (2016:34), ID is best understood as “a conceptual label through which to signify attributes of the kind of qualitative research approach one intends to embark upon”. Besides asking an actual question in the real world, there are two more parameters that distinguish the strategy, namely that

- the researcher has to have an understanding of what they already know and do not know, based on the empirical evidence (similar to the implicit and explicit knowledge in self-study research); and
- they have to consider the contextual and the conceptual settings.

2.4 Data collection

The researcher has to make choices about what kinds of data will be collected and in what way this will be done. The choices are, to a large extent, dependent on the research design of the study (Fejes & Thornberg, 2019:33). The collected data can be measurable and tangible, but also sometimes difficult to measure and invisible in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:105). In qualitative research many different methods for data collection are used and the researcher is encouraged to use new and innovative methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018:147). The different data-collection methods can be considered as a circle of interrelated activities, where the researcher is involved and engaged, but at the same time occupies a position beyond the data-collection process. The researcher aims to gather good information and thus create

favourable circumstances in order to answer the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018:148). As explained earlier, I used many different strategies of inquiry in my research, which allowed me to employ different data-collection methods, as researchers who conduct self-study and ID are encouraged to do.

As in the case of ID, I also refer to Thorne (2016), who offers clear ideas about the methods for collecting and analysing data when conducting an ID. In ID the goal in using the data is to find an appropriate way to get as close as possible to the subjective experience captured and, thereby, make it feasible to answer the research question (Thorne, 2016:113). Even though there is an unlimited number of methods and choices in ID, it is important that they be adapted well to address the research question (Thorne, 2016:124). Since the researcher is actively involved in the data collection, it becomes a description of what they observe, and an interpretation as a result of the sense that they make during the ongoing process of reflection on the collected data (Thorne, 2016:125). In my research I intended to study, describe and interpret my own experiences, while teaching, using the didactic strategies based on the LMT. During these teaching-learning experiences, I also customised the didactic strategies according to what I deemed to be necessary for each singer. Furthermore, I considered their responses and how they perceived their own experiences. The details of the processes involved in the customization of the strategies are unpacked in Chapter Five of the thesis. I worked from the specific to the general to look for patterns, conclusions and ways of constructing theories on the basis of the outcomes. I went back and forth between the practical and the theoretical. I followed an approach that allowed me to move between being objective and being subjective, and sometimes even hovering in between.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018:160), observations, studying documents and audio-visual materials are among the basic types of data collection. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:137) regard observations as one of the most common methods used in qualitative research. Fejes and Thornberg (2019:248) assert that interpretation involves reflecting critically and looking for underlying meanings or patterns. For this research I collected data through observation, document analysis, reflections and

audio-visual material. Some of the methods used to collect data in this study are discussed below.

2.4.1 Observation

Participant observation was a huge part of my data-collection process. As mentioned above, I was significantly involved as an encouraging facilitator during my study. When observation is used as a data-collection method, it is vital that the researcher decides what they will observe, when they will make such observations, and how long such observations will last before engaging in the research activities (Creswell & Poth, 2018:168). For the purpose of this research, I focused on observing the quality of sound, the vocal technique and the singer's responses (physically), and tried to perceive the mental and emotional responses to the didactic strategies used during the master classes that I presented. I was also able to gain insight into their perceptions about their experiences when reading their reflective journals. It was of the utmost importance to use all the senses and, as such, I listened carefully to the sound quality and watched the singers for any signs of physical, mental and emotional reactions.

During the observations it is essential to keep meticulous notes, while also devoting attention to activities, conversations, interactions and also one's own behaviour (Creswell & Poth, 2018:167). Being an observer means employing different degrees of observation. Observation can involve anything from being totally engaged in the activities to being a completely detached observer. Sometimes even the smallest contemplation of something can lead to the most powerful new understandings or insight, and it can come from the most unexpected direction (Thorne, 2016:117). While it often happens that the researcher, for example, adopts a different stance or changes theoretic direction during the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018:168), Thorne (2016:116) asserts that it is crucial that the researcher maintains a humble and reflective attitude, in order to make sure that their own personality does not dominate the investigating process, thus leading it in a predictable direction. It can be a sound approach to assume the position of a neutral, but encouraging facilitator (Thorne, 2016:116).

2.4.2 Reflections

Reflection was an imperative of my data-collection strategy, as well as during the data analysis. Using reflection as a tool in data collection and data analysis means that I remain aware of the circumstances around the different aspects and that I actively question and observe what consequences they might have for the research (Feyes & Thornberg, 2019:259). Consequently, I reflected on the strategies I was using, the singer's performance, their responses to the strategies I suggested and their reflections on their own experiences. I took into account verbal feedback by asking the participants questions that encouraged them to reflect on their own experiences. I kept a reflexive journal throughout the research process as a tool for recording and reminding me of observations, critical moments etcetera – a tool that contributed significantly to the study (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:76).

2.4.3 Document analysis

Along with the documents studied in the systematic literature review, I also collected data by analysing my own reflective journal and also reflective journals that I asked the singers to keep. Encouraging the participants to continue working and using the strategies on their own during their rehearsals, and then to document their reflections of their experiences during such rehearsal sessions, made a valuable contribution to the study. My own reflective journal, as well as those written by the participants in this study, supported the processes of data collection, data analysis and reporting results.

2.4.4 Audio-visual materials

Irrespective of how the data are collected, it is of the utmost importance that the researcher is fully aware not only of the consequences the method has for interpretation and analysis, but also of the credibility of the study for a future target group (Thorne, 2016:114). Both audio and audio-visual equipment were used in this study to document the explorations (Nind, *et al.*, 2015). I also used auditory stimuli or visual images to stimulate responses that might lead to enriched data (Thorne, 2016:121). Regardless of whether the participants or I did the recordings, it was

important to ensure that the equipment was of a high quality and that the data were stored in a safe way (Creswell & Poth, 2018:175) for at least five years.

2.5 Data analysis

Analysis in qualitative research often entails a course of action that combines a rough initial analysis of the material followed by a detailed analysis in order to identify generalised patterns and to draw conclusions from them (Flick, 2014:5). During the process of analysis, the researcher arranges and, in a systematic way, explores the data by coding and decomposing it in order to reach a synthesis and create patterns (Feyes & Thornberg, 2019:35). When analysing the question of what strategies I as the participatory researcher apply to facilitate technical and musical proficiency of the participants, I applied methods applicable to self-study. A self-study analysis is a mixture of sampling texts, finding themes and constructing models of contextualization (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:148). In a PAR study, it is not only the researcher but also the other participants who define, analyse and solve the problem. Thorne (2016:47) promotes the idea that ID reflects a mental attitude that considers it is essential to find the inherent value of a phenomenon by means of thorough analysis, followed by an equally urgent need to place the findings back into the practical context.

To conduct an analysis of the data that have been collected, the researcher has to classify and interpret the collected material in order to attribute meaning to the findings and to offer explicit and implicit conclusions (Flick, 2014:5). Thorne (2016:120) further asserts that one way of organizing and analysing the material is to divide it into macro, meso and micro levels, and then identifying the distinctions between them and looking for interactions among these levels.

According to Flick (2014:11) there are two major approaches to analysing qualitative data. The first is to reduce the big and complex structure into smaller parts, using qualitative content analysis, such as organizing the data by coding it (Fejes & Thornberg, 2019:48). The second is more the reverse, namely to expand the material by producing more than one interpretation. The most appropriate way of dealing with

the vast amounts of data in this study proved to be organizing the data by coding it into categories and concepts.

Flick (2014:6) states that there are three overall general goals with the analysis, namely

- to describe a phenomenon;
- to compare different data, looking for differences and similarities; and
- to develop a theory of the phenomenon based upon the data.

The analysis can be done either after the data collection has been completed or as an ongoing process during the collection (Flick, 2014:10). In this study I integrated the collection and the ongoing analysis, and thereby gained new insights and approaches in a cumulative way in an incremental process.

In the same way that the strategy of inquiry governs the collection of the data, it also affects the interpretation of the research question (Fejes & Thornberg, 2019:38). Therefore, no matter what design is chosen, it is important to fully understand both what the consequences of interpretation and analysis are, as well as to ensure the credibility of the research for the target group (Thorne, 2016:113). The interpretation is central to making sense of the data in the qualitative research, but it is also a challenge (Flick, 2014:136). It was important to remember the relationship between interpretation, analysis and the participants in this study, especially because of the large number of participants involved.

One big risk in qualitative research is that the data tends to become too voluminous. As such, the organisation, coding and categorising of the data from the onset of the study was very important. Thorne (2016:120) claims that the researcher has to devote attention to common assumptions in observations – from the respondents' side, as well as from the side of the researcher.

Beyond that, it is important also to be aware of the time-consuming nature of transcribing interviews, but by doing this oneself the researcher will get to know the material better (Seidman, 2006:115). Therefore, it was essential to initially plan for making these transcriptions and also to realise how costly this work can be if one

should decide to let someone else do it. I did my own data analysis within an academic environment. Adhering to the guidelines set by the North-West University, the data will be stored on a password protected file for at least five years.

2.6 Role of the researcher

The researcher plays a huge role in qualitative research, because the researcher is an instrument of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018:43). The whole research process starts with assumptions and the researcher decides what theoretical approach is most appropriate to be used. Furthermore, the researcher is present when observation occurs. Being present not only enables a researcher to listen to that which is said, but also to devote attention to non-verbal signs. The researcher can process the data immediately and it is also possible to go back to the respondents to obtain more precision in the interpretation. Furthermore, the researcher can explain unexpected or unusual answers in the study and ultimately can summarize and clarify the material directly for the respondents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:16).

The researcher collects the data, often done by studying documents, observations, conducting interviews using open-ended questions, etcetera. Consequently, the researcher is the one responsible for interpreting the findings or results (Creswell & Poth, 2018:43). The results are documented throughout the whole process and they are often presented to the participants, who can then confirm or dispute the findings and even implement suggestions. The researcher can try new strategies during the observation process and, through trial and error, it is possible that new results will emerge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:4). As a researcher it was important for me to devote attention to contextual features and how they might affect and inform the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018:14). The researcher may need to adapt to the situation and the respondents involved and can do so in a responsive way (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:16).

The relation between what is researched, and the researcher is something unique and central in the process (Fejes & Thornberg, 2019:20). Furthermore, Fejes and Thornberg (2019:20) claim that the researcher's role and overall purpose are largely to undertake an interpretation of something. A researcher's understanding of who they

are and where they come from, as well as what they represent and want to achieve, is central in both self-study and ID (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001:13) and assists with avoiding predictable risks with the design (Thorne, 2016:50). However, in PAR the role of the researcher is not as prominent as that of the participant. In PAR it is the participants' voices that are more conspicuous (MacDonald, 2012:34). The researcher's role is more that of a facilitator (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019:27). However, it is important to consider the role of the researcher even in PAR to observe and be aware of all perspectives that might affect the findings. Furthermore, the researcher's earlier experiences (Dinkelman, 2003:8), as well as his collaboration with others (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:v) are all parameters that can affect the findings. I already situated myself earlier in the problem statement as an experienced voice pedagogue who is familiar with the LMT and who has some experience in using didactic strategies based on that technique when teaching singing.

The writing in the research report can be personal. The way the researcher reflects on his background and experiences, and how the research question is investigated and interpreted, are all parameters woven together to inform the results that the researcher will achieve (Creswell & Poth, 2018:47–49).

2.7 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research it is important to ensure that the research is reliable and trustworthy. Sometimes qualitative research is criticized for the results not being measurable or repeatable. That means that purely qualitative research can be met with scepticism in some circles (Bryman, 2012:269). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016:16), one big risk in qualitative research is that the researcher might be perceived as being biased. Another risk mentioned is that the participants might be subjective. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:16) believe that it is important that the researcher identifies the risk of bias and tries to make subjectivity of the participants and the researcher visible. In order to be trustworthy, it is essential to be honest and tell the truth about your research. It is also necessary that commercial interests or interests with other associations are openly accounted for (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017:8). In order to achieve the highest level of credibility, it is essential that the thesis be characterised by scientific

trustworthiness (Lindstedt, 2013:139). Irrespective of how the data are collected, it is of the utmost importance that the researcher is fully aware not only of the consequences the method has for the interpretation and analysis, but also of the need for a future target group to perceive the research as trustworthy (Thorne, 2016:114).

A way of ensuring the trustworthiness of the research is to consider how I can convince myself as well as others that my study is noteworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290). There are four criteria that are useful for achieving a trustworthy and credible study: *truth value*, *applicability*, *consistency* and *neutrality* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290). That means that the researcher has to answer for how the study can establish confidence in the value of the results, how the findings can be applicable in other contexts, how the findings should be consistent if the research were repeated, and for ensuring that the findings are neutral and not in any way biased.

Lincoln and Guba (1985:301) state that there are five techniques for increasing the probability of a study's credibility. There are a number of steps the researcher may take to strengthen credibility. Firstly, the researcher has to have a *prolonged engagement* with the material. I accordingly spent a generous amount of time with the participants, mainly face-to-face, but also by being accessible online for questions, reflections and lessons. I worked with the participants several times over a period of 18 months, thereby ensuring not only that they comprehend the ideas and concepts, but consequently also creating the necessary contexts and opportunities for collecting and compiling the most fruitful data. A second way to increase the trustworthiness of a research study is to use *peer debriefing* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:308). The peer's task can be to put difficult questions to the researcher, thoroughly examining the working hypothesis and ensuring the researcher adopt an objective approach. My supervisor was a part of the peer debriefing in this study.

The third technique that Lincoln and Guba (1985:309) put forward is *negative case analysis*. The technique means that the hypothesis is continuously revised, and the aim is to refine it until it "accounts for all known cases without exception" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:309). While I did not formulate a hypothesis for this study, it was sensible to also take into account negative or deviant cases in order to ensure that the research

was both transparent and comprehensive. It can then serve as an “expansion of the range of a theory’s explanation” (Emigh, 1997:656).

Referential adequacy is the fourth technique, meaning that the researcher is archiving but not analysing a part of the collected data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:313). When the remaining data have been analysed and tentative findings have been made, the researcher returns to the archived data and analyses it as a way of validating the findings in the preliminary results. I found that returning to archived data and analysing it allowed me not only to enrich the descriptions and discussions in my research report, but also to compare the findings with the referential material, ensuring that the findings can be confirmed and thereby, ensure the trustworthiness of the research.

Finally, the fifth technique to achieve a high level of credibility for a study, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985:314), is to do *member checks*. Lincoln and Guba (1985:314) assert that this is the most decisive technique to ensure trustworthiness in a study. By implementing these checks continuously, the researcher can figure out, for example, if the understanding of the participants’ answers has been correct, or if the respondents want to add something or change something. In my study this happened spontaneously in a reflective dialogue with the participants by asking questions about the technique that allowed me to make sure that the concepts were comprehensible.

2.8 Ethical issues

This study was guided by the requirements of the Basic Social and Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) of the NWU Faculty of Humanities. I gained permission from each individual participant, as well as individual institutions where relevant, to use the data gathered during the research process. As mentioned earlier, the participants had been recruited by others in order to ensure that the sampling is unbiased. It was important to avoid vulnerable persons or groups who might in some way or other experience anxiety, embarrassment or other inconveniences. The participants were over 18 years and participated in the study voluntarily. I asked the recruiters to find participants who are open-minded and bold, and who are willing to experiment with and try new concepts in vocal pedagogy. As mentioned before, I made sure that the

students' regular singing teachers were informed and that they consented to my collaboration with the students. The research took place in a safe environment, and I endeavoured to gently guide the participants in all the activities. The whole study was supervised by Prof. Santisa Viljoen, according to the guidelines set by BaSSREC.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTS OF VOCAL PEDAGOGY

This chapter provides an overview of specific concepts related to voice pedagogy. After a brief historical background, I intend to guide the reader through the essential components needed for classical singing. I shall illuminate the aspects of posture and balance, the breathing process, breath support and four different approaches to freedom: muscular, artistic, spiritual and emotional. Additionally, I shall address topics such as movements and phonation, sensations, emotions and imagination, all aspects that could be incorporated into a holistic approach to singing pedagogy. Moreover, my literature review will address what the authors convey regarding communication and artistry for singers. Finally, a short paragraph will consider psychological issues affecting singers, followed by a more comprehensive paragraph on teaching and learning within the context of training singers.

What we currently consider to be good classical singing – a resonant, powerful and beautiful balanced *chiaroscuro* timbre, achieved by means of, for example, low breathing, a low laryngeal setting, flow phonation, a constant vibrato, registration evenness etcetera (Fisher & Kayes, 2016:136; Miller, 1996b:150; Sundberg, 2007:264; Titze, 2010:4) – is very much a 20th-century phenomenon, even though some characteristic features of the style were developed during the 19th century (Klingfors, 1990:8). It might be easy to assume that classical singing, just because it represents something classical, is always and always has been performed in the same way. But if we listen to recordings of the highest standard classical singers from the beginning of the 1900s (Tetrazzini, Patti, Melba, Caruso,)⁷ and compare those versions to what is heard in today's singers, we notice differences in many aspects such as vibrato, timbre, register evenness and articulation, and observe how perceptions of the ideal sound have changed over time. In my opinion there were more often straight tones, a lighter timbre with less dark quality, and more clear voice breaks in some female voices between chest and falsetto register than we hear today. I also find that singers from

⁷ It has to be acknowledged that that some of the singers were already at a more advanced age at the time of their recordings (Potter & Sorrell, 2014:202) and that the recording equipment at the time had limited capacity.

bygone eras (exemplified by the four singers mentioned above) more often sang with clearer diction compared to what is commonly heard today. The singers on these early recordings had a closer connection to the *bel canto*⁸ tradition – a tradition which claimed that singing, very much with the singer in the foreground, always has to be beautiful and agreeable (Berne, 2016). Besides, the singer's ability to embellish the music with ornaments was emphasised, and so was the agility of voice and the improvisational elements. The use of continuous vibrato, which prevails today in Western classical singing, did not occur in their singing (Potter & Sorrell, 2014:178).

3.1 Posture and balance

A large part of good singing has to do with finding a good balance between different facets. A singer needs a “balance of physical, emotional, and mental energy, and imagination” when performing (Bunch Dayme, 2005:111; Hemsley, 1998:41; Miller 1996a:205; Vennard, 1968:191). Singing involves the whole body-system and the sound that comes out of the singer is the culmination of what takes place inside the human being, mentally and physically. Bunch (1997:25) states that *dynamic* is the best word to use when it comes to posture and to achieving a good flow and stable balance instead of a static or fixed stance. There is the matter of finding a balance between tension and freedom. Laban (2011:75) states that, to a large extent, understanding what freedom (physically and vocally) feels like is possible once one is able to experience the opposite of being 'free in' or 'free from' the flow in a movement. However, physical freedom can also be manifested, even though it derives from strenuous activity. The activity can consist of unusual movements for the performer; an activity performed with an unhabitual motivation and executed in another context that, consequently, might contribute to physical freedom (Ullman, 1969:17). Thus, relaxation can be achieved through two counter-poles as long as they are sufficiently

⁸ *Bel canto* means beautiful singing and refers to the singing style developed by the *castrati* during the Baroque period (1685–1750). However, the most common definition of the term today refers to the explicit Italian singing style that was dominant during the period from 1800–1850; a romantic style which still took over the basic principles of Baroque singing (Berne, 2016). In an operatic context, Rossini (1792–1868), Donizetti (1797–1848) Bellini (1801–1835) and early Verdi (1813–1901) are the composers who are recognized as *bel canto* composers (Berne, 2016).

different and the movement between them takes place and provides relaxation (Ullman, 1969:17). Ullman (1969:18) points out that relaxation can therefore be likened to a process rather than a state.

Relaxation is, therefore, rather a process than a state involving effort in a series of operations of an inner and an outer nature. At times we may play it easy whilst at others we may stress our endeavour to progress, attain, change, develop and when there is a rhythmical flux between the two kinds of efforts, the easy and the stressed ones, a favourable condition for relaxation is given.

Stanislavski (1976:151) also stressed the importance of a degree of freedom in the body for creative work. Too much muscular strain hinders the work of the soul and so the experience of even the tiniest unnecessary level of tension will be an obstacle for a free access to the artist's resources. The singer who has a well-trained body has an awareness of tension and can easily reduce it before it becomes established (Sadolin 2006:222).

Producing a voice needs some muscular loading, but it is essential not only that this occurs in the right muscles, but to maintain an efficient vocal apparatus it is also essential for the whole body to be in harmony (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:173). Williams (2013:134) claims that an imbalance in the posture often leads to unnecessary tension in the muscles and hence an inefficient use of the voice. Doscher (1994:69) declares that the posture is like a kinaesthetic barometer for the whole body; an indication of balance, energy potential and muscle tone. She advises that the singer stands buoyantly and ready for action (Doscher, 1994:71).

Singing is a very complex act and almost 100 muscles are involved in the process of phonation (Lindblad, 1992:117). We can control the pitch, the volume and to some extent the timbre (Lindblad, 1992:9) by, for example, the diaphragm, abdominal muscles, intercostal muscles and external and internal laryngeal muscles. If one takes into consideration that all these muscles have to work together optimally in order to even produce sound, it is essential that the body be postured in the correct way. The

functions of just the larynx are driven by three different parts of the nervous system. Firstly, we have the limbic system which is a more primitive part of the brain. It is activated by emotions, especially those connected to motivation and survival, and it also regulates the autonomic functions. The limbic system also controls the laryngeal muscles and, by using primal sounds, the vocal system works as efficiently as possible (Williams, 2013:9). Secondly, we have the speech motor, which also conducts the articulators and is used consciously. The third system is the spinal reflex system, which is responsible for, amongst others, coughing, yawning and swallowing (Titze, 2010:24).

Chapman (2016:84) claims that issues with phonation almost always originate from a lack of a breathing process that is conducive to singing or bad postural alignment. The literature on the art of singing observes that very much the same things are needed to achieve a good quality sound. The first thing often mentioned is good postural alignment. Good posture affects breathing, as well as phonation and resonance. Dayme (2005:24) regards the effective alignment of the body (posture) as essential and believes that it will affect the singer's balance and sound quality. Poor posture can be the source of several limitations for the singer, including insufficient breath support, weaker tones, flat singing, excessive vibrato and difficulties in finding a good *imposto*⁹ (David, 2008:18).

An ideal way to find a good and balanced posture is to be aware of every part of the body and the relation between the parts (Goren 2017:1). One of the methods that promotes awareness of the relation between the parts of the body is the *Feldenkrais method*. The method originated with Moshe Feldenkrais (1904–1984), a physicist and electrical engineer, whose method is based on scientific principles of basic human movements (Nelson & Blades, 2018: viii). The Feldenkrais method is used to reduce muscle tension and improve flexibility in the body. According to the Feldenkrais method, the best way to improve singing – to “sing with your whole self” – is to use the feet well (Nelson & Blades, 2018:33). The method advocates a stance where the feet are placed firmly on the floor, which distributes the body weight evenly. Those who

⁹ Placement of the voice.

advocate for the method (Feldenkrais Method, 2021) claim that the improvements in the body stance will enhance the thinking, emotional regulation and problem-solving capabilities of the person using the method.

Blades (2017) interviewed various successful singing pedagogues such as Christansen, Keenze, Wall and Webber, who are of the opinion that, in order to acquire a good singing posture, ideas and images of alertness and looseness, a “listening posture”, muscular tonicity, an overall kinaesthetic awareness and an emotional connection to the body are essential. Arder (2009:99) goes a little bit further and states that, before the singer is anchored in “*hara*”¹⁰ – the inner centre in the abdominal section – the singer cannot find a good posture that comes from the inside.

Laban seems to have had strong insights into voice production. When he compared movements in the body with the voice’s movements, he stated that the “audible movement of the vocal cords, becomes almost a dance in singing” (Laban, 2011:91). He claimed that “the greater the economy of effort, the less apparent is the strain” (Laban, 2011:6). He also claimed that the voice is a part of a whole unit instead of just a “walking head” and emphasised that vocal fitness has its origin in body posture (Hodgson, 2001:201). A free body that is flexible and able to move freely is beneficial to singers, because such a body can avoid tensions in unwanted places and can thereby create more resonance in the voice (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:182). Adrian (2008:23) uses the metaphor that movement, voice and speech might be considered siblings and their mother is breath. Arder (2009:99) also points out that good posture affects the breathing and believes that it can change the singer’s whole singing experience.

3.2 Breathing process

Lehmann (1993:5) claimed that as early as in the beginning of the 18th century artistic singing was understood to comprise, first and foremost, of a distinct understanding of

¹⁰ The human centre of gravity, the abdominal area, as it is addressed in Japanese culture (Arder, 2009:99).

breathing. According to Marek (2007:85), great singing requires excellent breath support, controlled breathing and a balanced flow of air during the onset of phonation. Sundberg's (2007:39) conviction is that the breathing process is the first thing to deal with when a person has problems with their vocal folds. This is an indication that the proper breathing process is essential for phonation in singing. Furthermore, Sundberg (2007:40) states that the breathing apparatus and the larynx are closely connected and therefore the breathing process has consequences for the laryngeal musculature. Miller (1996b:196) asserts that there is a direct correlation between a good onset, a good breathing process and a vibrant tone, while Linklater (2006:121) states that a low and large breathing capacity also implies a larger capacity in terms of emotions. She points out how aspects of breathing and expression can be of great help to free the voice. Also, Bozeman (2018:13) states that singing will be improved with good breathing. The inhalation should be "inspired" as if the singer is about to communicate in order to set the instrument in a state of pre-phonatory preparation. The Italian expression *inalare la voce* (inhale the voice) is known to most classical singers as a way to keep the instrument open and active. The respiratory volume capacity in the human body is constant and cannot be changed. However, it can be highly beneficial to teach a singer to use and economise the flow of air during exhalation.

Even though several different and quite efficient breathing methods are evident among professional singers (Morris & Hutchison, 2017:32; Thomasson, 2003:72), there is one method – the *accent method* – that, according to Morris and Hutchison (2017: 92) can improve a singer's breathing, as well as the dynamic and the vocal range significantly. The accent method was invented by the Danish phonetician, Sven Smith, and was initially developed to treat stammers and voice disorders. However, Morris and Hutchison (2017) adapted the method to be an effective tool also in the field of singing methodology. In short, the accent method is about the co-ordination between breath, voice and articulation (Morris & Hutchison, 2017:69). By focusing on abdominal-diaphragmatic breathing, using fricatives performed in certain patterns, the strength, endurance and flexibility of the voice and the awareness of the airflow are optimised. The benefit of a low breathing technique is explained by McKinney (2005:48), who stated that the lower part of each lung is better adapted for efficient breathing. It is

equipped with more capillaries and thus more efficient in removing the carbon dioxide and bring oxygen into the blood.

The fricatives are semi occluded vocal tract sounds (SOVT) and are used in training as they promote good vocal closure because of the back pressure. They have a higher airflow than vowels and, therefore, the airflow are easier to monitor (Morris & Hutchison, 2017:89). Using the fricatives (or other SOVT sounds such as lip trills or raspberries) can facilitate the connection between the support system and an open throat. In order to be able to phonate freely inhalation should also be done correctly. The inhalation is just the recoil after the breathing-out phase, a quick and effective inhalation.¹¹

The training for the breathing process starts with the singer on the floor in a supine position. The student is requested just to note the respiration during a period of inactivity; this is to become aware of the activity in the abdomen and to observe a still upper chest. Then a breathy /w/ is added on the exhalation. This becomes a transitional stage between the respiration at rest and the respiration for speech. The next step is to do the same thing while lying on their side. This is more challenging since the weight of the abdominal content does not contribute as much to the expiration. That induces more activity in the abdominal muscles. After that, the procedure is repeated with the singer sitting on a chair and finally in a standing position. Successively, more and more activity in the abdominal muscles is needed during the phonation process since gravity no longer assists the phonation. The exercises that follow are performed with low intensity, breathy and with low pitch. Voiced and unvoiced sounds are used in different patterns with a *call and response* approach between the pedagogue and the student. They start *Largo* (very slowly, 40–60 beats per minute) and continue with *Andante* (at a calm, walking tempo, 56–108 bpm) and *Allegro* (quick, gay and lively, 120–168 bpm). Morris and Hutchison (2017:88, 92) claim that the method balances muscle activity

¹¹ When using the accent method for speaking, the inhalation and exhalation phases have the same length. However, to avoid the common over-breathing tendency among singers, the method is adjusted when applied for singing (Morris & Hutchison, 2017:89).

and breath energy, and significantly increases the both the dynamic range and the pitch in the singer's voice.

Much of the literature in the field of singing is also focused on the balance within a singer's personality. According to Dahl (2002:21), the condition of the body is dependent on how we live and our moods. Tension in the jaw, neck and diaphragm tends to occur in a body filled with stress and, therefore, the starting point in singing should involve creating a physical and mental balance.

3.3 Breath support

In the same way as most scholars of voice pedagogy emphasise posture and breathing, they also consider breath support as a crucial part of the prerequisites for excellent singing. Breath support can be explained as "muscular energy that is used to manipulate the respiratory system in order to maintain the appropriate balance of air pressure and air flow" (Morris & Hutchison, 2017:17). Harrison and O'Bryan (2014:168) explain it as "[t]he act of maintaining dynamic equilibrium between the expiratory recoil in the abdominals and the pelvic floor and the resistance to that breath flow from the diaphragm, the external intercostals and vocal folds". Hemsley (1998:51) states that the impulse centre point for singing is placed in the lower abdominal muscles where the motor activity has its source. He also refers to the point "between and slightly above the eyes" as the *Hochgriff* (the high grip) and claims that the *Hochgriff* is the singer's 'steering wheel' and constitutes "the energy centre associated with intense concentration" (Hemsley, 1998:51).

However, the perception of what happens in the body can vary widely from singer to singer. Chapman (2016:99) claims that, for the singer, good singing can be perceived as effortlessness in the throat, a noticeable buzz in the head and lot of work in the abdominal muscles. Goren (2017:28) emphasises the importance of a good breath support and how it informs the outcome of the singing. She claims that a level of fitness is required to meet the challenges implicit in more demanding singing, such as singing softly, reaching high notes or singing long phrases. Not only voice pedagogues, but also seasoned operatic artists, assert the importance of a good posture for achieving

a good breath support. During an interview with Hines (2006:136), the American opera singer, Marilyn Horne, stressed the importance of the legs as added support in singing (Hines, 2006:136) and the Swedish soprano Birgit Nilsson pointed out that a good pair of shoes is the most essential for good singing (Marek, 2007:74).

Kayes (2004:75) distinguishes between anchoring the instrument and using breath support. Sufficient subglottic pressure is not enough to enable seemingly effortless singing over a long time and, therefore, it is necessary for muscular anchoring¹² to provide an operative voice-body connection.

3.4 Freedom

There are various aspects of freedom that can be observed in most of the literature on singing pedagogy. I have identified four different aspects of freedom that are often regarded as essential for good singing, namely muscular, artistic, spiritual and emotional freedom. According to Fag  us (2017:145–147), a holistic perspective on music making requires that we consider, for example, spiritual, philosophical, mental, emotional, social and physical aspects, as well as knowledge and skills.

Bunch (1997:147) states that “[a] body (and mind) that is free, is fluid in its movement”. The endeavour should be to find a flow phonation that matches the requirements for the musical phrase at hand (Miller, 2004:59). In order to find this freedom, there has to be a connection between the different parts of the singing apparatus. Callaghan (2014:144) states that such an integrated use of the body optimizes the vocal function and is essential in any style of singing.

¹² ‘Anchoring’ is a term introduced by Jo Estill (Estill, 2009). Estill, who was the founder of Estill Voice Training, was initially known as a classically trained singer. Today she is best known for her work with belting and her division of the voice into six different qualities: speech, falsetto, sob/cry, twang, belting and opera (estillvoice, 2021). Anchoring the voice is done in the internal and external parts of the head and the neck and in the torso (Kayes, 2004:77–82). However, the Italian expression *appoggio della nuca* is used also for the same purpose. Miller (2004:167) claims that “[p]roper support of the cartilaginous structures of the larynx secures a balance among the extrinsic and intrinsic muscles attached to them. A popular term for this cartilaginous structure is the voice box. This box must be soundly anchored through firm external-frame support provided by the nuchal muscles (*appoggio della nuca*) and by the strength of the sternocleidomastoids”.

There is also the question of finding a balance between volume and energy which, according to Miller (2004:23), is a challenging task (2004:23). Smith (2007:87) also stresses the fact that for singing correctly, there has to be a balance between *chiaro* and *oscuro* from the first moment of phonation in *chiaroscuro*. Kayes (2004:71), for example, claims that loud and well-projected singing, which is seemingly effortless, requires energetic and free movement of the vocal folds; the vocal folds abduct further apart, and they come together quicker in the adduction phase. A change in the breathing process has to occur; there is a higher subglottic pressure and a higher airflow.

As a singing pedagogue, I find that it is important to pay attention to muscular tensions that hinder vocal freedom. Miller (1996a:224) states that, for example, tension in the external neck musculature is frequently the source of lack of freedom in phonation. Furthermore, he claims that once vocal freedom has accomplished, the appropriate artistic and spiritual expression can be channelled via the voice (Miller, 1996a:206).

Also, personal aspects and the inner life are recognised being as essential for good, free and vibrant singing. Jones (2017:253) asserts that free singing is accomplished when the human spirit is free, while Miller (2004:42) claims that the vocal instrument is actually the entire body, and it is important to pay attention to freedom in this regard, whatever emotion is expressed in the singing. Likewise, Stanislavski (1976:385) urges the artist to pay attention not only to freedom in the musculature, but also in the quality of mental attention. It is possible for lived experiences, especially negative experiences, to leave a residue of memories, whether conscious or subconscious. These memories can manifest as, for example, muscular tension or tension in the articulators when singing. Therefore, it is vitally important to pay attention to all parts of the body (head, neck, torso, arms, legs, articulators, etcetera.), since they constitute the link between the conscious and the subconscious (Källar, 1997:119).

3.5 Voice, movements and gestures¹³

Williams (2013:182) claims that movements are beneficial for all kinds of music training, while Bauer (2016) points out that kinaesthetic awareness is the neurological interaction between the mind and the body. Movement and singing have been strongly connected throughout history. Movements improve the stance of the singer and, accordingly, the breathing and singing. It also serves to create spatial perceptions which can be a preparation for the theatrical work (Moberg & Uggla 1984:15). Many singing pedagogues and voice researchers emphasise the importance of an active and vital body that brings an embodied sound to singing. A combination of movement, emotions and rhythms can often be used to enhance the way the voice work (Elliot, 2009:45). In order to achieve freedom and flow in singing, the use of gestures can create greater awareness of the body and, as such – by connecting sensation and function – improve the singing (Goren 2017:55; Winnie, 2018:7).

Movements and gestures can be used for technical reasons. By involving movement of the arms and torso, for example, it is possible to create better vocal closure (Miller, 2008:132). Moreover, movements and gestures can be used for musical reasons such to induce better phrasing (Miller 2004:242). However, there are risks, such as also transferring what are supposed to be auxiliary patterns onto the performance while on stage and so distorting the performance. In such an instance, the task of freeing the vocal instrument by using gestures and movements has instead become a shackle (Miller, 2004:242). Gritten and King (2011:47) are of the opinion that gestures can also negatively affect the technical prerequisites, even though the gestures are aimed at reinforcing the artistic expression. A gesture can be seen as an “embodied intentional action” (Gritten & King, 2011:14) and it allows the singer to show and to regulate the state of the body (Gritten & King, 2011:14).

¹³ In this thesis a distinction is made between a *movement*, a movement for its own sake (to move or to move something), and a *gesture*, which is an interpretation of movement – a movement that *represents* action. A gesture “has the power to influence communication, learning, and cognition in ways that movement for its own sake does not” (Novack *et al.*, 2015).

Likewise, from the scientific side, the connection between voice and movement is stressed. Sundberg (2007:198) states that there is a correlation between visible and invisible movements. The invisible movements that occur in voice production that take place in the voice, in the articulation and the phonation, cannot be seen but heard, insofar as they effect the phonation. He claims that singing and speaking are gestures in the vocal mechanism that manifest as changes of the voice (Sundberg, 2007:199). Furthermore, he points out “that the voice functions as an ever-acting translation machine from body gestures to sound gestures” (Sundberg 2007:199)

It is possible for the body to be subjected to tension in various parts and for suppressed feelings to be present. More and Bergman (2007:15) claim that we often use protective gestures to hide emotions and that it takes both “bravery and self-confidence” to open it up. Mirodan (2019:165) states that “[e]mbodied knowledge is not something one ‘has’, but something one ‘is’” and Hayes (2010:1) underlines that our kinaesthetic sensations have their origin in our body, but it is just our own individual experience.

There seems to be general agreement that voice, movement, gestures and body form a tightly-knit whole. There also seems to be a great consensus in the way movement, in voice as well as in corporeal movement, has internal origins. Laban (2011:69) claimed that a movement has two different aims; it represents the external features of experience, but at the same time, it mirrors the internal hidden processes in a human being.

Mirodan (2019:67) claims that “strong urgencies turn into movements; emotions become gestures”. All movements start with an intention to want something, and that sends the impulse to the muscles (Bjerger-Sköld, 2019:52). The impulse comes before the action and, therefore, the intention – the thought process – is significant, since it informs the pre-phonatory muscle movement of what is going to happen (Morris & Hutchison, 2017:35).

There are also other aspects of movements and gestures (Nafisi, 2013). Psychological studies have confirmed that movement and gestures, apart from conveying information, also help us to think. Likewise, Hodgson (2001:141) concurs that the mind

influences the movement, but also the other way around – the movement influences the mind. He says that movement “both affects and is affected by the inner states”.

Laban (2011: v) asserts that there is an “almost mathematical relationship between the inner motivation of movement and the functions of the body”. He explains how the physical movements are subordinated to the inner feelings (Laban, 2011:3), hence implying that a movement can reveal a range of different things. The movements become an echo of the inner feelings. A movement exercise trains the body, as an expressive instrument, and in addition, the mood and the inner attitude are affected by the bodily action (Laban, 2011:22).

[L]ife is movement in all its manifestations. None of our functions and actions would be possible without moving. One’s thoughts move in and through one’s mind and so do one’s feelings which are therefore called emotions, “e-motions”, or results of moving” (Laban, 1957a:11).

Central to Malmgren’s technique was a map of precise concepts for physical movements (which came from Laban and Carpenter), as he developed it into a theory where the vocal, physical and the emotional were in focus (Mark & Muchin, 2010:37). Laban believed that all sounds are created by some sort of movement (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:168, Preston-Dunlop, 2008:31), and that “man moves in order to satisfy a need” (Laban, 2011:1). Laban also proclaimed that “[t]o move is to tell” (Mark & Muchin, 2010:41). I find these statements useful for this research, which set out to explore in what ways movements – in the body, mind and voice – might be connected.

3.6 Sensations

How a singer perceives their own voice can be monitored in different ways; likewise, the way a teacher perceives the singer’s voices can vary. The way a singer hears themselves is very different from what others hear. The internal listening constitutes at least 50 percent of the singer’s hearing (Miller, 2008:120). It is possible for one to kinaesthetically experience the sound that someone else produces while they speak or sing (Lindblad 1992:118). For example, it is common for one who is sensitive to vocal timbre to experience vocal fatigue when listening to a speaker with pressed

phonation. Arder (2001:68–69) refers to this kinaesthetic experience as vocal empathy. The ability to experience vocal empathy with other people’s voices is both innate and learned (Lindblad 1992:175). Vestfall (2018:101) believes that “combined with a thorough knowledge of anatomy and physiology...the teacher’s ability to both hear, as well as feel in her own instrument, what the student is doing is one of the most important tools in guiding students through laryngeal issues”. When we listen to a voice, we process the sound we hear. As such, we perceive the underlying voice production rather than to the properties of the voice – an occurrence called *creative listening*, a phrase coined by Mosel (Sundberg, 2007:203).

The teacher and the student can work with a mixture of visual, audible and kinaesthetic sensory sensations and feedback. It is important to consider the major perceptive markers when it comes to the way singers hear themselves and the way they proprioceptively feel their singing, whether through the internal hearing – through bones, cartilages and inner the ear – or through the airborne external hearing (Miller, 1996a:274). Callaghan (2014:15) claims that an understanding of the voice requires a proprioceptive sense of the soma;¹⁴ a sense that is crucial and inevitable for technique as well as for the aesthetic aspects. Furthermore, she points out that both audition, the actual hearing, as well as audiation,¹⁵ the mental hearing, are essential to singing.

The perception of one’s own singing varies, since the low notes spread out equally well in each direction, thereby easily reaching the singer’s ear, while the high frequencies, with shorter waves, are more concentrated straight ahead (Sundberg, 2007:204). Consequently, it is harder to have a clear understanding of one’s own voice in the higher register. However, these sensations can also serve as a pedagogical tool for monitoring the sound when working with a more seasoned singer (Riggs, 1992:30).

¹⁴ Callaghan (2014:15) makes a distinction between the first-person’s perspective, a proprioception of one’s own body, the soma, and the third person’s perspective from the outside.

¹⁵ Callaghan (2014:17) claims that audiation “is a process involving physical hearing, perception, cognition and cultural conditioning”.

In his interview with Blades (2017:142), Brown asserts the importance of having an “inner sense of what is happening” – a proprioception¹⁶ – instead of letting the voice be driven by a listening/hearing perspective. The importance of the energy and the awareness of it are essential for the singer to develop healthy singing habits (Chapman, 2016:139). According to Miller (2008:38), that which we call *imposto* or placement of the voice, is actually the proprioceptive reaction to the sound. He further claims that our kinaesthetic sense is the wisdom of the body, and he quotes Lamperti (1890) as saying that “controlled singing feels uncontrolled” (cited by Miller, 2008:120).

There is an inverse relation between effort and sensitivity and, therefore, one has to reduce the effort to maximize the sensitivity (Nelson & Blades 2018:13). It is important to make the student aware of what is happening where in the body, something that, according to Nelson and Blades (2018:13), referred to in the Feldenkrais-method as *awareness through movement* (ATM). When the singer gets in touch with sensory sensations, such as listening, seeing and feeling, this also creates more stage presence for the singer (Bergström, 1987:30).

3.7 Emotions

Singing without emotions is like painting without colours. There has to be an expression – a will, a concern and eagerness – to communicate something to someone and that “something” is related to the singer’s emotions. The voice is the mirror of the soul and through using it, we are in tune with our inner self (Björk-Franzén & Ugglå, 2012:13). Popeil (2000:37) even asserts that “[s]inging is like the overflow of emotion that must spill out”. Moreover, Chapman (2016:18) claims that it is easier to be aware of a wholeness when the emotional system is also activated. When primal sounds such as crying, laughing, howling, groaning etcetera are executed, they all occur without conscious thought, but still the necessary requirements of air pressure, resonance,

¹⁶ According to the Karolinska Institutet (2023) website, proprioception is the “[s]ensory functions that transduce stimuli received by proprioceptive receptors in joints, tendons, muscles, and the inner ear into neural impulses to be transmitted to the central nervous system. Proprioception provides sense of stationary positions and movements of one’s body parts, and is important in maintaining kinesthesia and postural balance”.

vocal fold closure and a diaphragmatic recoil breath remain. Besides, some human expressions, such as happiness, anger, sadness and surprise are universal and can be understood all over the world (Morton, 2017:116). Hemsley (1998:19) points out that “the expression of emotion in sound is the body’s reaction to internal and external stimuli in which the whole system participates”. Many voice pedagogues often return to words such as flexibility and vocal freedom; however, Smith (2007:93) claims that vocal, as well as emotional flexibility assumes vulnerability.

There is proof that the inner state of mind might be heard in a voice. Different qualities of intensity, the number of overtones, fundamental tone and onsets have been clearly demonstrated in research on emotions and attitudes in voice production (Lindblad, 1992:178). Sundberg (2007:187) also states that the mood strongly affects the use of the voice. Bunch (1997:8) goes as far as to say that the emotional health of a singer can be heard in the voice. She believes that a happy person’s voice sounds freer, a depressed person’s sound might be duller and more lethargic, and the angry person’s voice could sound harsh (Bunch, 1997:8).

The voice is the foremost valve to release inner tensions and thoughts which become patterns of sounds (Sällström, 1988:30). Attitudes and emotions like happiness, joy and laughter can contribute significantly towards expanding a singer’s register (Sällström, 1988:70). The pharynx opens, the larynx is anchored down and back, and the body is connected in a balanced way. There is also a strong correlation between emotions and breathing, while both conscious and unconscious emotions, such as stress and performance anxiety, can strongly affect breathing in a bad way (Bjerger-Sköld, 2019:15, 107).

3.8 Imagination

Voice pedagogues’ thoughts about imagination in singing and in vocal pedagogy seem to vary. Hemsley (1998:111), who is a strong believer in imagination in singing, even entitled his book *Singing and Imagination*. He states that imagination is an essential part of the singing and not “an optional extra”. Bunch (1997:142) declares that “imagination is one of the most neglected tools of singing”. Chapman (2016:183)

asserts that “[i]magination is the elixir of learning”. She further states that the imagination can serve as a springboard for something that is not present in the singer’s senses, something that the singer has not yet experienced. Nelson and Blades (2018:9) quote Feldenkrais on kinaesthetic imagination, saying that “what you can do you can imagine, and what you can imagine you can do”. Hines (2006:15) stresses both the singer’s and the teacher’s capacity for imagination and declares that good operatic singing requires good hearing and imitating, as well as an ability to recall internal sensations. Dayme (2022:3) claims that imagination, in addition to energy, awareness, practice and performance, constitutes one of five elements necessary for what she calls core singing. She asserts that “imagination is the key to color and emotion” (Dayme, 2022:10). She further emphasises the importance of an “atmosphere of imagination and playfulness” as a way to greatly enhance the learning process and “finding new ways to explain, visualize and become more creative” (Dayme, 2022:50).

Since the vocal folds are controlled by an indirect action, it is essential that the singer uses their imagination and audiation to produce the tone quality they desire (Kagen, 1960:41). A primal sound creates a better vocal efficiency, as well as a good connection to the support system (Chapman, 2016:20). Copland (1959:22) believes that, from a composer’s perspective, it is not even possible to create a beautiful sonority unless the musician has not imagined the sound in his inner ear first.

Metaphors also play important roles in teaching music (Harris 2006:33), especially metaphors connected to sports, which can be very useful to solve technical problems (Harris, 2006:37). Metaphors in singing are very common and phrases like *hold the reins*, *inhale on the pitch*, *the bow on the string*, *the bow is the lyrics*, *Alles gute kommt von oben*, etcetera (Föreningen DGE, 2006:30–32) are sentences to which most singers can relate.

One of the strongest advocates for not working with a pedagogical approach that involves imagery is Miller (1996a:4). He warns against believing in the excessive use of the language of imagery and strongly advises the teacher to refrain from using it when teaching beginners, even though he admits that it can be of some value at a later

stage in the teaching process (Miller, 1996a:3). He declares that it is incumbent on the teacher to use specific language and, moreover, he states that this creates great relief and trust within the student (Miller, 2004:197).

3.9 Technique and communication

In order to express oneself and to do so authentically, it is important to look at the human being as a whole once again. Laban (2011:22) advised the artist to train the body as an instrument of expression, not only to create various bodily articulations, but also to develop an awareness of how mood and inner attitudes might be affected by the bodily actions. Laban (1975:136) regarded artists as commissioned with a special task and proclaimed that the task was to shine a “light on the inner world, each one in his own way”. More than 90 percent of human communication is done by means of non-verbal signals (Morton, 2015:18). The limbic system that, amongst other things, deals with emotions, was the earliest source of communication (Morton 2015:117). According to Callaghan (2014:130), the mental control of the voice and the combination of the voice with communication and interpretation have thus far not been subjected to careful examination.

In my experience, most singing teachers (including myself) agree that the goal of good singing is to mediate emotions, affect a listener in many ways and to communicate. The musician’s task is first to have an inner perception of the music, secondly to ensure a technical and professional realisation, and thirdly, to transform the inner perception to an audible result and into an endeavour that would affect an audience (Stålhammar, 2009:137). In order to achieve these steps, the singer’s technical proficiency has to be sound. Bunch (1997:143) claims that once a singer has mastered the singing technique, the acting and the movement, spontaneity can emerge in music making. This combination of vocal and musical proficiency, combined with acting skills, allows the performer to communicate with the audience successfully. A reliable technique is also the best tool for dealing with performance anxiety (Miller, 2008:150).

3.10 Artistry

To have an idea of how to work as a singer or singing pedagogue, incrementally and strategically, it is essential to consider what we are aiming to achieve. The goal with good singing technique is to have the ability to express emotions spontaneously and to rely on an artistic instinct (Jones 2017:193). According to Gårdfeldt (2017:75), expression in classical singing is a conglomerate of music and text that needs to be elevated and expanded. She believes that expression, specifically in opera where many things are at stake and strong emotions are being performed, requires a measure of voice and expression.

Hines (1997:177) claims that it is desirable that the quality of the vocal and the dramatic elements be given equal weight in an opera singer's performance. In order to make a vocal impression, it is important for the singer to be personally committed and authentic. It is desirable to reveal your personality during a vocal performance, and not just reproduce a melody (Bergström, 1987:90). Fagéus (2017:77) declares that "[w]hen music is at its best, it is basically love that is made audible in different ways". There are also aspects of well-being related to art. Laban (1957b:7) declares that, in addition to what the audience is given, real art brings a moment of inner fulfilment for the performer as well. The satisfaction bestows a feeling of bliss upon us and is accompanied by a "strengthening [of] our sensation of security" (Laban, 1957b:7).

The authors' attitudes conveyed my overview are permeated with a sense that the requirements for good artistry are emphasised more than the result. Mirodan (2019:124), for example, explains clearly how the Laban-Malmgren technique (LMT) developed; how there is a direct correspondence between physical and psychological concepts, and how the method does not prescribe an interpretation, but rather "gives the actor an analytical vocabulary with which to reach her own conclusions" (Mirodan 2019:124). Likewise, Stanislavski (1976:392) claims that, by removing physical and psychological obstacles and instead strengthening and developing everything that nurtures the creative process, the door to the creative subconscious becomes wide open. He calls this the psycho-technique.

3.11 Psychology

Rudolf Laban was strongly influenced by Carl Jung, who argued that, for the sake of mental health, the conscious mind and the unconscious mind have to move in parallel and that the unconscious is the guide to the conscious mind (Jung, 1992:52). Jung (1992:59) distinguishes between extrovert and introvert personalities, and he spoke about four different functions to orientate the conscious mind in life: *sensing* – the sensory sensations tell us that something exists; *thinking* – the thoughts that enlighten us what might be; *intuiting* – the intuition that tells from where something originates and where it leads us; and *feeling* – the feeling that determines whether something pleases us or not (Jung, 1992:60). These four aspects of consciousness were directly applied by Laban, who called them the mental factors. Jung (1992:67) is also known for his concept of archetypes – inherited notions, whose presence cannot be explained in terms of something in an individual's life but seems to be original and innate.

3.12 Teaching and learning

In a teaching-learning process, it is important to offer a variety of pedagogical ideas in order to develop and awaken the student's abilities. These ideas involve things such as sensory memories, intuition, movement and imagination (Chapman, 2016:165). The work of a teacher is often to guide the student in creating new patterns. Old habits of tension can persist strongly and can take time to get rid of. In order to free a natural voice, it is essential to perceive and experience the voice, both physically and mentally, in a new way (Linklater 2006:19) and the more senses involved in the learning process, the better one remembers (Gärdenfors, 2010:50). Gärdenfors (2010:142) reminds us of the well-known Chinese proverb: "What I hear I forget. What I see I remember. What I do I understand." As a teacher, it is also important to listen for what might be there, in addition to what is necessarily there already (Blades, 2017:105). When the American developmental psychologist Gardner (1999) put forward his theory of seven intelligences in the late 1970s (which he later developed into nine), it was a way of trying to look beyond common methods of measuring intelligence so as to improve learning. Gardner was inspired by, among others, Piaget and Bruner (Akpan & Kennedy 2021:406). Gardner (2006:33) claims that it is not about how *intelligent* you

are, but about *how* you are intelligent. Gardner (1999:33) argues that “intelligence is the ability to solve problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural environments”. He distinguishes between seven forms of intelligence:

- a verbal-linguistic intelligence;
- logical-mathematical intelligence;
- visual-spatial intelligence;
- bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence;
- musical-rhythmic intelligence;
- interpersonal intelligence, and
- intrapersonal intelligence.

Later, naturalistic intelligence and existential intelligence were also added (Gardner, 1999). Akpan and Kennedy (2021:409) point out that this multiple intelligence theory has been used to

improve the students' cognitive skills, in terms of understanding, remembering, applying and expanding knowledge; to explore the relationships among multiple intelligences, between musical intelligence and mathematical intelligence...and finally, to assist the memory as an aid in remembering.

Dayme (2005:14) declares that it is important for a singer to have some knowledge about the physical aspects of the body and the physical structure of the skeleton, as well as how the muscles and the nervous system work. However, even though it is important to know the scientific aspects of singing, it is important to be reminded that “science informs art, it does not create it” (Randall *et al.*, 2016).

It takes a lot of mental and physical energy to sing well. One problem today is that many teachers are so concerned with preventing harm that they are not doing anything good either (McCoy, 2012). It takes a certain amount of energy to sing and if the energy is too low, the result will consequently be bad (Bjerge-Sköld 2019:96). Likewise, Dayme (2005:111) points out that a singer needs a “balance of physical, emotional,

and mental energy, and imagination” when performing. The energy, and the awareness of such energy, is essential for the singer in order to achieve healthy singing (Chapman, 2016:139).

Learning singing is a two-way path in the way that the body informs the mind, and the mind informs the body (Bauer, 2016). The human brain is an extremely complex apparatus. It consists of hundreds of billions of neurons and the impulses between them are moved at a speed of 100m/s (Fagius, 2015:28). The brain constitutes only two percent of the bodyweight but utilises 20 percent of the body’s blood flow (Fagius, 2015:22). There is no special centre in the brain for music, even though the right hemisphere of the brain is the dominant one for musical ability and the left hemisphere is activated when the music is processed and analysed (Fagius, 2015:91). However, it has been determined that when text is involved in music, larger areas in the brain are activated (Fagius, 2015:145). Interestingly, emotional regions of the brain, such as the amygdala, hippocampus and parahippocampal region, are involved when there is not only music but also lyrics in the performed music (Fagius, 2015:145). However, what happens in the brain when we perform music, as compared to when we listen, has not been researched as much, yet there are reasons to believe the process is much the same, but more complicated (Fagius, 2015:133).

Each hemisphere in the brain manages the opposite side in relation to the functions that they control. The right hemisphere of the brain, for example, controls the left hand. That might be something to take into consideration in the teaching process. The brain focuses on details and fragments when the centre of gravity is on the right leg (left hemisphere), but the focus is on the wholeness and flow when the centre of gravity is on the left leg (right hemisphere) (Fagius, 2017:69).

Another point of view, raised by Nafasi (2013), is that the lack of information about teaching singing is due to the most common (mis)perception that it involves a one-on-one teaching-learning situation. The long tradition of master-apprentice, a learning method based on imitation (Gärdenfors, 2010:103), that has prevailed in music learning, has increasingly turned into a process where the student’s reflections, ideas and perspectives are taken into account; a non-passive student reflects and questions

in learning how to construct knowledge (Gärdenfors, 2010:116). It should also be taken in account that all pedagogical practices convey a perception about the learning process and also a perception about those who learn. Therefore, it must be accepted that the teaching-learning situation is never neutral (Bruner,1996:84). As Bruner (1996:84) points out, the pedagogy may not be harmful, but it is a means that carries its own message.

In many ways the teacher's role is to act as facilitator – to actuate the student's abilities (Schenk, 2006:71). One could liken this role to the process of a sculptor who 'uncovers' the sculpture in a block of marble. By using Socratic questioning and taking into account the student's perspectives, experiences and reflections during the teaching-learning event, the 'sculpture' will materialise. From the students' perspective (Gagnon, 2019), a good teacher is a strong communicator who has the ability to listen well. They collaborate, are empathic, engaged, patient and ready to adapt and adjust to the student's level, to new research, to new technology etcetera. They value real-world learning and share their best practices. Furthermore, a good teacher is a life-long learner.

According to Björkvold (2011:132), the teaching profession rests on two pillars: love and knowledge – knowledge far beyond syllabi and course literature, and love of the word, love of wisdom and love of whatever is human. In order to be a successful teacher, it is important also to have empathy with the student, to work with enthusiasm and to have the ability to explain (Entwistle, 2009:83). In addition to having deep knowledge of the subject matter, a good teacher should be aware of the order in which things should be taught (Entwistle, 2009:124). Furthermore, a seasoned teacher has knowledge and understanding of common errors and can thus minimize their occurrence (Uggla, 1989:53).

Entwistle (2009:1) stresses how important it is to be clear about "what lies at the heart of university education". He claims that at tertiary level it can be more important to be concerned about ways of thinking instead of the factual obtained knowledge. The ultimate value is the way a student developed understanding, skills and attitudes during their studies (Entwistle, 2009:2). These and similar thoughts also to a large extent

constituted the foundation on which the Drama Centre's¹⁷ ideology was built. The emphasis was not on the final product, but on liberating and stimulating the students both emotionally and physically. The students were required to investigate the motivations that propel their actions and examine their own behaviour (Hayes, 2008:7).

As a singing-teacher it is also important to bring your own experiences as a singer into the studio. In the definition of Evidence-Based Voice Framework (EBVF) Bozeman and Ragan (2022) claim that "[t]he first source of teacher preparation is one's own personal vocal journey". The authors declare that the foundation of one's future pedagogy is largely based on one's own internal and deliberate process as a singing student. According to Bunch (1997:21), a good singing teacher must have had a rich experience of performing in order to fully understand the aspects relating to artistry. But teacher's own bad artistic experiences can also benefit the teacher's practice. This was the case with the French pedagogue Francois Delsarte (1811–1871), the Tasmanian actor Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869–1955) and the Swedish singing teacher Gunvor Sällström (1907–1985), all mentioned in this thesis. Their recollections of less than favourable teaching-learning experiences constituted a base from where they developed methodologies for sustainable voice techniques (Gutenberg, 2004:8; Sällström, 1988:191; Kleinman & Buckoke 2013:16).

The brain is consistently learning; for example, to see how another person sings and consequently imitate that person is of the utmost importance as a part of the learning system, even though it forms just the first step of transmission of knowledge (Bauer, 2007:107–108). On a neuro-biological level, the interpersonal relations in model learning plays a huge role. We use our mirror neurons, which act independently of our analytical thinking (Bauer, 2007:14). Awareness of the power of imitation should be used as a golden thread in a teacher's methodology (Schenk 2006:39). In mental training the term *modelling the masters* is used. The focus is very much on *how* things are done, mentally or physically, not *why*. To 'model' in this context means to imitate

¹⁷ Drama Centre London (1963–2020), founded by Yat Malmgren, Christopher Fettes and John Blatchley.

someone or to gain experience from imitating a successful person (Alexandersson & Pettersson, 2003:47). Sällström (1988:105) states that, instead of instructing the students with words and thereby taking the risk that the technical instructions might interfere with the vocal freedom, it might be more efficient to provide a role model, provided that the teacher has the ability to be a good role model. Apart from providing the student with examples of kinaesthetic, visual and auditory perceptions, the teacher's modelling can also serve as an inspiration for the student (Harris, 2006:14).

3.13 Conclusion

It is worth noticing that classical singing has changed and developed over time. What future classical singers will sound like is something we can just speculate about. Will there be a clear distinction between classical singing and CCM; will classical singing assert its distinctiveness, or might there be a rapprochement between the two different art forms? However, whatever type of singing we consider, we can establish that singing is a complex and intricate artform that requires an advanced interplay between soma and psyche. A recurring notion among scientists, pedagogues and artists is that a holistic approach involves a process where the physical work constitutes a prerequisite for good singing. The singer has to be open-minded and willing to access new knowledge and perceptions. Also, Laban, representing another artform, stressed the wholeness of the human being to maximize their inner potential. He, like others, argued that movement could improve voice, breathing and posture, and that this in turn could strengthen musicality as well as expressiveness. Besides, apart from this emphasis on body and voice as a unit, this literature review has also noted how emotions, sensations and imagination can serve as tools, not only for the singer's own perception of their singing, but also as a tool for the voice pedagogue with which to guide the student. This chapter also noted to what extent Laban was informed by Jung, whose relevant ideas will be explained in detail in Chapter Four.

It is important to scrutinize oneself as a teacher and to be aware of what one brings into the studio. What are the assumptions and expectations? The one-on-one situation might be extra delicate and, as a responsible pedagogue, it is important to devote attention to the risks. The authors reviewed here stress that one's own singing

experiences are not only an obvious competence, but also to serve as an inspiration for the student. To learn, and to remember, entails involving many senses. As a singing pedagogue, it is also important to listen for what might be and not only to what is already there. In addition, it is good to vary the focus between the details and the whole picture. The authors reviewed in this chapter advocate that the pedagogue should act as a facilitator and not necessarily as a 'master craftsman' to be imitated. The aim is to create good conditions for the singer to develop, rather than being exclusively results-oriented.

CHAPTER 4: THE LABAN-MALMGREN TECHNIQUE: BACKGROUND AND INSPIRATION

This chapter is the first of two that offer an overview of the literature about the individuals whose beliefs, perceptions and theories informed the Laban-Malmgren technique (LMT) and the poetics of the LMT (to be discussed in detail in Chapter Five). In this chapter I present a brief overview of the two main theorists associated with the LMT, namely Rudolf Laban (1879–1958) and Yat Malmgren (1916–2002). The chapter begins with a discussion of Laban and introduces some information about the psychiatrist/psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), as well as three dance theorists who all influenced him namely, Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810), Francois Delsarte (1811–1871) and Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950). This is followed by a section on Malmgren's background and finally, some information about the theatre practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski (1863–1938) who inspired and informed Laban-Malmgren's technique.

4.1 Rudolf Laban

Rudolf Jean-Baptiste Atilla Marquis de Laban de Varalja¹⁸ was the firstborn of four siblings, of whom only three survived. The family lived in Pressburg (Prozny) in the Austro-Hungarian empire, today known as Bratislava in Slovakia. Rudolf's father was a field-marshal and a military governor in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, together with his wife, was often away from home. Consequently, Rudolf was cared for primarily by his grandparents. The men in the Laban family had always been military figures, doctors or diplomatic officials, and when Rudolf's uncle chose a theatrical profession, he was prohibited from using the family name any longer. The young Laban felt a strong kinship with his uncle and loved to disappear into a fantasy world, where pretending played a huge role. Early on, Laban made symbolic plays with fanciful scenery and the plays had names such as *The fool's mirror*, *The desolate prisoner* and

¹⁸ Interestingly, the literal Hungarian translation of the name de Laban means "on one's feet" (Flatt, 1981).

The sorcerer's apprentice. Laban wrote the texts and the characters danced and sang. He also wrote ballads and presented them as *tableaux vivants*.¹⁹



Photo 4.1: Rudolf Laban 26 years old in Paris 1905 (Photo: John Hodgson collection).

Laban was often alone and learned to rely on himself. He recalled that he had often sought comfort in painting (Laban, 1975:10) which, at the time, had been a far more acceptable form of art than theatre. Quite soon he had a reputation as a budding painter. Laban (1975:11) claimed that he had been

gifted with sensibility for the visual and plastic arts and there was no other way to my inner self, to my character, than through a craft that corresponded to my talents. Awareness of movement existed only in my sub-consciousness and was strongly with the pictorial.

¹⁹ *Tableaux vivants* refers to a 'living picture' that often depicted historical events or religious allegories that were staged by living persons.

At the age of 12, Laban occasionally joined his father on his missions abroad. He loved to explore and experience the wilderness alone on horseback, and he described his experiences in colourful and imaginative ways, mountains as giants, plants as greedy eaters and rocks as spirits. All these natural phenomena later became a rich resource for his creative works and Laban (1975:14) claimed that “[I]n my childhood the earth was my confidante”. During these journeys, Laban observed the dances of different cultures – folk dances from Yugoslavia, Germany and Turkey, and ballroom dancing in Vienna. In Constantinople he also encountered the dervish dancers from the Sufi brotherhood. He witnessed the silent prayers performed by the Muslim lay brothers; prayers manifested as whirling dances performed in a state of ecstasy. Laban was deeply impressed when he saw how the men could drive long needles through their arms, cheeks or chests, seemingly without experiencing any pain or loss of blood. It led him to consider whether movements in circles could control a person's blood circulation and how these dances in circles could be placed in a universal view of existence where the individual space could be connected to the infinite (Hodgson, 2001:53). Laban stated how he “recalled the belief of the old mountain farmer who maintained that through the magic of the dance, a body can be made ‘knife-safe’ (Hodgson, 2001:53).

Laban developed a great interest in the material as well as the spiritual world, and he studied Middle Eastern philosophy intently. He was susceptible to ideas about occult beliefs and engaged with Rosicrucian mystical ideas and practices about harmony, geometry, structures and beliefs. These beliefs and practices later became important keystones in his theories of movement. He was also interested in mysticism and esotericism, phenomena that were in vogue during the early 20th century (Folini, 2000:15), and he was a member of several Masonic lodges.

Laban was a cadet in the army for a short period but, rather than follow in his father's footsteps by pursuing a military career, he became an art student, very much to his father's dismay. He studied architecture at the *Écoles des Beaux Arts* in Paris, and art, probably with the sculptor and textile artist Hermann Obrist named the ‘Jugendstil Renaissance man’. Gustav Klimt (1862–1928) was a central figure for the *Jugendstil* in Vienna (*Wiener Sezession*). His bold, provocative and symbolic style of painting and

later, overtly erotic pictures or pictures with erotic undertones, as well as the work of Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), became especially significant for Laban. Just as Laban had ideas about creating a *Gesamtkunstwerk* during his time in Ascona, the artists during the *Art Nouveau (Jugendstil)* also wanted to permeate every part of life with art and create a "*Gesamtkunstwerk*". Perhaps it was these *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideas, combined with Klimt's erotic motifs and his symbolic painting, that inspired Laban. One can also wonder whether it was possibly the abstractness of Kandinsky's cubist style that influenced Laban. Kandinsky's painting is characterized by strong colours and colour symbolism, where the colour is freed from the form (perhaps just as Laban wanted to "free dance from the tyranny of music" (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:25). Kandinsky's later artwork developed into an almost formal geometry and perhaps it was these features of Kandinsky that particularly inspired Laban who so clearly loved geometric forms himself together (Fleming & Honour, 2009). At a quick glance at some of Laban's labanotation (Fig. 5:3 and Photo 5:2) one can almost sense Kandinsky in them.

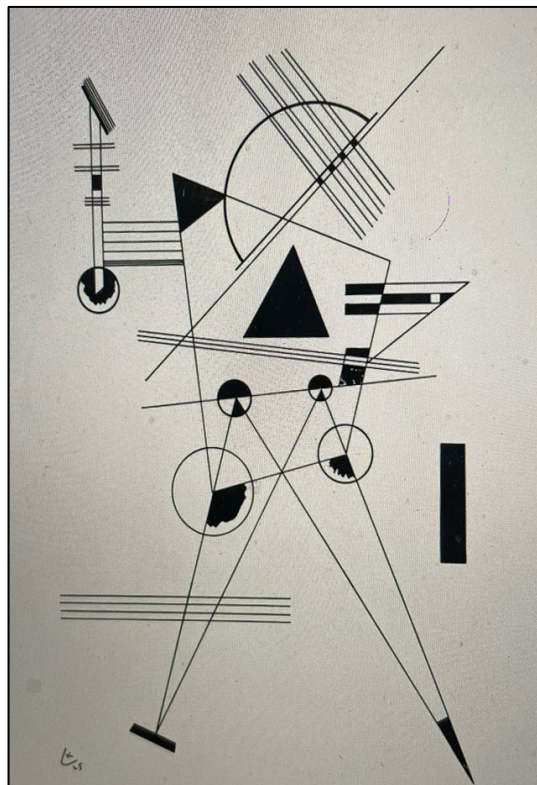


Illustration 4.1: Kandinsky *Black white 1*.

Laban was fascinated by the rules of proportion and especially interested in the Golden section. He found crystalline forms fascinating and he was very interested in Greek philosophy, especially Pythagoras' and Plato's mathematical and architectural ideas. These theories were later synthesized in *Space Harmony* (published in *Choreutics* in 1966). Laban (1950:83) asserted that the most natural way to move was in "the style of harmonious movement which was common in ancient Grecian and Roman cultures".

In addition to the works of painters, Laban's theories were also informed by other art forms. He was deeply motivated by the works of composer Arnold Schönberg²⁰ (1874–1951). One can assume that it was Schönberg's so-called intermediate period 1906–1913 when he increasingly distanced himself from the tonality, and the third period from 1923 when he devoted himself almost exclusively to twelve-tone technique which particularly appealed to Laban (Bernhardsson, 2023:1). Schönberg composed music without a tonal centre and without using a melodic theme. It is also interesting that, as someone who also dabbled in the art of composition himself, Laban created music based on rhythms and phrasing and without traditional harmony. He created these compositions because he found existing music to be unsuitable for his work, feeling that those compositions held him back artistically.

At age 21 Laban married Martha Fricke, with whom he studied art in Munich. Martha passed away after only seven years of marriage. Three years after Martha's death, he married the singer Maja Lederer in 1910. He had children with his wives, as well as with his mistress (Suzanne Perrottet), and ultimately fathered a total of nine children. During this time, the family lived in Munich and suffered economically. Laban had no regular employment, but worked as a free-lance graphic artist, producing paintings and posters. Maja occasionally taught singing. At this time Laban's interest in *Kunsttanz*, both as art but also from a historical perspective, began to occupy his time (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:21) and from 1912 he no longer referred to himself as a painter, but described himself using titles associated with dance theatre and dance festivals

²⁰ Interesting in this context is that Schönberg's artistic need to create also took visual artistic expression. He created a number of expressionist oil paintings and watercolors that even impressed Kandinsky and led to a long-standing, deep friendship between them (Buja, 2019).

(Preston-Dunlop, 2008:23). Laban had no formal training except for drawing and painting, and most certainly no dance training. He seemed to have trained himself as a dancer at the same time as he was training others (Hodgson, 2001:38)

Laban's intention was to free the dance "from the tyranny of music" (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:25). He sometimes abandoned the melody in the music and just accompanied the dance with a tambour. The music used in Laban's performances was always composed directly for the dancers, also by Laban himself (Laban, 1975:74)²¹. However, later he also presented dance performances without any music, in total silence (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:116). His endeavour was to take away all the unnecessary elements in a dancing performance, stating that there was too much emphasis on the decor and costumes (Laban, 2011:8). Laban's desire was to make dance available to everyone, and later he claimed that already early in life his "mind was occupied with the idea of composing works in praise of the community and of dancing together" (Laban, 1975:67). The photo of Laban teaching dance (Photo 4.2) conveys something of the magnetic force Laban was said to have had on people, not least on women. Preston-Dunlop (2008:30) points out that "[m]ost people fell under his spell, although a few were disenchanted by his sexual appetite, which even in an atmosphere of free love was disconcertingly copious and eclectically satisfied".

²¹ As a child Laban appreciated the theater productions that visited his hometown, Prozny, and he especially liked the opera performances. He described these performances by stating that "it was so colourful and the performers screamed so beautifully and heart-rendingly" (Laban, 1975:166). The first opera in which Laban was the choreographer was for the Bacchanalia in a production of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in Mannheim (1921). He also choreographed the same work in 1930 and 1931 in Bayreuth. Laban expressed his admiration for Wagner saying that

[t]o me, Wagner was not only a renewer and prophet of the arts of poetry and music. Since both through his writings and from the mouths of his personal collaborators I had the good fortune to get to know his tremendous way of thinking in terms of movement, I can say that he was also a decisive influence of the art of movement (Laban, 1975:174).

Other operas in which Laban was the choreographer included works by Borodin, Gounod, Strauss and Wagner.

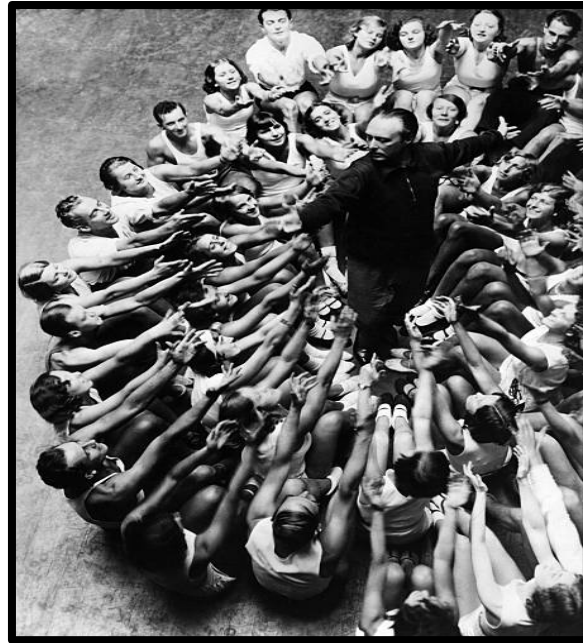


Photo 4.2: Rudolf Laban teaching dance. (Photo: Printertest, 2021).

In 1913 Laban started his summer courses in Ascona, Switzerland. Monte Verità in Ascona was a place where the European intellectuals met. These intellectuals included artists, writers, painters, philosophers and others, people who wanted an alternative to capitalism and life in the rapidly industrialising world – *eine Lebensreform*. Monte Verità was also a place where people could experiment with nudism, free love, vegetarianism, heliotherapeutic treatment, psychoanalysis and anarchism. Laban's *Schule für Kunst auf Verità* (Art of Life School) was based on the idea of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* – a coalescence of arts. The students were trained in *Formkunst* (crafts such as carpentry, painting, cooking and gardening), *Wortkunst* (language training and elocution), *Tonkunst* (singing and playing) and *Bewegungskunst* (movement and dance).

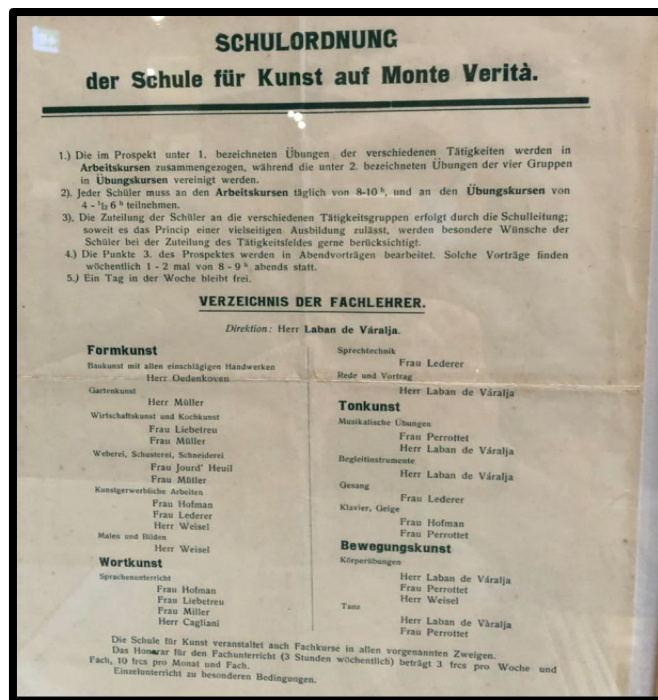


Photo 4.3: Photo taken at Casa Anatta Museum, Monte Verità, Switzerland, showing the areas in which Maja, Suzanne and Laban were involved in the *Schule für Kunst* (Rosenkull, Private collection).

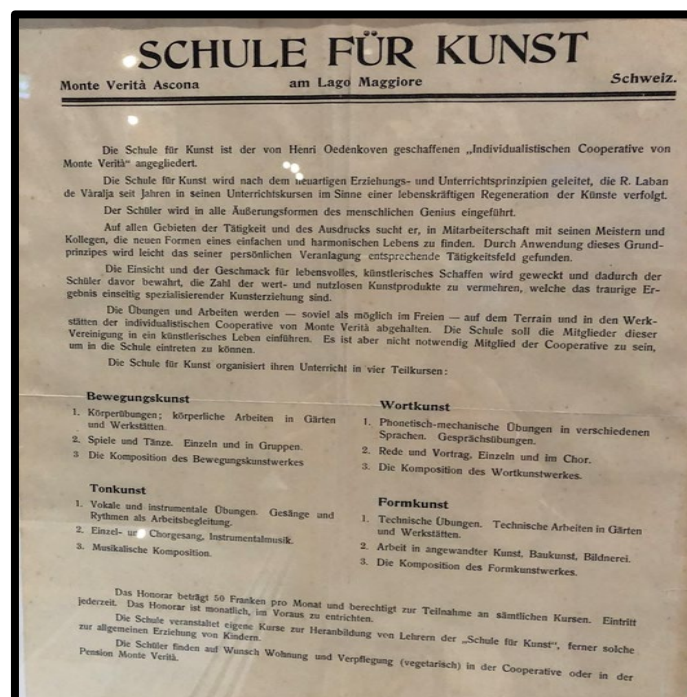


Photo 4.4: Photo taken at Casa Anatta Museum, Monte Verità, Switzerland, showing what is included in the different classes at the *Schule für Kunst* (Rosenkull, Private collection).

In the years that followed the 1913 summer courses, Laban lived in Stuttgart, Mannheim and Hamburg. He opened schools and a dance studio at the same time as he was active as a choreographer and as a dancer with *Tanzbühne Laban*. He wrote books and articles and worked intensively on his notation system. Laban wished to turn amateur dancing into an artform. With his passion and enthusiasm, he attracted people who would not have ordinarily danced. He had a strong belief that everyone should dance and, as a result, movement choirs emerged in many parts of Germany (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:13). Sometimes they performed in silence and sometimes accompanied by speech patterns. In Vienna, Laban presented a movement event with 20 000 participants. The most talked about movement choir event is probably the one that was supposed to celebrate the inauguration of the Olympics in 1936 in Berlin. However, it was cancelled, since Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, declared that what Laban had created was opposed to the Nazis' ideology.



Photo 4.5: Laban dancing (Photo: Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance).

Laban's thoughts on Nazi ideology are unclear. Hodgson (2001:125) claims that Laban might have been politically naïve. Being an international artist, Laban was valuable to

the Nazi regime for political purposes. However, he was without a doubt aware of what was happening around him, but he was perhaps “prepared to live on the edge of his luck, audacity being his line of defence” (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:181). It is also possible to understand his eventual collaboration with the Nazis as a “logical outcome of his biographical and artistic development” (Dörr & Lantz, 2003:21). He had had connections with the German nationalism as early as in the 1920s and he “identified himself as a sympathizer with the conservative wing of the life-reform movement, a faction that espoused Social Darwinism and ‘racial hygiene’” (Dörr & Lantz, 2003:2). Kant (2021), a dance historian, asserts that “Laban’s dance system was an agent of Nazi ideas, not a victim of the regime through appropriation or misunderstanding”. She even claims that the Laban terminology should not be used or discussed without taking his political beliefs into account.

In 1937 Laban left Germany for Paris and in 1938 he ended up in Dartington Hall in the United Kingdom. Once again, he was weak and suffered from fragile mental health, probably suffering from spasmodic manic depression, a condition which had been a recurring problem in his life (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:204). He found solace in his work with choreutic²² models, geometry and Rosicrucian thought, and continued to work on his theories. It was during this time that he met the management consultant Frederick Lawrence, with whom he entered into a collaboration. Lawrence was fascinated with Laban’s analysis of movement and, since Laban could notate every human movement, Lawrence wanted him to find ways of increasing efficiency in the industrial workforce. The output of the worker’s efforts vastly improved (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:15), and their ideas were published in the booklet *Laban-Lawrence Industrial Rhythm and Lilt in Labour* (Laban & Lawrence, 1942).

In 1942 Laban moved to Manchester and the year after he started training actors, something that had attracted his interest gradually and increasingly (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:249). In 1946 the Art of Movement Studio opened in Manchester. Laban’s curiosity and eagerness to learn seems to have been limitless. Besides his artistic,

²² His book, titled *Choreutics*, was published only in 1966, eight years after his death.

educational and industrial work, he also focused on movement as therapy. His ideas were received well, and treatments based on the Laban principles were successful.



Photo 4.6: Laban/Lawrence Industrial Rhythm exercises demonstrated by students of the Art of Movement studio in Manchester, 1947 (Photo: Roland Watkins).

In 1952 Laban met William Carpenter, with whom he immediately felt an affinity. Carpenter, like Laban, was also interested in movement from a spiritual and therapeutic perspective. Carpenter was the one who helped Laban record the latter's research into movement and personality. Laban was devastated when Carpenter passed away in 1954, only a year after the studio had moved to Addlestone, and he entrusted the unfinished manuscript on which he and Carpenter had been working to Yat Malmgren. Ten years later it was completed with the title *Theory of Movement Psychology*.

4.1.1 Carl Gustav Jung

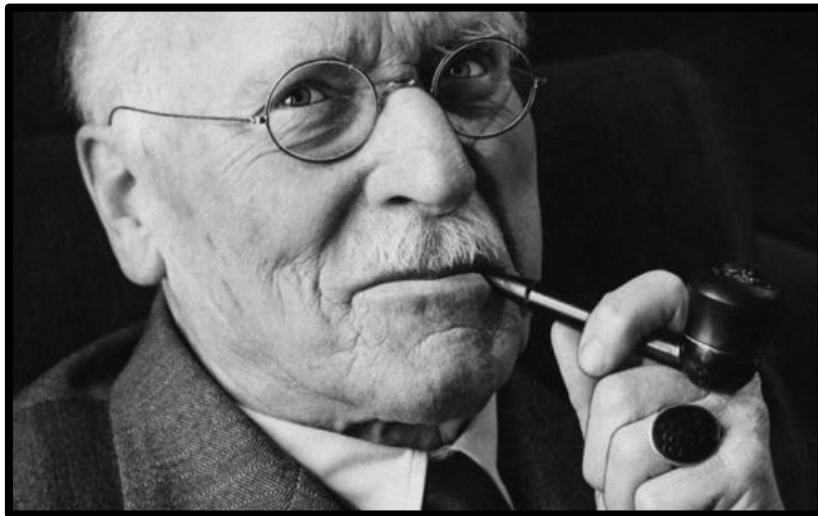


Photo 4.7: Carl Gustav Jung (Photo: Anon).

During the first part of the 20th century, the new science of psychology, i.e., psychoanalysis, emerged in Vienna, with Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) as the inventor of the new form of therapy. For some years, Jung and Freud had a close relationship, but in the end they disagreed on so many issues that the relationship ended. They had different opinions about religion, parapsychology and dreams. However, their difference of opinion about human motivation was the biggest issue (Jacobson, 2014). Freud asserted that that repressed or expressed sexuality was the main motivating factor in human behaviour, while in Jung's view Freud was far too focused on sexuality. He claimed that human motivation was a psychic energy or life force, of which sexuality could be one component, contributing momentum (Jacobson, 2014).

Carl Jung's work was a great inspiration for Laban's theories, which evince an indisputable link with Jung's concepts of psychological types and psychic functions (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:236). Laban combined Jung's ideas with dimensions of movement and thereby simplified them considerably (Mirodan, 2019:124). By combining the aspects of sensing, thinking, intuiting, and feeling Laban came up with six different inner attitudes, or personalities. Like Laban, Jung was very interested in

the world of symbolism. He stated that “the language and the ‘people’ of the unconsciousness are the symbols, and the means of communication dreams” (Jung, 1992:12). Jung (1992:50) declares that dreams could often provide premonitions, and what the consciousness cannot see, can be revealed by the unconsciousness, which can convey information through dreams. He states that some dreams seem to predict the future, perhaps due to an unconscious knowledge about future opportunities (Jung, 1992:76). Jung (1992:52) claims that, to maintain a physical and mental balance, both the consciousness and the unconsciousness should move parallel with each other.

4.1.2 Jean-Georges Noverre

Three distinguished dance and movement theorists strongly influenced Laban, even though Laban himself did not acknowledge some of their impact on his work (Hodgson, 2001:66-76). The first is Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810), a French dancer, choreographer, teacher and dance theorist. Noverre created more than 100 ballets and his book *Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets* – an exposition of the theories of dance and the laws underpinning its representation (Hodgson, 2001:68) – was published in 1760. The contents were presented as a series of letters to a fictitious addressee, in accordance with the epistolary literature of the time, and the work attracted enormous attention (Bohlin, 2016). Noverre criticized the obsolete templates and the dance routines that he noticed in the dances of the time, and his overall goal was to raise the reputation of the dance art. Just like Laban later came to do, Noverre advocated a return to a natural approach. Noverre asserted that dance should be, most of all, a means of expression and not just consist of a meaningless display of virtuosity. Noverre believed that, in order to dance with varied body language and nuanced expression, one should “[s]tudy nature [and] mimic it!” (Bohlin, 2016:31). Later, Noverre’s significance for the dance world was acknowledged when UNESCO’s International Dance Council declared his birthday, 29 April, as International Dance Day.



Illustration 4.2: The only known image of a Noverre-ballet depicting *Médée et Jason* from 1781 (Copper engraving by John Boydell).

4.1.3 Francois Delsarte

Another important source of inspiration for Laban was Francois Delsarte (1811–1871). Even though Laban never mentioned Delsarte in print, early biographical notes from 1900–1908 claim that he had “studied ballet and Delsarte mime” (Hodgson, 2001:69). Delsarte was a student at the Paris Conservatory where he studied both singing and acting. However, his voice was soon ruined as he had received inadequate and unhealthy vocal training and so a career as a singer was no longer an option. With the intention to prevent future generations from going through what he had experienced, Delsarte decided to dedicate his life to finding general laws and principles for art and expression (Shawn, 1963:12). He wanted to find the ‘natural’ feeling, in both body and voice. Also, Delsarte reacted in the same way as Noverre had done earlier; both strongly disliked the inauthentic manner in which the actors of their time acted.

Shawn (1963:18) points out that, according to Delsarte, everything in science as well as art, rests on a trinitarian basis. Delsarte divided human movement into three categories: eccentric (movement going out from the centre), concentric (movement going towards the centre) and normal (movement at the centre). Furthermore, he divided the body in three zones: head, torso and limbs (Craine & Mackrell, 2010) and claimed that they were all inseparable in human expression. These three body zones were subdivided into a further three parts. The head, for example, consisted of an upper part (forehead and eyes), a middle part (nose and upper cheeks) and a lower part (mouth, jaw and lower cheeks).

Delsarte also divided human existence into three different states, namely intellect, the feeling and physical, and claimed that these states were directed by the laws of time, motion and space. Delsarte's nine laws²³ of expression (or motions or gestures) were the base on which he invented exercises to train and educate each part of the body to be as expressive as possible. Delsarte stated that human languages are constituted of three aspects; the word, the tone and the gesture (Hodgson, 2001:71).

Delsarte was a highly respected teacher, and the leading actors and singers of his day came for private lessons. Besides being a highly respected teacher, orator, poet and philosopher, he was also a composer. Delsarte was the leader in the revival of Gluck's music which had been neglected for a century. He was the editor and publisher of music by Lully and Rameau. The obituaries after Delsarte's death state that he was "truly one of the most powerful artists France ever possessed" (Shawn, 1963:12).

4.1.4 Émile Jaques-Dalcroze

Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950) was a professor in theory and harmony at the Conservatoire de Musique in Geneva. He was also a composer and had studied with, amongst others, Bruckner, Fauré and Delibes. Aside from a lot of exercises composed for musical training, the list of Jaques-Dalcroze's works also includes five operas which

²³ The laws of Altitude, Force, Motion, Sequence, Direction, Form, Velocity, Reaction and Extension.

were performed regularly during his lifetime (Hodgson, 2001:72). Yet in the chronicles of music, Jaques-Dalcroze is not known as a composer, but as a famous music educator and the inventor of *Eurythmics* (“good rhythm”). A renewed interest in Greek culture was prevalent in this period during which Isadora Duncan was regarded as a great artist with her revival of the principles of Greek classical dance.²⁴ Jaques-Dalcroze was especially interested in the harmony of body and soul and explored ways of releasing the natural rhythm in the body. He wanted to interweave the movement of the voice and the gestures of the body and thereby create a training regime for rhythm and an education through rhythm (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1997:17). Jaques-Dalcroze (1920:8) claimed that training built only on the auditive was insufficient, and he wanted to connect music and dance, dynamics and space, time and power, and the auditive training with the motoric, in order to develop a greater musicality within the student. He asserted that “the physical experience forms the musical consciousness” (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1997:70). Jones (2018) explains that *Eurythmics* is a method that consists of three parts:

- ***Eurythmics***: Movement and kinaesthetic exercises through which the music is expressed.
- ***Solfège***: A method to improve aural-training and sight-reading.
- ***Improvisation***: A way to express musicality that corresponds to the physical and cognitive development of the student. The body is the primary instrument involved in the improvisation, but performers can also use instruments and their voices while improvising.

There is no doubt that Laban was aware of Jaques-Dalcroze’s theories and vice versa (Hodgson, 2001:75). Nevertheless, Laban never acknowledged any influence from Jaques-Dalcroze. On the contrary, he actually strongly disagreed with Jaques-Dalcroze’s ideas (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:15). However, Hodgson (2001:72) asserts that “there are too many close associations to allow anyone studying Laban to

²⁴ Laban was not delighted with Duncan’s personal way of interpreting and reviving Hellenic dance. Yet he acknowledged her significant role in his book *Modern Educational Art* (1948) and stated that she had given “modern artistic dance its first impulses” (Preston-Dunlop 2008:41).

ignore some definite acquaintance with the ideas of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze". One dividing line, however, between Laban and Jaques-Dalcroze's work was that the origin of Jaques-Dalcroze's approach was in the rhythm of the music, while Laban's work was attuned to the rhythm in the body and its movements (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:22). Laban also surely gained insight into Jaques-Dalcroze's methods from the dancers who had left Jaques-Dalcroze in favour of Laban. First to do so was Suzanne Perrottet, who had been Jaques-Dalcroze's highly regarded assistant for many years. She claimed that she was dissatisfied with Jaques-Dalcroze's point of departure and wanted a way to achieve pure movement that was not dictated by the music (Preston-Dunlop, 2008:23). However, there was also another reason. Perrottet and Laban had a love affair and later they lived in a *menage a trois*, together with Laban's second wife, Maja Lederer. The second dancer to leave Jaques-Dalcroze was Mary Wigman. Wigman complained that the training with Jaques-Dalcroze was tame, restrictive and "unable to make room for her sense of dynamism and freedom" (Hodgson, 2001:75).

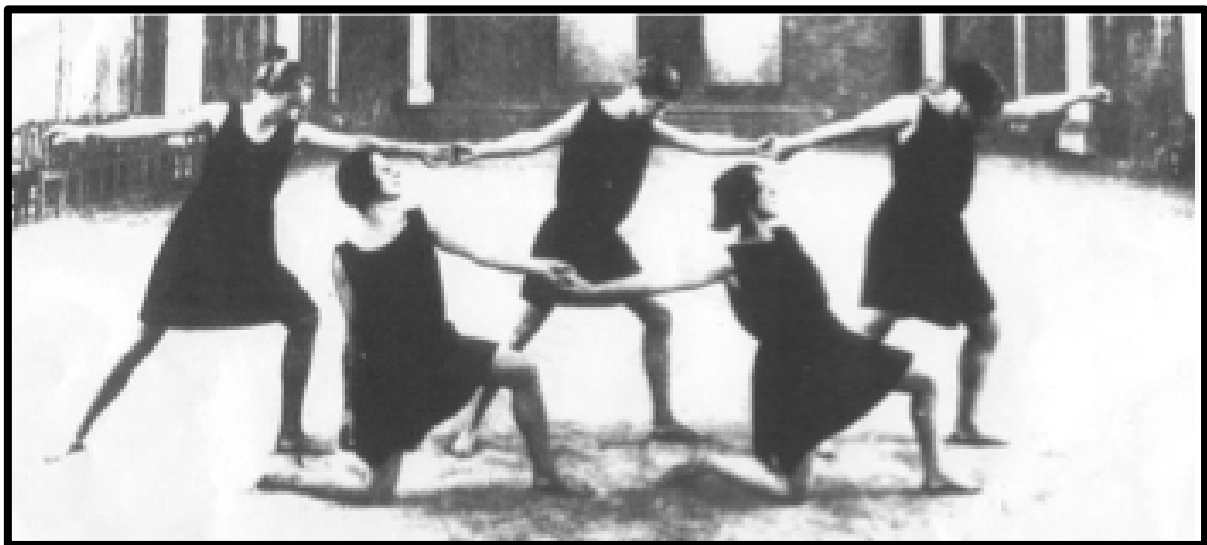


Photo 4.8: Group improvisation with London School of Dalcroze Eurhythmics, 1924 (Pope, 2010:137).

4.2 Yat Malmgren

The other person who is strongly associated with the LMT is Yat Malmgren. Yat was one of three children brought up in the Swedish town Gävle, north of Stockholm

(Luterkort, 1976:51). From an early age he showed, on the one hand, an interest in the Bible and, on the other hand, classical literature.

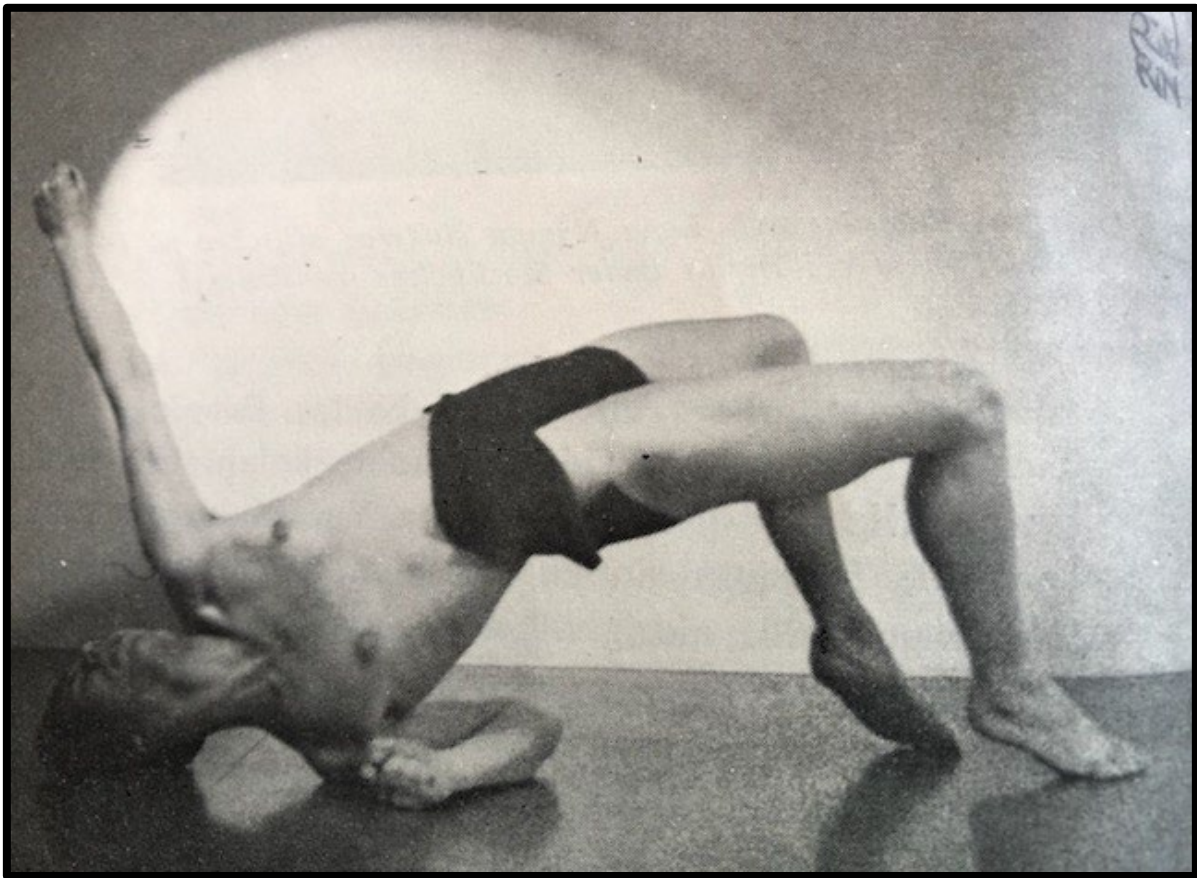


Photo 4.9: Yat Malmgren dancing Kain in *Ur Genesis (From Genesis)* Stockholm 1939 (Photo: Riwkin).

Malmgren considered the options of becoming a priest or an actor and, in 1935, he took his first acting lessons with the old Swedish actress Julia Håkansson in Stockholm. However, soon it turned out that he had a special aptitude for movement and dance and, despite his age (he was already 19 at the time) he started his dancing training with the Swedish Royal Ballet master, Sven Trop. He also worked with Tanya Grant, a Russian dancer, who had worked with Laban's student Kurt Jooss in Essen. Besides working with Grant, Malmgren also worked in Berlin with the Russian teachers Eduardowa and Gsowsky. It was during the late 1930s, that he started to create his *characters* as he performed in solo recitals in Stockholm, Berlin, Warsaw and Paris. In 1939 he was awarded the Gold Medal at the *Concours International de la Danse* in

Brussels. His dances were derived from his understanding of the psychological complexity that emerged from the theatre of Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg (with whom his teacher Julia Håkansson was a good friend). The content of the solo dances was very varied but could reflect themes like contemporary life or biblical motives (Fettes, 2015:322).

Malmgren considered himself a solo dancer and he was used to commanding the stage on his own and creating his own characters. Therefore, he was initially very hesitant when Kurt Jooss asked him to join his company. However, after much deliberation, he finally agreed. Eventually Malmgren danced in, amongst other productions, Jooss's world-famous *The green table*. This production was performed more than 1 000 times after its premiere in 1926 (Luterkort, 1976:54). It was in Dartington, while rehearsing for the tour with Jooss's company that he first met Laban. Lisa Ullman, Laban's partner and collaborator for twenty years, was the one who brought the two men together and it was a significant moment for Malmgren.

During the tour to South America, he met the monologist Ruth Draper (1884–1956), who he claimed had a great impact on his continued work. Draper was a major performer from the 1920s to the 1950s. She had become known for her solo performances, in which she acted with very few props and some invisible partners. Draper created more than 60 characters with her one-woman show, *Ruth Draper and her Company of Characters*, and toured all over the world. Later, Malmgren also adopted these monologues as a way of working with his students (Mirodan, 2015).

When Jooss's company was dissolved in South America because of the war, Malmgren remained in Brazil until 1947. Like Laban, Malmgren often worked without music, and he stated that he always had problems finding common ground with pianists and claimed that he "easily got annoyed by music" (Luterkort 1976:55). For two years he worked as a ballet master and a solo dancer in the Casino Atlantica in Rio de Janeiro, and it was during this time that Malmgren learned more about Stanislavski's method through the Polish director Zbigniew Ziembinski. In 1947 he returned to Europe, first touring Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Russia, and then as a member of

The International Ballet in London. At the height of his career, he was compelled to retire because of a serious injury (Fettes, 2015:323).

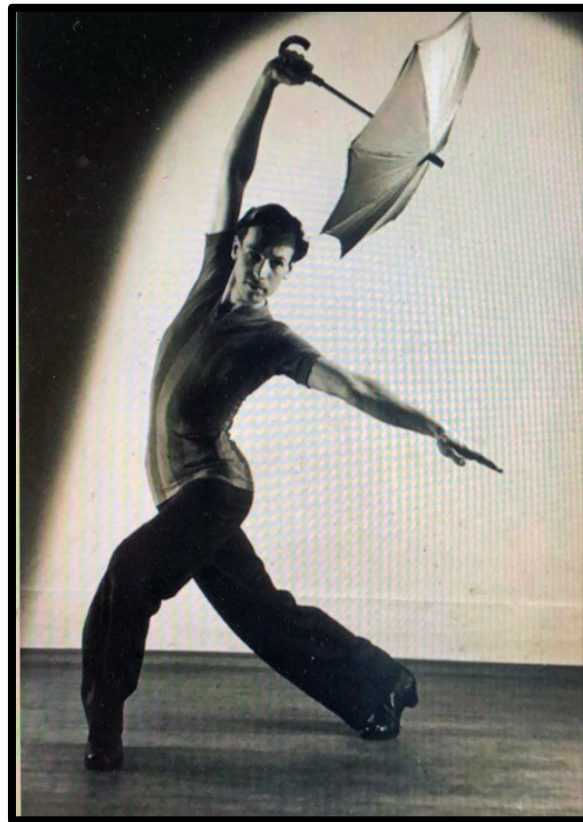


Photo 4.10: Yat Malmgren (Photo: Anon).

In 1954 Malmgren settled in London and commenced his life as a pedagogue. He opened a dance studio but, after a while, there were not only dancers but also actors in his studio. Malmgren remembers how they asked him to teach them the way he had taught himself (Luterkort, 1976:58). That was also the year that he was invited to Dartington Hall to teach and, after 15 years, he met Laban again; the year in which Laban handed him the notes – called *Glossary of terms as used in Movement Psychology* – on which he and Carpenter had worked. The manuscript consisted of a list of concepts with associated definitions. However, a lot of work remained to be done to turn the notes into a theory – a method for movement psychology (Mark & Muchin, 2010:35).

Hayes (2008:43) relates a statement made when she interviewed Malmgren in 2002:

What he handed me was loose papers of the *Inner Attitude*, what was called The tables...There stood little me, but you understand...of course I would be interested...So, they are all in the papers, you see. So, when I started to read them...I spread them out on the floor, you know, and I started reading. And then something very strange happened to me I got shocked, that I started to completely shake. I shook and couldn't stop for hours, for hours, for hours, for hours and it was as if I saw something that this is...This is something incredible, incredible and to think that the Laban people had never been able to do anything about it.

By 1964 Malmgren had developed and systematized the terminology devised by Laban and Carpenter. Malmgren took Laban's ideas and developed them further and renamed them *Character Analysis* (Hayes, 2008:24). Malmgren also linked Stanislavski's system to the technique²⁵ (Hayes, 2008:44). He created an overview of the movement system and based it on Laban's ideas for dancers. He transferred it into the area of acting – a training of body and soul which focuses on “characterization and control of the inner resources” (Luterkort, 1976:59). The LMT places an emphasis on physical expression and the body's work first and foremost (Hayes, 2008:14).

Malmgren trained actors in, amongst others, the Actor's Studio at the Royal Court Theatre and the National Theatre until 1963, when he, John Blatchley, Harold Land and Malmgren's partner, Christopher Fettes, began the Drama Centre in London. However, even though the school was very popular, its training was also considered rigorous, and it was nicknamed the *Trauma Centre*, because people often broke down (Raftery, 2014). Malmgren worked at the Drama Centre until his retirement in 2001. The school was closed in 2020.

²⁵ Malmgren used, for example, the *Super-Objective* as the concept was invented by Stanislavski. The answer to the question “What does my character desire above all else?” gives the Super-Objective as the character perceives it (Mirodan, 2019:126).

4.2.1 Konstantin Stanislavski

The Russian actor, director and theorist Konstantin Sergeyevich Alekseyev (1863–1938) was born fifteen years before Laban, and just over fifty years before Malmgren.

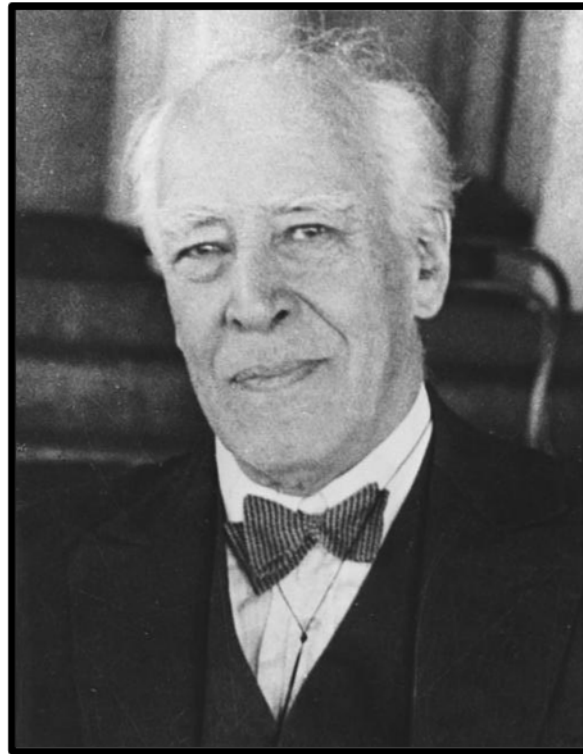


Photo 4.11: Konstantin Stanislavski (Photo: New York Film Academy).

Since Stanislavski wanted to keep his acting career hidden from his family, he chose to use Stanislavski as his artistic name. He came from a very wealthy family and studied singing with Fyodor Kommissarzjevskij who, at the time, was the leading tenor at the Bolshoi theatre (Ginsburg Grigorjev & Platek, 1979:451). Together Stanislavski and Kommissarzjevskij explored the connection between voice and body (Stanislavski, 2008:19). This exploration was something that Stanislavski later certainly found very beneficial as a director who worked with young opera singers. He might have become a successful opera singer if he had taken that *métier* into consideration (Stanislavskij 1976: ix). However, Stanislavski performed on an amateur basis as a singer, actor and director in many performances. In 1898 the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) was co-

founded by Stanislavski in an attempt to reform the Russian theatre and to pave the way for a more naturalistic and actor-centred style of acting (Gordon, 2006:37).

The theatre company gained a very good reputation and performed successfully abroad. Their performances had a significant impact on European theatre.²⁶ Even though the company enjoyed a significant amount of success, it triggered an artistic crisis for Stanislavski, and it became the impetus for him to start developing his acting system (Gordon, 2006:42). His idea was to formulate an approach to control the actor's process by using a psychological perspective. His goal was to give the actor "control over the phenomenon of inspiration" (Moore, 1984:14). At that time, the training of actors mainly consisted of how to intonate and how to perform gestures (Moore, 1984:22), an approach which resulted mostly in artificial poses and declamations, with little meaning.²⁷ Stanislavski reacted to the artistic outputs of his day just like Laban later did. Stanislavski wanted to abandon the tradition of overacting, mannerisms and clichés (Moore, 1984:17).

In 1918 Stanislavski founded his opera studio, *The Moscow Opera Theatre – the Bolshoi*.²⁸ This opera studio was a training school for young opera singers and Stanislavski accepted the responsibility to create a singer-actor-musician (Stanislavski & Rumyantsev, 1998: ix). In his work with young singers Stanislavski (Stanislavski, 1998:4) mainly emphasised two components namely, the diction and free bodies. He claimed that "50 percent of our success depends on diction" (Stanislavski, 1998:4); "one cannot be a really good singer without excellent diction" (Stanislavski, 1998:44). Daily regimens were also aimed at freeing the singers' bodies. Specific attention was paid to training the singers arms, wrists and fingers. Stanislavski (Stanislavski, 1998:36) claimed that "the more dramatically powerful a scene is, the greater the call

²⁶ In addition to plays by Chekov and Gorky, they played Ibsen more than any other dramatist (Worrall, 1996:36). It is interesting and worth noting that both Malmgren and Stanislavski had a deep interest in the plays of Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), sometimes called the father of modern drama.

²⁷ Stanislavski was familiar with Delsarte's system, but deemed the gestures prescribed by Delsarte as resulting in stiff poses instead of taking into account the actors' different tempo rhythms, the given circumstances etcetera (Moore, 1984:29).

²⁸ Later the studio was separated from the Bolshoi and in 1924 it was named the Stanislavski Opera Studio. In 1926 it was renamed to the Opera Studio-theatre and in 1928 it was given the name the Stanislavski Opera Theatre (Stanislavski & Rumyantsev, 1998:x).

on your inner forces, the freer the body must be". It was during this time, in the work with the young opera singers, that Stanislavski's system significantly developed (Magarshack, 1950:350).



Photo 4.12: Konstantin Stanislavski as Nanki-Poo in Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *The Mikado* in 1890 (Photo: Sputnik).

Based on Moore's (1984) explanation of the Stanislavski system, one can infer that the system includes the elements described below.

- **The Magic if.** In order to be believable on stage a *magic if* can help the actor to achieve that by using the questions: How would I do, react and be if I found myself in this character's circumstances? (Moore, 1984:26).
- **The given circumstances.** These circumstances include everything that the actor will encounter in his creation of a role: the plot of the play, the conditions of life, the place and time of the play etcetera (Moore, 1984:36). Nothing on stage will be done just "in general", asserted Stanislavski (1998:8); "in general"

is the enemy of art, stated Stanislavski (cited by Moore, 1984:34). One can use seven questions to achieve specificity instead of generalising:

- *Who am I?*
 - *Where am I?*
 - *When is it?*
 - *What do I want?*
 - *Why do I want it?*
 - *How will I get it?*
 - *What do I need to overcome?*
- **Imagination.** Since the play does not tell us about the past and the future of a character, it is essential that the actor has the ability to fill these gaps. The actor must develop and cultivate their own *imagination* and explore the subtext (Moore, 1984:37).
 - **Concentration of attention.** In order to facilitate the *concentration of attention*, Stanislavski introduced *the three circles of attention*. In the *small circle of attention*, the actor and the things just nearby are in the centre. The *medium circle of attention* includes several persons and a bigger part of the room. Finally, *the large circle of attention* includes everything that the actor can see on the stage (Moore, 1984:38).
 - **Truth and belief.** Since the truth on stage is different from the truth in life, it is important that the actor carries out that in the actions. Using the *magic if* and the *given circumstances* will prevent the actor from overacting, but they will perform truthfully (Moore, 1984:42). The audience perceives things and persons the way the actor treats them. Exercises, physical actions with just imaginary objects, are as essential to the actor as is the vocalisms for the singer. However, there are uninteresting truths as well as interesting truths. The actor has to take this distinction into account.
 - **Communion.** It is essential for actors to maintain constant and honest contact with each other. Since the communication with the audience mostly happens indirectly, their attention is dependent on the communication between the actors in order for them to become a part of the play (Moore, 1984:45).

- **Adaptation.** To overcome a physical obstacle in order to achieve a goal, it might be necessary to resort to *adaption*. The *adaption* to a situation cannot be done in advance but is adjusted to fit another actor's behaviour and other obstacles that the actor encounters in the play (Moore, 1984:47).
- **Tempo-Rhythm.** The tempo-rhythm in all humans is highly individual and does correspond to the given circumstances. The tempo-rhythm helps the action to be believable since it reflects the inner involvement. It is helpful in order to maintain a high level of concentration and as a tool to control the actor's emotions (Moore, 1984:51).
- **Emotional memory.** The emotional memory arises not from a real cause but involves a re-created memory. An emotional memory is not a primary emotion, but is based on the actor's experiences and therefore it does not take full possession of the actor. A strong emotional memory is the most important tool for the actor's work (Moore, 1984:54).

Konstantin Stanislavski passed away 1938, but his system, often just referred to as *the method* (Moore, 1984:6), is world famous and it is likely that no one in the acting world has escaped hearing about his pioneering work (Paikova, 2021). Stanislavski had many successors such as Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner, Mikael Chekov and Uta Hagen, among others (Bartow, 2010). In different ways they all developed the system further and stressed different aspects of Stanislavski's method.

CHAPTER 5: THE POETICS OF THE LABAN-MALMGREN TECHNIQUE

*To act is to see pictures inside of you:
What does the battlefield look like?
How many fields do you have in your memory?
(Malmgren, cited by Fettes, 2015:15)²⁹*

5.1 Introduction

Like many others at his time, Laban was attracted to the Ancient Greek thinkers. He used terminology inspired by Greek, such as choreo-sophie, choreology and kinetic³⁰ (Hodgson, 2001:62). He was influenced by the philosopher Plato (ca. 428 BC–348 BC). In *Timaeus* (Plato, 2000), considered to be a seminal text in European history (Hodgson, 2001:63), Plato first mentions the concept now known as the Platonic solids (Laban, 1974:103). Newlove and Dalby (2013:24) point out that Plato believed that these solids were the best way of explaining “how the universe was put together” (see Figure 5.1). The first solid is the smallest, the *tetrahedron*, consisting of four equilateral triangles with four vertices. Plato’s solids, discussed by MacLean (2019), are connected with the four elements: fire, earth, air and water. The *tetrahedron* is identified with fire, since it is the most movable and sharpest of the solids. The second, the *hexahedron* (or the cube), consists of six equal sides and eight vertices. The *hexahedron* relates to earth, since it is stable and the most immovable of the crystals. Thirdly, the *octahedron* consist of two pyramids with their bases joined. The *octahedron* consists of eight equal facets and six vertices and Plato identified the *octahedron* with the element of air. The *dodecahedron* is the fourth geometrical solid that Plato identified. With its twelve identical sides and twenty vertices it resembles a sphere and Plato related it to the cosmos. The fifth and last solid, related to the element of water,

²⁹ As mentioned in Chapter One, the absence of first-hand publications by Malmgren means that this thesis relies significantly on Fettes’s recollections and presentation of Malmgren’s statements, experiences and beliefs. The use of this seminal source can be regarded as trustworthy because of the author’s prolonged involvement with Malmgren, as well as with the subject matter.

³⁰ The term *choreo-sophie* refers to knowledge or the wisdom of circles, which were deemed to possess magical powers. *Choreology* refers to the science of circles. *Kinetic* – relating to or resulting from motion.

is the *icosahedron*. The *icosahedron* consists of twenty identical sides and twelve vertices.

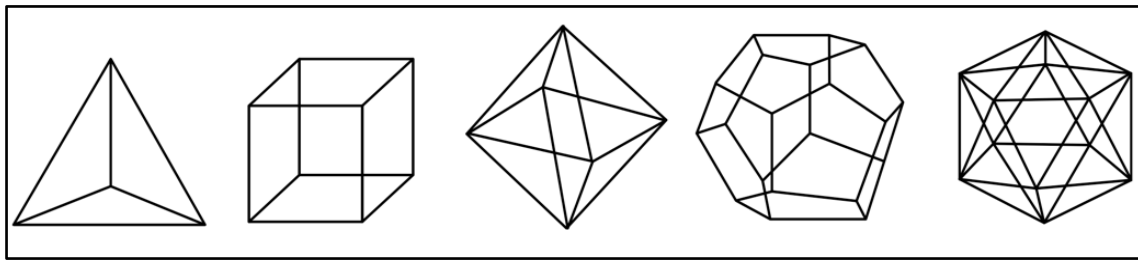


Fig. 5.1: Five Platonic solids: tetrahedron, hexahedron, octahedron, dodecahedron and icosahedron.

Laban preferred to use the word *crystals* instead of solids. Besides giving more poetic colour to the concepts, it also conveys an idea of something transparent inside of which one could step and move around (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:27). While these five crystals as geometrical forms constituted the basics of an imaginative scaffolding which formed the basis of Laban's movement theories (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:27), he regarded the *icosahedron* crystal as the most appropriate with which to express "space relationships and the tensions which all parts of the body can project" (Hodgson, 2001:66). The photo below shows an art piece, *laban's training area* (2013) by Miki Tallone, commemorating the centenary (1913–2013) of the first arts summer school by Laban in Monte Verità.



Photo 5.1: *laban's training area* (Rosenkull: private collection).

The *zeitgeist* at Monte Verità at that time promoted the idea of “back to nature”, an approach inspired by Rousseau (Folini, 2000:17). The proponents of the ‘return’ to nature advocated, among other things, vegetarianism, nudism and simplicity. The collective also practised women’s emancipation, sexuality without possession, the use of drugs and orgiastic experiences (Folini, 2000:14). Apart from these ideas, the collective also supported clothing reforms (wide shirts, simple shoes or barefoot, and no corsets or constrictive belts) and the reform of writing systems (abolishing, for example, capital letters) (Folini, 2000:9). The eradication of the upper case is depicted in the accompanying description at the icosahendron by Miki Tallone:

laban’s training area

work of art by miki tallone realized
by the monte verità foundation
on the occasion of the centenary
of the first art summer school
by rudolf von laban (monte verità
1913–2013). choreographer,
dancer and hungarian peda
gogue, laban, renewed and rec
reated the artistic language of
the dance, the icosahedron plays
an all-important role in his theo
ries, because the dancer’s move
ments take place exactly within
its form

In addition to Plato, Laban was influenced by the ancient Egyptians' knowledge of the golden ratio,³¹ later mathematically explained by Pythagoras (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:47). Laban discovered how some proportions within the icosahedron followed the golden ratio, in the same way as in the human body.

Laban called the distance around the body where a person can move without moving the feet the *kinesphere*. One can gather physically towards oneself or scatter outwards in space when moving, which means that we are shrinking or extending our *kinesphere* (Laban, 2011:83). The *kinesphere* is like a bubble around the body and remains constant, even if the body is moving. Laban divided the body into three zones: the head, the trunk and the limbs and emphasised their interplay and interconnectedness. In a description how the body and mind relate to each other he asserted that

[t]he body is our instrument of expression through movement. The body acts like an orchestra in which each section is related to any other and is part of the whole. Its various parts can combine in concerted action, one part may perform alone as a 'soloist' while others pause (Laban, 2011:34).

Hodgson (2001:70) acknowledges Laban's emphasis on the correlation between body and mind, as well as how the spiritual side affects the physical and vice versa (Hodgson, 2001:70). Furthermore, Laban (2011:53) divided the torso into an upper part, which constitutes the center of levity, and a lower part (the pelvis region), which

³¹ In ancient Greece, Pythagoras and his disciples were already aware of the golden ratio, sometimes called the Golden Section (Latin: *sectio aurea*). Even during the Renaissance, finding the golden ratio was considered to be a secret science by artists such as Michelangelo and Botticelli, who worked according to the principles of this ratio (Meisner, 2018:58). The basic principle of the golden ratio relates to the division of a distance into one longer part and one shorter part. The golden ratio comprises the relationship between the two parts. The longer part is 61,8% longer than the short one. Abbas (2017) believes that, if a structure exhibits the golden ratio, we are more likely to find it beautiful. The golden ratio is found in many structures in nature, such as in seashells or in beehives (du Satoy, 2015). However, the principles of the golden ratio also were often used in architecture, painting and music. The Vitruvian Man, painted by Leonardo da Vinci in 1487 is one example (Abbas, 2017). The picture illustrates the ratio from foot to navel, from navel to head, and the golden ratio is found in the point between them. Du Satoy (2015) further claims that an example of the golden ratio can be found in the overture to Mozart's opera, *Die Zauberflöte*. The section from the Allegro to the triple chords consists of 81 bars and, from there to the end of the overture there are 130 bars ($81/130 = 0.623$).

is the center of gravity. He stated that the flow of a movement strongly relies on the order in which the body parts are set in motion (Laban, 2011:18). A movement starting from the torso and gradually flowing to the outer limbs is more free-flowing than a movement that originates from the extremities. In order to make space visible he invented many different movement scales. These scales involved sequences of movement, with names such as the Dimensional, the Primary, the Diagonal, the A-scale, the B-Scale etcetera. They had all their starting points in the different crystals (Adrian, 2008:97). Furthermore, the scales are based on the *three-dimensional planes* that Laban used to explain the different spatial dimensions in which a human can move (Newlove & Dalby 2013:49) The *table plane* (hereafter referred to as the horizontal plane) is related to the right/left dimension. To experience this dimension one can imagine that one is standing in the middle, with the table surrounding one. The space is divided into one half above and one half under the waist. In the high/deep dimension, called the *door plane* (hereafter referred to as the vertical plane), the space is divided in one half in front of you and one half behind you. The forward/backward dimension is called the *wheel plane* (hereafter referred to as sagittal plane) and has a larger feeling of rotation. That space is divided in one to half at the left side of you and one at the right. Figure 5.2 on the next page illustrates the three planes.

Laban (2011:127) asserted that, in the same way as singers are classified as sopranos, mezzo-sopranos, altos etcetera, dancers often possess a natural rising or lowering in their movements. He looked at the dancer's personality, potential and their uniqueness and based his choreographic ideas on three different types of dancers: the *high level* – those who jump and leap off the ground, the *central level* – the ones that are led more by the body and are more sensuous in their movements and finally, the *deep level* – those who move in a more earth-bound way and, accordingly, have a stronger build (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:56; Preston-Dunlop, 2008:83). Laban (2011:22) claimed that it is important to be aware of different variations in body patterns as well as the “mood and inner attitude” produced by different actions in the body.

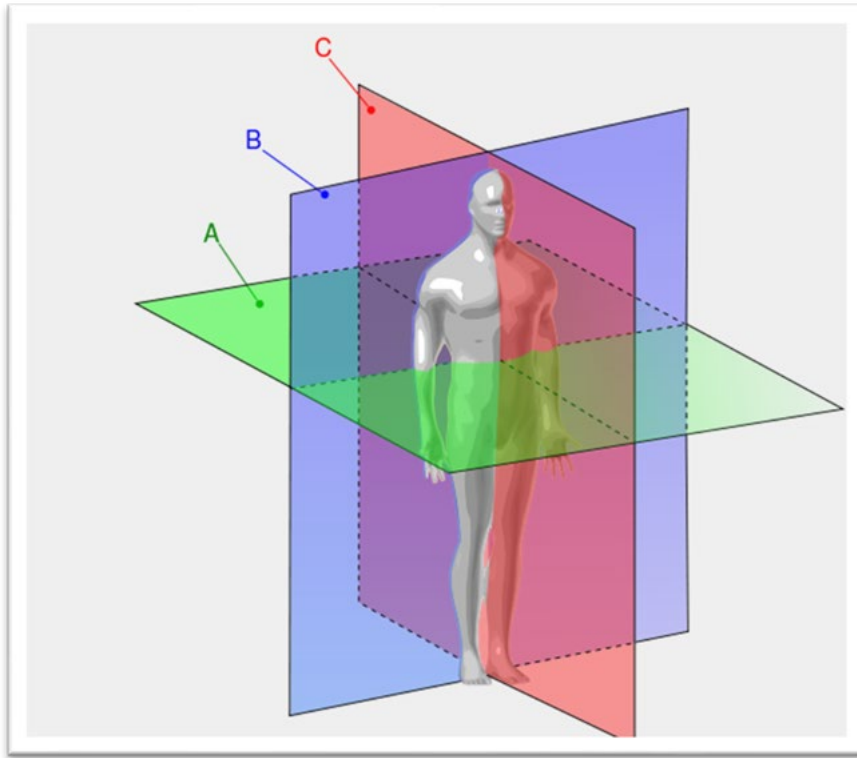


Fig. 5.2: The three different planes. A-table plane, B-door plane and C-wheel plane (Anon., 2021).

One could argue that Laban's consideration of the aspects mentioned above might compare to voice classification in singing where, for example, range, timbre, passaggi and agility are considered when designating the voice type. Examples of such designations include a light coloratura soprano, a full lyric soprano and a dramatic soprano. It is also possible for this voice classification, often seen as synonymous with *fach*, to consider various other characteristics within the different voice categories when identifying the voice type.

When Laban (2011:174) spoke of the intensity with which the movement could be performed, he stated that there are four *grades of intensity*. The intensity varies from *reduced*, *normal*, *exaggerated* to *extreme*. According to Fettes (2015:96), Carpenter – the man with whom Laban collaborated in developing *Theory of Movement Psychology* – referred to these grades of intensity as *degrees of stress* and categorized them: *under-stressed*, *normal*, *stressed* and *over-stressed*.

Laban is best known for his system involving the notation of movement, a system called *Kinetography* or *Labanotation*. *Labanotation* is part of the wider *Laban Movement Analysis* (LMA) and is “a method and language for describing, visualizing, interpreting and documenting all varieties of human movement” (Laban/Bartenieff Institute, 2021). According to the website of the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies (2021), LMA now is a multidisciplinary approach, with contributions from psychology, kinesiology, anatomy and many other fields. LMA is, in addition to being a tool for different artistic professions, also used in physical therapy, psychotherapy, anthropology, leadership development, law, sports, communication, politics and peace studies (Laban/Bartenieff Institute, 2021; Fernandes, 2015:15).

In his endeavor to find a language for notating movement, Laban studied earlier attempts made by Arbeau³² (1520–1595), Rameau³³ (1674–1748), Feuillet³⁴ (1675–1710) and, as mentioned earlier in Chapter Four, Noverre (1727–1810), but found that none of their attempts at notating movement adequately met his needs (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:60). Laban wanted not only to notate the movement patterns of the feet, but also to write down every articulation that could indicate the expressiveness of the movement and the human body.

³² Arbeau was one of the earliest people known to have recorded dance steps. In his book *Orchesographie*, published in 1589, he used letter abbreviations as a way of describing the steps. Although the descriptions are very detailed and in addition describe the prescribed etiquette for men and women, it is not considered a notation system. The descriptions, albeit detailed, are not detailed enough to enable us to read how the steps can be performed and thus allow interpretive variations (Guest, 2014:4)

³³ Rameau was a dancing master at the Spanish court. He further improved and adapted Feuillet's system and made it more comprehensive. Rameau stressed the importance of the five feet positions and the posture (Kassing, 2018:110).

³⁴ Feuillet was a French choreographer and dance notary, best known today for his *Choreography, ou l'art de décrire la dans*. The book was considered a self-instruction manual and published in the early 1700s (Kassing, 2018:109).

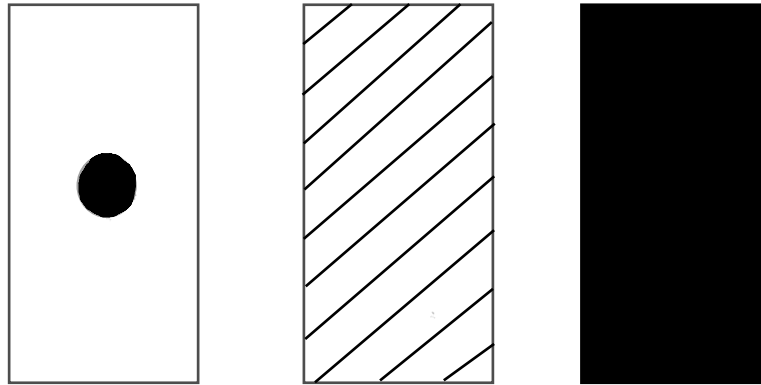


Fig. 5.3: Example of Labanotation: Symbols indicating the three different levels in space, namely the left is high, the middle is medium and the right is low.

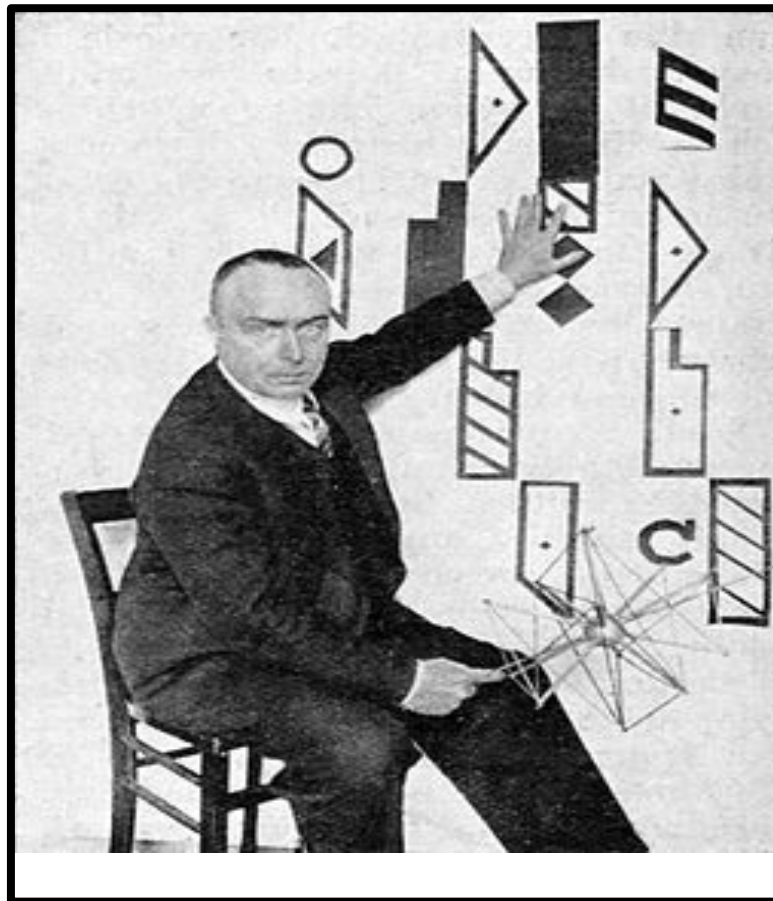


Photo 5.2: Laban, 1929, presenting his notation system (Photo: Anon.).

5.2 The Laban-Malmgren technique

For the purposes of this thesis (dedicated to understand the possible relationship between voice pedagogy and the principles of the LMT) it is important to consider the core of the Laban-Malmgren technique (LMT)³⁵. When Laban handed over the unfinished and incomplete manuscript the work he and Carpenter had done, Malmgren realized that it could be the core of a training method for actors (Nordin, 2017:2). Hayes (2008:50) claims that “it is through the work of Yat Malmgren that Laban’s experimental discoveries have been offered to actors”. Malmgren processed the manuscript, changed some words and concepts and made necessary additions (Luterkort, 1976:59; Mark & Muchin, 2010:42). He used Laban’s terminology in a new way and emphasised some parts, such as *inner attitudes* and *externalised drives*, more than Laban had done (Hayes, 2008:51, 164). In addition, he developed Laban’s and Carpenter’s work by adding Stanislavski’s thoughts on the *task*, the *super-task* and the *physical act* (Nordin, 2017:2). Stanislavski (2017:149) stated that the “tasks are the lights which show where the fairway is and stop you losing your way in any given segment of your course”. Regarding the *super-task* he claimed that all minor and major tasks, ideas and actions performed by the actor strive to “fulfil the play’s Supertask” (Stanislavski, 2017:320). Furthermore, he asserted that the inner, invisible shape of a character’s life was brought to life by the *physical act* (Stanislavski, 2017:539).

As mentioned earlier, a simplified way of explaining the technique can be the image of the tree (see Figure 5.4). Starting at the top, the crown of the tree, we see the eight *working or effort actions*³⁶. Movements take place in time and space and is done with a certain amount of force. According to Laban (2011:23), any movement of the body can be described by answering the questions:

- Which part of the body moves?
- In which direction or directions of space is the movement exerted?

³⁵ The name that Fettes (2015) gave this technique was “The Laban-Carpenter ‘Theory of Movement Psychology’ adapted and brought to completion by Yat Malmgren”.

³⁶ Laban (2011:71) called them from the beginning Basic Effort Actions.

- At what speed does the movement progress?
- What degree of muscular energy is spent on the movement?

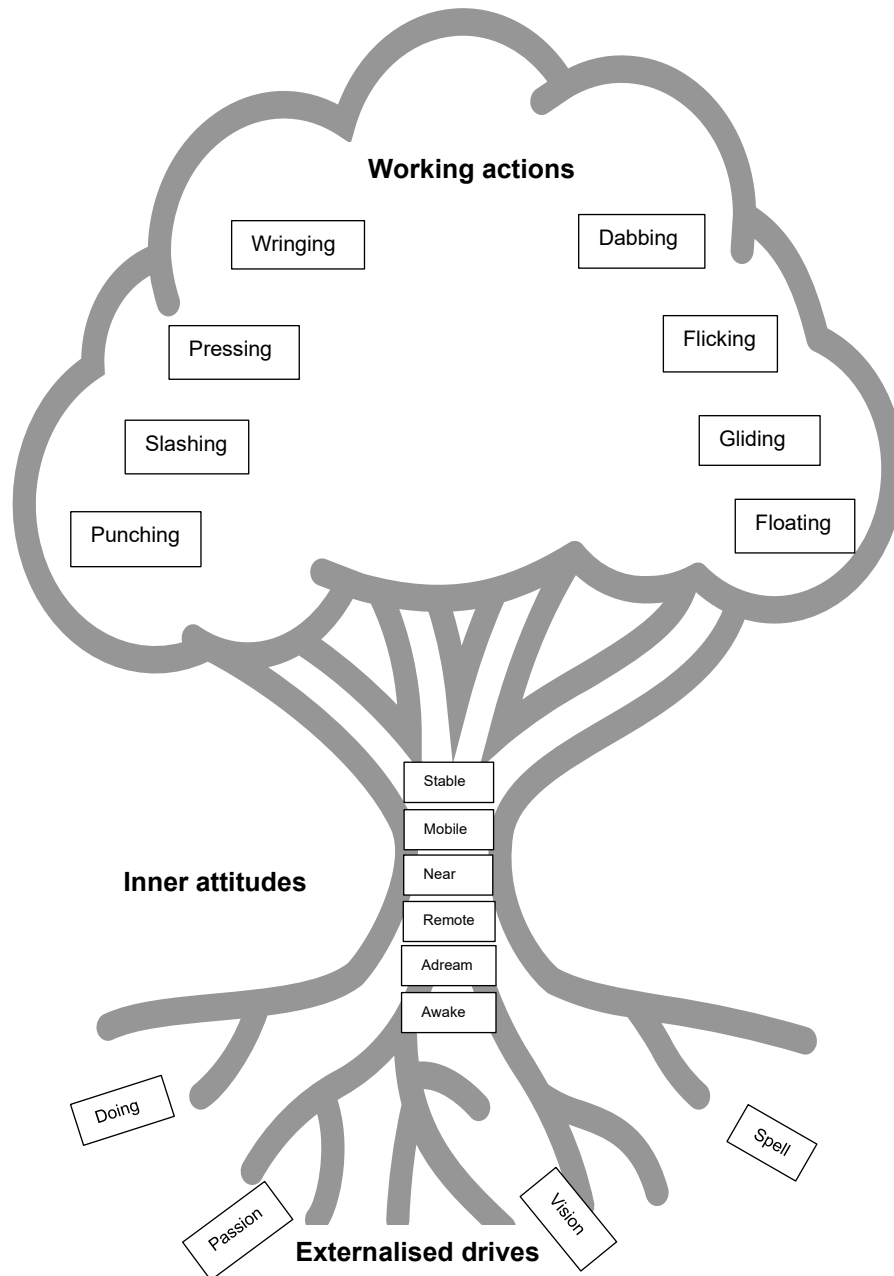


Fig 5.4: The LMT explained with the metaphor of a tree.

Laban (2011:47) claimed that movement could be understood as using a part of, or the whole, body as well as time, space and muscular energy. He divided movement into elements of *weight*, *space*, *time* and *flow* and referred to these as the *motion factors*

(Laban, 2011:69). He stated that the weight factor is the *motion factor* of which it is the easiest to be aware, while the three others often are revealed in the semi-conscious mind (Laban, 2011:176)

5.2.1 Motion Factors

Weight – The weight factor refers to the force with which a movement is accomplished. The body can indulge in gravity or resist it. The weight can be *strong* – a heavy movement that brings a weightiness to the movement, or *light* – a weaker movement that can be perceived as weightlessness.

Space – The space factor refers to the direction in which the body moves in the space, as well as in which direction it moves on its own axis. The personal space around us is our kinesphere and the movement in space can be *direct* or *flexible*. The *direct* element is described as a sensation of something threadlike or as a feeling of narrowness (Laban, 2011:73). The *flexible* movement is wavy and gives a feeling of pliability or being everywhere (Laban, 2011:73)

Time – The time factor refers to the duration or a passage of a movement (Laban, 2011:74). The time element can be *quick* – perceived as a feeling of momentariness, or *sustained* – a slow movement that brings an endlessness to the movement. Hayes recalls (2010:199) Malmgren telling her that Laban regarded time as the most important of the four motion factors.

Flow – The flow factor refers to a movement's inertia or flux. The flow is by its inward or outward streaming related to communication. An unhampered flow is referred to as *free flow*, while a hampered flow is referred to as *bound flow* (Laban, 2011:18). *Bound flow* is associated with the ability of precision in a movement (Laban, 2011:172) while *free flow* is related to liberation (Laban, 2011:75)³⁷. When the flow is completely stopped, a position occurs instead of a flux (Laban, 2011:50). The flux can vary from

³⁷ Malmgren (cited by Fettes, 2015:171) declared that "Free Flow is more destructive than bound flow yet never so destructive as love".

either going or interrupting to arresting, and the action goes from being either continuous or jerky to stopping altogether (Laban, 2011:49).

Concepts that relate to Laban's *motion factors* are the *mental factors* that originate from Jung's ideas. Jung (1993:18) argued that the psyche could be divided into four different psychological functions:

- *Sensing* – a sensory perception perceived by the five senses: hearing, touch, sense of smell, sense of taste and sense of sight;
- *Thinking* – an intellectual reflective reasoning
- *Intuiting* – an insight by the mind, without any input of reasoning;
- *Feeling* – an emotionally and valuing-based perception of something

According to Jung (1993:189), one of these basic functions habitually dominates in our relationship with that which surrounds us. The correlation between Laban's motion factors and Jung's mental factors can be indicated as follows:

- Weight expresses the mental factor of *sensing*;
- Space expresses the mental factor of *thinking*;
- Time expresses the mental factor of *intuiting*;
- Flow expresses the mental factor of *feeling*.

Laban (2011:114) added what he called an *inner participation* to the different motion and mental factors. He claimed that:

- Weight entails an inner participation of *Intending*. The intending can be either a strong desire to do something or just a light intention. According to McCaw (2011:352–353), this involves stimulating the mind purposefully to motivate an inner action of an externalized drive, or to activate an action;
- Space has an inner participation of *Attending*. The focus on whatever attracts one's attention can be direct, without distraction, or indirect and circuitous. McCaw (2011:352–353) describes this notion as "turning the mind tentatively to motivate an inner attitude or externalised drive or to activate an action";

- Time has an inner participation of *Deciding*. Decisions can be made unexpectedly and suddenly, or as considerations made after sustained periods of time. McCaw (2011:352–353) regards this decision making as the intuitive relating of the past and future with the present.
- Flow has an inner participation of *Adapting*. The adaptation involves the anticipatory time made just before executing the forthcoming task. The flow can be either curbed and bound or uninhibited and free. According to McCaw (2011:352–353), this adaptation is the extroverted adjustment of one's self with the outer world, and the introverting relating of one's conscious self with the subconscious)

A literal example of the above-mentioned aspects of inner participation could read: Your *attention* is directed to the cake on the table. You have an *intention* to eat it. Once you have made the *decision* to do so, your *adaptation* will determine how you do it.

By combining the three motion factors namely, *weight*, *space* and *time*, the eight *working actions* occur. Hayes (2010:269) asserts that the actor training according to Malmgren's principles and ideas "relies on the identification of *working actions*". Laban (1952:14) claims that, apart from the (working) action being performed according to the function of the word, the state of mind was also changed. Consequently, the movements are done with some degree of freedom and spontaneity. He claimed that "If one tells a child to press, to glide, to flick or to hit, a much larger margin is given to imagination and spontaneity, than in the command to stretch or bend some definite articulation of the body" (Laban, 1952:14).

5.2.2 Working actions

The first four working actions, characterised by weightiness, are considered to be contending or resisting *working actions* (Laban, 2011:71; Hodgson, 2001:149). The qualities of these working actions are strong, energetic and assertive and, concentrated largely from the hips and down the performer's body.

- **Punching** – is strong, direct and quick. A punching action appears in martial arts, for example, but can also be more of a poke, a stab, a shove or a thrust.
- **Slashing** – is strong, flexible and quick. A slashing action appears in a whipping movement, as a throw, or in the tennis player's serve.
- **Pressing** – is strong, direct and sustained. A pressing action is performed when helping someone to move a vehicle that has stalled. A less pressing action could be compared to the action required when ironing clothes or, even less strong, pressing a doorbell.
- **Wringing** – is strong, flexible and sustained. A wringing action is performed when one wrings out a wet pair of jeans, or a lighter version, a wet washcloth.



Photo 5.3: *Pressing* working action is accomplished by the girl when she applies pressure when pushing the boy in the stroller (Rosenkull: Private collection, 1966).

The next four working actions, characterised more by intended lightness, are called yielding or indulging *working actions* (Laban, 2011:71; Hodgson, 2001:149). Their qualities are gentle and soft, and mostly concentrated from the hips up. According to Hayes (2010:269), the working actions upon which Malmgren's principles and ideas rely include:

- **Dabbing** – is light, direct and quick. A dabbing action appears in dabbing a wound, making dots with a paintbrush or writing on a computer keyboard.
- **Flicking** – is light, flexible and quick. A flicking action appears when you flick fluff of the clothes or flick away a fly that disturbs you.
- **Gliding** – is light, direct and sustained. A gliding action is performed in ice-skating, hang-gliding or caressing an infant's head.



Photo 5.4: *Gliding* working action is achieved when the boy skis. The movement is light, direct and sustained (Rosenkull: Private collection, 1969).

- **Floating** – is light, flexible and sustained. A floating action is performed in flying or floating movements. It is considered aimless.³⁸

³⁸ In Chapter Five I chose to use a descending whole-tone scale in my *working-action song* to depict the floating quality. This kind of tonality can be a way of perceiving the music as dissolved and floating (DeVoto, 2017).



Photo 5.5: After the *pressing* working action by the man, a *floating* working action takes over with the girl on the raft. (Rosenkull: Private collection 1968).

In every-day life few actions are limited to only one *working action* but instead often consist of two or three different actions (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:140). Even though a person uses different motion factors that are appropriate for the task at hand or fit their personality, it is of great value to understand and extend the personal and artistic range to have the ability to apply them all well (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:140). Laban (2011:172) argued that all eight *working actions* consist of a varied flow and mixture, and their intensity can be altered. A *working action* is a two-way action, since it affects not only what is around us but also our inner attitude (Laban 2011:3, 11, 22). In the same way as a moment consists of elements of *weight*, *space*, *time* and *flow*, so also do sounds and words, Laban pointed out (2011:94). Laban (2011:91) stated that “the audible movement of the vocal chords becomes almost a dance in singing”. Furthermore, he claimed that singing and dancing are more emotional than intellectual arts. During his address at the annual meeting of the Laban Art of Movement Guild (LAMG) in 1950, the president shared an anecdote about Laban’s investigative work in real life to illustrate the zeal with which he wanted to understand humans and their movements.

During a political demonstration Mr. Laban studied the movements of the excited crowd. He stood amongst a bunch of rowdies who threw stones at the windows of an official building, and he was arrested by the police together with the others. Questioned at headquarters why he was there, he tried to explain in a foreign language to the police officer what his job was. The incredulity with which this was received gave way to a mild astonishment when he declared: "You catch thieves, other people catch butterflies, I catch movement efforts." He was then dismissed as an utterly hopeless case (LAMG News sheet, 1950).

5.2.3 Inner Attitudes³⁹

Laban (2011:22) stated that the body's movement creates a mood, an *inner attitude*. Fettes (2015:265) recalls Malmgren telling him that "[e]ach *inner attitude* is a progression of a want". The *inner attitude* represents a mode of dealing with the reality or a device to perceive that reality (Hayes, 2010:150). While a *working action* is a movement of the body performed by *motion factors*, an *inner attitude* is also related to the four *mental factors*. The direct correspondence between the *motion* and *mental factor* becomes a unit through which one can "both conceive and perceive a character" (Mirodan, 2015). According to Fettes (2015:105), an *inner attitude* "is revealed in our movements as a compound of two elements". Nordin (2017) states that the *inner attitude* is a character's way of relating to the world and the attitude in this context is very much a determined manner of thinking and feeling.

While Jung (1993) spoke of two types of humans in his typology (extravert and introvert) and four functional types (sensing, thinking, intuiting and feeling) and made a distinction between the two. Laban greatly simplified Jung's ideas and combined them with his four different dimensions of movements (Mirodan, 2019:124). If we go on using the metaphor of the tree, we can find the six inner attitudes in the trunk of the tree (Watson, 2001:51).

³⁹ Initially, Laban referred to the inner attitudes as the *Six tables*. They were statements by young dancers who explained their different experiences of the movement's quality. They wrote them down and put them on six different tables (Fettes, 2015: 107).

- **Stable** (“the intelligent ruler”) consists of the *motion factors* weight/space and the *mental factors* sensing/thinking. A stable character can be *commanding, receptive, practical* or *self-contained*.
- **Mobile** (“highly emotional”) consists of the *motion factors* time/flow and the *mental factors* are intuiting/feeling. A mobile character can be *unacknowledged, acknowledge, revealed* or *concealed*.
- **Near** (“down to earth”) consists of the *motion factors* weight/time and the *mental factors* sensing/intuiting. A near character can be *materialistic, human, warm* or *cool*.
- **Remote** (“ascetic, spiritual”) consists of the *motion factors* space/flow and the *mental factors* thinking/feeling. A remote character can be *egocentric, altruistic, sociable* or *unsociable*.
- **Adream** (“the lover”) consists of the *motion factors* weight/flow and the *mental factors* sensing/feeling. An adream character can be *sombre, irradiant, overpowering* or *diffused*.
- **Awake** (“the intellectual”) consists of the *motion factors* space/time and the *mental factors* thinking/intuiting. An awake character can be *acute, doubting, certain* or *uncertain*.

The inner attitudes, in particular, are concerned with creating the actor’s character. Mirodan (2019:125) provides generalized labels for each of the inner attitudes so as to promote an better idea of them.

Inner attitudes	Mirodan’s label
Stable	The intelligent ruler
Mobile	Highly emotional
Near	Down to earth
Remote	Ascetic/spiritual
Adream	The lover
Awake	The intellectual

The attitudes design and delineate the actor’s choice, not in an artificial way but as an “attenuated expressionism or accented realism” (Mirodan, 2015:42). However,

Malmgren developed the *inner attitudes* further and stated that, in a complex character, there is an interaction between the *Character Attitude* – the constant character of the role – and a shifting *Situation Attitude* – an attitude that affects and changes according to the prevailing circumstances in the situation (Nordin, 2017).

5.2.4 Shadow moves

An incomplete action can occur in some movement actions – an action where one or two of the *motion factors*, namely *weight*, *space* or *time*, are missing (Laban, 2011:70). They can sometimes be seen as actions between two basic actions, for example Dab-Glide or Punch-Press. When the incomplete action is done subconsciously, a shadow movement arises (Laban, 2011:77). Malmgren stated that “shadow moves are movements of any part of the body made without conscious will” and Fettes (2015:334) added that these movements are beneficial “expressing *inner attitudes* and *externalised drives*”. Through our *shadow moves* it becomes apparent what we really feel, think and are (North, 2011:257). A *shadow move* contributes significantly to the performing or acting in the way it reflects the *inner attitude* and inner participation deliberately or by subconsciousness movements (Laban, 2011:104). Sometimes, a *shadow move* can be perceived as a hidden movement or a movement that expresses the contrary to the stated intention (Laban, 2011:186). Laban (1947:14) explained that *shadow moves* are “suggestive of something they would like to do but may not” – such as clenching the fists when there is a desire to hit out – and is indicative of their frame of mind at the time, for example, joyful, pleased, anxious, fearful, resentful, etcetera. Laban (2011:187) argues that a person with a lot of *shadow moves* is well-equipped with imagination, while there is a lack of imagination in persons with scanty *shadow moves*.

5.2.5 Externalised drives

Laban (2011:79) declares that the *action drives* (later called *externalised drives*) take place when the expression is more intense. They form the roots of the tree, and they nurture the *inner attitudes*. The *externalised drives* are there in order to stimulate an

expressive action (Hayes, 2008:54). An *externalised drive* consists of three *motion factors* and, as a consequence, the actions are more intense.

- **Doing** – consists of the *motion factors (weight/space/time)* and is *exerting* or *reacting*. The characteristics of *doing* are “flowless, feelingless and unadaptive” (Fettes, 2015:211). When *doing* is the predominant root, the result lacks flow and becomes almost mechanical, without emotions (Nordin, 2017).
- **Passion** – consists of the *motion factors (weight/time/flow)* and is *constructing* or *destroying*. The characteristics of *passion* are “spaceless, thoughtless and attentionless” (Fettes, 2015:217). When *passion* is the predominant root, the result becomes eager and urgent. *Passion* can appear like fire or, if less passionate, like a glow (Nordin, 2017).
- **Spell** – consists of the *motion factors (weight/space/flow)* and is *dominating* or *surrendering*. The characteristics of *spell* are “timeless, intuitionless and decisionless” (Fettes, 2015:225). When *spell* is the predominant root the time seems to have stopped. In *spell* someone is dominated or enchanted by something or someone or, is dominating someone (Nordin, 2017).
- **Vision** – consists of the *motion factors (space/time/flow)* and are *ideas* and *problems*. The characteristics are “weightless and intention is subdued” (Fettes, 2015:233). When *vision* is the predominant root, we leave reality and go into our dream world (Nordin, 2017).

The *externalised drives* appear in pairs where:

- *Doing/Passion* creates **Near**
- *Doing/Spell* creates **Stable**
- *Doing/Vision* creates **Awake**
- *Passion/Spell* creates **A dream**
- *Passion/Vision* creates **Mobile**
- *Spell/Vision* creates **Remote**

5.2.6 Negatives

In addition to the above-mentioned parts of the LMT tree, there is also a performance device called *negatives*. Fettes (2015:69) explains the *negatives* as a circumstance when the character ends up between different *mental factors*, *motion factors* or inner participation. The four *negatives* consist of *heavy*, *adrift*, *indecisive* and *irrelated*.

- *Heavy* – is the neutral and impotent negative quality between strong and light *weight* and its inner participation *intending*. There is an inertia which hinders the reception and the transmission of the mental factor *sensing* (Fettes, 2015:71). It gives rise to something heavy, something “in between” and a physical feeling of sinking downward (Nordin, 2016).
- *Adrift* – is the neutral *negative* quality of *attending* in *space* (Fettes, 2015:76). A disorientation and confusion in the mental factor *thinking* occurs. The existence becomes unfinished, and the mind is floating aimlessly. The *space* quality is neither direct or flexible but inbetween and the character has no idea where he is or what his destination is (Fettes, 2015:77).
- *Indecisive* – is the “*negatively neutral dream quality of time*” (Fettes, 2015:78). The quality is neither *quick* nor *sustained* but inbetween; a timelessness occurs (Fettes, 2015:78). The *indecisive’s* inner participation is *deciding*. In this condition, the character cannot connect to the past, the present or what might be in the future (Nordin, 2016). The ability of the mental factor *intuiting* to reach a decision has ceased.
- *Irrelated* – is the *negative* neutral quality of *flow*. The quality is neither free nor bound in the flow. This character is ir-related (unrelated) to his emotions (mental factor *feeling*). The feelings have not disappeared but the unrelated, “emotional fixity” disguises the pain or diminishes it (Fettes, 2015:81–83). The inner participation is *adapting*, but the ability to adapt to pleasure, as well as to discomfort, has ceased (Nordin, 2016).

5.2.7 Inner Quests

An *inner quest* relates to the *motion factors*, the *mental factors* and the inner participation. Fettes (2015:87) proposes four questions that an actor should ask, not only about the role he is depicting, but also about himself as an individual. Fettes (2015:87) state the the questions “reflect the four mental factors, inner participation and motion factors”. The answers to these four questions will help the actor to achieve the inner quests.

- **What** is my *intention*? What do I want? The motion factor is *weight*, and the mental factor is *sensing*.
- **Where** is my *attention*? Where am I? The motion factor is *space*, and the mental factor is *thinking*.
- **When** do I make my *decision*? When am I doing something? The motion factor is *time*, and the mental factor is *intuiting*.
- **Why** am I *adapting*? Why am I doing something? The motion factor is *flow* and the mental factor is *feeling*.

These *inner quests* were later developed by Malmgren into *ten questions*:

1. What do I want in the scene?
2. What do I want in the play?
3. What do I want in life?
4. To whom or to what am I doing it?
5. What is my obstacle?
6. How or by what means am I doing it?
7. Where am I doing it?
8. When am I doing it?
9. Why am I doing it?
10. Who am I? (Luterkort, 1976:76)

“When something really happy or sad happens,
that makes us alive – and that is Theatre”

Malmgren (cited by Fettes, 2015:15).

CHAPTER 6: PERSONAL TEACHING APPROACH AND INTENDED DIDACTIC STRATEGIES FOR VISITS TO THE RESEARCH SITES

This chapter is concerned with the sub-question on the didactic strategies, based on the principles of the Laban-Malmgren technique (LMT), that I used to develop technical and musical proficiency during the contact sessions with the selected singers. Such consideration required me to turn to self-study as a strategy of inquiry. As mentioned in Chapter One, it is necessary to be intentional and systematic when conducting such a strategy of inquiry, in order to reach a better understanding of one's own practice as an educator (Dinkelman, 2003:6). As such, I followed the advice of Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009:234) and began by considering my existing teaching approach and reflecting on my own positions in what I believe, after which I started planning the strategies and activities for the intended contact sessions with the selected singers. These strategies and activities were characterised by pedagogical principles based on my existing teaching approach and on the principles of the LMT.

As claimed earlier in the thesis, a starting point in a self-study is to use what you already know and, from there, connect to the findings in the research (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:234). There is a focus on making a teacher's knowledge explicit (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:18). By uncover and transforming our tacit knowledge - reframing it - we can act more strategically and thereby improve our practice and by documenting it, it can also inform other practitioners as it provides new knowledge about the relationship tacit knowledge and practical action (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:66-68). A few themes emerged quite clearly during my intentional and systematic attempts to define my own teaching approach, as well as during those times when I tried to distance myself and get a more objective perspective on my teaching practice. The emerging themes can be classified as:

- reflective thinking and a metacognitive perspective on the learning process,
- positive reinforcement,
- imagery as a teaching tool,
- singing combined with movements, and
- knowledge acquired through one's own artistic experience.

The self-study led to the discussion below, which explains how the above-mentioned themes constitute a theory that is based on my personal teaching approach.

6.1 Reflective thinking and a metacognitive perspective on learning

Many of the educators and researchers to whom I referred in Chapter Three underscore the importance of having a range of teaching strategies (Chapman, 2016:165; Linklater, 2006:19). Furthermore, perspectives on voice pedagogy have changed over time. From the master-apprentice approach that dominated earlier perspectives on voice pedagogy in general, the pendulum has increasingly swung towards a perspective that encourages a student to be active and reflective; such a student constructs their own knowledge rather than merely accepting and copying someone else's claims (Gärdenfors, 2010:116). Entwistle (2009:2) asserts that a focus on *a way of thinking* might be more valuable pedagogically speaking than merely the acquisition of knowledge, while Schenk (2006:71) explains how the use of the Socratic method⁴⁰ can function like a sculptor 'uncovering' the marble statue.

I strongly support a teaching approach that encourages reflexivity. It is easier for the student to develop an idea about how to practise on their own when they are used to reflecting on their own work. I frequently ask students when we first meet what they think they are good at. Most students are clearly aware of their shortcomings (perceived or otherwise), but less prepared to enumerate their assets as singers. It is also important for students to be able to define their strengths, so that in times of doubt and when questioning their own abilities, they can still soberly discern what they are actually capable of doing.

⁴⁰ The term 'Socratic method' refers to Socrates (469–399 BC), the Greek philosopher, whose way of teaching was by posing questions to his mentees. Socrates' teaching was about helping the disciples to arrive at what they "already knew" (Nilsson, 2023). The students thereby gained insights into questions that Socrates believed they already knew the answers to. The aim in research interviews is to deepen both one's own and the interviewee's way of thinking (Pihlgren, 2023). Socrates called his method *maieutics*, i.e. delivery pedagogy - a way of redeeming inner knowledge. It was a teaching method that directed attention to the knowledge a person possesses without being aware of it (Jansson, 1999).

Mirodan (2019:124) and Stanislavski (1976:392) view the acquisition of knowledge as something where learning and the creative process are emphasised more than the finished result. As a teacher, I find it integral to emphasise the importance of the prerequisites and the ongoing process, and not to focus exclusively on the results. I regard curiosity and the ability to wait and see what happens when the conditions are right as very important. However, the act of learning is largely a matter of gaining an understanding of the phenomenon, rather than learning how it works. In my experience, it is worth noticing that what you find is not always that for which you were looking.

One of the most important aspects for me personally when I teach at university level is the interaction with the student. I strive to tailor my didactic strategies according to each student's needs and, therefore, it is possible that attitudes, work pace, content and teaching methods can also vary. Some students learn better by imitating, others by seeing and others by understanding intellectually. I am convinced that, in the long run, it is beneficial to the student's sense of autonomy to make myself somewhat redundant within the teacher-learner relationship, and to lead the students gradually towards becoming the creators and bearers of their own learning to an even greater extent. Hence, I very often require the student's input on their own performance by asking reflective questions. The questions are open and may raise issues such as: Were you happy with anything in your singing? With what were you satisfied? Did you feel any difference when you did or thought like that? Was the sound different? How did you experience the effort? If you were your own teacher, what changes or improvements would you have suggested for yourself? These types of questions are often ways of freeing up their own resources, such as critical thinking, listening, proprioception and imagination. The questions can serve as tools to delve deeper into the student's way of thinking and to understand what is under the surface.

Two keywords I often use are *follow* and *lead*. I deem it important for me as a responsive teacher to follow a student's intentions and impulses, to show interest in the student's ideas and thereby encourage the student to work independently and build a personal musical identity where the exploration of thoughts and ideas has a prominent place. Besides, the students often bring to the table things I may not have

thought of. On the other hand, as a pedagogue, I am the one who has more experience and knowledge and probably have a clearer picture of what has to be achieved. Therefore, I also have a responsibility to take command of the process and lead the work. A fruitful work often arises when a dialectical approach takes place between the two poles – to follow and to lead. These two words can serve as keywords both in the musical process and in the didactic work. By adopting a dialectic approach between these poles – both as a student and for me as a teacher – a good dynamic is created and gradually, in my opinion, this leads to an independent and reflective student.

I also deem that it is essential to get an insight into the student's self-image, learning styles and their expectations – expectations from me as their pedagogue but also what they expect from themselves. Whether the student has poor self-confidence or low self-esteem or is equipped with great confidence and even grandiose thoughts about themselves can also strongly affect the teaching-learning situation and the final results.

6.2 Positive reinforcement

Bruner (1996:86) claims that a teaching-learning process is never neutral, and the possibility of risk is ever present. He even asserts that the process “is a medium that carries its own messages” (Bruner, 1996:86). In the case of singing lessons, there is also more to explore about the individual singing lesson situation, because the dynamics of one-on-one teaching has not been investigated a great deal (Nafasi, 2013). However, it can be emphatically argued that the principle of *positive reinforcement* plays a major role in the learning process, whatever the teaching and learning situation is. Entwistle (2009:83) explains that empathy and enthusiasm are crucial qualities for being a good teacher, while Björkvold (2011:132) states that the teaching profession rests on two cornerstones, namely knowledge and love. I strongly agree with this statement. In a teaching situation, the student may feel vulnerable and doubt their knowledge and ability to cope with the task at hand. Through my experience, knowledge and empathy, I hope to be able to help, guide and support the student to overcome obstacles and grow as a singer, musician and human being. Gagnon (2019) also believes that cooperation and the ability to adapt to the student is a prerequisite for a successful teaching and learning experience. These aspects,

together with positive feedback and a lot of encouragement, create a safe, fun and positively reinforced environment where, in my opinion, learning can take place successfully.

A positive, warm, permissive and safe environment is essential for good learning to take place. I try to contribute towards creating an environment where mistakes are accepted as an obvious and natural part of the developmental process and where boldness and courage are encouraged. I have frequently met students who have had experiences of teachers who are very restraining and who try to shape the students in specific directions; teachers who quite brutally reprimand, make derogatory comments and sometimes even ridicule the student. Whether these comments are conscious or unconscious violations, they certainly do not belong in a teaching and learning situation. The students are in a position where they depend on the teacher and should be able to feel safe, guided, supported and led. I constantly strive to enhance what is good – even if in some cases it might be ever so little – and what has been improved. By strengthening these areas, the weaker ones also tend to follow, and the problem seems to subside. However, this does not mean that you can or should avoid the weaker aspects.

An example of how to approach a challenge is when working with a student who intonates too low. Often attempts to fix intonation problems can lead to more tensions emerging and a fixation around the problem can arise. Of course, a problem connected to intonation can also be because of ignorance about intonation, a problem that obviously should be addressed. In rare cases, intonation problems might also occur as a result an inability to perceive different pitches clearly. If this is the case, a laborious task awaits the teacher and the student. However, by diagnosing the root of the intonation problems, for example, tension in the tongue, an overly retracted tongue, too low air pressure, a tessitura that is too high for the singer, lack of boldness, poor vocal fold closure etcetera, the teacher and student can work on correcting these vocal faults and the intonation also tends to improve. Furthermore, I consider humour as an important and redemptive power in the studio. Being able to laugh at oneself and with each other, and de-dramatize the situation when things go wrong creates a relaxed

working environment. In addition, muscular tensions are released in a beneficial way through laughter.

6.3 Imagery as a teaching tool

As a teacher, I am of the opinion that it is essential take in account how different students learn and acquire knowledge. Some want to know exactly what is happening muscularly, while that kind of knowledge does not mean much for someone else, or perhaps makes singing even more complicated. Some want to feel and have a physical experience, while others are guided by their auditive and visual experiences. Some singers find at least a part of their path by imitating, and for others it can be rich imagery that makes the technical and musical challenges fall into place ultimately.

As stated in Chapter Three, imagination, metaphors and inventiveness (*imagery as a teaching tool*) can contribute significantly to the singer's vocal and musical development. Feldenkrais (Nelson & Blades, 2018:9) even claimed that “what you can do you can imagine, and what you can imagine you can do”. Several authors with long and proven experience refer to imagination as a prerequisite for successful teaching and learning (Chapman, 2016:183; Harris, 2006:37; Hemsley, 1998:142; Hines, 2006:15; Kagen, 1960:41).

Imagery, metaphors and imaginative parables are a big part of my teaching. For example, images associated with wind, waves, lava and water can be very helpful when it comes to communicating the notions of flow and vocal freedom. In my experience, references to different animals' behaviour patterns, sounds or movement patterns can provide imaginative connections that might have an effect on the singer's energy levels, voice quality and self-image. Furthermore, I believe that images that clearly illustrate weight and gravity can be useful metaphors for finding a balanced posture and anchoring both the body and the larynx. I am also convinced that imaginary gestures, attitudes and emotional moods can affect the singer's onset of tone, the density of the sound or the direction of the phrase.

6.4 Singing combined with movement

Singing combined with movements can be a way to achieve a balanced instrument. Many authors (Goren 2017:55; Miller 2004:242; Miller, 2008:132; Williams 2013:182; Winnie, 2018:7) emphasise the need for an equilibrium between tension and relaxation. Laban (2011:75) argued that to find freedom entails, to a large extent, first having experienced the absence of being "free in" or "free from" the flow of movement. Movements are crucial to any music training and improve the awareness of the body, stance and breathing and, ultimately, results in improved singing (Goren, 2017:55; Moberg & Uggla, 1984:15; Williams, 2013:182; Winnie, 2018:7). I have seen clear evidence in my teaching of how these tools are able to change the focus for students who are subsequently able to overcome impeding challenges. The movements in my teaching have, for example, also been used to provide or remove unnecessary energy. Like Miller (2008:132; 2004:242), who claims that movements can be used for both technical challenges and musical phrasing, I have seen the benefits of movements combined with singing. Other benefits of movements in singing are also evident in the way they affect our thinking (Hodgson, 2001:141; Nafisi, 2013). How we think affects our movements but also vice versa. In the same way that Sundberg (2007:198) claims that there is a connection between visible (external bodily) and invisible (internal work in the laryngeal muscles) movements in the body, Laban (2011:91) also argues that there is a strong connection between body movements and voice movements. He further claims not only that the movements become an echo of the inner state, but also that the movements of the body can change the inner state (Laban, 2011:22). These aspects will be considered in more detail in later chapters of this study which deal with the *inner attitudes* – the trunk of the tree.

As a voice pedagogue, I also find movements in singing lessons an effective tool. The movements can be very simple, such as strolling around the room or moving in time with the music. For example, it can serve as a way to release the restrained singer and release the flow in breathing and phonation. Sometimes the movements turn into a dance, where the student dances by himself or sometimes with me as a teacher. Movements can be performed in time with the music or in a different tempo rhythm and go against the given pulse. The purpose can then be to use a different amount of

energy in the song, but also to strengthen the pulse feeling. Movements can be performed as if they are done in water, quicksand or on clouds; sometimes it is the lower body that moves, sometimes the torso and sometimes the whole body. This entails finding different tonal qualities such as a heavier, darker or anchored sound, or an airier and more fluid timbre. The movement activities may be reminiscent of *tai chi* or pure squats; they may be about 'throwing away' the tone or 'reeling it in'. The movements can consist of sitting down and getting up from a chair during singing, leaning against something or gently falling backwards into someone's arms. These movements I have found beneficial for a clearer body awareness and support function, as well as a different way of phrasing and a greater fearlessness.

From time to time, I use specific images: a rabbi who prays and performs the typical rocking of the upper body, or a large bird that flies in slow motion, using its entire wingspan. I also use the image of a sower who – with hands and arms – scatters seeds in the field, or a somewhat intoxicated guest at the bar, who is allowed to hang over the grand piano.

The movements also serve as a good diversionary manoeuvre. The singer is distracted from focusing on vocal difficulties and he allows his natural voice to emerge. It seems as if the voice mimics what the body does. The goal is that, once the singer achieves freedom in phonation, a musical performance and expressiveness, they can find their way to vocal freedom without having to perform the movements.

However, sometimes the situation is the opposite from the one described above, and a teacher encounters a singer who needs to find peace and quiet. In such a case the instructions might be for the singer to stand still in a frozen position, act like a machine or move like a robot to be effective. This type of singer needs, in my opinion, to peel away all unnecessary external movements and find their core in postural alignment, phonation, expression and self-confidence. The result often gives a greater density of sound and thus also more authenticity in the performance and the tone of the voice.

6.5 Knowledge acquired through personal artistic experience

Several authors (Bunch, 1997:21; Gutenberg, 2004:8; Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013:16; Sällström, 1988:191) mention that, for a teacher, knowledge acquired through one's own artistic experience is an extremely important element for successful teaching. This knowledge creates a teaching and learning environment where both good and bad experiences can serve as important building blocks. Only the singing teacher who also has a great deal of experience of performing as a singer has deeply experienced and thereby acquired intimate knowledge and understanding of the creative act. Such experience, according to Bunch (1997:21), is a prerequisite for fully understanding everything that would be expected from the artists whom he is teaching, as well as minimizing common errors that might occur (Uggla, 1989:53).

In my opinion, one cannot understand that which is expected from performing artists by only reading or watching others perform. As a voice pedagogue, one needs to experience for oneself what it feels like to actually sing. One can understand the singer's vocal experience better once one has experienced how it feels in the body when a tone is supported well, when a tone has balance and projection, how it feels to sing strongly or weakly, and how effortless it feels when the tone becomes free and fluid. My previous rich experiences as a performer on the opera stage and in concert have strongly contributed to my teaching approach and methods. In addition to seeing and hearing what the student does, I also use my creative listening to a great extent to feel what the student is doing or not (Sundberg, 2007:203). Moreover, an experienced singer also has tacit knowledge, based on their experiences of repertoire, of difficult passages in the music, where it can be difficult for the singer to hear the orchestra, etcetera.

6.6 Questions and assumptions

Based on the literature review, as well as on my experiences as a singer and singing pedagogue with my own assumptions, it finally became time to investigate how the Laban-Malmgren technique could affect the participants' singing technique and musical performance. The issues I wanted to examine crystallized into the questions:

- How could the perception of "gathering in space" support my hypothesis that this approach could create a denser, collected sound, and could "scattering in space" resolve an overly 'held' and tense voice, or loosen up a restrained or rigid expression?
- In what way could the emphasis on *gravitation or levitation* affect the overly unfounded singer, or the singer with a less favourable posture or centre point in the body? And could it also effect the position of the larynx, the jaw, the zygomatic muscles and the soft palate?
- To what extent would the thought of – and movement in – different planes affect timbre, flow and direction? Would the thought of and movement of *retiring in the sagittal plane* create a more perceived roundness in the timbre and an ability to sustain longer phrases and would *advancing in the sagittal plane* result in a more perceived and audible frontal placement, twangy quality or an eager expression? Would the thought of, or the movement of, *spreading or enclosing in the horizontal plane* in some way have an impact on the breathing pattern, the legato, the position of the mouth or the pharyngeal freedom? Would the thought of, or the movement in, *rising or descending in the vertical plane* affect the laryngeal setting, the position of the jaw, the breathing pattern or the physical expression?
- How effective might Laban's concrete scale with *four grades of intensity* be as a tool in vocal pedagogy when attempting to create more or less intensity in the energy within the singer and create an awareness of it?
- How would the different *working actions* affect the phonation, energy level, musical phrasing, legato etcetera?
- How would the *punching* quality affect the vocal energy, power and attack?
- How would the *slashing* quality affect energy and boldness?
- How would the *pressing* quality affect the continued maintenance of the energy level, as well as the legato, the vocal fold compression, intonation and the direction of the phrase?
- How might the *wringing* quality resist the exhaling air, affect the phonation and the legato singing?
- How does the *dabbing* quality affect the tone?

- How would the *flicking* quality affect the lightness, speed and agility of tone?
- How would the *gliding* quality affect phonation?
- How would the *floating* quality affect the vocal mass and the singers body?

The literature has clearly testified to the way in which the design of the acting can be influenced by the *inner attitudes* in the Laban-Malmgren technique. However, the aspects that this thesis focuses on include

- the extent to which it might be possible to also refer to the *inner attitudes* to change phonation, resonance, dynamic and musical elements,
- the way in which the sound might change when the singer goes into a *stable* attitude,
- how the musical phrasing changes when the singer acts with a *mobile* attitude, and
- how the musical expression changes when the singer uses a *near, remote, adream or awake* attitude?

Shadow moves are something that singing pedagogues are quite used to encountering. These might be involuntary movements in fingers and hands that move in time with the music, but usually completely unsynchronized to the given pulse. The movement might involve a body that rocks back and forth or moves up and down parallel to the pitch or, an overly active or shaking head. In the light of the knowledge that *shadow moves* involve a relatively common pattern in a developing singer, and that such movements often become obstacles to effective work, I realised that I would have to pay extra attention to such *shadow moves* when observing the singers. This conscious awareness is especially justified if one considers that Laban (2011:104) claims that such movements often express something that is completely against the performer's conscious intention. On the other hand, Laban (2011:186) also believes that a person who does a lot of shadow moves possesses a rich imagination, while a person with more frugal shadow movements lacks imagination.

The *externalised drives* will be able to function partly in the same way as the *grades of intensity*. I anticipated that the *externalised drives* will be able to vary the degree of

commitment, the type of energy and intensity, and in that way they can nurture the musical and technical quality of the performance.

My experience as voice pedagogue has shown me that sometimes singers who are innately musical rely on their inherent musicality to such an extent that the development of their technical proficiencies is compromised. But one also sometimes encounters students who are too cautious or overly occupied with technical aspects. I accordingly planned to investigate the relationship between innate musicality and the development of technical proficiency by examining:

- how such singers, by using *doing*, might act more objectively, rhythmically and, as a result, sing better, instead of creating their own obstacles;
- how *passion* can increase the singer's energy and, consequently, inform aspects such as stage presence, legato, airflow and vocal closure;
- how a singer using *spell* can affect flow, vocal openness and freedom, or stage presence and musical expression and, finally,
- how the *externalised drive vision* affects the singer who is too direct and lacks flexibility, who needs to improve with regard to a more internal participation, or who uses a too pressed phonation.

I chose not to delve into the Laban-Malmgren notation *negatives* in this study.

Lastly, in this study I intended to take a closer look at the so-called *inner quests*. I used the ten questions that Malmgren came to develop, largely based on Stanislavski's ideas. The purpose of posing these questions was, in addition to strengthening singer's ability to construct and depict a character, to look at how (in accordance with my research questions) the *inner quests* might affect the development of the musical and technical proficiency of the singers.

I planned the research activities for the contact sessions ahead of my visits to the different institutions. These activities were informed by my own teaching approach, as well as the inferences from the data I had gathered during the literature review (Chapter Three and Chapter Four). I visited each university twice. The rest of this chapter serves as an exposition of the didactic strategies I intended to use during the contact sessions.

6.7 Planned activities for first visit to universities

I planned on requiring all the participants of each institution to attend the first session at their specific location together. This session consisted of a lecture and a workshop. During the lecture I introduced myself and the main research question of my study, as well as presented a background story of the people behind the Laban-Malmgren technique to contextualize their ideas and the environment in which these two masters had operated. I created a PowerPoint presentation to begin explaining the Laban-Malmgren technique, for example, using the metaphor of the tree (discussed in Chapter Three) and also to give a brief overview of the different steps in the technique. This was followed by a practical investigation of the different parts of the content; we explored our kinesphere by gathering and scattering in space, levitation and gravitation, the *three-dimensional planes*, the *four grades of intensity* and the four *motion factors* that led into the eight *working actions*.

6.8 The motion factors

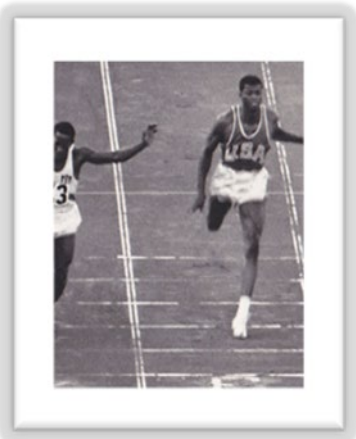
I used the images below to explain the *motion factors* to the participants in this study. The *motion factors* have the possibility of displaying four qualities, namely *weight*, *space*, *time* and *flow*. Each of these qualities has the possibility of being executed in different ways. In order to explain the *motion factors* to the selected singers, I offered, what I considered to be clear examples of the different qualities and the way they can be performed, in the PowerPoint presentation, using the photos⁴¹ below.

⁴¹ All the photos I used for the PowerPoint presentation were found on the internet and, while the names of the photographers are unknown to me, I acknowledge them as the creators of the visual images.



The two images above are indicative of the different ways in which **weight** can be applied, namely in a way that is *strong* or *light*. The man who lifts the ball needs more effort (weight) than the girl who blows away the seeds of the dandelion. Her effort (weight) is light.

The images below illustrate the qualities of **space**, which can be executed either *directly* or with *flexibility*. The runner who runs 100 meters, runs directly, while flexibility of movement is required to negotiate a path through the crowd.



The *quick* movement of the world's fastest animal, namely the cheetah, as opposed to the *sustained* movement of the yawning baby, illustrates the different ways in which the quality of **time** can be performed.



The qualities of **flow**, which can be either *bound* or *free*, is evident in the two images below. The solemn military line-up presents young men with a *bound flow*, while the playful children illustrates a *free flow*.



Photos 6.1–6.8: Motion factors *weight*, *space*, *time* and *flow*.

After having explained and carefully illustrated the *motion factors*, I intended to workshop with the participants. I wanted them to engage in physical activities to experience these factors, initially merely using the body and no voice. The idea was to first establish the *motion factors* clearly in the body to give a physical kinaesthetic experience. Since the sense of sight is the dominant sense for human thinking (Gärdenfors, 2010:237), I also wanted them to see the movements in themselves, but

also observe them in their peers. The goal was to later strengthen the sensations of *weight*, *space*, *time* and *flow*, and to enable the voice to imitate what the body expressed and experienced (Goren, 2017:47)

Furthermore, I planned on asking the singers questions that would allow them to reflect on their experiences.

- What does it feel like to move the arm, the leg or the whole body with strong or light weight?
- Where am I moving in space if a movement is executed directly or with more flexibility and how does it feel?
- What is the difference in physical and mental sensation in the when a movement is done in a sustained manner versus quickly?
- How does the body express free or bounded flow?

Once I had the impression that the students had acquired a significantly well-informed idea of these qualities, I moved on to discussing the working actions.

6.9 Working actions

The *working actions* are characterised by different qualities. They can be either contending or yielding. The four contending qualities are *punching*, *slashing*, *pressing* and *wringing*, while the yielding qualities are *dabbing*, *flicking*, *gliding* and *floating*. As in the case of the *motion factors*, I used different pictures to illustrate the various *working actions*, expressing the four contending and the four yielding *working actions*.

6.9.1 The four contending qualities of the working actions

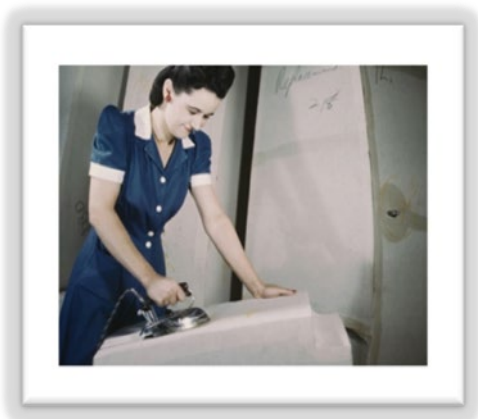
I once again presented visual images by way of a PowerPoint presentation to explain the four contending qualities. The first contending quality, namely ***punching***, is strong, direct and quick. Punching is an action that can be found in various martial arts, such as boxing or karate, as evident in the images below.



The second contending quality is ***slashing***, which is strong, flexible and quick. The images below illustrate the different ways this quality can be executed: a rider who cracks a whip and a person who harvests grain with a sweeping movement.



Pressing is the third quality, and it is performed as a strong, direct and sustained action. The way in which this contending quality can be performed is illustrated in the images of a woman pressing down on the ironing board while ironing clothes and the elephant pressing against a car in an attempt to turn it over.



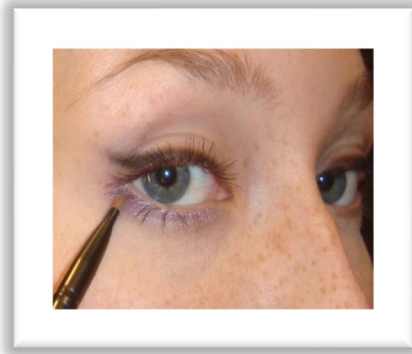
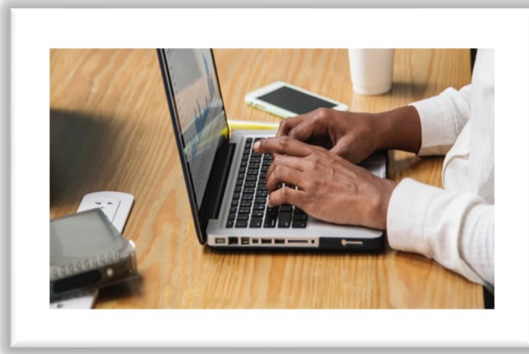
The final contending quality is **wringing**, and it is performed strong, flexible and sustained. It is illustrated by the images below in which the woman wrings out water from the clothes or, in another version where the woman is doing a yoga pose.



Photos 6.9–6.16: Working actions *punching, slashing, pressing* and *wringing*.

6.9.2 The four yielding qualities of the working actions

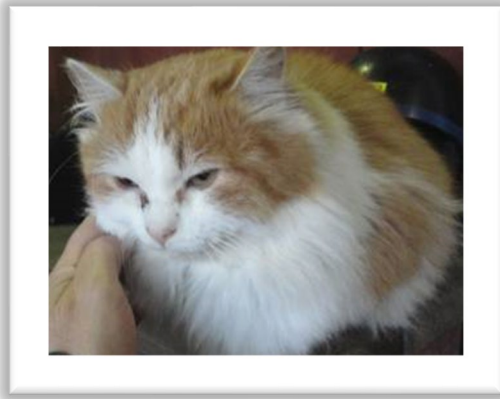
The first yielding quality is **dabbing**, illustrated by the images below, is light, direct and quick. Examples of dabbing include typing on the keyboard of a computer or gently dabbing with a makeup brush while applying make-up.



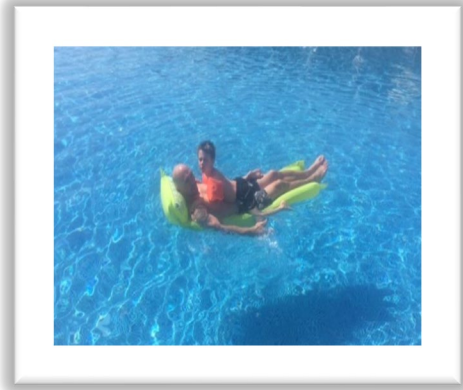
The second yielding quality is **flicking**. This quality is light, flexible and quick. A flicking gesture is used when flicking a fly away or as illustrated in the image on the right, when a lady opens a fan with the flick of her wrist.



The images below illustrate the third yielding quality, namely **gliding**. This quality is performed lightly, directly and in a sustained manner. Examples of this quality include gently stroking a cat or an ice skater smoothly gliding over the ice.



The final yielding quality is **floating**, a light, flexible and sustained working action. The images below – floating through the air while paragliding and floating around on an inflatable waterbed – illustrate the floating quality.



Photos 6.17–6.24: Working actions *dabbing*, *flicking*, *gliding* and *floating*.

To offer an even deeper understanding of the *working actions*, I also provided the selected singers examples of how one can associate certain animals with perceptions of the working actions. These examples included:

- Punching – an aggressive bear, a boxing kangaroo or a fighting bull
- Slashing – a selfish baboon
- Pressing – a draught horse or a crocodile biting its victim to death
- Wringing – a big cobra or an anaconda, moving, or squeezing its victim to death
- Dabbing – a very little bird jumping around or a hen pecking

- Flicking – a fluttering bat
- Gliding – an eagle, a dressage horse or a creeping cheetah
- Floating – a jellyfish.

To make the concept of the *working actions* even clearer, I also used music examples to illustrate the different qualities. In the same way as it was challenging to find suitable examples of animals for some *working actions*, it was not in any way straightforward to find music depicting one pure *working action*. However, I used the musical examples listed below to clarify the respective *working actions*.

- **Punching**



Example 6.1: The beginning of Beethoven's *Symphony no. 5 in C minor, op. 67*.



Example 6.2: The beginning of Stravinsky's *Auguries of Spring – Dance of the Youths and Maidens*.

- **Slashing**



Example 6.3: *Libertango* by Piazzolla.

- **Pressing**



Example 6.4: *Hungarian dance no. 5* by Brahms.



Example 6.5: *Cello Concerto in B minor op.104* 1st movement (from the cello solo) by Dvorák.

- **Wringing**



Example 6.6: *L'amour est un oiseau rebelle* (the Habañera from *Carmen*) by Bizet.

Example 6.7: *Adagio for strings* by Barber.

- **Dabbing**

Example 6.8: *Two ladies* from *Cabaret* by Ebb and Kander.

Example 6.9: *Badinerie* by Bach.

- **Flicking**

Scandinavian Shuffle *Swe-Danes / Arr.: Jens Johansen*

Lam da ba du ba dam bam bah. Lam da ba du ba dam bah.

Dum dum dum ba du ba duba dum dum ba duba dumdumdum

Example 6.10: *Scandinavian shuffle* by Asmussen (performed by Swe-Danes).

Waltz tempo

NC.

Cet

tr

mf

Example 6.11: *Padam!* by Content and Glanzberg (performed by Piaf).

- **Gliding**

Lentamento molto cantabile

mp

mp

Example 6.12: *Vocalise* by Rachmaninov.

signature, 5/4, excluded the third in the first bars and advocated a slow tempo and a soft volume in the performance, all components in order to give a light, flexible and sustained character. Yet another example of floating in Western art music could be represented by *Atmospheres* (1961) by György Ligeti (1923-2006). In this orchestral piece Ligeti used a technique called *micropolyphony*. The composition technique puts the focus on dynamics and timbre and, by suspending pitch, rhythm and melody in different clusters, the music changes slowly without the listener having time to register this. The prelude to Wagner's opera, *Das Rheingold*, with its 136 continuous measures in E flat major (depicting the wave movements of the Rhein) is another example of *floating*. Meditation and relaxation music and sometimes even muzak are also good examples of *floating*.

After having *seen* and *listened* to the working actions, I wanted the participants to *experience* them, in their bodies and voices, in themselves, but also by observing their peers. I wanted them to experience the *working actions* using various parts of the body, namely the head and shoulder region, the upper part of the body, the lower part of the body or the body as a whole. These activities were followed by different ways of using the *working actions* in speech, starting with just using the words *yes* and *no*, initially accompanied by physical movements and voice, and then just with using the voice. Once the participants understood the *working actions* as experienced in the body and in the voice, it would be time to start singing.

To further emphasise and experience the *working actions* in the singers' bodies and voices, and increase their awareness of them, I had composed a little song (see Ex. 15 & Ex. 16). In this song I intended to demonstrate the *working actions* even more. The contending qualities here are strong (loud) and with more gravity (lower in pitch), while the yielding qualities are lighter (quieter) and with more levity (higher in pitch). The *punching* is performed with accents, *dabbing* with *staccato*, *slashing* with *glissandi* and *flicking* with a very short *legato* followed by a *staccato*.

Working Actions part 1

Bo Rosenkull

♩ = 96 *f* *p*

dm *A^{sus}* *dm* *d/F* *A⁻⁹* *dm*

Pun - ching Pun - ching Pun - ching Punch dab-bing dab-bing dab-bing dab-bing

4 *1gm* *A^{sus}* *A⁷* *2gm* *A^{sus}* *A⁷* *f*

dab - bing dab - bing dab. dab - bing dab bing dabb. Slas-

6 *dm* *A^{sus}* *dm* *dm/F*

- ing Slash - ing Slash - - ing Slash. flic -

8 *A⁻⁹* *dm*

king - - king flic - - - - king flic -

9 *1gm* *A^{sus}* *A⁷* *2gm* *A^{sus}* *A*

- king flick - . Slas - king flick - .

Example 6.15: *Working Actions* Part 1.

To further emphasise the quality in the different *working actions* one can, change the words and instead use syllables that mimic the character of the quality: Bom bom (*punching*), ditti ditti (*dabbing*), Brrrom bom (*slashing*) and piddelim pim (*flicking*).

In the second part of the song the *pressing* quality is performed with *forte*, *glissandi* and an almost chromatic scale, while *gliding* is distinguished by singing *legato* and *piano*. In order to achieve the *wringing* quality, I chose big triplets that, in my opinion, conveys a natural resistance and inertia. The *wringing* part is sung *forte* and in a lower register. To depict the *floating* quality, I chose a falling whole-tone scale. Using this kind of tonality can be a way of perceiving the music as dissolved and floating (DeVoto, 2017). Sometimes the whole-tone tonality can relate to the perception of water, which in turn is associated with floating and hovering.

Working Actions

part 2

Bo Rosenkull

Pres - sing - Pres-sing, Press. gli - ding - gli - ing - gli - ding glide.

gli - ding glide. Wrin - ging Wrin - ging Wrin - ging Wring.

fla - ting - fla - ting - fla - ting - float. fla - ting - float.

Example 6.16: *Working Actions* Part 2.

To further emphasise the quality in the different *working actions* one can, change the words and instead use syllables that mimic the character of the quality: a fricative like “V” or “Z” (*pressing*), an “o” (*gliding*), “VR, VR” (*wringing*) and an “a” (*floating*).

After the participants experienced the qualities in the voices and stressing them further by singing the qualities names or syllables related to them, I wanted them to sing a common song and see how they could transmit the qualities into it. The singers were each asked to sing the well-known song, *Brother John* in different ways, including using their own mother tongue. Below are the words of *Brother John* in the six languages in which the respective singers sang it.

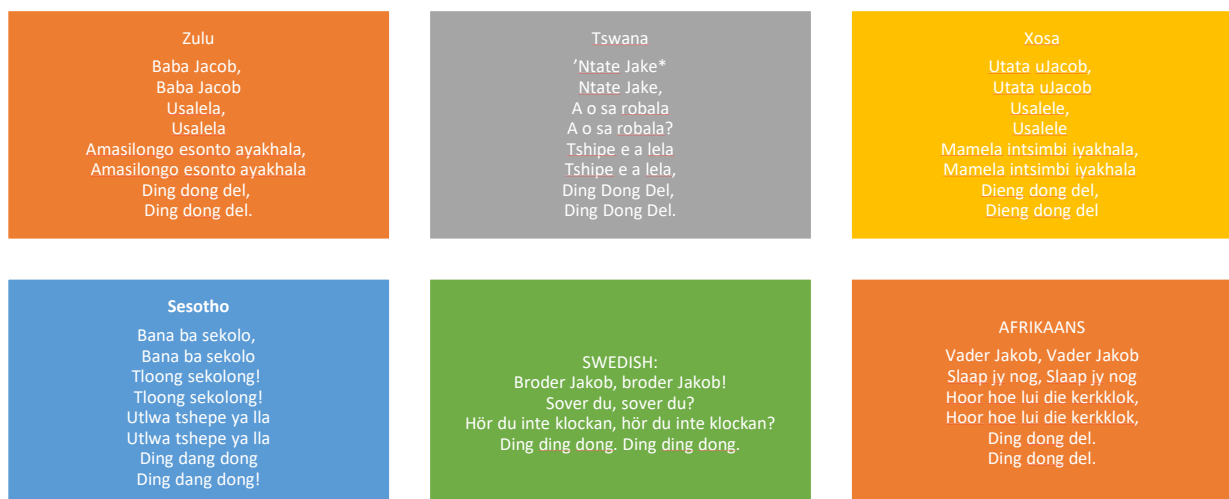


Fig. 6.1: *Brother John* in six different languages: Zulu, Tswana, Xosa, Sesotho, Swedish and Afrikaans.

6.10 The three planes

The next thing that I wanted to introduce during the contact sessions during this first round of data collection while working with the students was the *three planes*. Here too we made a combination of *observing*, *experiencing* in the body and *translating* the physical sensations into singing.

Initially I illustrated the planes with pictures and also by demonstrating them myself. After that the singers were required to move in the different planes, using either a part of the body or with the body as a whole. We worked with rising or descending movements in the *vertical plane*, spreading or enclosing in the *horizontal plane* and advancing and retiring in the *sagittal plane*. The next step was to perform the movements in the planes applying strong or light weight, moving directly or flexibly in space, acting quickly or sustainedly in time, and finally, moving in the planes with various amounts of free or bound flow. Hence, the next level was to combine the movements with phonation. For that purpose, we used my song “*Amor vincit omnia*” (Rosenkull, 2021:64) since it is short, quite easy to learn, possible to use in South Africa and Sweden and none of the students would know it from before. Additionally, the lyrics consist of only a few words (*amor vincit omnia*) meaning that, after a while, the singer can focus more easily on other things rather than trying to remember the

lyrics. The words consist of three cardinal vowels, the so-called corner vowels – [i] [a] and [u] – one front and two back vowels. My intention was to enable the singers to explore various sensations while exploring the planes also in terms of *imposto* in general and, more particularly, vowel placement. Also, the nasal [m] and [n], and the fricatives [v] and [r] can contribute to shaping lines for the singer, while – on the other hand – the affricate c [tʃ] and the unvoiced plosive [t] stop the airflow. The participants were encouraged to find their own pattern of movement and alternately lead the voice with the body or lead the body with the voice.

To understand on a deeper level and physically perceive the planes, we also connected the three vowels with the three planes: *horizontal* [i], *vertical* [a] and *sagittal* [u] (Fernandes, 2015:109). According to Bainbridge Cohen (2015:85), there is a correlation between how the vocal folds work and the planes. She states that the vocal folds open horizontally in order to phonate on an [i], elongate vertically in an [a] and stretch sagittally in a [u]. In addition to that, the laryngeal position in speech varies with different vowels; [i] generates a higher larynx and [u] a lower larynx (Sundberg, 2007:143). This understanding of the correlation between the vocal folds and the laryngeal position informed my interest in the student's perception of adding the vowels related to the planes. In my work with the singers, I wanted them to exaggerate the different planes. When they examined the *horizontal plane*, they were required to change all vowels to [i], *imir vincit imnii*, in the *vertical plane* all vowels were [a], *amar vanc(i)at amnaa*, and in *sagittal* plane they were asked to change the vowels to [u] *umur vunc(i)ut umnuu*.

Amor vincit omnia

Love conquers everything

Bo Rosenkull

$\text{♩} = 90$ am7 em9 am7 em9 am7 Fmaj⁷ dm9

A - mo-r vin - cit, a - mo-r vin - cit, a - mo-r vin - cit om - ni -

8 E^{sus} E cm7 gm9 cm7 gm9 cm7 A^bmaj⁷

a. A - mo-r vin - cit, a - mo-r vin - cit, a - mo-r vin - cit

15 fm9 G^{sus} G em7 bm9 em7

om - ni - a. A - mo-r vin - cit, a - mo-r

20 bm9 em7 Cmaj⁷ am9 B^{sus} B

vin - cit, a - mo-r vin - cit om - ni - a.

Example 6.17: *Amor vincit omnia* (Rosenkull, 2021:64).

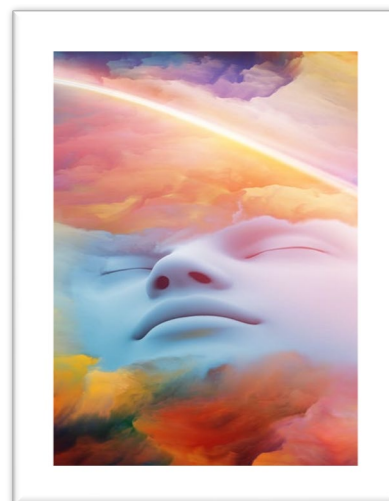
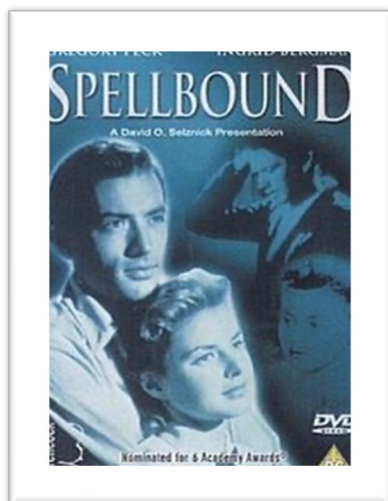
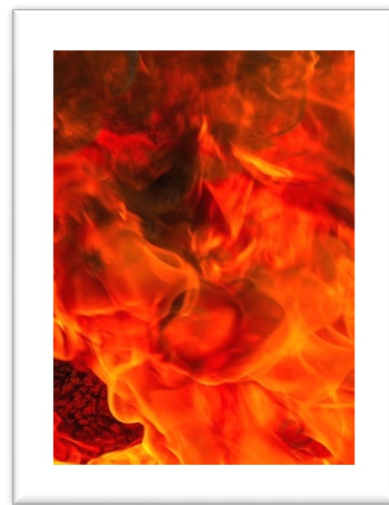
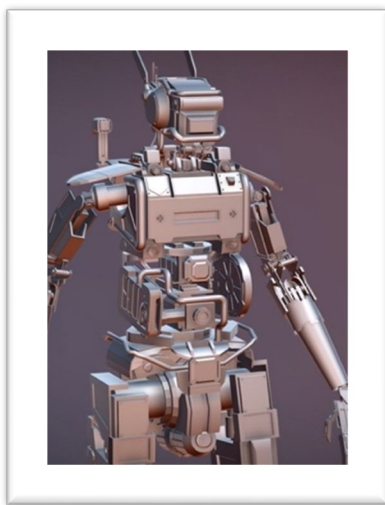
The penultimate part that I presented was the *four grades of intensity*. We started off with what Laban (2011:174) calls the normal. In order to make it clearer I had numbered the reduced intensity to minus 10, the exaggerated intensity to plus 50 and the extreme intensity to plus 100. By implementing this element of degree, I expected to find ways to achieve significant changes in the technical and musical proficiency of the participants and moreover, to achieve these outcomes faster.

6.11 Externalised drives

Finally, I wanted to introduce the *externalised drives*. My intention briefly was to explore how *doing*, *passion*, *spell* and *vision* could affect the musical performance, the degree

of urgency of the expression or the type of phonation. I illustrated the *externalised drives* with the pictures below (Photo: 4:4).

- *Doing* with mechanically movements with absence of *flow*, almost like a robot.
- *Passion* as a destroying or constructing force lacking *space* (here depicted as a raging fire).
- *Spell* with the absence of *time*. On this poster the couple can both be spell-bound (surrendered) or the woman can be enchanted by the man (surrendered) and the man can enchant or bewitch (dominate) the woman.
- *Vision*, finally, conveys absence of *weight* and is related to ideas and problems.



Photos: 6.25–6.28: Externalised drives *doing*, *passion*, *spell* and *vision*.

CHAPTER 7: FIRST ROUND OF DATA COLLECTION: TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH AFRICA

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of four in which I present the data collected during my visits to the research sites: the South African College of Music (SACM) at the University of Cape Town (UCT), the School of Music of the North-West University (NWU), the Academy of Music and Drama University of Gothenburg (UGOT) and the University of the Arts in Stockholm (SKH). It was paramount that I considered the contexts within which the research took place, as well as the conceptual aspects involved in the research (as discussed in Chapter Three and Chapter Five) throughout the process of data collection and data analysis. It was also important that I understood what I already knew and did not know about the research topic, based on empirical evidence gained through self-study (Chapter Six).

As mentioned in Chapter One, one of the sub-questions was:

How do the singers who are involved in this study respond to the use of the didactic strategies based on the principles of the LMT?

In order to answer this question, I used participatory action research (PAR) and Interpretive Description (ID) as further strategies of inquiry in this thesis. Using the theories of ID allowed me to consider not only my own perceptions, observations and interpretations of the consequences of the application of the didactic strategies, but also to interpret and describe the participants' verbal and non-verbal responses, as well as their written and verbal reflections within the context of the teaching and learning environment. These interpretations and descriptions produced further data on the efficacy of the didactic strategies, as well as on how to adapt or discard some of the strategies in instances when they did not result in positive change. Ultimately, ID allowed me to shed light on and disseminate the singers' experiences of using the didactic strategies while singing.

As mentioned in Chapter One (1.5 Research participants), the singers were at various levels of vocal proficiency; some were at a basic level, while others were more advanced. In accordance with the agreement reached with the participants, I assigned a pseudonym for each of them in this research report to ensure their anonymity.

Pseudonym	Voice category	Institution
Liza	Soprano	SACM
Olga	Mezzo-soprano	SACM
Carl	Tenor	SACM
Henry	Tenor	SACM
Gift	Baritone	NWU
Phillipe	Bass-baritone	NWU
Nkosi	Soprano	NWU
Precious	Soprano	NWU
Rebecca	<i>Zwischenfach</i>	UGOT
Susan	Soprano	UGOT
Evelyn	Mezzo-soprano	UGOT
Eric	Bass	SKH
Eva	Mezzo-soprano	SKH
Catherine	Soprano	SKH

As explained in Chapter Six, I started each of the visits at the respective institutions with a lecture and a workshop during which I introduced myself to the singers and gave an overview of the research topic. Having explained the different steps of the technique, the participants and I then engaged in a practical exploration and demonstration of, for example, the different *motion factors*, *working actions*, *planes*, *grades of intensity*, levitation and gravity. These planned sessions were structured around the information in the PowerPoint presentation. However, as a result of the diversity of the participating singers' personalities, timbre, technical proficiency and innate musicality, the manner in which the actions and activities in the individual lessons and master classes proceeded were not fully structured according to a specific pattern.

I always allowed the singers to sing through their selected repertoire at the beginning of their individual lessons. When I asked them to reflect on their strengths and areas of improvement as singers or musicians, their answers generally gave me an insight into their perceptions of their voices, musicianship and personalities. I focused on what they said, but initially kept my own impressions to myself. At times, their reflections testified to a mature understanding of their voices, music and their relation to it, whether

they had high or low self-esteem, whether they tended to focus on details or had an ability to capture the whole picture, conveyed their ideas of the next step in their vocal or musical development, as well as their assumptions as singers.

I also encouraged the singers to make notes after every session in order to remember their reflections. A week or two after my visits, I contacted the participants and asked them to send me their personal feedback and invited them to write freely. I requested them to work more with what they achieved during the lessons and also to experiment with the elements that they had learned during the lecture and workshop, but that we might not have tried during their individual sessions. To remind them of all the components we had worked with, I also attached a summary of the contents. Those who wanted could use this questionnaire as a guideline:

- What were your overall reflections on the lecture, masterclass and individual lessons?
- Did you learn anything? In that case, what?
- Was there anything you found extra good or less useful?
- Did your singing change or improve in any way?
- Was there anything that was easy or difficult to understand in the LMT?
- Have you been able to work further with the things we worked on and has that led to any result?
- Was there anything that contradicted what you have learned from your teacher?
- What else you would like to add?

Apart from allowing each singer to sing through their selected repertoire at the onset of the lesson or master class, the sessions were primarily guided by

- the singers' own reflections on what they had presented,
- my own observations (visual and auditory) of the singers' performances, which resulted in

- a 'diagnosis' of perceived vocal challenges that the singers presented during their performances,
- the choice of didactic strategies employed to deal with the said challenges, and
- the cycle of steps as found in PAR.

My own teaching approach (see Chapter Six), along with the above-mentioned guidelines resulted in semi-structured teaching and learning environments characterised by collaboration. This chapter presents a narrative that relates the reflections, observations, perceptions, didactic strategies employed and the various activities that occurred during the contact sessions.

7.2 First round of data collection

I left Sweden on a cold day in October 2021, filled with excitement and expectations and looking forward very much to working with the participants in South Africa. It was a lovely day, with jacarandas and proteas in full bloom, when I started my exciting journey with the eight South African singers, four at each of the two selected tertiary institutions in the country. I had come to meet the students for the first of what was to be two visits during which I wanted to gather data, with four to five contact sessions per visit. I was looking forward very much to meeting the South African participants in my study in order to explore how strategies based on the LMT might benefit classically trained singers in the development of their technical and musical proficiency.

7.2.1 South African College of Music (SACM), University Cape Town

When I initially met the four selected singers at the SACM, it was somewhat difficult to observe their reactions because, adhering to the necessary COVID protocols at the time, the singers and I all wore masks and were forced to keep the appropriate social distance. However, matters improved once we started the practical part of the workshop (also involving the participants singing) and I was also able to get an idea of their different vocal qualities, their personalities and the way in which they embraced the new knowledge presented to them. The planned activities also allowed me to form

at least some ideas of them as singers and as people before we started the individual lessons.

From the start, the singers showed great interest in the PowerPoint presentation that expounded my views on the LMT (see Chapter Six). The music examples I played to illustrate the points made in the PowerPoint presentation really helped the singers to reflect on what they had heard during the lecture. Having listened to some music examples, the participants even suggested other qualities in the music examples than the ones I had proposed during the lecture, and their suggestions led to opportunities to engage in interesting discussions. Olga, for example, pointed out that she thought the *Tango* might also have *gliding* qualities. Henry agreed and suggested that the *Hungarian Rhapsody* “also contained a lot of *flicking* and *dabbing*”. Everyone present concluded that it might be impossible to find music with just one *working action*, but that it was *how* the *working actions* were combined that constituted one of the aspects that actually created that which we could define as music.

Once the lecture was completed, we began with the workshop that I had planned.⁴³ We engaged in physical activities to experience the motion factors, initially merely using the body and no voice. I asked the participants to work with *weight* (light and heavy), first focusing on the head and shoulders, elbows, wrists and hands, after which they proceeded to experience these qualities in the upper trunk, further down in the midriff and, finally, with the body as a whole. I encouraged them to find their own patterns of movement instead of showing them one to follow.

The next step was to do the same thing with *space* (direct-flexible) and *time* (quick-sustained). Thereafter, I also wanted them to explore *flow* (bound-free). I encouraged them to investigate an inward-restrained flow or an outward-emitting flow, and also explore the variations in inertness and resistance. I constantly encouraged them to reflect on their experiences by asking them questions like: What does it feel like to

⁴³ The activities described here at UCT were repeated at all the other research sites. So I shall not repeat the descriptions of these activities when discussing the singers’ responses at the other three sites.

move the arm, the leg or the whole body with strong or light weight? Where am I moving in space if a movement is executed directly or with more flexibility and how does it feel? What is the difference in physical and mental sensation when a movement is done in a sustained manner versus quickly? How does the body express free or bound flow? I encouraged them to observe and write down the answers when the class was over in order to remember the sensations. Once I had the impression that the students had achieved a significant idea of the qualities, we moved on to examining the *working actions*.

We experimented by doing the *working actions* with parts of the body, or the body as a whole. Then we explored different ways of using the *working actions* in speech. We made it simple and just used the words *yes* and *no*, first with physical movements *and* voice and then only with the voice. From the beginning of the workshop, the group of singers were somewhat quiet and subdued. That was before Henry suddenly looked at me, saying:

Henry: "Is this the support that I feel?"

Bo: "What do you think it is?"

Henry (looking surprised, with a questioning smile): "I have never felt my body like this! When I work with *pressing*, I can really feel how my body works."

Bo: "Can you describe the feeling?"

Henry: "My teacher has spoken of the body support so much, but I have never felt it until now. It feels like...I find a connection."

Everyone present was smiling and were excited to continue experimenting.

By then the participants had an idea of the *working actions* in the body and in the speaking voice and, as a result, it was time to start singing. A wonderful motley weave of sounds and languages filled the room first when we all sang *Brother John* in our own mother tongues, followed by a somewhat brutal version while imagining *punching* (with loud punching quarter notes), a sexy tango in *slashing* (with dotted quarter notes on every first beat in each bar), a sweet lullaby in *gliding* (in signature key 6/8) and singing gingerly and timidly while imagining *dabbing*. To further emphasise and get a deeper understanding of the working actions, we learnt the *Working action song*. My misgivings that they would find the song too naive came to nothing. They truly went all

in and challenged themselves both physically and vocally by finding the right qualities and in fact they did it very well. I asked Henry whether he now could maintain the physical awareness that he had recently acknowledged when we added singing. He nodded, saying: “Yeees, absolutely...especially in *pressing* and *wringing*!”

After having explained the *three planes* we started exploring them physically. We worked with ascending or descending movements in *vertical plane*, spreading or enclosing in *horizontal plane* and advancing and retiring in *sagittal plane*. The next step was to do the movements at the same time as singing *Amor vincit omnia*. Finally, I wanted them to exaggerate the planes even more in their singing, so I asked them to change all vowels to [i], *imir vincit imnii* in the *horizontal plane*; in the *vertical plane* all vowels were [a], *amar vanc(i)at amnaa*; and in the *sagittal plane* they should turn the vowels to [u] *umur vunc(i)ut umnuu*. The laughter over how dreary it sounded was combined with insightful comments about how one or the other version changed or strengthened the respective singer's singing style. Liza claimed: “Singing in the *sagittal plane* really helped me find a round quality of my voice”, while Carl pointed out that he found it easier in the *horizontal plane* because he felt freer. It was interesting for me to observe how differently they responded to the various planes, and also how obvious it was to the others when they listened that the sound was affected by these ideas.

Having completed the introductory phase of my activities, I arranged with each participant to meet for an individual lesson.⁴⁴

7.2.1.1 Individual lessons at SACM

Liza

Liza, a white singer with a very light soprano voice⁴⁵ whose singing was, in my professional opinion, too shallow and frontal, was the first singer with whom I worked

⁴⁴ I acted both as a pianist and singing pedagogue during each individual lesson at all the institutions.

⁴⁵ My perceptions as a foreigner who has been to South Africa several times has generally been that white women in South Africa often speak in a lighter and higher pitch than I perceive to be natural, often with the corners of the mouth in a spread position.

at SACM. Since Liza was a singer in the beginning stages of her vocal studies, it was easy to define areas to improve. She had started her studies at the university as a violinist but changed to vocal studies in 2020. Upon hearing Liza sing Musetta's aria, *Quando m'en vo* from *La Bohème* by Puccini, I identified some technical challenges that might be resolved by using some of the didactic strategies based on the LMT. I also felt that we could use some didactic strategies to enhance the overall performance. I decided that Liza and I could work together on

- improving the breathy sound that lacked density and energy,
- achieving more lines, legato and even airflow in her singing,
- improving her intonation and,
- enhancing the overall musical and dramatic performance of the aria.

During the individual lessons with Liza, we worked with movements in parts of the body and the body as a whole; movements combined with singing at first and then, finally, singing without movement. I observed that she was very concerned with the intonation in her singing. She confessed that she was "terrified not to be in pitch. Intonation is the most important thing for me". In my opinion, Liza's focus on intonation hindered her in the flow of the music and, furthermore, blocked the freedom of her vocal apparatus. I suspected that intonation might have been an issue in her violin playing but did not find it such a major problem in her singing. While sometimes singing out of tune was an issue, I found that when she concentrated on other things, such as on the breathing process, the intonation was better. As such, I encouraged her to focus more on the breathing process (lower inhalation, breath support and air flow) while singing the opera aria, as well as *Après un rêve* by Fauré.

In the latter case, I wanted to explore whether we could remedy the intonation that was rather flat in some of the chromatic passages. My perception when Liza first sang this song was that she employed a *gliding* quality in her approach to the song and, when I asked her about it, she agreed that it was the case. We changed the approach to a *pressing* quality in these passages and we were both pleased; the result was a less breathy phonation. Interestingly, better intonation occurred, without having mentioned that I had that in mind when I asked her to explore *pressing*.

Liza's inhalation was high and shallow, which affected the sound. Her voice did not reach its full potential with regard resonance and intensity of sound, and she did not have the ability to get sufficient air to carry complete phrases. I suggested that she used the idea of inhaling on a *horizontal plane*. To make this suggestion and her experience of it clear, I asked her to hold her arms straight out in front of her. At the moment of inhalation, she had to spread her arms quickly outwards to each side, almost like an open, welcoming gesture. During exhalation she was required to slowly return the arms to the initial position (straight out in front of her), imagining that she was holding her ribcage between her hands and arms and thus mimicking the movement of her chest during singing. My idea was for her to engage in more intense physical work to achieve lower breathing and a quick release of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles during each inhalation (Chapman, 2016:43), to visualize what she was doing and thereby also be able to plan the phrases more clearly. After a while it started working very well and she herself noted that the breathing process worked better.

The use of the *horizontal plane* was not the only didactic strategy relating to the planes that I used with Liza. I also wanted to experiment with her phonating while imagining the *sagittal plane*. My decision was based on my perception that her voice was too light, shallow and frontal. When I asked Liza whether she agreed with my perception that she spoke in a way a bit like I described earlier (lighter and with a pitch somewhat higher than natural with the corners of the mouth spread a bit), she agreed and explained: "Well, I hear my mother and her mother speak like that...but yes, I hear it is very light." From the other singers' smiling expressions upon hearing this conversation, I was also able to infer that they agreed. We started by working on how to relax the mouth and jaw by emphasising the *vertical plane*. Then we worked with a retiring *sagittal plane* in movements and attitude, combining it with the vowel connected to it, namely [u].

When we worked with the same exercises during the masterclasses the following day, the other participants observed a huge difference in Liza's singing.⁴⁶

Bo: "What was the difference?"

Olga: "I think it sounds much rounder."

Henry: "Yes, and louder."

Liza (looking pleased and encouraged to continue): "It feels much better...the voice sounds more mature in a good way."

As mentioned earlier, Liza's sound was also a bit breathy and lacked energy. Remembering one of the questions posed in Chapter Six (6.7 Questions and assumptions), namely whether the *pressing* quality of the *working actions* might maintain energy levels and enhance vocal fold compression, I suggested different ways of utilizing the *pressing* quality in order to improve the vocal fold compression and to enhance her breath support. One of the strategies I used to allow Liza to experience the *pressing* quality was to position myself firmly next to her and to ask her to lean against me – almost as if she was trying to push me aside – as I used my body weight to resist her efforts. Initially she was a little weak and maybe shy in her attempts, but I encouraged her to work a little more. I reassured her that I am not particularly strong – I am just big. I told her: "Really try to put me away!" I teased her and challenged her in a friendly way by saying: "Come on! Aren't you stronger than that?" I continued to encourage her to search a low centre-point in the body and work with the legs and feet and after some embarrassed laughter and perhaps some annoyance at how troublesome I acted, she managed to raise the energy to match my effort. We

⁴⁶ For me as a teacher it can be very rewarding to have other singers sitting in the room as in these masterclass situations. The peers contribute significantly with their perceptions or can further confirm what I allege. I have in the past experienced how some singers trust their peers more than the voice pedagogue, or at least, when we all express the same opinion, they tend to absorb those opinions better. Besides, if I sometimes forget quite obvious aspects of the singer's advantages or shortcomings, the group's opinions can remind me. Furthermore, my experience is that the listeners learn at least as much as the active singer in a masterclass; they can focus on just listening and seeing without performing themselves. In addition, they are not nervous because they are not expected to sing in front of others; they can observe objectively.

unanimously thought it was a better result and I observed a clearer and louder voice emerging.

The lack of support and energy also affected Liza's approach in the high, fast ascending passages. She came across as hesitant when singing these and we therefore added some strong, as well as light, flexible and quick working actions, namely *slashing* and *flicking*. I encouraged her to imitate with her voice what she did in her body. For the *slashing* quality we used a gesture of whipping with a very long whip like those used for training tigers at a circus, and for the *flicking* hand movement often seen in *flamenco* dancing, while shouting *Olé!* Through applying these didactic strategies, Liza achieved the right amount of energy and speed, and was able to comfortably sing b².

It was my opinion that Liza was probably the participant who benefitted most from the didactic strategies based on the LMT and made the most progress. Liza achieved very much in a short time; the following observations emerged during my reflections while working with her:

- The flow in the *gliding*, breathing in the *horizontal plane* and singing in a retiring *sagittal plane* allowed her to pay attention to the whole picture, instead of getting stuck in the details;
- The idea of *gliding* and *floating* resulted in better legato singing and a richer air flow, which enabled a better vocal fold efficiency;
- *Slashing* and *flicking* increased her energy and gave stronger impulses⁴⁷ for the ascending passages;
- *Pressing* gave a better vocal fold compression where that was needed;
- The focus on breathing in the *horizontal plane* gave her an awareness of an even airflow and a higher subglottal pressure. That stabilised the sound and made the air sufficient to sing through whole phrases;

⁴⁷ In this context the word 'impulse' is used to describe a small measure of extra energy.

- Finally, the idea of singing in the *sagittal plane* (retiring) gave her a lower laryngeal setting and the ability to maintain a wider pharyngeal space. The *sagittal plane* created an *inalare la voce*, enriching her fourth and fifth formant and this gave more *squillo* to the sound.

My overall impression was that Liza sang with a fuller, deeper and more mature sound. She obtained a greater awareness of her whole body and an access to it both in terms of technique and expression, and in addition, she sang with better intonation. In fact, by the end of my visit, I was of the opinion that the intonation was not a problem at all. The sound was embodied in a new way and the focus on the planes and working actions also served as a diversionary manoeuvre. I was very pleased with her progress, and it was very satisfying to note that not only the other participants, but, above all, Liza herself could also see the big change that had taken place.

Olga

In Chapter Six I stated my belief that a dialectic approach between leading and following in the teaching and learning environment contributes to the dynamic between pedagogue and singer, as well as to the singer's ability to developing into an independent and reflective student. It is important for a pedagogue to be a good follower, as well as a good leader. The pedagogue should not interfere with technical or musical aspects that are already in place. It is important that I, as the pedagogue, should be a follower in the sense that I follow a strong musician's intentions and encourage such a singer to contribute significantly by presenting their own ideas while, at the same time, I can take the lead when needed. I realised that this would be the case with the second singer with whom I worked at SACM. Olga (31), who is an extremely talented mezzo-soprano, was busy with postgraduate studies. She had already come a long way in her vocal development, and I always find it stimulating to be challenged by a student like Olga, a singer with a strong technique, fine musicality and a great personality.

When Olga sang *Nobles Seigneurs*, Urbain's aria from *Les Huguenots* by Meyerbeer, I immediately realised that, with her, there was less basic work to do, but also that she

could benefit from more detailed work that I assumed could further enhance her technical and musical proficiency. I decided that I would want to use didactic strategies that would

- investigate whether the top notes (b^2 and c^3)⁴⁸ could be improved,
- improve the *coloratura* passages and melodic lines in the middle register,
- clarify and improve the onset on some *staccato* passages,
- help her improve her posture and breathing, and
- improve her ability to communicate the text and subtexts of the repertoire even better.

This very demanding repertoire requires a stable technique and great expression skills. I decided to work on the top notes (b^2 and c^3) by working more horizontally than vertically, focusing on how to achieve a higher laryngeal position. Sundberg (2007:168) claims that female singers, contrary to male singers, should not sing with a low larynx in the higher register, since the phonation frequency is higher than the normal frequency of the first formant. I asked Olga to sing while imagining the tongue being in a *horizontal plane* (to avoid the back of the tongue affecting the pharyngeal space by being too low). I asked her to see if she could perceive the sides of the tongue touching the molars. Sometimes I find it more effective to speak about a broad tongue than where to place the tip of the tongue. I also asked her to adapt a *horizontal plane* by using an inner smile (to maintain a widened pharynx and a lifted soft palate) and moreover, with a *horizontal plane* at the corner of the mouth (to allow the larynx to rise and increase the higher overtones).

In order to achieve more forceful impulses for the high notes, we also worked with variations of the *punching working action*. I asked her, in line with the male character she depicts in the opera, to imagine that she was fencing with a rapier and to attack on the high notes by thrusting the rapier towards the imaginary opponent. Another idea

⁴⁸ This thesis uses *Helmholtz pitch* (HP) notation. It is the most common way in Europe to define the different octaves. In a comparison with the second accepted way of determining the respective octave, the *scientific pitch notation* (SPN), or the *American notation*, HP notation uses a mixture of upper case and lower case. That means C_1 (C1) C (C2), c (C3) c^1 (C4) c^2 (C5) and so on.

was to imagine that she was playing with a party horn.⁴⁹ She was asked to imagine blowing into the horn and prolonging the tongue-like tube of the party horn as much as possible on the high notes. I further asked her to imagine she was sticking a fork into a grilled sausage. In addition to these images, combined with her own movements, I wanted to try something with Olga that I often have found useful; I wanted to give her an outer kinaesthetic experience of a good *imposto* for the high tones. I stood behind her and put two fingertips on each cheek. A millisecond before she took her high note, I firmly lifted her face (like a facelift) with my fingers, up and slightly out to the side. The idea was to enhance a broad and high perception. She looked happy when I looked at her and when I asked her to reflect, she claimed: "Yes, that felt very easy." When I asked her what she liked about the quality, she replied: "I think it sounded...hmm...easy and light." In my opinion it did, indeed; the voice just flourished and welled up in the most natural and generous way.

However, it was interesting that, while Olga was content with the top notes during the lesson and expressed how easy it felt, in her written reflection she claimed that she was not satisfied with her top notes when she listened to the recording she made of the lesson. She did not think that the sound had both clarity and warmth in the recording. One could only really speculate about the reason for this discrepancy between her perceptions during the in-person lesson and the recording. My own experience is that it is easy for one's expectations to be too high and, therefore, to be disappointed when such expectations are not met. My own experiences of the process have often been that, when first listening to my own singing in a recording, I am hugely disappointed, probably because I had unreasonable expectations of my own abilities. As I listen for a second and third time, I usually become more and more satisfied. Olga's reflection did not match my observation, which was that she had improved the security and clarity of the top notes very much.

⁴⁹ A horn made of a plastic mouthpiece and a long paper tube. The tube is flattened and rolled up into a coil. When one blows on the party horn, the coil unfolds and a sound similar to that of a horn is produced.

In order to release the voice and increase flexibility and agility in some *coloratura* passages and melody lines in the middle register, we experimented with a singing approach relating more to a *gliding* instead of a *pressing* quality. My goal was to let the voice 'sing by itself' and adjust an approach that was more to play the instrument, rather than to create (manufacture) it. So, instead of adding too much pressure or vocal weightiness while singing, I encourage her to go from a bound to a free flow. We also worked with soft, caressing movements in the arms while singing. Olga was not the most extrovert person, but after a while I learned to interpret her small signals and I could gather from the glitter in her eye that she was quite happy with the result, as was I. The voice became freer and, as we worked with both legato singing and *martellato* (with an underlying legato), the *coloratura* passages sounded more precise while, at the same time, transparent.

To clarify and improve the onset of some *staccato* passages, I decided to employ didactic strategies involving the light, quick and direct *dabbing working action*. I began by asking her to combine movements (*pizzicato*-like playing on an imaginary violin or easy tapping with her finger on the grand piano) while singing the passages, and then to sing without the movements, but copying the sensation she experienced in her body and voice while executing the *working action*. I have often seen how a combination of physical movements and one's awareness of the sensations resulting from such movements have contributed to producing a beneficial result. There was an instant effect on the sound when Olga started singing more like the movements she was making with her hands and fingers. The onsets, as well as the endings of phrases, became more distinct and precise. She used clearer, more energetic impulses and the tones in all registers directly started to vibrate. I also noticed how this dabbing quality helped her to support the sound in a healthy way. When I asked her whether she noticed any differences, she acknowledged that this way of singing felt better.

While it was my intention only to dig deeper into how the didactic strategies based on the LMT might be used to facilitate the depiction of a character during the second part of my research study, I followed the natural progression of the teaching and learning process; this was a process dictated by Olga's vocal proficiency, which led us to considering how she might use relevant didactic strategies to be more communicative

and expressive when depicting the character, as well as the text and subtext of the music.

Needing more intensity, we added the *externalised drive, passion*, while singing *Nobles Seigneurs*. As mentioned in Chapter Five, the *externalised drive* can nurture the *inner attitudes*. Even though I had planned to leave working with the *inner attitudes* during my second visit to the research sites, I wanted to explore how an *externalised drive*, as a separate didactic strategy, could strengthen the outcome of her singing. Considering Laban's (2011:174) belief that there are different grades of intensity, Olga and I worked with various grades of intensity of *passion*, ranging from glowing to more intense burning. I suggested that she needs to clearly share with the audience Urbain's thoughts or whatever filled his heart.⁵⁰ I encouraged her to imagine having a lot at stake, to act impatiently, as if the noble men whom the aria was addressing were not listening to him or could not see or hear him. We also used the metaphor that she herself was the *passion*. We experimented with her being glowing ashes, a little fire and finally a big fire with huge flames.

We also worked with some of the Laban-Malmgren questions to clarify who the character was in this context and what he wanted to achieve. Who am I? What do I want in the scene? Where, when and why am I doing it?

Olga: "I am a page to Marguerite, the Queen of Navarre. We are in Paris in the later part of 16th century. I am young, brave and somewhat cocky. In this scene I meet with some noble men in order to bring the merry message to Raoul, that the queen has chosen him as her love. I tease them and really play with their curiosity about my visit."

The more specific Olga became with the *externalised drive passion* and in her answers and – as a result – continued to build her character, the more it was reflected in her singing in terms of dynamic and phonatory variations, clearer impulses and a physical echo (the body echoed her inner participation in gestures and facial expressions). In

⁵⁰ Urbain is a trouser role.

her written reflection, Olga mentions that she had learned about putting energy into her singing according to what story required.

Olga: "...for instance, if I sing something that requires anger, I'd have to sing a bit forcefully, but healthy vocally at the same time, the punching examples made a lot of sense because immediately after thinking about how my emotions are in connection to what I'm singing about, the punching and expression is easily done."

Olga also performed a second recitative and aria, namely *La Cenerentola's* last aria *Nacqui all'affanno ... Non più mesta* by Rossini. While she sang, I observed even more that Olga was a little bit rigid in the back part of her neck. As a result, she breathed with what I sometimes refer to as a turtle head, a protruding and upward movement with the head during inhalation. I perceived the cause of this way of breathing as originating in a spine that is not kept elongated but collapsing into itself. We explored the sensation when her postural alignment was more in a *vertical plane* and elongated. I encouraged her, for example, to stress the nobility in her posture, as when we recently had explored the young Urbain. I also placed my hand gently at the back of her neck and slightly lifted her head as a reminder of a vertical sensation. She quickly grasped the idea and admitted with a slightly embarrassed smile: "Yes, I know I have a collapsed posture. But yes, this feels better." Once she had established an elongated spine and an open and somewhat horizontal back of the neck, we investigated the breathing process. contrary to what I did with Liza (imagining a *horizontal plane* during inhalation), Olga and I worked on the inhalation in a vertical plane but later with the addition that it should also be sagittal. My idea was to both deepen her breathing but at the same time also find more of the chest at the back of the body - an advanced instruction that she managed well after a while. In my opinion, she had now learned a breathing process that was more adapted to the music she was singing, where she could use more of her full potential. After my departure from SACM, Olga kept on working on her breathing process on her own. In her reflections she writes:

I used mostly the three planes, mostly the wheel plane [sagittal] when breathing. This is helping me a lot because whenever I breathe, I think of the wheel plane and imagine my singing as an ongoing wheel. The lessons helped me a lot, especially the one-on-one lessons. I was able to apply different contending qualities during my singing and it helped a lot. I wouldn't say my singing changed after this, but technically I learnt something."

Based on my observations and reflections while working with Olga, I noticed that she had achieved the following objectives when we worked with the strategies based on the principles of the LMT:

- the horizontal approach resulted in stronger top notes;
- changing from *pressing* qualities to *gliding* qualities resulted in more effortless singing, but still with retained vocal clarity;
- the light, quick and direct *dabbing* actions created more exact staccato and better onsets in the staccato passages;
- using the *externalised drive, passion*, bestowed a more urgent expression and a sense of "more being at stake";
- imagining the *vertical plane* led to a more stable balance in the posture and the breathing process.

It was satisfying to observe what Olga had gained from the days before and during the one-on-one lessons and how she had the ability to implement and adapt these strategies when she went on to work with other repertoire.

Carl⁵¹

Carl is a very polite and humble young man and gave the impression of wanting to please. However, working with such a singer can sometimes present challenges in a teaching and learning environment. A polite and overly agreeable student does not always create the best circumstances for himself. It seems to be more important to do

⁵¹ Unfortunately, I never received any written feedback from Carl after my visit to SACM. After numerous attempts to get his written reflections, I had to accept the situation and therefore I can only rely on his responses and reflections, as well as my own observations, that occurred during the contact sessions at the SACM.

the correct thing, instead of exploring, reflecting and drawing conclusions for new knowledge. However, I wanted to assure Carl from the beginning that I was very interested in his opinions and his contributions. I paid extra attention to giving him time to answer my questions and took care in observing non-verbal signals. Whether his subservient attitude was the result of cultural issues, a lack of self-esteem or some insecurity in the situation in general was not for me to find out. I just observed, and in order to adapt to him, I slowed down my tempo and lowered the volume of my voice a bit when speaking to him.

Carl has a beautiful tenor voice. However, my impression of his voice when he first sang *Un'aura amorosa* from *Così fan tutte* by Mozart during his one-on-one lesson, was that the voice did not ring freely and also sounded a bit fabricated. My intention was to explore how he could liberate the voice and let its natural beauty out even more. As I mentioned in Chapter Six, I have observed this phenomenon fairly often among young, black male singers. They resort to a 'quick fix' in their attempts to darken the sound by retracting the tongue and sometimes over-widening the pharynx. In order to darken the timbre, the singer lowers the larynx with assistance of a retracted tongue, instead of letting the infrahyoid muscles, sternohyoid, sternothyroid, thyrohyoid and omohyoid (superior and inferior) do the job (Sataloff *et al.*, 2017:20). It is an effective way to quickly gain a dark quality, but it sounds unnatural or unauthentic, and over time it can develop into an exaggerated wobble (Miller, 2004:83). When the larynx is lowered unnaturally, it hinders a singer's ability to sing in the higher register. The singer's own perception is often that of a dark and full-bodied sound, but for the listener it sounds a bit exaggerated and unnatural in terms of balance and beauty. I sometimes refer to this phenomenon as the *mezzo-baritone disease*, since I have come across it much more often among these voice types, also in Europe. Whether it is a desirable cultural ideal that is encouraged in certain social contexts in South Africa (as it seems to be with the previously mentioned white women who often tend to lighten their voices) or not, is something that this thesis does not consider. I only state my observation for the sake of interest. Furthermore, Carl had a strong tendency to lose gravity and instead disappear in levitation. He had a habit of almost lifting off the floor on the high

notes. Based on my observations, I thought it imperative to work with Carl on the following aspects during the one-on-one lessons:

- enhancing the gravity,
- improving his breathing technique,
- achieving a freer voice in general,
- achieving a more relaxed tongue, and
- achieving an increased flow and freedom in the top of the voice.

As he performed the aria, we put exercises and principles relating to gravity into practice. We talked about the feet grounded on, or even in, the floor. One of the strategies I used to raise his awareness of gravity was to give him images of being heavy and grounded like a big elephant or a gorilla. This resulted in him gaining greater stability and anchorage in the body. Another strategy I used to heighten his awareness of gravity involved me putting an imaginary 'lid' on his shoulders and then on his head, thus resisting his tendency towards upward movements by *pressing* (weighing) down lightly with my hands on his shoulders and on his head. Having done so, I wanted him to make a 'lid' by himself, first by crossing his arms over his chest and then by putting them on his head. I tried to enhance the perception of a lid by using the metaphor of putting a lid on a saucepan that has popcorn kernels popping in it.

Carl and I also worked with antagonistic movements in the *vertical plane*. I noticed Carl tended to lock his knees while singing in a standing position, which affected the lower back and hindered a breathing process that is conducive to fluent singing (Dayme, 2022:166). I reminded him of the blood flow continuously passing the knees. I also instructed him to do slowly performed squats, which not only enhanced perceptions of gravity, but also prevented him from locking his knees. He did them with no relation to the rhythm or breathing and, therefore, sometimes he was standing up and sometimes he was squatting when he reached the demanding parts. As he went back to a standing position, I did some descending vertical movements with my hands on his chest and back while he was singing. I put one hand on his chest and one on his back and simultaneously, while he was singing, pulled them with a definite pressure downwards.

My intention was to give him another type of tactile sensation while he concentrated on his singing – a clear sensation of gravitating towards a low physical perception.

Finally, I requested him to just stand still while singing while paying attention to the memory of the movements he had just done while raising his awareness of gravity. Gradually, during all these exercises, Carl started to maintain a lower centre-point – also in the higher register. It was rewarding for me to see how these didactic strategies paid off, and I noticed that the voice started to sound freer and the effort he was putting into the activities was evident in him sweating. Carl was also satisfied and claimed: “Yes, I think that felt much better. I was less tense in my voice...I think.”

Another aspect on which I wanted to work with Carl was his lack of breath control. He is very slender and there was not much indication of horizontal width in his performance, and he struggled with the coordination of combining the singing with the breathing. As a result, I regarded working in the *horizontal plane* as essential for him. We repeated the exercise I did with Liza, namely, to also engage the arms in the breathing process (spreading the arms sideways during inhalation and straight out forward while exhaling). Apart from exploiting the workings of his intercostal muscles to a larger extent, I wanted him to visualize and perceive a wider feeling in his body and in his singing. After having used the suggested didactic strategies, Carl found a natural feeling for the lower breathing and the sense of how his voice connected to his body as a result of the breath support. I observed a better breathing process emerging and, additionally, some of the tongue tension releasing. I asked him how he felt about his breathing and singing, and he replied: “This was a new way of thinking, but it really helped.”

This tension in the tongue was an issue that needed to be addressed. Not only did Carl retract the tongue into the pharynx, but he also pulled it towards the middle of the mouth in the shape of a thick cigar. These movements affected the sound very negatively and constituted an obstacle for his high notes. We explored whether the tongue could take a position resembling a more *horizontal plane*, instead of the cigar-shaped and retracted position to which it was used. Continuing the horizontal approach, I encouraged Carl to sing while maintaining a broad tongue position – first

inside the mouth and then, as an exaggerated exercise, with the tongue outside the mouth. After some laughter over how silly it looked and how funny it sounded, Carl managed to control the tongue better. He declared that the tongue "felt freer and sounded better" when he managed to achieve a tongue placement and position that was more relaxed and wider. My observations were that it was as if the focus on a steady, grounded stance, breathing while imagining a *horizontal plane* and a relaxed, horizontal tongue all worked together to result in an overall freer and unconstrained phonation.

Finally, I wanted to add some energy and temperament to his singing. However, attempts to add the *externalised drive*, known as *passion*, did not pay off. My perception was that Carl, at that stage, found the many suggestions, combined with his slightly timid and polite personality, a bit overwhelming. Considering my own approach, I realised that I was too eager to get the most out of him and I decided to stop for the day.

During the masterclass on the final day of my visit at SACM, Carl and I worked with *Si, ritrovarla io giuro* from *La Cenerentola* by Rossini. I wanted to change the focus of the lesson and we worked particularly to improve his high notes. As a voice pedagogue, I have sometimes noticed how an exaggerated emphasis on legato singing can be more of an obstacle than an advantage. The singer tends to use the same amount of pressure and flow when approaching the higher notes, instead of giving a little new impulse of energy for such notes. Singers often also approach the demanding high notes by singing gradually slower (*ritardando*), instead of approaching the high notes in tempo, singing directly into it – almost as if the tempo increases. With Carl I wanted to explore didactic strategies that would result in stronger, braver and more exact impulses which could be a recipe for him to improve the high notes.

We tried with derivations of *punching* to hit the high notes and found that a *thrust* was the ideal working action to give a new impulse to the voice. I suggested that he imagines having a sharp knife or perhaps just a needle and puncture a balloon in front of him. Carl succeeded in conjuring up this image and I saw him looking both surprised and happy when he sang the high c very easily. The other singers who were observing

the master class also were impressed and complimented him on how well he sang. In fact, right from the start of the lesson, I could observe how much Carl had improved his singing since the first session we had worked together. He looked happy when I complimented him.

Carl: “Yes, I have really tried to implement the new technique in my singing, and I feel that it has helped me a lot.”

Bo: “Can you be more specific about the way in which the technique had helped you?”

Carl: “I can now sing without getting tired.”

Bo (addressing the group): What do you think?

Olga: “I hear that it sounds much better since the last time I heard you.”

Henry: “His singing sounded fuller.”

Henry⁵²

Henry, the last singer with whom I worked at SACM, was also a tenor. As I mentioned earlier, Henry had a little aha moment when we applied the *working actions* during the workshop and he stated that, for the first time, he understood how the body was connected to the voice, and how he perceived his breath support in a most obvious way. As he sang his prepared work, namely *Ständchen* by Schubert, I perceived Henry’s voice to be restricted. There was a lot of tension and I wanted to find out whether we could do anything about these matters. I also wanted to explore whether he could work less intensely while still making his voice sound just as rich and resonant. I had the impression that Henry paid more attention on how to project the voice rather than letting it free and release its beauty and flexibility. Furthermore, I wanted to see whether he could find more airflow and less compression in his way of singing. Thus, my intentions were to

- loosen up the voice and find more sweetness and freedom in general,

⁵² The fact that, unfortunately, I never received a written reflection from Henry after my visit at SACM meant that I can only refer to what I had observed and what I had heard him say during the lessons. It would have been interesting to see whether he observed any differences when he went on working himself.

- increase the airflow, and
- make him trust his kinaesthetic perception and for him to listen less to his voice.

I wanted to find out whether a *gliding* quality could benefit his singing more, instead of the *pressing* quality that I deemed he was using. I invited him to sing with a *free flow*, instead of the *bound flow* as I perceived in his singing (Laban, 2011:75). To conjure up images of *free flow*, we talked about metaphors like soft winds, soft waves or blowing on a very large dandelion. We worked with small gliding movements with his arms. I also requested him to sing more like a question mark than an exclamation mark. As he sang while trying to conjure up the images, I noticed a little difference in his sound, namely a freer phonation and a more vibrant sound.

We explored the idea of imagining the *sagittal plane* in the vocal tract.⁵³ I asked him to imagine that the sound could be ‘placed’ in different places in the mouth (*sagittal plane*), using a rating scale from one to five; one was a very frontal *imposto* with nasal twang, and five was to be retracted, sombre and towards the back of the head. We also used *grades of intensity* – experimenting with exaggeration and extremeness.

Through the course of the lesson, I had assumed that Henry understood what I was after, namely, to open up the voice and also to increase the lower formants. However, at some point I realised that my assumption was not sound:

Henry: “But I have a duck sound.”

Bo: “What do you mean?”

Henry: “Well, you hear that my sound is metallic and has this duck character. I have earlier tried to ‘darken’ my voice, but by doing that, I have become very heavy in the voice and lost my high notes.”

I realised that, in order to create a more anchored and naturally balanced *chiaroscuro* sound, he confused a natural low laryngeal setting, a wide pharynx and released

⁵³ The vocal tract is the area starting from the vocal folds consisting of the pharynx, the mouth and the nasal cavities. The length and the shape of the vocal tract determines the formant frequencies (Sundberg, 2007:278).

tongue with an exaggerated down-pressed larynx by dint of a retracted tongue and a pharyngeal squeeze. By consciously trying to sing and 'place' the sound in different places in the oral cavity there was, to some extent, a distinction in comparison with the different numbers, but not as much as I had expected. I reminded him of the physical sensation when he worked with two of the contending qualities known and *wringing* and *pressing* but have to admit that I was not convinced that Henry was able to recall that feeling. Ultimately Henry and I agreed that his voice sounded metallic with its pros and cons and decided not to continue with this approach.

In addition to our efforts to achieve a phonation with more flow and less effort, we dug deeper into how to vary the lyrical fragments that were repeated in the song. This approach was intended as another way of diverting him from the thick and massive way of singing that I experienced was so clearly guided by his listening. It was also my intention, without telling him, to introduce one of the *mental factors*, namely *sensing*, as a strategy, to elicit a sense of fragility and vulnerability in his singing. I requested him to smell, taste, see and touch (not listen) while he was singing. In my opinion his singing became more genuine and personal when he followed these suggestions, and he enjoyed the way his singing had changed.

The second work Henry sang was Don Ottavio's aria *Il mio tesoro* from *Don Giovanni* by Mozart. My intentions while working with this aria were very much the same as in the other repertoire, which was to move away from the overly assertive and, in my opinion, too tight way of singing, and to try and guide Henry towards embracing a freer, less forced vocal approach. We went on with experimenting with *gliding* and I encouraged him to do a *gliding* movement with his hand; first stroking his one arm with his hand, and then by using the whole arm, waving freely in the air. I suggested images such as moving the arm like a blade of grain that moves in slow motion from one side to another, or as if he was using his hand to softly stroke the back of a sleeping child. To some extent his singing changed, but not as much as I had hoped.

Ultimately, working with Henry was perhaps the teaching and learning experience that delivered the fewest results. In my professional opinion, Henry's singing was stuck and rigid, and did not change so much. He was also older than the other singers and maybe

less malleable. However, it would have been interesting to have observed whether, given some more time, Henry might have achieved more by using the didactic strategies consistently. At that point of the research process, however, I thought that we had accomplished

- a greater awareness of a softer phonation, as an alternative option to his dense and somewhat forceful timbre,
- bigger varieties in terms of phrasing and colouring the words, thus becoming more expressive in his singing,
- a greater awareness of focusing on the prerequisites, instead of being result-oriented, and
- perhaps the most essential, his own new experience of his support as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

7.2.2 NWU School of Music and Conservatory

The next research site in South Africa was the NWU School of Music and Conservatory in Potchefstroom. This was my fifth visit to this school, but the first as a researcher. My previous experiences were as a visiting voice pedagogue. During past visits at NWU, I had worked with the classically trained singers, singers in the contemporary commercial music (CCM) department, the choir and had given lectures in voice pedagogy. I recognized all four singers whom the recruiter had secured for this research project but had worked with only one of them before.

The procedure here at NWU was very much the same as it was at SACM. I gave a historical background of Laban and Malmgren, shared the PowerPoint presentation during the first meeting, introduced some elements of the technique, and then we started exploring. It was an easy group to work with; they dared to participate actively and readily surrendered to the experimentation. I got the impression that they felt quite safe in each other's company and within the teaching and learning environment. There was a very positive atmosphere with a lot of laughter and smiles during the lessons. Admittedly, I also felt safer as I recognized the singers and, moreover, was using similar teaching and learning content to that which I used during my visit to SACM. The

NWU singers' reflections and their way of applying the working actions were very similar to what I had observed at SACM. They found it easy, for example, to adapt to the *gliding* and *pressing* qualities while singing, while the *flicking* and *slashing* qualities were more difficult for them to apply.

What I noticed, however, was how different their starting positions were when we worked on the *three planes*. Two of the singers had a more natural *horizontal* approach, while the other two had a more natural *sagittal* approach in their singing. Once we explored the planes with the bodies, we added vocals. We worked with *Amor vincit omnia* (see Chapter Six) in keys between C to F minor. Since the voice types among the respective genders were similar, I divided them into a male and a female group. First, I let the males sing while imagining the *sagittal plane*, something I noticed they did rather naturally. They retired backwards and had the [u] in mind. We all smiled when we heard how silly it sounded when they took it to the extreme version of the [u] vowel. We all agreed that the voices sounded old, unauthentic and heavy. I challenged them instead to imagine going into the *horizontal plane*, with the *intensity grade of extreme*. They moved their arms spreading and enclosing in the *horizontal plane* while singing with the [i] position in mind. However, I was not content after their first try since it was still without a significant measure of extremeness in the [i] sound. The sound was still too 'beautiful', with rounded top notes. I encouraged them to sing less 'beautifully' in terms of evenness and, instead, to imagine being in the *horizontal plane* with the connected [i] vowel all the time. Having followed my suggestion, they laughed at the extreme result, with Gift stating that "it was very shallow, but it had more brilliance!". Gift's response and Phillippe's nod of agreement underscored my observation of the result. Furthermore, I have to confess that when I looked at the videorecording of this session during my post-visit reflections, it was very beautiful to watch them with their gliding arms in the sagittal plane; almost like a contemplative ritual dance; a dance accompanied by perfect legato singing.

The two sopranos were also asked to sing while imagining the *horizontal plane* and I asked the male singers what they thought about the females' attempts. They suggested that the female singers should imagine the *horizontal plane* being more extreme. When I asked the female singers to go to the extreme version of the *horizontal*

plane, I observed how the men started smiling when they heard the result. I asked the female singers what they thought about this latest version. At first Precious was a little shy and turned towards Nkosi, saying: “Hmm...I don’t know.” I encouraged her to respond freely by reassuring her that there are really no right or wrong answers and that her thoughts matter and are important. “Well,” she said, “the sound was more forward.” Everyone agreed with her observation.

Finally, we went on to the *vertical plane*. Watching the video recording of the session, I observed clearly how differently they did it. Some of them sang and moved their arms up and down as if they were thoroughly painting a wall with parallel paintbrushes, almost like a soft *chi gong*-inspired dance. Another moved more mechanically, up and down, and yet another executed a movement reminiscent of someone bowing down in reverence to a higher power. When I asked them to reflect on what they had just done, they did not think there was a big difference. Only Gift stated that he thought “the vowels felt broader”. It was interesting to note that he was the only one who also worked in the *horizontal plane* at the same time, and I believe that is the reason for his perception.

7.2.2.1 Individual lessons at NWU

Gift

Gift, a mature, advanced postgraduate student, was the only participant with whom I worked who knew some parts of the technique from before. I had introduced some of the elements during a visit to the NWU two years earlier and so he was quick to identify what he was doing. Since he had these experiences of the technique from before, we could proceed quite rapidly.

As I often do when I meet a singer who is new to me, I ask Gift what he thought his vocal strengths are. He smiled and hesitated, looking a little embarrassed, but finally he pointed out:

“I am good at doing a thorough background to the music I work with, the composer, lyrics and so on...hmm...and I can paint with my voice in terms of dynamics and different timbres. And I think I have a good register”.

I shared my observations and opinions about his voice with him as well. I told him that I believe he is a very expressive singer who is brave in his communication with an audience, and also when it comes to showing vulnerability in his performance. He acknowledged my opinion with a nod and looked flattered.

When we spoke about aspects in his singing that might be improved, Gift said that he wanted to improve his stamina. Gift contributed overall significantly with his own reflections during the whole process. The areas I wanted to work with Gift included

- finding better onsets and a more resonant voice function in his lower middle register,
- improving the quality of the higher register,
- finding a good legato with the right amount of air pressure,
- improving his intonation and his awareness of it, and
- developing his artistry by requiring him to be more specific regarding a higher awareness of his inner participation and the subtexts.

First, we worked with Yeletsky's aria *Ya vas lyublyu* from *Pikovaya dama* (*The Queen of Spades*) by Tchaikovsky. We spent some time finding a good onset, with a less artificial and more speechlike quality. I encouraged him to use a little of the *horizontal plane* and 'taste' and 'chew' the articulation in his mouth. He had a strong habit of 'constructing' the sound instead of simply saying the words in that register (e^b - a^b in the small octave), but he finally found more of a speaking quality while imagining a *horizontal plane*, and we were both pleased with the improved resonance in the timbre. We also worked with an advancing approach in the *sagittal plane* – both physically and mentally – and these adjustments helped him further. Furthermore, they helped him to find better onsets when he focused on the audiation – the process involving physical hearing, perception, cognition and cultural conditioning, as mentioned in Chapter Three. Moreover, he consequently achieved a good pre-phonation as he prepared his instrument (Bozeman 2018:13). We both observed how these preparations benefitted whole phrases.

While the high notes were not necessarily bad, I suspected that they could be improved. Gift was encouraged to sing less legato between the f¹ and g¹ and, instead, to make sure he made a new impulse (like a separate stitch in sewing), in order to increase the airflow on the high note and give a clear new impulse. This instruction, combined with the idea of *thrusting* (a derivation of *punching*) a sword into a big balloon on the top note, brought about a good result. He stated: “Yeah, that sounded better and was also easier”.

When working on the improving the legato line, we explored derivations of *pressing* in the aria and discovered that he found *squeezing* (like squeezing the juice out of an orange) and *cutting* (like cutting a piece of bread) useful variations of the *pressing* quality and helped him to achieve seemingly effortless legato lines. We worked with physical movements. Gift improvised his own movements while singing. He cut the imaginary bread in the air with a tiny resistance, so the hand with the knife had to work a little bit, and he squeezed his own hand as if it was an orange when he wanted a lighter version of *pressing* namely. In the long run, this combination, of movements and singing could be one of the strategies with which Gift can improve his stamina to his desired level. By being specific with a *working action*, with this light contending quality, he had neither a too much or too little pressure, nor did he overload his voice.

I asked Gift to comment specifically in his written reflection on whether his singing had changed in any way.

Gift: “My singing is the same, but the Laban elements have assisted in the few places I struggled with technically and vocal. The Schubert and Wolf cycles were much better in terms of character and technically. This helped with stamina. I was not as exhausted towards the end of my recital. The energy carried from the first piece until the last.”

I was very happy to read that he thought he had benefited from his new knowledge and had also experienced that technically difficult passages had become easier to perform. In addition, he also felt that he had gained more stamina in his voice. It was also gratifying to note how he translated his new knowledge and skills into a musical and dramatic presentation that was personal.

The last technical aspect I intended to investigate while working with Gift was his tendency to sing a bit flat. I noticed that in instances when the intonation was not so safe, it was almost always at the same register in the voice, and I wanted to look further into that phenomenon. In one part of the aria, just before the first *passaggio* in the small octave (g-a^b), where he perhaps assumed – consciously or unconsciously – that he could relax, he had problems with flat intonation. However, using one of the working actions, namely *pressing*, specifically with a contending quality, proved to be a good strategy to correct this intonation problem. He maintained the right amount of energy and, metaphorically, took his place in the driver's seat instead of occupying the passenger's seat. He understood the metaphor and invested more of himself in terms of energy and intensity and, as a result, the intonation was improved.

For me the one essential area of improvement with Gift was progressing from a general approach to singing and musicianship towards a much more specific one, especially regarding a higher awareness of inner participation and subtexts. We seriously considered how much information we could gain from the instructions Tchaikovsky gave in the score – information that could inform his interpretation of the words and music. Furthermore, we spoke about the importance of being aware of what happens in the orchestra or piano and how that informs the singer's interpretation and performance. We also addressed the breathing, not only as life-sustaining measure, but also as expressive means, as well as the interaction between singer and conductor and how they take turns in leading the music.

It was rewarding to see how quickly Gift could adapt to the new strategies. Gift is a disciplined student, and once he had done his homework between the lessons and deepened his ideas of the meaning of the words, his efforts paid off very well. The variations in dynamic levels and phonation patterns were bigger, impulses clearer, intonation better and he gave me as a listener a more detailed musical interpretation, while at the same time offering the aria as a fuller unit. I looked forward to seeing what the next part would bring to his performance when, in due course, I intended to introduce the *externalised drives* and the six *inner attitudes* during the second round of data collection. However, having worked with Gift during my first round of data collection, I noticed that

- the advancing sagittal placement created a sound with more presence and accuracy. He achieved a better vocal fold pressure and a natural placement of the larynx,
- the *working action*, *pressing*, and its derivations *crushing* and *cutting*, improved his legato lines,
- the same *working action* (*pressing*) helped him improve his intonation in the middle register,
- *thrusting*, a derivation of the *working action* known as *punching*, helped him achieve a balanced and powerful sound on the high notes.

In Gift's written reflections he points out that, after having completed the one-on-one lessons, he has a greater toolbox, and he explained how he could relate the *working actions* also to the dynamic levels, thus allowing more options in ways of expressing himself. He also mentioned that he had found that the technique "aids the performer to use mental images, but also engaging the body in enhancing the performance". Finally, Gift claimed that the technique had helped him to move away from the sheet music, allowing him to focus "on the art and making artistic music". As a voice pedagogue, I found Gift's responses and reflections most rewarding.

Phillipe

Phillipe's response to my request to tell me something he liked about his singing, or his voice was: "I love my voice." When I encouraged him to tell me what he loved about his voice, he replied without any hesitation: "It's big and powerful." It was wonderful to hear such positive feedback from Phillipe. In my opinion, singers are too often more aware of their shortcomings and failures. This unbridled enthusiasm and self-confidence were liberating and refreshing. After he had sung *Come Paride vezzoso*, Belcore's aria from *L'Elisir d'amore* by Donizetti, it was clear to me that this tall and very slim 23-year-old baritone had quite a few vocal issues that needed to be addressed. Having reflected on his performance, we both agreed that there was significant tension in his neck and shoulder area. He struggled a lot to reach the higher register and had problems singing in a slender and less loaded way above little *b*. The

aspects I wanted to address were only related to vocal technique. I intended to work on

- improving his sense of gravity,
- finding a lower breathing during inhalation,
- releasing tensions in jaw, neck and chest and getting away from over-singing,
- enhancing a low laryngeal setting, and
- finding the lines in music.

We started the lesson by working on the gravitation aspect. We explored various strategies to help prevent him from 'leaving the earth' on the high notes. Phillipe was asked to fold his hands across his chest so that he might be aware of when he was raising his chest. I asked him to almost lean into his hands and arms. To further reinforce a downward feeling, as if he had a heavier inner plumb line (a greater sense of gravity), I put my hands on his shoulders and pressed gently when he reached the notes in his higher register. The purpose was also to observe how he responded to an outer resistance offered by someone else. My observation was that, when I gave him the external resistance, the high register sounded freer. I asked him if he perceived any difference and he claimed that it was more comfortable to sing the high e.

Having reflected on the didactic strategy used, I also gave him two chairs to lift up on either side of his body while he was singing. The purpose was to kinaesthetically experience the weight but also, with his eyes see the weight and hence, attain a lower attitude. Thereafter, we took these outer resistances (leaning, pressing and lifting the chairs) away, but continued by remembering the sensations that these actions created in the body while singing.

We also tried the feeling of *pressing* in a *vertical plane* down into the earth with his legs which reminded him of the contending force down from his hips. I suggested that he should imagine the movement, size and the weight of various animals such as a gorilla, horse and elephant, in order for this very light-weighted man to experience an increased the feeling of gravity. Additionally, we tried to find out whether lying on his back while singing could be beneficial in producing a more relaxed and grounded

balance in his body. The didactic strategies worked very well for Phillipe, and I could observe how he gradually achieved a lower centre point and less clavicular breathing in his singing, a method that results in the chest elevating too much. Consequently, his perceptions of the lower centre point resulted in his singing sounding much freer.

The next step was to work on his high, gasping and almost clavicular breathing. The reason for wanting him to breathe from lower in his body was to further enhance the above-mentioned feeling of a lower centre point in the body, to release the neck tensions and to find a natural, low laryngeal setting. We started by investigating whether breathing in a descending, *vertical plane* could work. I requested him to do squats with a *gliding working action* and to inhale when he was in the squatting position and to ascend (straightening up) while he was singing. I had the impression that, when he did this exercise, it further released the voice from too many unnecessary tensions. We also explored whether, by inhaling in a retiring, *sagittal plane*, he could improve his breathing process. I invited him to do a retiring movement when he inhaled, as if he was preparing to throw away something heavy. He backed off with one leg and let his arms follow as well. By this time Phillipe was exhausted and I when I asked him how he felt, he confessed with a smile that “this is so tiring”. When I asked him whether his voice was tired (I could not hear anything in the voice that signalled vocal fatigue), he snorted half-dead with a smile and exclaimed: “no, no, not at all...but my boody!” I was happy with the outcome since I could then notice how a more embodied sound emerged while he sang.

After a small interval, with some SOVT⁵⁴ exercises to reduce possible strain in his voice, we began to consider *working actions* that might be most suitable for him when he sang Belcore's aria.

Bo: "If we now look at the working actions, would you say that is light weight or strong weight in the beginning of this aria?"

Phillipe: "No, it's light weight", he replied.

Bo: "And direct or flexible?" I asked.

Phillipe (closing his eyes and feeling the sensations with his arms): "Direct? I think."

Bo: "Yes, I think so too. There is really no right or wrong here. But let's try direct. And what do you think, is the time quick or sustained?"

Phillipe (hesitating and humming to himself): "I think my, my strong beats are quick, and in the middle of the bars, sustained."

Bo: "Hmm, yes, I think the overall quality is sustained. The quick [beats] are more under the sustained 'umbrella'. So, we have light, direct and sustained and that makes a yielding quality, you remember?"

Phillipe nodded in agreement.

We ultimately agreed that, based on the discussion described above, he sang with a *gliding* quality. However, we soon found that this *gliding* quality was too unenergetic for this aria, and after some experimenting, we finally decided that derivations from pressing, namely, *cutting*, *squeezing*, or *crushing*, were the best strategies for him to achieve the desired sound and energy while singing the aria. I gave him an example of images that would create perceptions of the level of energy needed to sing the aria.

⁵⁴ SOVT is a general term to describe a semi-occluded vocal tract. Examples of SOVT exercises are lip trills, tongue trills (sometimes called raspberries), dove-r (an r with inflated cheeks), the apple (an [u] with inflated cheeks) (Rosenkull, 2021:63). Other exercises use fricatives z, j and v and also the nasal continuants m and n. SOVT exercises might also be performed in straws or tubes, sometimes executed with the tube in water. Exactly what happens physiologically is yet unknown, but the result is a reduced effort vocally, an easier phonation and an overall improved laryngeal health (Titze *et al.*, 2021:3). What is known, however, is that the semi-occlusion widens the entire airway and the vocal fold collision, while their vibrational amplitude is reduced. Furthermore, the phonation threshold pressure – the "minimum lung pressure required to initiate vocal fold oscillation" (Titze, 2009) – is lowered and the surfaces of the vocal folds are separated (Titze, 2018:311). Titze (2021:11) argues that the most important finding is that these exercises, when carried over to vocalization and when "maintained with some sensory or motor memory", can lead to a sensation of a lower glottal pressure and a more efficient sound with less pressed phonation (Titze, 2021:11).

Bo: “Imagine you press a somewhat sluggish doorbell or cut your bread with a very sharp knife...or, you have a fresh peach, and you crush it, as if you want to destroy it for you friend.”

Phillipe smiled and tried singing with this new energy level. Since I noticed that he could sing the music by heart, I wanted him to focus more on the physical feeling and asked him to put the music stand to the side, thus getting away from the visual impulses in the music score. Now the voice started working even better. He commented on how much more support he had to add.

Since he was a quick learner, I wanted to explore whether an *externalised drive* could deepen Phillipe’s musical expression. I asked him to work with one of the four *externalised drives*, namely *spell*, almost as if he, the very self-confident sergeant Belcore, wanted to devour the beautiful Adina. Phillipe did very well, and the outcome was a high density in his voice, a beautiful legato and a less strained top of the voice. I noticed also when, months later, I went back to the recording of the lesson, how much more beauty emerged from the young man’s voice when he employed the *externalised drive*.

Because neck tension was so obvious in Phillipe’s singing, I wanted to address exercises to be used explicitly for releasing that tension. We worked with some exercises I named the *periscope*, the *pecking hen* and the *infinity sign*.

- In the *periscope*, the head goes from side to side conducted by the eyes in a *horizontal plane* – like a submarine’s scouting periscope. The movement is *legato*, and it can be conducted with different speeds. The *working action* is *gliding*.⁵⁵
- The *pecking hen* (or a *yes-man’s nodding*) is done with small *staccato*, nodding movements with the head in *vertical plane*. The movements are small, light and quick and the *working action* is *dabbing*.

⁵⁵ Variations of the exercise can be done when the head is moving, and the eyes are still or when the eyes are moving, and the head is still.

- In the *infinity sign* the nose draws a *horizontal/vertical* figure eight in the air. The *working action* is reminiscent of *floating*.

These exercises are executed while singing, as a way to release the head and neck musculature, to distract the singer and to avoid habitual movements or holds in this part of the body. We worked thoroughly mostly with small parts of the aria, and I asked him to implement the ideas also in the rest of the music while practising on his own. I asked him how he perceived these exercises and he laughed and leaned forward. “Pfuhh...this was...so...I don’t know.” I could see how sweaty and tired he was, and I told him how I had observed that he had to engage the muscles in the abdominal region more when he took away the compensatory “instead-of-support” activity in the neck and shoulder region, thus eliminating unnecessary tension in the head and neck muscles. In addition, I observed how the tongue started to move more freely as a result of the decrease in tension in the head and neck. I also explained to him how I sometimes find it useful to work from the inside out, but also, as in this case, from the outside in, in order to stimulate inner, low physical work when the outer weaker frame is taken away.

Another song on which we worked together was *The Boatman’s Dance* by Copland. The song starts in a high register which was a huge challenge for Phillipe. We explored whether *slashing* might be the appropriate *working action* with which to sing. We imagined that he was a seaman up in a mast, calling out in the *vertical plane* to someone on deck, with the hands shaped like a megaphone. We went from calling, to calling on pitch, performed the melody like *sprechgesang*⁵⁶ and finally, to normal singing. We also explored going from falsetto to modal register in different ways in order to investigate whether he could find the high register with less vocal fold mass, lower subglottic pressure and shorter time in the adduction phase of the vocal folds. We worked on, for example, *glissandi*, and I asked him to pay attention to the register transition and sing soft, increase the airflow and make the procedure slowly. The progression was not great, but I could notice another entrance for him as he sang in

⁵⁶ *Sprechgesang* is a type of vocalization that lies somewhere in between speech and singing. The best-known example might be *Pierrot Lunaire* by Schönberg (1874–1951).

that *tessitura*, and I assume that, over time it could develop to a freer phonation with less unnecessary effort.

It was rewarding to work with a student like Phillipe and he developed a lot in a short time. The first thing Phillipe mentions in his written reflection is a higher awareness of his body and where in the body he is putting his weight. He points out the exercise with the chairs and declares: “That really helped me with my posture and keeping the back of my neck tall as my coach always advised me.” He also mentions how beneficial the different exercises with the neck were, and how he now understood what freedom and relaxation in the neck and head muscles feel like. Furthermore, he shares how he had found *the grades of intensity* useful, and that he had realized that the yielding qualities could be more helpful to him, since he has a strong inclination to exaggerate his intensity in his performing. He points out that, months after the lessons, he still uses the technique and that he now sings the high notes with less tension than before. Finally, Phillipe claims:

“Most of the things that I worked on with Mr Bo helped me to understand what my coach expected from me. These are things I’ve been struggling with for a very long time. And now, there is a huge, huge difference.”

In conclusion, my observations while working with Phillipe included:

- The strategies used to maintain the perceptions of a connection between the voice and the body, with a low physical centre point, helped him with his body awareness and, accordingly, to create better circumstances for healthy vocal production;
- Perceptions created by didactic strategies including descending in a *vertical plane* and retiring in a *sagittal plane*, established a deeper breathing process and a natural, low laryngeal setting;
- The *cutting*, *crushing* and *squeezing* (derivations of *pressing*) were useful to obtain a balanced flow phonation;
- The *gliding periscope*, the *dabbing pecking hen* and the *floating infinity sign* were extremely beneficial to release the tension in Phillipe’s neck and shoulders and, hence, a freer phonation could take place;

- The yielding *working actions* improved his proficiency to sing with less vocal fold mass.

Additionally, and in my opinion very important, he gained tools that he could apply after our sessions, while practising on his own. Consequently, Phillipe could partly be in charge of and oversee his own development.

Nkosi

None of the singers that I met had contracted Covid-19, as far as I knew, but Nkosi had suffered from severe Covid and told me that she had been in bed for two weeks with a high temperature and still, four weeks after recovery, had breathing issues. She shared that she had managed to sing *coloratura* passages quite easily before contracting the Covid virus, but since her recovery she has lacked vocal agility. Furthermore, the vibrato was quite slow and big. After she had sung Barbarina's aria, *L'ho perduta* from *Le nozze di Figaro* by Mozart, I agreed with her perceptions and sensations. However, despite the issues she mentioned, this 21-year-old soprano has a lovely timbre and a fine musicality. I experienced Nkosi as a very cautious and shy person, and it was sometimes even difficult to hear what she said, since she spoke so softly. I wanted to spend the lessons with Nkosi working on technical aspects in order to

- improve her breathing,
- find a stronger physical connection in her singing,
- find quicker and lighter impulses in line with the music,
- improve her stamina, and
- improve her vocal agility.

I wanted to address Nkosi's breathing issues since that was one of the first things that she mentioned in her verbal reflection on the very first day. We worked in the *horizontal plane* with the arms imitating the work of the ribcage as mentioned earlier in this chapter when discussing the didactic strategies used with Liza. Nkosi found it easier to hold the phrases when she experienced her breathing in this way and it was a combination of the physical work and experience of the actions, in combination with

her visualized impression, that was beneficial to her. I noticed that, when singing, she just let go of the air without really supporting or managing the breath flow and we spoke about ‘resisting’ the outgoing air. I encouraged her to work more with *bound flow* than with *free flow*. We also worked with breathing in the *sagittal plane* and used the metaphor ‘hold your horses’, meaning that I required her to be a coachman on a horse-drawn carriage and to rein in the wild horses. The horses symbolized the air wanting to escape and the coachmen’s reins and physical work with the arms illustrating the thought of ‘resisting’ (controlling) the airflow. We both agreed that these images and perceptions enhanced the breathing process and balanced her muscular efforts. It was obvious to me that she also, by focusing on a good breathing process, maintained a wider pharynx and a richer tone.

Regarding the *working actions*, Nkosi suggested *gliding* for most parts of Barbarina’s aria. It turned out to be beneficial for both improved legato singing and phrasing, as well as an improved breathing process. In her written reflection Nkosi wrote: “I could easily imagine an object that is *gliding*, and I could project that into my singing...The *gliding* action was really helpful for me, especially in the song *L’ho perduta*.” Additionally, we worked with singing in the retiring *sagittal plane* as another strategy to further withstand the force instead of letting go and, as a result, also found a more even voice quality in the whole register.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, my impression of both female singers at NWU was that they approached their singing very much on a *horizontal plane* and lacked some depth and roundness in their voice quality. I wanted to explore whether that could be adjusted by using perceptions and images of a retiring *sagittal plane*. I asked Nkosi to imagine that she was pulling a rope. Initially, it seemed more as if she was gently pulling a thin thread and, in order to get past this timidity, we finally took a music stand and engaged in a little tug of war between us. I wanted her to perceive more of the muscular activity in her back and, in addition, an *imposto* further back in the region of the pharynx. Aside from being more energetic, she also had to pay more attention to the tugging action – to maintain resistance and not to let go of the stand – than the sound production itself. My observation was that, while using this strategy, Nkosi managed to achieve a better embodied singing and a richer voice quality.

We further investigated how it was for her to sing the aria in a variety of very different tempi. The purpose of doing so was, in addition to seeing how the voice behaved in different tempi, to see whether she could be more rapid and precise in her rhythmic impulses if she were given more time. This did not produce the result for which I had hoped. Therefore, I changed the strategy and provided verbal instructions and went back to the *motion factor* known as *time*. I requested her to use more *quick time* instead of *sustained*. I encouraged her to imagine acting like, for example, a grasshopper, a galloping horse or a jumping kangaroo. Furthermore, we discussed on what level of volume (on a scale from one to ten) she was singing, and we agreed that a four would be suitable for her when performing this character. Interestingly, Nkosi had no problem at all to go into the character when she was asked to do so. She directly performed a believable character with warmth and sensitivity. Later, when she performed the aria in front of the others in the group during the master classes, they were very moved by her interpretation. “I really want to commend you for your boldness and seriousness to directly make a performance with such an expression” I said, “and I can see that Gift is nodding.” She smiled and shyly looked down at the floor.

Nkosi and I also had time during the sessions to work with *Let the bright Seraphim* from the oratorio *Samson* by Handel. We worked more or less with the same strategies to address the challenges she had with breathing, stamina and agility in this piece. In her written reflection, Nkosi mentions how the lessons helped her on a daily basis to prepare for her exam. Another point that she reported in her personal reflections relates to the ability to sing in tempo. She pointed out that “[b]efore the action efforts, I would drag the song and after, I was able to sing the song without dragging the tempo”.

In my opinion, the things Nkosi achieved included the following:

- Imagining a *horizontal plane* resulted in a breathing process that is more conducive to fluent singing. The intercostal part of the breathing had its rightful place in the process and became more flexible, and moreover, the inhalation phase became quicker. Additionally, I observed her achieving a wider pharyngeal space and, thereby, a more resonant tone – probably because of the focus on a *horizontal inhalation*;

- A more energetic inner participation and physical engagement took place, brought about by focusing on the breathing. The vibrato subsequently became faster and with less fluctuation in pitch;
- The pulling in the *sagittal plane* (or perhaps more of a squeezing with the elbows) made the voice quality more even in terms of volume and the singing was more embodied on the high notes;
- Working with different aspects of *time* – from *quick* to very *sustained* – she partially improved her awareness of her physical effort and her mental preparation for the phrases;
- The *gliding* – and its variation *smearing* – contributed to a better legato and the capacity to maintain better phrases.

Precious

The last singer with whom I worked with at NWU was Precious, a 21-year-old soprano. I asked her about her strengths as a singer, and Precious claimed that she was good at singing *coloratura* and confessed that she found her voice beautiful. Having heard her sing, I agreed totally with her opinions. Her voice was creamy, rich and balanced, both in terms of airflow and subglottic pressure, as well as in the *chiaroscuro*. However, in my opinion she needed to improve

- her breath control,
- her ability to sing with more expression, and
- her ability to sing with more volume.

The reason I wanted to improve her breath control was to cope with the requirement of the length of phrases – and increase the amount of energy in her singing – in order to meet the set requirements of dynamics, expressiveness and communication. Initially, we worked with *Alma del core* by Caldara, where I wanted to investigate whether she could sing with more *free flow* instead of *bound flow*, as I perceived she had done. I asked her to imagine going down a waterslide. We spoke about the impact of the water and about the sensation of gliding down a waterslide with only a little bit of water, as opposed to a lot of water when doing so. We then compared these

sensations to the air flow while singing. Another image I used was a mill, and how one could imagine that the necessity of water for the mill's wheel to rotate can be compared to the indisputable importance of air flow for singing. We agreed that *gliding* was an appropriate *working action* for the song, and I asked her to imagine that the fist of her left hand was an infant's head and that the right one caressed it with *gliding*, tender movements. We also experimented with singing the song without consonants – to take as many obstacles away as possible for a *free flow* and afterwards putting the consonants back. By employing these four different strategies—imagining gliding down the waterslide, the role of water for the mill's wheel, caressing the infant's head and finding the legato lines without consonants – I could observe that the air flow was better while she sang. When I asked Precious how she experienced it, she nodded and replied: “Yes, it was easier now.”

Working on *In uomini*, Despina's aria from *Così fan tutte* by Mozart, proved to be a perfect aria in which to explore the *working actions* with Precious. She actually managed to place all eight *working actions* in the aria when she was asked to find out the *working actions* from one day to another. For example, we played tennis (with the arms as tennis racquets and Swedish candy as tennis balls) to find *slashing*, she stomped angrily on the floor to find *punching*, and worked with her arms like big snakes to find *wringing* with *free flow*. Precious pointed out in her written reflection how the *working actions*, especially the contending qualities, were beneficial for her. She stated that she found the *punching* action particularly challenging to express. Precious also declared how the *working actions* had equipped her with tools to create more variety in her singing.

To further challenge Precious, we also employed the *grades of intensity* (as I did with Olga and Henry) and I encouraged her to work not only while imagining the exaggerated, but also the extreme grade. Precious was a little bit low key and unobtrusive, and this was a way of luring her out into lesser-known domains. I encouraged her to act without reflecting, to act without considering the consequences. As is the case with PAR, I sometimes divide the teaching and learning process when it comes to singing in three parts: preparation, acting and reflection. My experience is that most singers tend to strongly emphasise one of these parts. One singer uses so

much energy to prepare that he almost never gets started. Another just acts without proper preparation, and the singing mechanism is not prepared for what is to come. The third reflects and criticizes himself all the time, so that the action can never be satisfying. In Precious's case I wanted her to act more freely, with no reflection, since I perceived her self-critical attitude to hinder her too much. Precious had a specific habit in her upper body of using only the forearms. This action is somewhat reminiscent of a penguin tucking its flippers into its body. I wanted to guide her to get more freedom in her arms. I encouraged her to use the whole body and demanded that she throws her arms in the air without reserve. I actually called out from behind the piano: "Please show your armpits!" in an attempt to have her do this action with the utmost freedom. Furthermore, I wanted her to use the whole room and to involve the other participants (this was during a masterclass) while performing. I encouraged her to encompass the whole room, to work with the *extreme grade of intensity*, and to really use all of the space around her body (kinesphere) as far as she can physically reach and scatter in space (Laban, 2011:35). I wanted her to do this as a way of expanding herself and her singing. Moreover, she was encouraged to interact with the other participants, and she did it very well. When we did the aria once again, she sashayed around in the big room, jumped up on a table, interacted and flirted with the other singers present. They smiled and complimented her with the utmost of enthusiasm. They stated that there was now a big difference. "This was nice!" claimed Nkosi. "Yes, it was much more volume and intensity now" stated Gift. They smiled and nodded encouragingly to her, and they all seemed impressed with how she had developed. I was also impressed with how quickly and bravely she was able to transform these new ideas. What Precious gained in this aria was huge, namely bigger variations in volume and timbre and more attitude in the acting. Furthermore, the body and voice were now connected, and she was able to present a cohesive narrative to the audience.

In her written reflections, Precious acknowledged how the *three planes* also helped her "with the sound and breath control". She asserted: "I used much more of the table [horizontal plane] technique for the opening of my voice." She ended her reflection by writing: "I wish I had learnt that last year in my first year, because I think I could be at least [further]."

Summarising the outcomes achieved during the sessions with Precious, I would say that she achieved

- a much bigger dynamic range as a result of exploring and applying the contending qualities in the *working actions*,
- louder volume and more density in sound,
- a wider range of expression and distinction in communication and acting by adopting the *extreme grade of intensity*,
- braver, less anxious singing that, over time, might increase her development in general as she continued to step out of her comfort zone so clearly,
- a more nuanced and varied performing because of specific and detailed preparations regarding the *working actions*,
- a higher awareness of aspects such as volume, energy and density, and
- the ability to handle the breathing process better by imagining the *horizontal plane*, while thinking of *gliding* as the *working action*.

CHAPTER 8: FIRST ROUND OF DATA COLLECTION: TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN SWEDEN

8.1 Introduction

This chapter continues to consider the same sub-question posed in Chapter Seven, namely: How do the singers who are involved in this study respond to the use of the didactic strategies based on the principles of the Laban-Malmgren technique (LMT)? As in that chapter, I used the principles of participatory action research (PAR) and interpretive description (ID) to collect, observe, reflect on and interpret the actions and responses of the participants during my first visits to the selected Swedish institutions. In February, some months after my South African visit, I started my collaboration with the students at the Swedish tertiary institutions.

8.2 Academy of Music and Drama University of Gothenburg (UGOT)

UGOT has been my workplace since 2014, where I teach future opera singers, musical theatre artists and some voice pedagogy in classical singing. This institution was also my own *alma mater* during the 1980s and 1990s. There were three participants at UGOT, one bachelor student from Sweden and two master's degree candidates from Greece and Croatia respectively. All three of the participants were eager to learn and open to the ideas I presented.

I worked according to the same model as I did in South Africa. First, I presented the thoughts and content of my study and what prompted me to work on this during a lecture. Then I shared the same PowerPoint presentation as I did in South Africa with them, including pictures, texts and sound examples with the intention of presenting the content as broadly as possible. At the same time, I was conscious of the possibility that they might perceive the content differently from the participating singers in South Africa, whether as a group or as individuals. My intention with a broad variety of perspectives in my presentation was to allow the possibility of engaging the participants within activities that involve more senses, which could make their personal resources available to them in a deeper and more comprehensive way (Gärdenfors, 2010:50; Gardner, 1999:33). As was the case in South Africa, we approached the material

visually, spatially, verbally, kinaesthetically, musically and intrapersonally (by way of self-reflection). The participants listened intensively and were fascinated by the stories of Laban and Malmgren and their lives, especially as they had never heard of these people before. I could also tell that they were concentrating very much and, initially, I had the impression that they were trying to understand the ideas mostly in an intellectual way.

Susan (hesitantly): "But tell me Bosse...I absolutely don't understand how this technique that has been applied for dancers and actors could have an actual connection to the sound and, furthermore, singing."

Bo: "I think it would become clearer when we begin the practical work."

My reassuring comment was validated when Susan later wrote in her written reflection: "[T]hrough the moment that you start to connect the movement, the images with the voice through this path, it all becomes very clear."

There was an intense and curious desire to experiment amongst the participants when they began the practical work. These singers did not react so much to each other's performances as they did to their own. Suddenly, when we were exploring the planes, Rebecca started giggling.

Bo: "Why are you laughing?"

Rebecca (laughingly): "Singing in horizontal was so different."

Bo: "In what way?"

Rebecca: "It was so easy...it sounded much clearer (giggling again). I have a habit of singing too far back in the throat."

Bo: "So, how did you like this then?"

Rebecca: "It was better!! Easier and lighter."

8.2.1 Individual lessons at UGOT

Rebecca

When I asked Rebecca what she thought her strengths as a singer are, she replied that she is good at interpretation. She explained that she has a sense of music and style and can bring the right colour to the music. She also said that she sings with quite a lot of vibrato but does not know whether it is good or bad. She confessed that she sometimes had trouble controlling the vibrato. “My jaw and tongue shake a little and I do not want to look like that,” declared Rebecca. We talked about what can be allowed or not in terms of shaking parts of the body and what researchers, educators and singers say about this issue⁵⁷.

The work with Rebecca was stimulating. She had a clear understanding of what she knew and what she can do and what not. Since I had heard her before on some occasions, I had some idea where I wanted to start my work. I had in mind to investigate how she might achieve

- a more resonant and projected phonation,
- a more varied and specified way of singing (instead of some general approach that I perceived that she was using),
- improved legato and phrasing,
- a performance with less effort and better outcome in intensity of sound, and
- a breathing process more conducive to singing.

When working with *Va! Laisser couler mes larmes*, Charlotte’s aria from *Werther* by Massenet, we started exploring *the three planes*. We agreed that she sang in a mixture

⁵⁷ Sundberg (2007:214) claims that certain co-oscillations can occur in both the tongue and jaw, while oscillations in the pharynx side walls give rise to an unstable voice. Miller (2004:99) declares that “shaking jaws and trembling tongues are matters for concern.” A lack of external frame support can result in a wagging jaw, but also a downward dragging of the platysma muscle, a depressed larynx or a distention of the pharynx can contribute to oscillating jaw and tongue. However, Miller (2004:100) points out that tiny movements can be normal consequences of a vibrato and they can serve as a “relaxant principle”. On the other hand, Marilyn Horne (Hines, 2006:137) asserts that a shaking tongue occurs only because of lack of support.

of *the three planes*, with a certain preference to advance into the *sagittal plane*. I agreed with Rebecca's opinion that she tended to push her voice too hard. Therefore, I suggested a didactic strategy that required her to try experimenting with singing while imagining that she was retiring in a *sagittal plane*. In order for her to completely grasp the idea of the strategy, I pointed out its similarities with the concept of *inalare la voce*, but the concept was unknown to her. Since this didactic strategy did not seem to pay significant dividends, if any, I decided to proceed with the *working actions* instead. When asked which *working action* she found suitable for the different phrases, she thought that the first note with the word *Va!* (Go!) was *punching*. I suggested that we experiment with this *working action* and some of its derivations. We, for example, played around with the idea that she was a fencer who would thrust a sword in a balloon – a fairly strong impulse – but with a softer resistance. Rebecca was surprised and started laughing at how easy it felt. After we had worked with *punching* and some variations of it, we concluded that a derivation of the word, such as *thrust*, *shove* or *stub* was more appropriate for the music.

We then chose a *pressing working action* on the second phrase (*laisser couler mes larmes*) and then there was a lot of *gliding working action* in the rest of the aria. Rebecca was satisfied with the result. I observed a vast improvement when Rebecca was specific in her choices of the *working actions* in the initial phrases of the aria. The *thrust (punching)* on *Va!* gave a clearer impulse, an edge to the tone, clear rhythm and less loaded vocal weight, while she still managed to maintain a good projection of the tone. In my opinion, the *gliding* and *pressing working actions*, and the hovering in between, created better density in Rebecca's legato singing and her phrasing improved as well. I also pointed out the chromatics in the music, which I regarded to be an example of the word painting (of the lyrics) in this composition. I am of the opinion that this reciprocal relationship between music and lyrics justifies the emphasis that a singer puts on using *pressing* and *gliding* qualities even more.

The second aria that Rebecca sang was *Buß und Reu* from *Der Matthäus-Passion* by Bach. We began by working to improve her breathing process. We went back to the planes, but now with a focus on the breathing. We started by working with breathing in a *horizontal plane*. I used the same didactic strategy as I did with Liza and Nkosi (see

Chapter Seven) involving the horizontal forwards and sideways movements of her arms. I was able to observe that this strategy resulted in a steadier and more controlled breathing. Furthermore, this strategy generated a more secure feeling in her singing. I also observed that she had extra margins in what she did; she was not out of air and was able to maintain a good breath flow and air-pressure—also at the ends of phrases. I asked her whether my perceptions were valid, and she claimed: "Yes, that is how it feels."

We then proceeded to work on the mixed voice quality in her lower register. Rebecca tended to retract her tongue and, moreover, to expand the pharyngeal space for the back vowels (of which the text contained many). These tendencies make it more complicated to move seamlessly from one register to another. With the intention of avoiding back vowels that were sung in too "throaty" a way and, instead, finding a uniform placement for all vowels, I wanted Rebecca to experiment with a more forward *imposto*. We continued working with the idea of a *horizontal plane* using the [i] vowel. Rebecca was asked to imagine that she 'filtered' all the vowels through an [i] when she was singing, and it really paid off. In combination with the horizontal action, to further poise the voice, we adjusted the mouth shape by gathering the corner of the mouth to act more in line with the *sagittal plane*. By now there was a lot of information and instructions for Rebecca to absorb, but she easily understood and applied the strategies while she sang. In my opinion, the use of these strategies contributed to an ideal vocal tone quality and a balanced *chiaroscuro*. Rebecca agreed with me once again when I explained to her what I had heard in her singing.

Lastly, we explored didactic strategies involving a mixture of *gliding* and *pressing* qualities while Rebecca sang the aria in order to achieve better legato singing. Sometimes it can be challenging to achieve legato singing in German while, at the same time, singing *knacklauts*.⁵⁸ In order to explore *gliding* qualities, I suggested the same didactic strategy as I did with Precious in South Africa – gently stroking the fist of her one hand with the other as if caressing an infant's head. Following that, I

⁵⁸ *Knacklaut* is a glottal plosive.

suggested that she imagine her fist being a horse's back that she was grooming. The intention with this didactic strategy was to increase the weight quality to *strong* and the *working action* to *pressing*. Ultimately, that which I observed while working with Rebecca included the following:

- A more balanced and varied way of singing occurred when she was specific in her choices of *working actions* for every phrase;
- *Gliding* and *pressing* qualities contributed significantly to improved legato singing and a more beautiful way of phrasing;
- Breathing while imagining a *horizontal plane* generated a more stabilized way of singing and both she and I noticed more security and improved margins in her performance;
- The horizontal starting point in her singing, combined with the associated [i] vowel in mind, improved the clarity and projection of the voice.

Rebecca wrote in her reflection that, through the lessons (during which we used the didactic strategies based on the LMT), she had gained new perspectives on her singing and that they had been especially useful. She stated that the *three different planes*, and the vowels connected to them, helped her to explore her voice more and to “get closer to the result I want.” She noted that she had been given new tools which are

“helping me a lot with my singing and finding a new way how to work on my singing issues that I struggle with...My perspective did change. I’m very grateful to have had the opportunity to learn about this technique. I’m trying to use some of the ideas from the technique while I am practising, depending on the repertoire.”

Susan

As mentioned earlier, the recruiter at the school had chosen one of my own students to join my study. Susan is young and has a lyric voice. She is aware of her vocal shortcomings and works hard. In the tradition from which she comes, singing lessons – to a significant extent – consist of imitating a perceived ideal sound that the older teacher presents. She is a very open-minded person and was eager to learn right from

the start. She had been, for example, actively engaged in the discussion when, during the first lecture, we discussed the music examples related to the different *working actions*. Furthermore, she drew connections between what we were discussing to her own repertoire and started looking for the different *working actions* in that repertoire.

It was interesting that, as someone with whom I had worked with before, Susan pointed out that I had used Laban-Malmgren elements from the first lesson she had with me (without using the terminology). This was something of which, at the time, I had not been fully aware. I knew that I had sometimes consciously looked for technical aspects that can be found through the LMT, but I was not aware that my teaching approach could be perceived as being so in line with it. Susan also mentioned that, in addition to the purely technical work, I always emphasise a need to be passionate about the lyrics, the urgency of the story, and how I also always call for an inner participation by the singer. Whether I had adapted so much to the technique without realising it, or whether it is so obvious that singing is very closely related to dance and movement and, therefore, that those artistic principles could so easily be transmitted to singing, is interesting to consider.

Susan and I started working with Oscar's aria *Saper vorreste* from *Un ballo in Maschera* by Verdi. As she sang through the aria the first time, I was interested to explore how her singing could improve. The goals when working with Susan were to

- enhance her phonation in terms of freedom and elasticity,
- improve her breathing process,
- improve the higher register,
- improve her intonation,
- improve her phrasing and awareness of musicality, and
- to 'gather the sound' and improve the projection.

In order to create more flow and legato and to keep the voice open during the phrase, I encouraged her to experiment with *gliding* in a retiring *sagittal plane*. She sang the aria once again while walking slowly backwards with the arms doing gestures expressing the same thing as her singing was. She instantly noticed an improvement

and claimed: "Aha, now I understand what you mean by the flow of air." The next step was to imitate the movement while standing still as she sang it once again. Her voice seemed to remember the experience of the *gliding* movements and, as a result, sounded freer.

To *gather the sound* (to sing with a slender, but effective voice quality), we explored enclosing the body in the *horizontal plane*, but still acting in the *sagittal plane* – like scattering in space and subsequently shrinking the *kinesphere* (Laban, 2011:35). I asked her to imagine that she was a funambulist walking backwards on a very thin rope. We agreed that the density of the sound was improved by this approach.

Other *working actions* that she used while singing the aria included *dabbing* and *flicking*. They were used in the second part of the aria where there is a lot of staccato and the tempo is increased. For the *dabbing* we worked with imaginary violins, celli and harps as she was asked to play pizzicato on the string instruments, dab gingerly on the grand piano as if it was a hot stovetop (where the movement *away* from the grand piano is more stressed) and type in the air (where the touching of the typewriter's keys is stressed). For the *flicking* she was asked to flick away some fluff from her clothes. Furthermore, we worked on getting the jaw to move in a more vertical position, which also affected her way of using the tongue. Susan tended to try and control the sound with her jaw, and I reminded her about letting the jaw hang and asked her to sing with a somewhat surprised jaw. I gave her the idea to let the jaw be like a light thin sheet hanging to dry on a washing line. The suggestion helped her perceive a more *vertical plane* and resulted in a less tense and rigidly held jaw, and a freer and a broader tongue, which made the phonation sound freer. Susan contemplated the different qualities in her written reflection.

"Another thought I had was this; when trying to find in which 'quality category' every music passage belongs to, helped me have a transparent sense when it comes to the music lines and awaken my creativity and made me feel very inspired."

We then continued the lesson with Susan singing the romance, *Before my window* by Rachmaninoff. We continued to explore didactic strategies involving the retiring *sagittal*

plane and emphasised the *sustained* quality. Susan pointed out: "I imagine a big wheel in front of me and my arms act like water streaming over me." I loved this image and encouraged her to fully use her body and imagination. Susan noticed how she tended to stop the movements of her arms as soon as she approached a higher tone, and we continued to work on always keeping the ongoing movements of the arms. In addition, we also connected the vowel [u] to the *sagittal plane*. Her facial muscles were unaccustomed to these movements and after a while her lips began to shake. The persistent work of keeping the lips in the *sagittal plane*, almost like a kissing position, probably became an excessively static movement. When asked whether she recognized the thoughts and experiences from the work with *inalare la voce*, she made a distinction between this concept and that of the retiring *sagittal plane*. She claimed that "*inalare la voce* it is more like holding back the air while singing in retiring *sagittal plane* increases my flow". I found her understanding that this didactic strategy contributed to an improved flow phonation very satisfying, and, in the end, she was able to sing a particularly good b².

Bo: "And now it was fabulous...the high b."

Susan (looking excited): "Yes! I heard. Was it very good?"

Bo: "It was!"

During the masterclass Susan and I also investigated different ways of exploring *gliding*, which she found to be a very beneficial quality while singing. We worked with the aria *O mio babbino caro* from *Gianni Schicchi* by Puccini. She sang and moved her hands and arms in a *gliding* movement on the grand piano, first with her hands directly on the surface of the lid and then, in order to work with less effort, with a shawl between her hands and the grand piano. I suggested that she starts the physical movements before singing in order to achieve a flow phonation already from the beginning. I also recommended that she continue these *gliding* movements with her arms while singing the top notes where she tended to get stuck. We agreed that the flow and ease in phonation gradually improved. She also explored the *gliding* quality by gracefully swinging and swaying her arms in the *sagittal plane*, which contributed significantly to

an overall improvement in quality of tone, the freedom of the top notes and her intonation which, up to that point, had been a bit flat.

Reflecting on the results of the use of the didactic strategies during the various exercises the three participants mentioned how enormously differently they all needed to deal with their respective areas that called for improvement, and how different approaches could improve the same shortcoming, but for different singers. Susan, for example, expressed how well the *gliding* worked for her and the retiring wheel. However, she noticed how differently Evelyn connected her areas of improvement with the *working actions* and claimed: "I mean, Evelyn was talking about *punching* and *slashing*, but I don't think at the moment that I can even use them!" Susan reminded me of a metaphor I often use, namely eating a soft ice cream on a sunny day, a metaphor that relates to my teaching philosophy. The little child eats only on one side of the ice cream and the ice cream begins to melt, flowing over the whole hand. An adult, on the other hand, has learned that one must continuously turn the ice cream and eat a little all around so that it does not melt. Once one has addressed one thing at a time in the teaching and learning environment, one should often work holistically, continuously repeating the improvement in different ways.

In her written reflection, Susan declares that she found the didactic strategies based on the LMT very captivating and added that "through this method I can visualize the sound through an actual image or movement. The ability to describe every quality can create a clear idea on how the sound can be provided, but in a flexible way." Susan also points out how she deems that, by using the didactic strategies, she can focus on the images, actions and feelings, without paying so much attention to the actual outcome in the sound. She claims that, instead of 'fixing' the sound by focusing on technical aspects or imitating someone's timbre, she tried to explore, without hesitation, "to experience and observe [and then] see what happens [and] notice if there is any difference...as Bo[sse] always says." Susan states in her written reflection:

“For me it works like a toolbox, where I can have many colours and shapes to work on the direction. I can choose so it fits better for me each time. This is what I found fascinating with this method, the fact that I that can actually choose myself... depending on my state, my voice at the point and the music that I choose how I want to handle my toolbox... so that I can have the best result. Instantly I get a result I have never heard before... just by concentrating on my ‘water wheel’, for example. With the Laban-Malmgren I can have lot of different try-outs, through different directions and then decide what suits me best at the moment.”

Personally, I found the new tools that these didactic strategies offered extremely important for Susan, who had the habit of learning to sing mainly by imitating. Having applied the didactic strategies, she had tools to explore what could be changed, as well as the way in which such changes can be achieved more easily. I also observed that she had found it easier to practise on her own, which of course must be considered as paramount for achieving success when singing.

Having completed working with Susan, I was able to summarise my observations. I noticed that

- the *gliding* in retiring *sagittal plane*
 - increased the airflow in a beneficial way,
 - contributed to a more even air pressure, and
 - improved the legato singing;
- the physical exercises, combined with her singing, contributed to a more embodied singing, with a more balanced support;
- the emphasis on *free flow*, instead of *bound flow*, manifested in physical movements and led to an easiness of phonation in the higher register;
- the scattering of the body in *horizontal plane*, while still phonating in the *sagittal plane*, enriched the sound;
- the releasing of the jaw in the *vertical plane* had a ripple effect, for example, also liberating the tongue;
- the focus on the *motion factors* and an awareness of them improved her intonation (without us having to address the issue of the intonation explicitly).

Evelyn

Evelyn's previous experiences of the LMT are rooted in her involvement in acting. She had worked with a director who used the terminology relating to the *working actions*, and her impression was that these *working actions* allowed her to 'shine' on stage. However, the way of using the *working actions* with the clear purpose on focusing on vocal technique and musicality was new to her. Since she was acquainted with the terminology and had physical experiences connected to the technique, it was possible to start working straightaway. In her written reflection, Evelyn points out that

"I *knew* since before that the vocal expression and singing technique are not mutually exclusive. They are affected by each other, and you can use one to make the other one better. BUT: I rarely find that this is true in practice, I often get stuck in one or the other. Either my expression is good, or my singing technique is. In working with the Laban-Malmgren technique, I was able to use expression in my singing technique and vice versa, and it's been liberating."

After she had sung Stephano's aria, *Que fais-tu, blanche tourterelle?* from *Romeo et Juliette* by Gounod, my perceptions of this singer were that, not only is her personality characterised by a *dabbing* or *flicking* quality, but these qualities, to a large extent, also characterise her as a singer. Most of her non-verbal, verbal and physical communication consisted of light weight, quick time, and a mixture of direct and flexible directions in space. Therefore, my intention was to

- dig deeper into the *working actions* related to *strong weight* and *sustained time*, in order to embody her singing and widen her musical expression,
- improve her posture and increase her gravity,
- improve the calmness in her singing in general and remove involuntary *shadow moves*,
- improve the density and excessive fullness in the sound,
- find a deeper emotional contact in her singing,
- explore whether she could embrace a more integrated approach, instead of a detailed controlled way of singing, and
- find ways to enhance her breathing process.

Evelyn was aware that there was an excess of movement in her body while she sang. She was also aware that the *shadow moves* that she was doing often acted as a substitute for the required technical stability and an inner peace. Therefore, we concentrated on improving her sense of gravity and stillness. To relieve the stigma that *shadow moves* would necessarily be something bad, I reminded her that Laban (2011:186) stated that a person with a lot of *shadow moves* is equipped with a rich imagination.

In order to anchor the body and stabilize its gravity, I suggested that she imagines that she was standing on a skateboard or surfboard. We also experimented with the idea of travelling with a shaky tram or subway and how she, by keeping a lower centre point in her body, could avoid stumbling or falling. However, I observed that these strategies did not pay off so well, since she started wagging from one side to the other instead. So, I had to adapt the didactic strategy and suggested that she assumes the stereotypical stance one would expect from someone who sings this trouser role. I also used the image of the legs being heavy tree trunks, with a large root system deep in the ground. This image proved to be more successful than the prior strategy and she confessed that she could "now...concentrate much more on the air going in and out". I encouraged her to tell me more about what she means by this confession. She explained that she felt a physical connection in her, and that she perceived a clearer physical embodiment. "But at the same time," she added, "my experience of the physical work is soft and flexible when I find the right amount of energy." My observation was that the use of this didactic strategy resulted in more direct, less breathy, and more resonant singing. Since she had found this way of relating to posture and stance helpful, I stressed the importance of also practising like this on her own, with an anchored body. I also emphasised the need to be fully involved emotionally, and to use these didactic strategies not only while being on stage. I wanted her to understand that the use of these didactic strategies while acting, as well as when singing, becomes a habit. Besides, by focusing on a lower centred point in her body, I experienced that she also experienced a deeper emotional level, and her uncontrolled *shadow moves* gradually disappeared. A more mature, trustworthy and less girlish singer emerged. I tried to clarify my understanding of the difference between

involuntary movements and conscious movements as an echo of the song and as a reinforcement of the singer's inner participation.

When it came to the *working actions*, Evelyn found that her way of performing Stephano's aria consisted mostly of *gliding* quality, but also perceived *flicking* and *slashing* qualities in the *coloratura* passages. I got the impression that Evelyn had, in the past, worked technically in a very detailed way and in small units, so I was interested in following a more musical approach, which involved finding musical lines with greater cohesiveness in the aria. This way of working which, for example, involves singing long passages focusing only on the *gliding* quality helped her find musical lines and also to embrace an integrated approach. To reduce the anxiety even more – it was still present in her body – I gave her the instruction to imagine singing solely through her eyes. The purpose was for her to visualize a very narrow passage for the sound in the *sagittal plane*. Evelyn was very pleased with that sensation and came back to it also in later lessons as a useful tool for her to use when she sang.

In my experience, singers sometimes tend not to understand the connection between posture and the breathing process for singing. According to what I had observed, Evelyn was such a singer. She had a curved thoracic spine that affected the breathing process in less favourable ways. We worked in front of the mirror while improving her posture in a more *vertical plane* as well as her awareness of it. When the posture was improved, we added aspects of the breathing process while imagining a *horizontal plane* – a didactic strategy I had also used earlier with some of the other participating singers. Also with Evelyn this combination led to a much more stable breathing process and better breath support.

Evelyn is someone who always smiles, and she has a habit also to speak and sing with an overly broad, horizontal position of the mouth. This position of her mouth resulted in a flat, shallow sound and a timbre that was so excessively light that her tonal quality did not sound appropriate for her age. It also did not sound as if she was exploiting her full vocal potential. In addition, she worked asymmetrically with her upper lip and drew her whole mouth a little bit to the right. Therefore, to achieve a more balanced sound in terms of *chiaroscuro*, the next step was to encourage her to sing

while imagining a *sagittal plane* (but continuing to breathe while imagining a *horizontal plane*).

As we began working, I invited Evelyn to exaggerate the idea of a *sagittal plane* by imagining that the corners of the mouth were kissing each other, which automatically shaped the lips in a protruding position in a *sagittal plane*. She stated that she now had an obvious [u] quality in her singing, which was my intention. Singing in the *sagittal plane* with a [u] in mind, along with the oval shape of her lips, helped her to balance the resonance in the sound, and thereby to produce the natural, darker timbre of her voice.

The next step was to use some didactic strategies based on the LMT to try and improve Evelyn's breathing process. We did what I also had found especially useful in the work with other singers in this study, namely inhaling while physically spreading in a *horizontal plane* with the arms and exhaling while physically closing the arms in a *horizontal plane*. I reminded her to move her arms in relation to the whole phrase, a movement which I noticed allowed her to accomplish a more sustained quality of the tone. Furthermore, we worked together in an attempt to understand the relationship between posture and the breathing process. I stressed the importance of keeping a good posture, regardless of whether one is inhaling or exhaling. As the breathing process started working better, we worked on singing with the whole body, while imagining the *sagittal plane* – assisting the imagination by adding movements such as waving arms and working in a retiring *sagittal plane*. We also used a metaphor involving *raking in* the sound, a bit like raking leaves in the autumn. Evelyn was satisfied with the result of the sound quality and put her hands on her stomach while claiming laughingly: "Yes that was definitely more obvious physical work now." At that point it became obvious to me that she then had a deeper physical connection with her singing, both from what I could hear during the contact session and also, from what I could see when I watched the video of the session afterwards.

During Evelyn's session, we also addressed the question of balance in terms of mixing head register (CT)⁵⁹ and chest register (TA)⁶⁰. My perception was that Evelyn's change of register from head to chest register was much too obvious, as is the case with many other mezzo-sopranos. Some singers seem to have a need to show off with the pure, almost brutal chest quality or, perhaps, they simply cannot make a smooth transition. I always encourage female singers to *register* the lower part of the voice in various ways: pure chest voice, chest-mix or head-mix in order to offer a wider variety and have more options in how to colour their singing.

Evelyn and I then went on to the next song she had prepared, which was a romance, composed by Nadia Boulanger. Once she had sung it, we both agreed that the didactic strategies we had employed while working on the Gounod aria had affected her performance of this song. However, Evelyn expressed her fears that her timbre would become heavy at the back and unnaturally darkened. She had had previous experience of this happening. However, having experience of what the ideal sound for her voice type should be, I was able to reassure her that the sound was now more balanced in the mixture of light and darkness, and this seemed to lay to rest her concerns.

When, earlier in our interaction with each other, I asked about her vocal assets, Evelyn stated that she was good at singing *coloratura* passages. At the time Evelyn asserted that singing *coloratura* passages is "like a stretching for the voice". In the masterclass where all three singers from UGOT were present, Evelyn and I worked on the aria *Parto, parto, ma tu, ben mio* from *La Clemenza di Tito* by Mozart, an aria characterised by wonderful *coloratura* passages. While preparing for this lesson she had experimented with applying the *working actions* during the opening phrases of the aria and in the *coloratura* passages. She explained how she had worked on her own with *coloratura* passages first with *gliding*, to find the lines and the smoothness, and then approached them with *flicking* to make them clearer and more exact. I told her that I was pleased to hear how she had been analysing her own singing and she replied:

⁵⁹ The register where the CT muscle (Cricothyroid) is the predominant.

⁶⁰ The register where the TA muscle (Thyroarytenoid) is the predominant.

"Yes, I think it is very useful to do these variations when the music is repeating itself." She explained further how useful she had found the *working actions* to distinguish between the repetition of the word *Parto* at the beginning of the aria. She illustrated with her voice, accompanied with arm movements: the first *Parto* with a loud voice and a slapping hand like a clear *punching*, and the second one with a soft onset and *gliding* arms like rolling out a little carpet or rolling out a thin dough. There was a huge difference in the sound of each of the words and I told her that I found it wonderful in the way that she had created her own experiences.

Evelyn (excitedly): "Yes, and I haven't been able to like... figure out how to do that before...it's a good way to work musically instead of technically...the voice is flexible, so it just happens."

Bo: "Yes it responds to that, it's like an echo. To me the vocal technique and the musicality, it's almost like a... unit when we work like this."

I told the group how imperative it is, especially when it comes to opera and sacred music, to find ways to vary the expression, since there are often so few text fragments to relate to in comparison to the amount of music. The participating singers agreed with this perception.

Evelyn and I also discussed the ability to harbour the musicality inside the body, instead of showing it on the outside and, as a result maybe interfering with the voice production. When she managed to maintain a comfortable stillness in her body while singing, she was able experience a sensation of her body obviously being more connected to her voice. Additionally, she had the feeling that the sound was then originating from the same place in her body when she accomplished a better connection between her body and her voice, even though she felt a little bit stiff in the beginning. To sing the sustained tones at the end, we referred to the way a duck moves in the water. On the surface it glides so quietly, but under the water its feet work frantically. In order to give her a visual and audible idea of the "duck feet", I clapped my hands in eighths, sixteenths and triplets. We both found that it was useful to keep the *free flow* going instead of getting stuck in a *bound flow* on the sustained notes. At the end of the lesson, I observed that her voice was spinning much more freely, and

Evelyn sang with a more balanced and resonant timbre. In her written reflection Evelyn states that

"I found my technique getting better as well as my expression and posture (at least my sense of my posture, it FELT better, and I could stand still without feeling particularly stiff). I have found myself using these tools and experimenting with them in the practice room, and they really came in handy in preparation for my upcoming audition."

In her written reflection Evelyn also points out that she has not found a use for all *working actions*, *planes*, or *grades of intensity* in her singing, and she believes that some of them are more singer-friendly than others. However, believing that her singing has improved, she claimed that she is happy and wrote the following comments:

"I would not be surprised if the working actions or table plane [horizontal plane] that I did not use during this period will come in handy in the future."

"I now have specific tools to use in order to sing with correct technique and also use my voice to express."

"It was fun and challenging to work in a different way since I normally do what my teacher tells [me]."

"Nothing contradicted what my teacher has told me...[b]ut since I've been working in one particular way for almost 3 years now, this was a big eye-opener for me personally."

Based on the interactions, observations and reflections while working with Evelyn, I concluded that focusing on

- gravity and stillness evoked a stronger physical connection that improved her singing significantly,
- breathing, while imagining a *horizontal plane*, helped Evelyn to achieve a sustained quality in her singing,
- physical stillness, she was able to create less energy leakage in her limbs and voice, which resulted in a higher density in timbre and expression.
- Singing, while imagining a *sagittal plane* increased the lower formants, resulting in a richer sound.

8.3 The University of the Arts in Stockholm

The three participants from the University of Arts in Stockholm, all on bachelor level, had previously encountered some of the terminology used in the LMT. They were familiar with the *working actions* because of the movement training at their university. However, as was the case with Evelyn, the experience with the technique relating to phonation in speech and singing was new to them. Stockholm was the only place where I presented and worked with the singers in Swedish. However, I decided to keep the English vocabulary and concepts that Laban and Malmgren had coined.⁶¹

Following the same procedure with Eric (bass), Eva (mezzo-soprano) and Catherine (soprano) as at the other research sites, I presented an introductory lecture on Laban's and Malmgren's backgrounds and technique, after which the workshop started. Since the participants had a clear idea of the *working actions*, it was easy to quickly combine these actions with singing. The group was brave and they immersed themselves totally in the activities. Furthermore, I already could tell from the start that they were all intelligent and reflective. They moved, danced and sang in the different *working actions*, with *free* or *bound flow*. We worked with *Amor vincit omni* as a song while converting and applying all the different contending and yielding qualities. Initially I only wanted them to explore on their own and they experimented with the *working actions* as a group. As a result, it was hard to tell in what way their singing changed. However, based on their expressions and verbal reflections, I was able to infer that they had experienced quite significant differences between the *working actions*. They noticed how various yielding and contending qualities appeared, how easy it was for some of them to perform a sustained quality, while others preferred a quick quality.

The next step was to work with the *horizontal*, *vertical* and *sagittal planes*. We explored them one at a time, first only while performing physical movements and then while combining the movements with singing. As we had done at the other research sites, we added the vowels ([i], [e] and [u]) related to each of the planes. It was interesting to

⁶¹ Sweden has only one national language and that is Swedish. Nonetheless, the standard of English among young people in Sweden is quite high, and I made sure that this group could follow well.

observe how the participants seemingly had very different starting points. Eric was very much a *sagittal plane* singer and was comfortable singing in the [u] position. When I asked him to sing while imagining a *horizontal plane*, he looked uncomfortable, but still tried his best. I could see how the other singers looked at each other and looked both impressed and surprised.

Eva: "Whaaoo, that was amazing! What a difference!"

Eric: "Hmm, to me it was unusual and sounded...strange."

Catherine: "There was a much more projection in the sound."

Eva: "Absolutely! The voice sounded clearer."

Eric (still hesitant): "Hmm, really?"

I agreed with Eva and Catherine, as I had observed a remarkable difference when Eric had sung *Amor vincit omnia* while trying to imagine the *horizontal plane*. His "go to" vocally was an *imposto* that was too far back and possibly a larynx that was forced downwards a bit too much. However, when he sang while imagining an exaggerated *horizontal plane*, we could hear a much more ringing quality in his voice.

During these introductory activities, I observed that – contrary to Eric – Eva's initial position indicated that she was more of a vertical singer. "Hmm, I liked very much now when I combined the physical movement with the [a] vowel," Eva said when she had tried to first move her arms in vertical plane and then the entire body. "It really helped to sing more freely," she claimed. In her written feedback, she added that

"Just to raise awareness of a direction, time or a level of weight, influenced singing in a way that amazed me, both vocally and my own, physical experience, quite simply how it feels to sing."

I also observed that Catherine, who had yet another singing approach, tended very much to adopt a horizontal setting in her approach. The other participants and I all observed how a broad and smiling mouth position was her natural tendency. We all agreed that she had achieved a fuller and more resonant timbre when she went more into a sagittal plane and Catherine was also rather pleased with the outcome.

8.3.1 Individual lessons

Eric

When I asked him what he liked about his singing or his voice, Eric stated that he liked his timbre, something with which I agreed. Eric has a free, natural *basso cantante*⁶² voice with a warm quality. "Besides," he said, "I am good at relating to the lyrics in the music." On the question about what he wanted to improve, he answered that he had a wish to improve his high register. I totally agreed with Eric when he claimed that he perceived himself as a person characterised by being *sustained*, *flexible* and *light* in terms of *motion factors*. When I had listened to his first rendition of Massenet's *Quand apparaissent les étoiles* from *Don Quichotte*, I also detected these *motion factors*, especially *flexible* and *light*, in his singing. On top of that, I perceived him as a bit imprecise and mumbling in his articulation and, in addition, as having very little resistance in his body (breath support) and in his airflow. It was almost as if he lacked some muscle tone.

Based on what I had observed, as well as our conversation, I decided to work with Eric on achieving

- a more grounded and stabilized body,
- a higher, but also a more precise use of energy and intensity of sound,
- improved phrasing and flow phonation, and
- better accessibility to the higher register.

Initially, we spoke about his posture. I asked him to make sure that he was stable on his feet, in combination with an inner vibrant activity in his body. As I mentioned in Chapter Six (6.6 Questions and assumptions), I intended to explore in what way the

⁶² Lyric bass

emphasis on gravitation could affect a singer who has a lack of gravitation, or one whose posture or centre point in the body is less than favourable. I asked Eric to watch himself in the mirror and to make sure that he experienced a centred body. I also asked him to pay attention to his right shoulder which tended to move together with the music. In order to increase gravity and stabilize the body, I gave him three imaginary pictures:

- standing an inch below the floor,
- that his legs were tree trunks, with a large network of roots that spread out under the floor, and
- that he was a well-grounded tent.

The prerequisites needed to achieve a more anchored sound (e.g., body alignment and breath support) improved and Eric understood the necessity for them. He was more satisfied with his posture and the sensation it gave him.

To increase his inner energy, airflow and air pressure, we worked from different angles. I asked him to perform with a *pressing* quality while imagining an advancing *sagittal plane*. Firstly, he was asked to move only his arms forward, as if he were pushing a chest of drawers while he was singing. Secondly, I encouraged him to walk while I was restraining him from behind; on my knees holding his wrists. Thirdly, I asked him to imagine bearing into a strong headwind. As he followed these didactic strategies – all based on the *working action* known as *pressing* and an advancing *sagittal plane* – Eric's energy increased, and we both agreed that these strategies contributed positively to his inner energy, airflow and air pressure. Additionally, I stressed that he should sing while keeping these strategies in mind when he sang voiced as well as unvoiced consonants. To illustrate this, I asked him to stand in the other corner of the room and address his singing towards me as if I were suffering from hearing loss and was slow and sluggish in understanding what he was saying. We further experimented with *exaggerated* and *extreme grades* of articulating, and he was asked to sing with much more urgency and as if there were a lot at stake. Together, the use of these didactic strategies strongly resulted in a more obvious flow phonation and an ease at the higher register. Eric writes in his reflection that

"I think it was a great fun and rewarding to work with new entrances to my singing. The work with the planes were completely new to me but gives a very clear picture and are useful in singing. To think sustained instead of 'support a lot' really helped me to become a more activated singer and to engage the body."

The next aria Eric and I worked with was *I'm a lonely man Susannah* from the opera *Susannah* by Lloyd. Perhaps it cannot be characterised as a '*wringing* aria', but we explored that quality in order to continue exploring a more energetic way of singing. Therefore, I requested Eric to sing the aria with an annoyed, *wringing* quality. I suggested that he imagine having recently cleaned the floor and now his younger siblings and his big dog ran across it with rainy, muddy shoes. Eric smiled and I could see that he could relate to the scenario. When he applied the suggested qualities and imagery while singing, we both thought the results were satisfying: the closure of the vocal folds was improved, the phrases became smoother, and the legato was improved. In addition, the focus on more specific conditions, physically as well as mentally, resulted in the high notes being perceived as freer – as if they were milked down instead of being pushed up. I asked him what he thought of the result and whether he could grasp what I was looking for.

"Yes, I like how you explain *why* you want me to try things, instead of just telling: Do this! You say: Try this because it can perhaps do that."

When we met for the masterclass, and I asked Eric whether he had reflected on or had investigated anything since the previous time we had met.

Eric: "It feels as if investigating, is the only thing I do."

Bo: "Why then?"

Eric: "I want it [his singing] to feel good."

Bo: "What do you perceive as being good?"

Eva: "What do you mean by investigating?"

Eric (looking thoughtful): "I try to come back to what I find during my lessons. What is it that makes it feel good...that I don't get tired?"

I continued to ask Eric questions about his perceptions about his voice and his singing, but I also suggested that sometimes it is good to arrive at something. I also pointed out that

"it can be important to be aware of that the sensation over time might change...the sensation you experience the first time probably will be dampened over time."

For the masterclass Eric brought the aria *Wie schön ist doch die Musik* from *Die schweigsame Frau* by Richard Strauss. To avoid too much flexibility and weakness in his approach to this aria, I asked him to imagine that he was standing one centimetre under the floor. I also asked him to imagine being a wheel steamer riding inexorably, constantly and heavily on a river. My intention was to further emphasise the stable and low centre-point in his body, thus eliminating as many obstacles as possible standing in the way of a freer phonation. However, even though we stressed these things, the body instantly started doing some Hawaiian hula-hula dance as soon as Eric started singing. To me it was not only, as I had assumed from the beginning, an old habit of trying to remain free and relaxed instead of getting tensed. In my opinion one sometimes comes across singers who perform with an excessively relaxed jaw, which causes the articulation to be muffled, or who assume a stance where the knees are bent or relaxed too much. Presumably, these actions serve as an echo from something that had to be considered years ago and has now become a too extreme version of the original problem. Now I observed how the body was communicating something else than the actual meaning of the aria while singing. I told him that I had a perception that he wanted to be somewhere else, even though that probably was not his intention, because I had the impression that he really enjoyed the work. However, the body acted yieldingly and a bit shy.

I stepped away from the piano so that I could assist him better and we continued to work *a cappella*. In an attempt to let him experience a weightier, more downwards quality, I gently added some *pressing* quality on his shoulders and encouraged him to

resist this pressure. I followed this by also lightly pulling his arms downwards in an attempt to let him experience the intended weightier, downwards quality. After a while I took my hands away but asked him to continue with the sensations of weight brought about by the strategies we had used. My intention was to stress his centre of gravity in the lower part of the trunk (Laban 2011:53); first by giving him an outer kinaesthetic experience and after that by asking him to strive for that proprioception himself. As he sang again, I observed more direct singing, with fewer detours. The other participants observed the difference as well. I asked them to describe the difference and Catherine stated that “now it sounds more conveniently [relaxed]”. Eva also commented, saying that “it is as if the sound takes more space...before it was more of a dabbling singing.”

Eric and I continued working with the *pressing* quality by applying slight pressure with his arms folded across his chest. I had observed how Eric was moving in a *vertical plane* in his breathing process. He lifted the sternum while inhaling and his torso collapsed when he exhaled. I pointed out the need for a good, low inhalation in order to take advantage of the tracheal pull – a concept which was unknown to him – thereby enjoying its beneficial effect on good phonation. Once again, I reminded him of his posture; a stable stance, without becoming rigid, a light resistance with the hands on the chest and imagining the air was pulsating through his knees.

I had found it interesting when, earlier in the master class, Eric had explained that he never raises his voice or gets angry. At the time, in an attempt to encourage him to act with more courage, I had explained to him that my experience was that, by acting on stage in a way that one may not consider part of one's personality, one can also transfer these qualities into one's personal life in an effective way. Now, when working on the Strauss aria, I explained to him that “we strengthen your gravitation, and we enhance your directness [of sound] ...you seem to have a lot of flexibility in you”. When Eric smiled, I thought he might be a bit embarrassed and I hurried to reassure him that this is not said as criticism, but that it was just my perception of how his body works, based on the sessions we had had together. At that point Eric also acknowledged that he found his singing to have improved. He observed how he had achieved better lines in his phrases and a better flow in his phonation. He asserted how helpful it was for him to concentrate on other things than just singing beautifully. In my opinion, at that

point Eric was achieving the prerequisites of producing a good sound, instead of searching for a predetermined final result.

We continued exploring the *pressing* quality and I encouraged him to search for a light version of this quality, such as *cutting* or *squeezing*. I asked him to sing while imagining that he was about to gently crack a walnut in a nutcracker – perhaps an impossible task. However, it offered him the resistance I was after, squeezing the juice out of a lemon or cutting away the fascia from the fillet of pork. The idea of squeezing a lemon as well as physically performing the movement, allowed him to apply the right amount of pressure. The voice that was too breathy and seductive at times disappeared, and a greater presence and more resonant voice emerged.

To further explore more of the *pressing* quality, I stood next to him and asked him to resist the pressure as I leaned into him from the side. I exerted pressure by leaning towards him and he pressed back. When I listened to the videorecording afterwards, it was clear how Eric's singing improved in that moment. The flow in the phrase was improved and there was a significant difference in the vibrato, which became more balanced and adapted to the prevailing pitches.

I was curious about two more things. I had the impression that, from time to time, he tried to control the sound with the back of the tongue. The back of the tongue pulled backward and an unnaturally darkened sound occurred. Moreover, this backwards movement of the tongue functioned as a way to compensate for a lack of breath support. In my experience, one can sometimes come across such instead-of-support issues especially among young male voices. Instead of finding a good *appoggio*, an *appoggio della nuca* and a *gola aperta*⁶³ the singer 'supports' his singing partly with the back of the tongue and pharyngeal muscles. In order to rectify this inclination, I asked him to sing while keeping his tongue on a *horizontal plane*. I instructed him to imagine that the tongue was broad in the mouth and almost hovered freely. I asked him to search for a sensation where the sides of the tongue were touching the molars.

⁶³ *gola aperta* – open throat

Unfortunately, I really could not tell whether these strategies had paid off or not, and I decided not to put pressure on him, but to proceed with didactic strategies directed at improving Eric's airflow.

Finally, I wanted to create a visual image of Eric's airflow in his body. I wanted to explore a strategy I had never tried before that involved using movements with my own body. I asked him whether I may stand behind him and move his arms from behind. He looked somewhat hesitant, perhaps being apprehensive of not having control, and I calmly reassured him that he should not be concerned. I stood behind him and took his arms in my hands and explained that I intended to move them in gliding and floating movements. I moved his arms, one moment symmetrically and the next asymmetrically. I explained to him that the intention was a little bit to combine what we had been doing during our lessons, to find a deep core feeling, to have a continuously never-ending flow, one that to a significant extent had some underlying power and directness. To find the underlying simmering power, I reminded him of the *externalised drive*, namely *passion*, that I had briefly mentioned earlier. I also drew a parallel with something I remembered from my childhood. At the time, the Salvation Army was singing outside the department store, collecting money for their charity. They had a money box in the form of a pot with the words *Keep the pot boiling!* written on it. Just as mentioned earlier regarding Eric, I wanted to make a clear distinction between his outer calmness (the pot) and an inner alertness (boiling). When he was asked to find the physical stability and anchoring, he tended to become passive and unenergetic. This was one more imaginative picture that I hoped could serve as an idea for the energy aspect in his singing – a way to find his inner vibrant activity in his body. Even though the outcome was not necessarily convincing, I had the impression that he was gradually gaining a perception of how the inner participation and engagement were essential to his singing and that he could explore that balance further on his own.

In his written feedback, Eric reflects:

"I think the working actions were very clear. However, I have a hard time applying the concept of floating because it feels like I'm just getting slack and unfocused. And I have not grasped slashing yet."

Eric's observations did not exactly surprise me, and I could not agree more with his reflection. As mentioned earlier, I perceived Eric as very light, flexible and sustained already and, contrary to what I had intended, he became even more imprecise and unenergetic in his performance when we stressed these *motion factors*. Furthermore, given his personality, it was also easy to understand that *slashing*, with strong and quick qualities, would be more challenging for him.

In conclusion, my impression of what Eric had gained from our sessions include

- a bigger measure of accessibility to his physical resources when he emphasised a centred body, with a stable and lowered centre point,
- more physical involvement, and an awareness of this, in his singing, by using more contending qualities in the *working actions*, which resulted in an embodied singing and a sound with more *squillo*,
- a more resonant and projective tone occurred when he added the *horizontal plane*,
- a richer and more even airflow when he worked with *pressing* and *wringing*,
- a higher urgency emerged, and an awareness of it, when we added the different *grades of intensity*, and
- clearly-stated, specific conditions – physical as well as mental – with increased energy and inner participation, contributed to freer high notes.

Eva

It was very pleasing to work with the 25-year-old mezzo-soprano, Eva. She was a quick learner and seemed to have a good study technique. Singing seemed to be very natural for Eva and there was an almost seamless connection between her speaking and singing voice. In addition to her good technique and natural talent, her total engagement in the acting and the whole performance was cohesive. Her impulses were clear and organic, she gave the pauses value and dared to hold them and, as a result, her subtexts were evident.

When I asked Eva what she found herself good at, she answered: "I think I am good at singing *coloratura*, and I like my middle register." I found her voice very beautiful and did not fully agree with her perceptions when she complained about a thin higher register in her voice. In my opinion it sounded just lighter in a most natural way. I often use the image of a rubber band to explain the different colours in a singer's voice in various registers. Just as the colour of the band gets lighter as it stretches, so does the voice. However, it is still blue or red, but just another shade of the colour. Eva had previously been criticized by some teachers for being very thorough and not spontaneous enough. However, contrary to those teachers, I very much appreciated how well prepared she was, while simultaneously being able to easily adapt to innovative ideas and strategies.

After many years of teaching, I have found that one of the most sensitive or challenging teaching situations is how to work with someone when there are apparently no obvious problems. The reason may be that the student has come a long way in their development, often by working arduously to solve specific voice problems. But it can also be because the student is a more natural singer, with very limited physical tension. In the latter case, the student's technical awareness may not be so significant. It might then be necessary for a voice pedagogue to also take into consideration how deep the technical awareness needs to be when everything already seems to work so well. Regardless of the reason for the high standard of the singer, it is the responsibility of the voice pedagogue to add the next step in the development of the singer. In my opinion, in such cases it can be more demanding and challenging to find the most suitable didactic strategies to move forward, as compared to correcting tensions and releasing an inflexible voice. These were things I took into consideration when I worked with Eva, since I found her level of performance remarkably high. However, there were some things I wanted to explore with her and see how she might improve.

I intended to see whether she might

- improve her legato singing,
- sing with a more even volume in the whole register,
- improve her higher register,

- enhance her physical connection to her singing, and
- enrich and enlarge her voice.

The first song we worked on was Britten's *Sally Gardens*. After she had sung the song, we proceeded to work on improving the legato singing required for this song and to find a smoother, more organically adapted volume. Eva had a habit to, unconsciously, push the high notes. At first, we worked with *gliding*, but gradually we increased the weight quality and got into a *pressing* quality. I asked her to perform *gliding* movements with her arms while singing and to perceive a physical sensation by, for example, stroking one hand over the other arm. The next step was to make the *gliding* movements freely in the air. I asked her to imagine painting a large wall with a large brush from left to right. In addition to finding the *gliding* character, I thought to remove the feeling of different pitches by working with the arm in a *horizontal plane*. Finally, we removed the movements and Eva's singing beautifully reflected her previous movements, sounding smooth and soft. She was also more pleased with what she was doing and, afterwards, was able to concentrate more on how to express and colour the words, regardless of the pitch. The things with which we experimented were easy for her to grasp. Working with *gliding* and *pressing* qualities helped her to focus on the phrasing and resulted in improved legato singing. As I listened to her, I also observed how the high pitches seemed to 'beam downwards' more, instead of sounding as if they were being pushed upwards.

Furthermore, to maintain an underlying energy for the sustained high notes, we envisioned them being broken up into shorter values for the notes, as a way to constantly achieve a re-birth of the voice and to keep the energy alive. To further find the right amount of energy necessary for the high pitches, I encouraged her to experiment with *thrusting*, the derivation of *punching*. "Haha," she laughed, "that was so easy now!" "Yes, it sounded...and moreover...it *looked* so effortless now," I replied.

Since I got the impression that Eva tended to get stuck on the high notes, almost stopping and 'watching the view', I used the same strategy as I did with Evelyn, namely suggesting that Eva imagines a duck gliding easily on the surface of the water, while working very energetically with its legs under the water. The goal was for this image to

illustrate the need for effective physical work in order to achieve a freer and more stable phonation. First, we worked with a descending movement in *vertical plane*, almost like doing squats, combined with a *pressing working action*, and then, only imagining the same movement while singing. In my opinion, these didactic strategies clearly improved the body-voice connection. I asked Eva to describe what her experience was when using this strategy and she stated: "I observe how much more connected I am to my body now. I like.... feel another awareness of it." I observed that it was obvious how much better her singing had become in terms of balance and flow. The higher register sounded richer, but still slender.

The second piece Eva and I worked on was *Una voce poco fa* from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* by Rossini. While Eva's first rendition of this aria was already performed brilliantly, I felt that it was still my responsibility to explore whether something could be improved. I perceived the sustained notes in the high and middle register as being less free, and the voice also tended to start to wobble slightly on these notes. As in the previous piece, we worked with a combination of the *externalised drive doing* (imagining *doing* in a descending *vertical plane*) and a *pressing working action*. We worked with the squats and the rocking of the Rabbi, mentioned in Chapter Six (6.4 Singing combined with movement). Eva again noticed how her body connected in a more noticeable way and how the sound instantly became more embodied. Since her background was very much in classical ballet, these movements also increased her gravitation more than the levitation to which she obviously was used. In addition, a reminder about the release of the abdominal wall at the end of the phrases helped her significantly in the sense that she completely released those muscles and achieved a naturally lowered larynx.

Eva and I were both pleased with the audible result. Her voice sounded slender and more balanced, and we went on to her *coloratura* singing. We experimented with different ways of performing the *coloratura* passages. Eva sang them first legato and then *martellato* (detached and strongly accented), and we discussed the various qualities. We noticed that it was hard to be in charge and sing precisely when she performed them legato and, on the other hand, it easily became a slower tempo, and more breath was needed with the *martellato*. We also agreed that the individual tempi

in a *coloratura* piece vary greatly from one artist to another. Now, when she had various options of performing the *coloratura* passages, I encouraged her to experiment further on her own.

It is my opinion that the didactic strategy that most changed Eva's singing involved singing in *sagittal plane*. Initially, I had assumed that the voice had already reached its full potential because it sounded rich and resonant and already carried a balanced *chiaroscuro* quality. However, when she retired in *sagittal plane*, in combination with keeping the [u] vowel in mind along with the shape of the mouth (suitably rounded for the vowel), her voice grew and matured in a most obvious way. Eva was pleased and noticed how big the voiced sounded. The other participants also indicated that they had noticed a huge difference and expressed it in terms of "a richer, bigger sound". We all agreed that this strategy resulted in an increase in both volume and resonance. Above all, Eva thought that the *three planes* held huge dividends for her. In her written reflection she describes how she obviously had worked with similar ideas before but had "never thought/expressed the feeling/words in that way".

"What is so interesting when you work with singing technique is how radically your way of singing can change as long as you choose to express one and the same idea in other words. All of a sudden you understand what an exercise is about or how to sing the exercise best. It was inspiring to hear about new concepts and think in new ways. Several seeds have definitely been sown in my brain and my system and I will therefore take these concepts with me to the rehearsal room!"

The last session with Eva was in the masterclass where all three singers participating in this research study attended. During this masterclass, Eva and I worked on *Er, der Herrlichste von allen* from *Frauenliebe und Leben* by Schumann. Eva's own reflection was that her singing here was a bit shaky and she showed acute insight when asked what could be improved. She stated that one could be helped by "a great phrasing mindset". I agreed totally and recommended that she attempts to achieve longer phrases and bother less about the details. To work further towards a linear approach, we decided that she would try to perform with a light version of the *pressing working action*, namely *cutting*. I suggested the idea that she might imagine cutting butter that was taken directly from the fridge.

Eva (smiling): "Oh, I loved that idea! It was really useful."

Catherine: "I like this with pressing, but I think much more about it being sustained, more than that it is called pressing. That's what I like about it...I think it helps in many contexts."

Bo: "Perhaps it depends on what kind of singer or person in general you are...this song is a good example of how fast the working actions can and must change in a song to make it alive and authentic."

We continued with an interesting discussion how, in Swedish, we easily associate the word *press* with a voice that is too strained and forced, and how bad such a perception obviously is for singing. In this context however, we agreed that the appropriate perception of *pressing* supplied the right amount of energy.

Eva further claimed that her worst tone in this song was when she sang the f^2 -flat. Eva's claim made perfect sense to me since that is where the second *passaggio* lies for most mezzo-sopranos. The note was on the word *Wahl*. We worked with a variation of the *punching* working action, namely *thrusting*. I asked her to imagine that she was thrusting a stick into a waterfilled balloon when she sang the specific note. She smiled when she heard the distinct quality in her voice when she executed this action and explained how much more comfortable it had felt. Eva, like so many other participants in this study, is guided by audible perceptions of her own voice, perceptions based on what she hears when she sings. When explaining how it felt, she constantly came back to being "comfortable" as a criterion for good singing. I shared my observation that she often refers to a comfortable feeling when I hear her performing with a good sound quality. I asked her whether that is how she normally conducts her singing.

"Yes, I am guided by the grade of comfort very much. I feel that my body is engaged and works in a good way and the source to the sound is... like, far down in me."

Finally, we went back to the beginning of this song to consider other details in the song. We discussed the importance of the dotted notes, emphasising them by applying *poking*, *stabbing*, or *thrusting* qualities. We also highlighted how effective these dotted notes could be, along with other musical aspects such as the ornaments, in order to illustrate the young woman's infatuation and passion. We worked with the vowel [u]

and how to articulate it with a higher back position of the tongue, thereby creating more resonance. We considered what was written in the piano part and how to adjust to that and we discussed and experimented with going from *bound flow* to *free flow* of the breath, as well as with using breathiness in softer parts as a way of expression. We also practised really lodging the breathing within in her where that aspect was appropriate. I told her that I had noticed that she (like Evelyn) sometimes mixed up the posture with the breathing and we clarified a distinction between the two. While working on this song, I realized again that it is not necessary to always employ didactic strategies that relate to the LMT. The wonder of being a voice pedagogue is that one can use different strategies to facilitate the technical proficiency of a singer.

Eva explained that she enjoyed alternating the three quite diverse ways of working (workshop, individual lesson and masterclass). She declared how a masterclass is always the one where she learns the most. I also observed how actively she participated and observed what happened with the other singers as well. It was evident that she appreciated their input on her singing.

Eva expresses in her written reflection that she found the distinction between *dabbing* and *flicking* most difficult. However, as is evident in her written reflection, she found the new tools to be especially useful as a diversion from obsessing about the tricky parts of the music. She claims how, by thinking *gliding* or singing in *vertical plane*, she had managed to avoid getting tense or becoming static.

“The various parameters we learned can be transferred to both musical analysis as well as acting and singing technique and I realized after some thought that it is probably very easy to be able to combine these as an opera singer. In the past, I probably separated them. Next time I study an aria, I will try to choose the weight, time, and space that I think agrees with both the music and my perception of who the person is. Based on that, it may be a voice that interacts with what I came up with earlier. So, I would like to see if I can get any of the points to be seen, felt, and heard in a role.”

I observed the following results from working with Eva:

- The *gliding* and *pressing* (*cutting*) improved her legato, the phrasing and balanced the volume in her singing,
- Imagining descending in *vertical plane*, in combination with *pressing*, increased her gravitation and embodied the singing, as well as contributed to a greater presence in the sound,
- The use of thrusting actions on some of the higher pitches gave a clear impulse and removed any unnecessary load on the vocal folds,
- Singing in a *sagittal plane* drastically improved her resonance and intensity of sound.

Catherine

In her written reflection, Catherine wrote:

“When I was asked to take part in this research, I had a small idea of what I needed to take my singing technique to a new level. After reading about the work that we were going to do, I saw an opportunity to explore a new way of thinking and perhaps come even closer to understanding what is needed for my voice and my body. Through this research, we have been able to immerse ourselves not only in technique to a greater depth but also to examine how useful it can be in our profession. In addition to what we have learned in our education, I took the opportunity to read a little more before our first meeting. I feel that I can take in information better if I have already become acquainted with the subject.”

Catherine, who has a light soprano voice, was the last singer with whom I had the pleasure to work in Stockholm. Interestingly, Catherine had a background as a musical theatre singer and had received her training in New York. I explained to her that, upon meeting singers for the first time, I usually ask singers what they think they are good at. When I posed this question to her, we engaged in a very interesting conversation.

Catherine: “What I think I am good at?”

Bo (after a long break): “Well, we are quite good at knowing what we can’t and what we lack, don’t we?”

Catherine (nodding): “I find it easy to go between my different registers.”

Bo: “Can you think of anything else?”

Catherine: "I think I sing natural. I don't put on anything. And I'm also good at singing cross-over music."

Bo: "And what do you think you have to improve to become an attractive singer out there?"

Catherine: "I have worked a lot with my teacher to get down into the body, to get an anchored a bigger sound...and also freedom of voice. I already have a fast vibrato, but when I get tense, it becomes very, very fast."

Bo: "Is it like that in the whole voice or mostly in the highest register?"

Catherine: "In the higher register."

I explained that I sometimes find myself noticing how singers, and often also voice pedagogues, sometimes confuse getting into the body – involving anchored and well-supported physical work – with singing with 'body' in the voice. I perceive the latter to aim at achieving a rich, resonant and balanced sound which is achieved by means of favourable conditions in the pharyngeal muscles and vocal tract. Attempts to 'get into the body' with the intention and striving to intensify the physical work can often result in a hard and tense abdominal wall and a false external support. It frequently also affects the vocal folds' function. "I think that's what I'm doing," Catherine claimed. "My abdominal musculature is very tense." I pointed out how badly that could affect one's singing and she smiled in recognition. I then asked her: "Is there anything else that you are less satisfied with?" She thought for a long time, and I said smilingly: "Well, we don't have to look for something that is not there."

After having heard her reflections about her singing and gradually formed my own opinion (also based on what she did in the workshop the lesson before), I concluded the appropriate areas to try and improve were

- finding more roundness and warmth in her voice,
- improve the intonation,
- reduce the air pressure,
- release the abdominal wall tension, and
- raise the musicality standard in general.

Catherine began her lesson by singing *Je veux vivre*, Juliette's aria from *Romeo et Juliette* by Gounod. Her first rendition of the aria was already particularly good. I asked her what she wanted to improve in this work, and she replied that she should sing it off by heart because "I get so crazy many more impulses then." I offered her my opinion by telling her that I had heard particularly good *coloratura* passages, skilful register blending and a musicality that partially contributed to a vibrant performance. What I missed however, was – as she had earlier also noted herself – a roundness instead of the intense, twangy and pressed phonation. There was also a need for better intonation.

We started working with the *sagittal plane* and I instructed her to explore movements in the body, such as tightening a bow, or imagining the feeling of a big, warm Mediterranean wave washing over her. We also tried having her walk backwards, in combination with a feeling that her arms and hands acted as if they were gesturing to someone to come to her, or as if she were rolling the notes towards her. First, she tried in silence and then while singing. When I asked her what she thought of the 'new' quality in her voice, her reaction was that there was less *ping* in it. However, I personally liked the change in her vocal quality very much and I explained that I had observed a more balanced *chiaroscuro* in her voice. The singing became more effortless and had more roundness.

I further encouraged her to connect the [u] to her singing (in combination with retiring in *sagittal plane*), so the first phrase sounded something like *Ju vu vuvru*. It sounded silly and she started laughing: "Hahaha, this was tricky for the brain!" We agreed however, that the result had much more of the quality after which we were, namely a balanced *chiaroscuro*.

I mentioned that I perceived her singing in general to be too effective – almost contrived, with a lack of roundness and sincerity. Her tone quality was one that seemed to strengthen the higher formants too much, while it lacked a bit of the lower formants. We discussed her musical theatre background and she claimed that she had worked significantly with the twang quality characteristic of this style. I said that, while she was singing, I had observed an oral twang and sometimes also a nasal twang. However, I

claimed that it also depends not only on how we use the instrument, but also how we are built, and also on the traces of sociolects⁶⁴ that surround us. I reminded her of the concept known as *chiaroscuro* once again – one with which she was familiar – and used a shuttlecock as a metaphor to explain this concept. The red rubber knob is the core, the projection of the sound, the *chiaro*, while the white part, especially in the old-fashioned badminton balls with real feathers, is the *oscuro*. We experimented with different percentages of the sagittal [u], but at this point she needed to exaggerate quite a bit to move away from her habit of getting too tight and bright. Catherine writes in her reflection: "Singing an aria with only [u] as the vowel, gave a completely new colour and a completely different space in the body for the voice."

We changed focus. I asked her what *working action* she wanted to use in, for example bar 15–17 of the aria (see Fig. 8.1 on the next page) and she suggested *flicking* or *dabbing*. We decided to start by trying *flicking*. She sang it while simultaneously performing some movements with her right hand; movements that looked like arrogant and nonchalant movements someone might make – as if she was snapping at someone curious too close to the nose with her fingers. The outcome was more rhythmical singing, a *Juliette* with more attitude and character and, moreover, perfect intonation.

⁶⁴ Sociolect is a linguistic variation that characterises a social group unlike dialect that refers to a regionally delimited variation.

Tempo

ff

ff

dim.

Ah! _____
Ah! _____

p

Je veux vi - vre Dans le
In my fai - ry dream lù

pp

rê - ve qui mèn - i - vre
rev - el, Gay and air - y,

cresc.

Example 8.1: *Ah! Je veux vivre*. Juliette's aria from *Romeo et Juliette* by Gounod.

Moving to another section in the aria, I asked her: "And what about the chromatic descending movement in bar 8-10?" She closed her eyes and spun around limply and replied: "*Floating*, yes I think *floating*." My response to her answer was to ask her whether she had "noticed the accents over every note...Is it possible these are micro

punches?" I asked. Catherine agreed and I asked her to place an imaginary balloon in front of her and a needle in her hand and prick the balloon on every accented note. I can see on the video, as I did not notice during the lesson, how she varies with one hand or uses both and perforates the balloon. "So, do you think there was any difference?" I asked her, and she gave me a big smile as an answer. My own observation was that her musical phrasing, along with the exact details, gave a much more specific and less general expression and I explained how this is how renowned artists do it – they leave nothing to chance. Catherine looked happy and flattered to be compared to them. However, we observed how the music changed in bar 11–14 and decided that that required perceptions of *gliding* qualities.

We compared the *flicking* she did in bar 15–17 of this aria, with the example I had shown in the PowerPoint during the introductory lecture, namely Piaf's famous *Padam*. I asked Catherine why she thinks Gounod had chosen to use these *acciaccaturas*⁶⁵ here in these bars. I found her answer intriguing. "I remember from school how we learned a distinction between *je veux* – I want [*Indicatif présent*]⁶⁶ and *je voudrais* – I would like [*conditionnel présent*]," she stated. She explained how the first one was very much like how a child would express himself, while the latter was a more polite way of formulating the phrase. I agreed that this was also what I remembered from my French lessons many years ago.

Bo: "So you think that entitles the flicking?"

Catherine: "Yes, I think that it is in line with Juliette's direct and almost naïve way of expressing herself at this point and that justifies the quality."

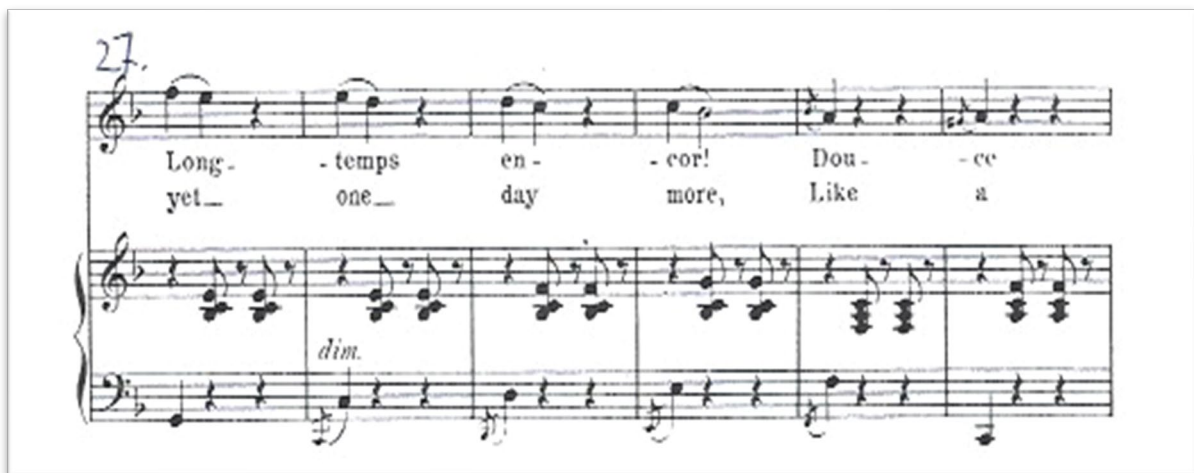
The first page of this aria contains a lot of useful information that one could easily transform into Laban-Malmgren terminology. We developed, for example, the pattern that occurs in bar 15–16 and I asked her not to breathe when there are rests, but to stop her breath momentarily and then go on to sing the note that follows the rest. I

⁶⁵ *Acciaccatura* is a small grace note, one note higher or lower than the principal note. It is performed rapidly just before the head note.

⁶⁶ The verb forms in brackets are the authors comments.

introduced the expression *portare la voce*⁶⁷ which was new to Catherine, and I invited her to have the phrase in mind, even when she stopped the sound in between the notes. My idea was to explore whether she could find a higher intensity in her expression and, in addition, whether fewer, but more thorough breathings, might contribute to a better release of the abdominal musculature. Catherine experienced this way of breathing as less stressful, and I asserted that the character of Juliette sounded more in charge and sexier this way. I pointed out to Catherine that "[n]ow it sounds as if you are keeping us on the leash" (keeping us guessing). Catherine agreed and claimed that her perception was that she sounded more confident.

As mentioned earlier, I had observed that Catherine was sometimes a little bit out of tune. I wanted to investigate whether the intonation could be improved by employing didactic strategies based on the LMT. I drew her attention to the intonation and explained how easy it is to take steps that are too small on ascending melodies and the opposite, too big steps on descending phrases.



Example 8.2: Bar 27–32 of the aria *Ah! Je veux vivre*.

To demonstrate my statement, I referred to bars 27–32 (Fig. 8.2) and shared my observation that she tends to become flat when she sings descending passages. I

⁶⁷ *Portare la voce*: to carry the voice.

asked her to gently lean with her hands against the wall and smoothly apply a *pressing* quality as the phrase was descending. We also observed that the three first nasalised vowels and the vowel in bar 30 were all back vowels and required a higher position of the back tongue in order to be better tuned. The use of all these didactic strategies improved her intonation and we were both satisfied with the result.



Example 8.3: Bar 69–78 of the aria *Ah! Je veux vivre*.

When Catherine performed bar 73–75 of the aria, she tended to slow down the tempo and increase the volume. I asked her to act more robotlike and just sing these bars while maintaining the same tempo. "Let me quote the swimming trainer," I said, "who asks the swimmer to swim all the way into the tile." I suggested that she would sing the phrase while imagining the *gliding* quality and in advancing *sagittal plane*, even accelerating a bit. The result was agility in the phrasing in general, with a slender tone on the top instead of the upside-down Eiffel tower, which was the impression of the sound that she created in the first version. "Good, good, good!" I praised her and stated that it sounded so easy and balanced. Catherine explained: "I can do that very well when I am practising myself but as soon as I do it with a pianist, I stop myself." I asked

if it could be because she involuntarily wanted to prove or account for something, and she responded that maybe that was so. I commanded her in a friendly manner: "However, henceforth you shall always sing that as a playful fairy, just as you did now, do you promise?" And so, she did.

In the last part of the lesson Catherine and I concentrated on *La Maja y el Ruiseñor* from Granados's *Goyescas*. While working with Catherine, I gradually noted her tendency to sing as if producing small sound-sausages. She replied: "Yes, I have had that comment earlier...it's like I start over all the time." I suggested that she sings with a soft *pressing* quality, asking her to imagine that she was cutting into fresh bread. I pointed out that this action involves a continuous movement all the time. She took the suggestion and, subsequently, a more even sound was produced. I explained that

"sometimes, I think, one is too musical for one's own good. I think you want to be so expressive that you lose some basics. You have to trust that the music is already there, and you are more like a channel for it. [Imagine that] you are sitting in a boat, and you need to create neither boat nor water. Your job is to follow the river."

When Catherine referred to the suggested image while she sang, it sounded even and beautiful. I asked her how she felt about that rendition, and she claimed: "I liked what came out!" I read in her reflection:

"I have learned that my voice has a rather uneven flow. The flow is like small waves or like small restarts on each new note instead of a smooth long line that lasts through an entire phrase. In this case, we have used actions such as 'pressing'. With these actions in mind, there is a clearer sense of line through the phrases. We could use a wall to push against, pretend to pull a rope or lean. I felt that with this approach I was able to maintain a steady flow throughout the phrase. Although it requires a new type of effort, I have noticed that in the long run it requires less energy because "restarting" the voice before each tone actually requires an unnecessary amount of energy that is not used efficiently."

During the masterclass Catherine sang *Tutte le feste* from Verdi's *Rigoletto* and we worked with very much the same things as we had done during her individual lessons. I encouraged her to let go of the intensity and embrace the softness in the sound. I

also reminded her about keeping an even air flow and to resist the impulse to sing crescendo on the high notes. Consequently, Catherine became aware of her vocal patterns and how to adjust them to different situations. In my opinion her singing became very much in line with the vulnerable and fragile Gilda in the scene where she has a confidential conversation with her father. Eric and Eva gave Catherine positive feedback and praised her way of singing. I personally observed a substantial change in Catherine's performance. It was now a vocal performance that brought out her personality and timbre and she manage to depict Gilda's vulnerability in an authentic way. Catherine ends her written reflection by writing that she has

"continued to use these two tools – singing in a sagittal plane and using variations of the pressing – and I see a big noticeable difference in my singing technique."

After having worked with Catherine, I observed that she had found

- more roundness and warmth by singing with *sagittal plane* in mind,
- improved intonation by a greater awareness of it, in combination with a maintained energy in less energetic music,
- a less pressed phonation by stressing the airflow more than air pressure and by allowing the abdominal wall to release properly in the breathing,
- a more even phonation with less effort by using *gliding* and *pressing*,
- a significantly improved musicianship by specific choices regarding different qualities in different musical phrases.

CHAPTER 9: SECOND ROUND OF DATA COLLECTION: TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN SWEDEN

9.1 Introduction

After having transcribed, processed and reflected on the data collected in the first round at each institution, it was time for the second and concluding round in my data collection. As was the case in the previous two chapters, the focus of the data collection still related to the sub-question:

How do the singers who are involved in this study respond to the use of the didactic strategies based on the principles of the LMT?

The work with the participants was intended to take place in two long group sessions at each institution. I decided to work only with the whole group and not to present individual lessons, since the participants at all the research sites were very positive about the group sessions during the first round of data collection. Their written reflections, as well as my observations of the teaching and learning experiences during those master classes, indicated that several of them had found these experiences to be the most conducive to their vocal development. Furthermore, the participants had contributed significantly to my study during the previous group lessons and I noticed, especially when I watched the videos afterwards, lots of comments and non-verbal signals from them that were very insightful. Furthermore, I found justification for my decision to change my approach after having conducted the first round of data collection according to Whitehead's and McNiff's five steps in participatory action research (PAR); they describe the action research cycle in terms of observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating and modifying, and then moving "in new directions" (Choo, 2018).

During the second visits to the research sites, my intention was to continue working on the aspects of the participants' technique that we had not yet explored. During the two sessions of the second round of data collection we would further explore the four

externalised drives, introduce the *mental factors*, the *inner attitudes*, the *inner quests* and, finally, discuss the *shadow moves* a little more.

In addition to introducing and experimenting with these new didactic strategies, I was also curious to follow up the participants' reflections on the previous round of teaching and learning experiences. I wanted to know whether and how they had continued working with the techniques on their own after I had met them in the first round.

I knew in advance that the exploration and introduction of new concepts would produce a lot of information for the participants to process, but throughout my study I always kept Laban's words in mind when he encouraged people to pick what they wanted from his work and to make it their own (Hodgson, 2001:236). I knew I would have to encourage the participants to take the same approach when processing the information offered during the contact sessions. At the same time, I also recalled Malmgren's own words when, in an interview with Berggren (2016), he pointed out that it took three years just to "understand the technique". However, while I remained aware of Hodgson's and Malmgren's claims throughout the whole study, I felt brave (and perhaps foolhardy) enough to experiment with as many strategies as I could.

9.1.1 Preparation for the second round of data collection

I had prepared a PowerPoint presentation (see 6.7 in Chapter Six) to share with the participants at all the research sites in the same way as I had during the previous visits. The purpose of this presentation was to enable the participants to clearly visualise the content of the upcoming sessions. As mentioned above, I intended for us to explore the four *externalised drives*, introduce the *mental factors*, the *inner attitudes* and *inner quests*, as well as to gain some insight into *shadow moves*.

The *externalised drives* had been introduced briefly during my previous visits to the research sites (see 5.2.5 in Chapter Five), but during the second round of data collection I intended to scrutinize them a bit more closely. In the PowerPoint presentation I had pictures (see Chapter Six) that illustrated the *externalised drives*. As mentioned earlier (see Figure 5.4 in Chapter Five) the four *externalised drives* form

the roots of the tree, and they nurture the *inner attitudes*. They act to stimulate an expressive action. An *externalised drive* consists of three *motion factors* and, consequently, the actions are more intense. In my study I wanted to explore in what way these *externalised drives* and *motion factors* might affect the participants' singing in terms of vocal quality. I also wanted to understand how the *externalised drives*, along with the relevant *motion factors*, could affect the participants' musical expression. Since, by then, the participants were used to working with *Amor vincit omnia*, I decided to use this song again during the second round of data collection. The participants had no knowledge of the song before having sung it during the first round and, as a result, it could be used for different purposes that fit the intended exercises.

To make the *externalised drives* even clearer, I wanted to give obvious examples in an operatic context of characters driven by specific *externalised drives*. I suggested that, for example, the doll, Olympia, in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* by Offenbach was a good example of the *externalised drive* known as *doing*. One could argue that both Carmen and Don José in *Carmen* by Bizet, as well as Floria Tosca in *Tosca* by Puccini, are 'nurtured' by the *externalised drive*, *passion*. *Spell* as *externalised drive* is evident in Mephisto, a character in *Faust* by Gounod. While Mephisto depicts a dominating *spell*, another form of *spell*, namely a surrendering *spell*, can be found in Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart, specifically in the scene where Papageno uses his magic *Glockenspiel* and Monostatos is hypnotised by it. Finally, one can argue that *vision* is found in Sarastro, also in *Die Zauberflöte*. Sarastro is a high priest in a brotherhood and his vision is to make Tamino a better person by putting him through various trials. The *externalised drives* are able to function partly in the same way as the *grades of intensity* and, as such, I anticipated that the *externalised drives* could vary in the degree of commitment, as well as in the type of energy and intensity. I wanted to explore in what way these drives and factors might nurture the musical and technical qualities of the participants' performances. I planned on investigating whether

- (or how) singers, by using *doing*, would act more objectively, flowlessly and without feeling – almost mechanically – and, as a result, sing better, instead of creating their own physical and emotional obstacles,

- *passion* could increase the singer's energy and, consequently, inform aspects such as stage presence, legato, airflow and vocal fold closure. I planned, for example, on experimenting with a singer who is acting passionately (as if the passion is one feature in him), or if he personifies the passion.
- using *spell* could affect the singer's flow, the vocal openness and freedom, or the stage presence and musical expression. I planned on investigating the development of the vocal and musical proficiency of a singer who used *spell* as a dominating or surrendering drive, and
- the *externalised drive, vision* might affect the singer who is too direct and lack flexibility; a singer who needs to improve a more internal participation or who uses a phonation that it is too pressed.

As mentioned in Chapter Five (5.2.5 Externalised drives), Laban (2011:22) states that the physical movement creates a mood, an inner attitude and Fettes (2015:265) recalls Malmgren telling him that “[e]ach inner attitude is a progression of ‘a want’”. While a *working action* is a movement of the body, performed by *motion factors*, an *inner attitude* is also related to the four *mental factors*. I planned on briefly mentioning these factors to the participants in order to prepare them for the *inner attitudes*. My intention was to explain how *sensing* is a sensory perception by the five senses, how *thinking* is an intellectual reflective reasoning, how *intuiting* is a mental insight, without any input of reasoning and, finally, how emotions and values relate to the *mental factor* known as *feeling* (Jung, 1993:18).

From personal experience, I know that it takes considerable time to understand and to embody the practice. I have to admit that, as I was preparing for the second round of data collection, I was concerned about how to explain, clarify and work with the *inner attitudes*, because they are difficult to fully understand. Hayes (2010:31) states that the *inner attitudes*, based on two *motion factors* and two *mental factors*, can be considered as forming a typology. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, an *inner attitude* represents a character's mode of dealing with or relating to the reality. It is a determined manner of thinking and feeling to perceive that reality. The *inner attitude* functions both as a way to conceive a character, but also as a way to perceive a character (Hayes, 2010:150; Mirodan, 2015; Nordin, 2017).

Being aware that the concepts on which this round of data collection are challenging, I decided to try and radically simplify the way in which I explained them and to find didactic strategies that might inform the participants' understanding of the concepts as much as possible. Furthermore, I again allowed myself to be guided by Laban's exhortation that people should take what they could from his work and to make it their own (Hodgson 2001:236). I planned on guiding the participants through the *inner attitudes* by explaining how these attitudes relate to a more or less established way of human thinking and feeling in certain situations, and also how they relate to individual people. The purpose was also to help the participants to understand how these attitudes could facilitate the actor's choices on stage.

Even though the purpose of my study was not to investigate a singer's work while preparing or performing an operatic character, I wanted to explore in what way the *inner attitudes* advocated by the Laban-Malmgren technique could affect the singer's technical and musical proficiency. In the PowerPoint presentation I used the generalised labels invented by Mirodan (2019:125) and I aimed to give as concise a description of every *inner attitude* as possible (see PowerPoint in Chapter Five).

As I was planning the practical work, I decided that I would want to emphasise very clearly how intricate and complex I personally have found the *inner attitudes* to be. I acknowledged this complexity, since I know how my own understanding of the subject could affect the participants' comprehension, and my intention was to encourage the participants to be both patient and brave. To further reduce any stress, I aspired to create a permissive and generous teaching and learning atmosphere. I planned to underline how everything was deserving of consideration and that nothing would be 'wrong' in the exercise we were going to do, namely perform a monologue. Just as Malmgren had been inspired by the monologist Ruth Draper (see Chapter Two), using her monologues in his work with his students (Mirodan, 2015), I was inspired by Malmgren. I wrote a very short monologue for the participants to use during the first session. The intention was to use this monologue to explore different possibilities for expressions of the various *inner attitudes*. The monologue reads as follows:

Hello, I am xxx. I am your new teacher. Today we shall talk about something important, namely, *how to raise children*. It's important to be strict and kind at the same time. If the child doesn't obey, you are not allowed to spank them, of course, but you must rebuke them harshly and firmly. Me, myself, I have 14 children and they are all just like angels. Any questions?

Despite the limited time the participants had for processing the new knowledge, my intention was to ask them all to act out this little mini monologue while applying all six different *inner attitudes*. I was interested in observing whether they could grasp the concepts and looked forward to observing whether each one could find his or her own way of expressing the six attitudes. In the same way that I had chosen to begin by working only with spoken text in the first round, I anticipated that, with the *inner attitudes*, it also would be the best way to introduce this part of the technique. Consequently, the participants did not have to be concerned about phonation, pitch or rhythm, but could concentrate solely on the expression in the spoken words.

According to the LMT, the four *inner quests*, which Malmgren later developed into the ten questions listed in Chapter Five, are largely based on Stanislavski's method of acting. In my experience, Stanislavski's method for training (or the various branches of the method developed by educators such as Strasberg, Adler and Meisner, actors and singers) is often used in tertiary operatic training at institutions such as American and British drama schools (Strandberg-Long, 2018:11). That was also the impression I had after my first visits to these institutions and, therefore, I anticipated that this part of the technique would be easier and quicker for the participants to understand. Besides, I personally have the perception that working according to the principles based on Stanislavski's system is relatively easy to understand – even for an untrained actor or singer.

Lastly, I intended to introduce the concept of *shadow moves*. At some institutions I had briefly mentioned them during the first round of data collection, but this time I wanted to be sure that the participants all had a precise idea of what *shadow moves* implied and how they could be used. As mentioned in Chapter 4.2.4, a *shadow move* can contribute significantly to a singer's performance. It can work as a conscious choice

with which to produce certain effects, but it is possible for a singer to unconsciously, or subconsciously perform such *shadow moves*. Personally, I have used a lot of *shadow moves* in my own performance of operatic characters, not least when depicting comic roles. A nervous hand picking at one's clothes, an unsteady look with fluttering eyes, restrained anger or impatience that manifests in small movements, for example, the twitching corner of the mouth or a constantly tapping hand. *Shadow moves* like these can bring a lot to the character.



Photo 9.1: Imagining a shadow move.

While it is difficult to illustrate a *shadow move* in a photo, the one above is one I used in my PowerPoint presentation as a visual image of a shadow move. It is easy to imagine the terrified boy making shadow moves by fluttering his eyes, giving a nervous smile or performing nervous uncontrolled hand movements.

Finally, my plan was to give all the participants some homework for the second session. I wanted them to choose an opera aria and, according to what they had learned and experimented with, choose the character's *inner attitude* when performing the aria during the second session. In addition, I planned on sending them the PowerPoint presentation so that they could go back and look at the different slides while preparing. When the two sessions at each institution were done, I would send them a questionnaire to find out about each and everyone's experiences.

Please reflect freely or use the questions below to formulate your answers.

- 1) Which of the above-mentioned tools in this second round did you find useful, and in what way (please be as specific as you can)?
- 2) What did you find difficult or not useful at all, and if so, why?
- 3) How did you like to work in group lessons in the second round?
- 4) Compared to the first round (working actions, the planes, grades of intensity), was this second round more or less useful?
- 5) What do you think could have been done differently in the second round or in the overall research?
- 6) What has been the best, most useful or developing part of this whole study?
- 7) What has been the least rewarding part of the whole study?
- 8) What is, according to you, left of the LMT in your singing, when this study has now ended?
- 9) Has anyone around you observed or commented on any improvement you think you have achieved during the study?
- 10) Would you like to add something?

9.2 Academy of Music and Drama University of Gothenburg (UGOT)

9.2.1 First session

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, I was eager to hear more about the participants' reflections since we last met. Therefore, the **first session** started with a short discussion about whether they had had any experiences now that they had worked on their own for some months after the first round of data collection. I asked them if they had had time to work with the technique. Susan started by saying: "I used a lot the actions...how can I say...I don't remember the words." I encouraged her to use her own words and not to be deterred by whether the terminology was right or not. She continued: "I used a lot of the wheel" and showed a retiring movement with her arms in a *sagittal plane*.

"When I wanted...how can I say, when I wanted something quick to put me in...like to jump into some easiness instead of pushing too hard, it helped me by creating a feeling and an image. I also used a lot of what we did with the clothing on the piano in order to get the right flow and legato. And also, dabbing was very useful when I worked with Adele's aria."

Rebecca had also worked with the technique in mind.

"What I started to use, when I needed to find the right place for the sound, I always experimented with the planes, to find a comfortable way of singing. Yeah, this is how I do it. Specially the horizontal with the [i] works really, really great! This is actually how I managed to do the *Cenerentola* because I was."

She demonstrated an [i] position with her mouth and reenforced with her hands, as if she would draw the corner of the mouth away with her thumbs, while saying "hmm yeah! Literally I did that!".

Rebecca had recently taken part in a production with scenes from *La Cenerentola* and she received much praise for her singing there. She continued: "And also like this", she moved her arms in a big wheel in front of her, saying

"when I sang *coloraturas*, because I was like...something is wrong! Maybe I should try this...and it worked! It was really, really good! And for someone who has never done anything like that on a stage... so, this is how I managed to do it. So, I took what I found was important and useful for me."

It was pleasing to hear that they had found their ways to pick strategies from their new toolboxes.

Evelyn also claimed: "I was thinking of shadow moves, as I have one right now." We all noticed how one of her legs was moving rhythmically. She shared her experiences with the rest of the group, admitting that

“since we started these lessons I’ve been like super attentive to them [the *shadow moves*]. It’s like, ok I’m moving my hand now, and...ok...now I’m not. All of a sudden, I’m noticing all these little movements. Damn it. Why am I doing it?”

I asked Evelyn whether she thought her awareness of the *shadow moves* causes her stress or whether she thought it perhaps helped in some way. She answered that it was a little bit of both. I told the participants that I personally am often shocked when I see a recording of myself speaking to others (especially during this data-collecting period when so much of what I am doing was recorded). I have noticed in these recordings I have so many movements in my arms and head. When I demonstrated how exaggeratedly I spoke and shook my head excessively, Susan confirmed with some delight: "Yes that's exactly what you do!" and Evelyn interjected smilingly: "Yes precisely." The participants all laughed and I had to acknowledge that, while the movements are not necessarily *shadow moves* (on the contrary, they are sometimes there to enhance the message), I was not aware of them. After this reflective conversation, we started with the new strategies that I was going to introduce during this session.

9.2.1.1 Externalised drives

After a short recapitulation of what we had done during the previous round, we began considering the *externalised drives* and, with the help of visual images, I explained the significance of the *externalised drives* as clearly as possible. I explained how I perceive quite a lot of the *externalised drives* known as *passion* and *spell* in many opera characters, but less of those known as *vision* and *doing*. Depicting characters in an opera is often something that needs to be elevated and enlarged (Gårdfeldt, 2017:75) and, therefore, it is more common to find these drives there. Every-day life is rarely very interesting, not when listening to it nor when beholding it.

After having reviewed the *externalised drives* and given examples from the opera literature as mentioned earlier, I wanted the participants to apply some strategies in practice and we started experimenting. We went back to the song *Amor vincit omnia* and I requested them to sing the song while employing the first *externalised drive*,

namely *doing*. I asked them to do it mechanically and without taking the meaning of the words into consideration. I acknowledged their efforts, saying that I thought I had never seen three such boring, robot-like singers. Thereafter, I wanted them to sing it individually, while combining their singing with a little scenery. The task was to move around three chairs; first one to the left and then take another one and move that one to the right, etcetera. The result was very simple, neutral and undisguised singing from all of them, almost like when humming while doing a mundane task such as washing the dishes. The only incident where the *doing* was disrupted was when Evelyn approached the high note. She hesitated for a millisecond when she lifted the chair and it was obvious that she had abandoned the *externalised drive* and, instead, started reflecting, and hence the result was no longer mechanical (flowless or feelingless). She was not quite convinced when I told her what I had observed, but I insisted and suggested that it was possible that she had been concerned about the note and wanted to sing it well.

We continued to the next *externalised drive*, namely *passion*. This time we left the props and I asked them to direct the *passion* straight into the camera of the computer. I explained that they could do *passion* like a fire or as a glow and suggested that they could use *passion* like someone very much in love would do, or like someone who feels strong hatred, or as if they wanted to persuade someone to do something. Evelyn started and she clenched her fist in a powerful gesture. Her singing was loud and the tempo became faster. After her first try, which still lacked a bit of intensity and density since she was moving her eyes and head around, I asked her to do it again but now really with a steady look, straight into the camera. (Because of a cold I was home in front of my computer screen and the students were in the classroom at the university, just over 400 kilometres away. However, this teaching-learning environment was not foreign to me or the participants, because after Covid-19 we were all trained to sing and speak via Zoom. As a result, not much attention was paid to the fact that the session was taking place in this way). "Imagine it is a close-up with the camera and try to 'sing through your eyes'", I suggested. When I compared her two versions I saw and heard in the first one a very fiery version that had energy but, at the same time, a softness and breathiness. The second version offered an uncompromising rendition.

In the first version I heard more chest register and louder volume, while the second version offered a legato that was more intense and an expression that was fiercer and more threatening.

Rebecca was next and I suggested that she could sing as if she was the fire herself. She did a version that was filled with perceptions of fire, where she worked with her whole body in a very flexible way. Her arms were like snakes and she acted in large, sweeping and wringing movements, and her legs and hips were almost gliding over the floor. The outcome was a very sexy *passion* and I praised her for being so brave. However, I wanted to explore whether she could be more interested in affecting us as an audience with her singing and acting, instead of being concerned about how she looked. I asked her to sing and act as if she were 'interested in' instead of being 'interesting'. I explained that the movements can occur in her body, but more as an echo of her singing and not as a goal. She sang once more.

Bo: "Good. Was that different for you?"

Rebecca: "Yeah, it was. I mean...I find it easier when, how would I say, I find it easier when I have an intention, a clear intention. So...yeah...that's why."

I had also observed two distinct versions, with the latter version having more presence in the sound and the acting and, moreover, better intonation.

When it was Susan's turn, I asked her to start singing while applying *passion* as an *external drive*. I asked her to imagine a glow such as at a barbeque, after the flames had burnt out and the charcoal is at its best. Susan sang with a high intensity and *bound flow*. In her second version I suggested that she imagines a big bonfire like the ones we have in Sweden when we celebrate *Valborgsmässoafton*,⁶⁸ an event with which she was familiar, despite her Greek ancestry.

⁶⁸ *Valborgsmässoafton* is Walpurgis night and is celebrated on the last day of April in memory of the German saint, Walpurgis. Big bonfires are lit to protect animals and livestock from magical powers and from predators (Nordiska Museet, 2022). These days the reason to celebrate *Valborgsmässoafton* is more to celebrate the coming of spring.

Bo: “Imagine it is a furious, fervent bonfire. It’s so hot that you have to stay two metres away. I want you to be that hot!”

Rebecca (smiling and laughing): “OK Bosse...I’ll be that hot!”

Once she had sung the second version with freer flow and had added some *portamenti*, I asked for a version where she imagined embodying the fire and that her intention was to burn us. She chose a faster tempo and acted more aggressively. Her depiction created the perception that the hot fire was expressed using her whole body. However, in this version her intonation became quite bad. I recognized clearly that the physical movements had become a natural consequence of her inner fire, like an echo of the inner participation. When Susan reflected on this, she claimed that the first version, the glow, had an inner energy that was much bigger, but all the time kept inside. Susan reflected on her attempts by saying:

“Since you are my teacher, I try to identify what we do in this research and connect it with what we do in our singing lessons. Sometimes you ask me, for example, to be like an expectant child and so on...to increase my inner participation and I would connect this first version to these feelings. The other one was more like a burst out...like just letting the voice out. But I was afraid to, and that’s what happened actually, that I was gonna go heavier in sound.”

I agreed a lot with Susan’s reflections and had perceived a sense of feverishness inside her in the first version. In vocal terms she first version had a high density, legato and good intonation, while the second, third and fourth attempts sounded harder and angrier. Technically I had found that the intonation in the latter version was less secure and there was more breathiness in the sound.

The next *externalised drive* to explore was *spell*. Evelyn started and I asked her to imagine being under the spell of something.

Bo: “imagine that you hear someone from the ‘other side’ that is coming down to you from the sky...and you say to yourself: ‘Ooh I didn’t think there was a life after this...but now I can see my granny, and she’s talking to me.’”

“Is this too crazy?”

Evelyn: “No...no...I can see that!”

(*Evelyn sang*)

Bo: “Good! You really had a concentration in body and voice. It was as if there was no time whatsoever [time was suspended] ...in addition to this, can you assure us that you are so flabbergasted about seeing your granny that you can’t even move your eyelids...because now you were blinking your eyes quite a bit.”

Despite several further attempts, Evelyn found it challenging to resist blinking. However, there were fewer unnecessary tensions in other parts of her body, and she was less self-aware about her singing, which flowed better.

Next, we tried the *spell* in another way. I wanted her to imagine hypnotising someone else by using *spell*.

Bo: “Are you familiar with the Netflix series *The Handmaid’s Tale*, by Atwood?” ⁶⁹

Evelyn: “Yes.”

Bo: “Act like the leader of the group...you should spellbind and mesmerise the subservient and obedient women. As you start singing, you know that your people will listen to you.”

Using this frame of reference, Evelyn did very well and performed this version with energy and conviction. I perceived this attempt to involve a bit more stable and grounded singing and the outcome was a natural, darker vocal timbre.

Rebecca was next and she was asked to use *spell* as the *externalised drive* – as if she was casting a spell of immobilisation on someone. I gave her three options:

- she was spellbinding a good-looking guy that she wanted,
- she was a political leader who is spellbinding her audience by delivering a feverish speech, or

⁶⁹ *The Handmaid’s Tale* (2017) is an American television series based on Margaret Atwood’s novel (1985). It takes place in a dystopian future where a religious and totalitarian patriarchal regime rules the land of Gilead.

- she is spellbinding her big Croatian family, since they know she had so much money that they would inherit it if they listened to her attentively.

When I asked her whether any of these scenarios could work for her, she laughed and said: "Oooh yeah, all of them." I suggested that she picked one of these scenarios so that I, while she was singing, might try to figure out which one of the three she had chosen. There was no doubt that, with those playful eyebrows, flexible shoulders and the secret smile that used while singing, that she had chosen to seduce a guy, an inference with which the other participants agreed. Rebecca guffawed when she realised how easily her intentions had been perceived. However, I also experienced her performance as being a mixture of *spell* and *passion*. Rebecca agreed and claimed: "Yes, I was a bit confused. I felt that." Considering my own teaching approach, I thought that, perhaps, I had not been overly precise with my instructions and, because we were experimenting, we were not focused on perfection. Therefore, we could continue to explore and see what the outcomes would be.

"Imagine you are an old Croatian lady sitting in your rocking chair, surrounded by your children and grandchildren. They are very polite and really concerned about doing the right thing to inherit from her. They are subordinate and almost henpecked."

When this strategy did not work as well as expected, I suggested that she imagined being a fanatic religious leader.

"Act like a strong leader who is almost threatening your parish by saying 'If you don't listen to my word, God will punish you and you shall burn in hell'. You can do it quite effortlessly on the outside while your intention should be very, very strong and hypnotising."

I could observe a definite change when Evelyn imagined this scenario. She sang with straightforward phrasing and there was more density in her voice quality. Susan looked straight into the camera with which we were recording the session and said: "I was very afraid seeing her now!"

When it was Susan's turn to sing *Amor vincit*, I suggested a scenario in which she was supposed to tell a child a ghost story. While singing, she approached the camera with narrowed eyes and lifted her arms as if she was going to frighten and finally catch the child. She sang the song with *gliding* and *pressing* qualities, which resulted in good legato singing.

Bo: "Now let's make it the other way round. Imagine being spellbound or mesmerised by something. It could be a very, very handsome and luscious man to whom you are attracted and want to please."

Susan laughed.

Bo: "He is tall, and you literally look up to him and adore him."

Bo (speaking seductively and moving closer): "And maybe he speaks like this...perhaps he is a trained sportsman."

Susan: "Nooo, not a sportsman! Bosse!"

Bo: "OK, he's a sexy violinist."

Susan smiled, pulled herself together and delivered a very distinct performance. Her hand instinctively made a sensual movement at the end of the phrase. The performance presented a good vocal quality, characterised by perfect onsets and a balanced phonation, with a high density in the sound. Being under her own spell, her tempo was a bit slower and the volume softer, and I noticed that she retired in the *sagittal plane*. When she finished, I asked her whether it was clear to her that this didactic strategy affected her singing in a good way, and she answered with an unabashed smile: "Yes, yes, yes...absolutely! And you gave me a very clear task and then I could follow it!" Upon reflection, the other participants agreed that the use of this didactic strategy was clear and worked well.

I asked the participants to reflect upon the use of the *externalised drives* up to that point and they all stated that the manner in which to use the drives was very clear and that they found them to be useful tools. Once again, they mentioned how they had observed that it was not a given that each of them used exactly the same *external drives* with which to achieve a specific result. Evelyn, for example, had found *passion* easy and *spell* very difficult, while Susan claimed that the most challenging drive for her had been *passion*. We concluded that our normal, individual habits and our

movement patterns contribute in different ways, how *passion* probably has a lot of energy while, for some, *spell*, implies less energy. I pointed out that, while the audience might not know exactly what *externalised drive* the singer is using, “one can tell that you are filled with an inner participation and that comes across as an eager and alert expression”. Susan pointed out that

“it’s very surprising what the voice does if you just use another type of intention. You give me a task and then the voice does another [new] thing...I mean not only the body, but it’s also about how the sound goes out.”

Overall, I found it very pleasing how the participants were able to reflect on their own singing, as well as on that of their fellow participants.

Finally, we went on to the fourth *externalised drive*, namely *vision*. Starting with Susan, I suggested a scenario where she might try to visualise her ideal situation for the future.

Bo: “Close your eyes or look to the horizon. You have a happy relationship and some children...you live in a beautiful house...go on holidays to the Mediterranean in the summer and to the Alps in the winter. Can this work for you?”

Susan: “Eh...mmm...no!”

Bo: “Why not?”

Susan: “Oh don’t care about it [those kind of things] at the moment.”

I appreciated her frankness and decided to rethink my teaching strategies and allowed Susan to participate in the decision about a frame of reference. She eventually tried to visualise singing her dream role, namely Violetta, in Verdi’s *La Traviata* at La Scala in Milan. I contributed to her vision by painting a detailed scenario and when she sang, her performance was wonderful in terms of freedom, authenticity and intonation. She sang it a bit more *lento*, taking time with the rests and giving the impression that she almost smelled the music. However, we found it a bit challenging to isolate *vision* as an *externalised drive* because there were traces of both *passion* and *spell* in her performance.

Rebecca was next to sing, and I asked her use *vision* as if she were a child that dreamed of a world with no climate change, no wars; a world in which everyone is friendly and cares for one another.

Bo: "Might this work for you?"

Rebecca (nodding): "I will try."

Bo: "Try a naïve intent, but very honest and, at the same time, a mature child that says: 'Think if...if the world really could be like this.'"

This strategy paid off well and Rebecca's singing was smooth, even and warm. Even though one could not tell what was on her mind, there was an obvious eagerness and intention in her singing. I asked the other participants what they thought, and Susan responded saying: "It was also...the gestures that we do during singing and before this task I mean as well, they are very...hmmm...precise. And also, her hands." Susan showed small *gliding/floating* movements with her hands in front of the chest, saying: "they were like...don't...like protecting herself, but at the same time like *shadow moves*." I agreed with Susan's observation and, once again, there was a clear example of how the physical appearance, offered with sincerity, echoed the inner participation. Rebecca stated that this strategy worked well for her "because I'm a bit like this" she said and showed some vigorous movements with her arms. She continued: "I get easily excited in a way that people normally don't and I start to behave like this, like a little kid and I am so fascinated." While she explained, she raised her voice and accentuated her words – words such as 'behave', 'kid' and 'fascinated' – with her whole body. She wrinkled her nose and looked disgustedly over her shoulder as if she imagined she was observing herself. I was not convinced that her perception of how people regarded her was in fact true.

I then suggested that the *externalised drive*, known as *vision*, might be extra useful to her. If she noticed that she had a lot of *passion* and *doing* in her singing, she might find other qualities should she choose to use *vision*, or maybe *spell*, instead. When she sang again I observed more lyricism in her voice when she sang with *vision*. This observation was echoed by Rebecca's perception of her singing and Susan contributed by pointing out that Rebecca had sung with a beautiful legato.

When it was time for Evelyn to sing, I pondered what idea for *vision* we could use. She had earlier declared that she liked the paintings I had in the background, so we decided that she was a painter with a vision of depicting a landscape.

Bo (speaking on her behalf): “Hmmm...how shall I paint this? I see a beautiful landscape and I have a vision of how the green is coming into the blue, and I see a little bit of purple in the trees.”

Evelyn sang, making small, painting movements with her hands.

Bo: “You looked very serene. We really could see deep into you, and you had a very serious and sincere expression.”

Evelyn: “It was a good picture for me because I draw a lot. So, I just went into when I am sketching something.”

I found this strategy, enriched by her own experiences, even more useful than I had expected – something that pleased me.

9.2.1.2 Inner attitudes

After having completed the *externalised drives* and having taken a short break, we continued with the *inner attitudes*. I was honest and told the participants that I thought this part of the technique was much more complicated and also, since the order of the institutes during the second round of the data collection had been changed (I started at UGOT instead of in South Africa), this group was the first participants to whom I would introduce the *inner attitudes*. I admitted that I found the decision about how to introduce the concept in the best way was quite challenging. I also took care to remind them that mastering the LMT was very time consuming, but that I thought we could do it in a very simplified way. Moreover, the goal was not to build a finished character in an opera, but to explore how to "develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers" as stated in the title of this thesis.

As planned, I started explaining the *mental factors* and the *inner attitudes* (see Chapter 4.2.3 *Inner attitudes* for a detailed discussion), using the PowerPoint once again. Furthermore, I explained how these factors and attitudes, along with the *motion factors*, create a unit through which one can “both conceive and perceive a character” (Mirodan, 2015). I told the participants that we were approaching the vocal and musical

development from another angle, namely from a character or a role, an angle that involves a singer's *inner attitude*. Once we had gone through the six *inner attitudes* (*stable, mobile, near, remote, adream, awake*), I referred back to the monologue we had used during the first session as an exercise to explore these attitudes.

Once again, I emphasised how this was going to be an experimental moment. All three participants did their own version of the two first attitudes. They were innovative and performed three different versions. We agreed that we all could notice how the rhythm varied in each of their versions. We observed how the prosody had changed, how the volume had been raised and lowered, how the speed and the pitch of the speaking had been varied and how the intensity, energy, breathing pattern and phonation pattern had fluctuated in their performances of the monologue. The long lesson was about to come to an end, and I decided that I wanted to challenge them a bit and I asked them to work with these two *inner attitudes* on their own until the next time we were scheduled to meet. I also requested them to investigate the other four *inner attitudes*. I sent them the slides from the PowerPoint so that they could go back and check the significance of every attitude. Additionally, they were asked to bring two opera arias for the next session and to try out what the *inner attitude* of the characters they had chosen might be. Moreover, I requested them to look at the two last slides in the PowerPoint. I wanted them to

- go through the *inner quests* by answering the *ten questions* as if they answered them 'in character', and
- remind themselves about the *shadow moves*.

I explained that the purpose in these sessions was to explore in what way their technical and musical proficiency might be improved if they were equipped with these tools from the Laban-Malmgren toolbox. Lastly, I gave them a friendly reminder to write some notes in which they reflect on what we had done during the session on the day so that they can refer to them when they were later asked to share their written reflections.

9.2.2 Second session

The second session at UGOT took place two weeks after the first. We started with a recapitulation of the previous session and Susan shared her perspectives with the group.

“It’s very impressive that, I mean, these externalised drives, we can also use them to do a character. You can say that *Traviata* is like that, or *Tosca* is like that. But I mean, it’s very interesting how we use them, like also to detect qualities in a character that can be identified in the singing as well. I mean...before we came here, I tried to do all the four externalised drives in like one aria. I asked myself: ‘How can I do Musetta [in *La Bohème*] in four different ways’? Since you asked us what had happened since last session, I would also like to add that I used it [externalised drives] when we had the role examination. I used it for *Giunse alfin il momento*, the whole Susanna aria. Because last time when had our ‘research meeting I really felt like being spellbound by someone, like really feeling the emotions and so on. It really helped my voice to come inside me. I think it helped during my examination, like self-centring but also like admiring around me, the flowers.”

Later in her written reflection she describes her experiences regarding singing with the externalised drive known as *spell*.

“I felt like for me it really worked out, since I had an easier flow and a nicer legato. But most of all, I was really driven into the feeling and enjoyed singing this piece (maybe for the first time).”

Judging by their silence, when I asked them how they had progressed with the exploration of the other four *inner attitudes* as I had requested, I gathered that they had not devoted much time to them. So, I decided that we should do it together, using the monologue with which the candidates were now very familiar. By working with a spoken text before working with singing, I intended to take the focus away from specific pitches, rhythms and requirements, thereby avoiding as much self-awareness and attempts to produce beautiful sounds as possible. I wanted the participants to explore and focus on being experimental instead.

After a review of the *inner attitudes*, Evelyn started working with the spoken monologue, using the *inner attitude* known as *near* with great success. However, I

drew her attention to my perception that, when speaking the words “Me, myself”, she changed to the inner attitude known as *mobile*, before returning to *near* when uttering the words “have fourteen children”. Evelyn agreed and claimed: “Yes, I noticed. I was not *near*.”

After Susan’s and Rebecca’s attempts with *near* as an *inner attitude*, the participants pointed out how small the changes were for becoming one character or the other, and I agreed that the distinctions could be very subtle. We continued with the three remaining attitudes, namely *remote*, *adream* and *awake*, and we all found it amusing how differently each participant approached the various attitudes, despite having used the same text. It was fascinating to observe how differently they ‘acted’ with their voices, but also with the body, mimicry, looks and pauses. The focus was more on experimenting with making different entrances to their way of expressing themselves, while using the different attitudes and less on being specific or doing what they perceived to be correct.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, these participants already had knowledge and understanding of Stanislavski’s technique and, therefore, we quite rapidly went through Malmgren’s *ten questions* as a last task before I started working with each individual participants while the others observed.

Rebecca

Rebecca sang the *Habañera*⁷⁰ from Bizet’s *Carmen*. From the very beginning, I wanted to hear what she presented without us going deeper into the context. When I watched the video afterwards, I noticed some *wringing* in her physical appearance. She was performing *wringing* movements with her hands and lower arms, almost like the ones you can see in some Spanish dances where the dancers play castanets, and her body was also swaying like a big snake. Furthermore, I observed a *wringing* quality in her

⁷⁰ Originally from Cuba, a habañera is a slow dance in 2/4 time that became especially popular in the Catalan parts of Spain during the 19th century (Kennedy, 2013). The first known habañera was *La Paloma*, written by the composer Yradier and it became a big hit. Bizet’s *Habañera*, from the opera *Carmen*, was an adaptation of another habañera by Yradier, namely *El Arreglito*.

legato singing, something of which I had not been aware while I was busy accompanying her on the piano. For the sake of working as effectively as possible, I interrupted her performance after she had completed the first verse.

We started our work based on the *ten questions*, wanting to contextualise the aria. We situated the scene in which the aria is sung outside the cigar factory, as is traditionally the case in opera productions. The scene takes place in the late afternoon during the last break of the day. Carmen is dancing and singing for the soldiers outside the factory gates. Rebecca imagined Carmen being an independent woman who is living by herself. She wants to entertain, but she also wants confirmation that they think she is attractive. She desires to be loved, seen and heard, perhaps also on a deeper level. Rebecca stated that Carmen is an extrovert and that the obstacle, according to the questions, is the jealousy from the other women when she wishes to seduce the men. I asked Rebecca how she would gain the soldiers' approval and she asserted laughingly: "In any way [possible]," an answer to which Susan reacted with the utmost delight. Another image we considered was that of a bird's dance during a mating ritual. Having as rich a framework as possible, Rebecca was requested to sing, while Susan and Evelyn assumed the roles of soldiers. Rebecca sang through the aria once more.

Bo: "How was it for you?"

Rebecca (laughing): "It was good...I felt vocally much better. I don't know why."

Bo: "In what way was it better?"

Rebecca: "When I get into the character, the voice automatically follows and starts to act freer."

Evelyn: "You were much freer in terms of voice and expression. The sound didn't feel as 'held'."

Bo (to Evelyn): "Could we call it a freer flow instead of a bound flow?"

Evelyn: "Yes...it was as if the sound was there to express something, instead of just 'Oh I'm doing this sound'."

My own observation of Rebecca's singing was that it had a more *wringing* quality, which contributed to a beautiful legato. Furthermore, when I listened to the recording of our session afterwards, I observed greater variations in the phonation and dynamics

and, beyond that, well-adapted *portamenti* – absolutely suitable for the style and necessary expression.

The next step was to investigate the *inner attitudes*, and I asked Rebecca to suggest an *inner attitude* that she found appropriate for this aria. By systematically excluding some of the *inner attitudes*, she eventually suggested *adream*, which I also thought best. I challenged her and asked her to be bold and go for a large physical and emotional expression. I requested her to go for ‘extra everything’ like when ordering a hamburger. I could see that Rebecca had a lot of fun and, when I asked her after she had sung, whether this performance was different, she laughed and said yes. Susan claimed that she thought this had been Rebecca’s best version of the aria thus far.

"Now you really were Carmen, and we could see and hear that", she stated. Susan further claimed that "it was stronger vocally, with more lines and it had a lot of ‘give and take’."

Throughout the first attempts, Rebecca had succeeded in depicting a smiling, seductive version of Carmen and I wanted to explore whether she could depict Carmen as being more dangerous and earnest. Instead of her relying so much on the facial expressions, I was interested to see what effect a less pleasing and more demanding Carmen would have on what Rebecca would sound like.

I asked her to imagine that her singing originated mostly from her lower abdomen and her feet, and to act almost like a lion, intensely stalking its prey. "If you are too smiley, you might not be so attractive to the military in this scene" I suggested, and Rebecca agreed. I illustrated it further by first smiling and with flexibility, especially in my head, walking very close to her – into her personal space – saying: "Hello, how are you?" The result was pretty innocent and almost a little quirky. Changing my approach, I lowered my voice, took away the smile, walked straight towards her and now even closer and repeated the phrase: "Hello, how are you?" Rebecca laughingly acknowledged that the way in which I had just expressed myself had felt more dangerous and challenging. Understanding the mental image, Rebecca sang the aria once again.

Evelyn: “I felt like you were more relaxed now, like...in the jaw and so on.”

Susan: “I liked the previous version more.”

Rebecca: “I like this interpretation the best.”

I shared my observations with the group: how I had perceived her last attempt, physically as well as vocally, to be like a cheetah sneaking up on its prey or like one of these snakes slowly coming up from a snake charmer's basket when it hears the snake charmer play the pungi. I had noticed how there had been physical *gliding* and *wringing* movements in her body and explained how beneficial that had been to her singing. I also pointed out how we could hear more musical lines in her singing, as well as a more balanced and effective vocal fold closure. I clarified, however, that perhaps a mixture of the two versions would have been the choice within an operatic context, but within the context of this teaching and learning experience, we investigated the purer and sometimes more exaggerated versions.

In her written feedback, Rebecca claims how useful she found the *inner attitudes* in combination with the *inner quests*.

“It helped in the way where I would think about what I want my character to be like, with the ‘right’ and clear thought and this would help me in expressing myself while performing.”

During the contact session, she stated that she thought she was grasping the *inner attitudes* despite them being “complex and complicated”. Pointing to her chest, she claimed that it is interesting what the use of the imagery does with one's “inner, inner...it's just amazing, you know!” She admitted to finding the whole process really exciting and beneficial.

Rebecca further explained how, now that she had completed the teaching and learning activities while using the suggested didactic strategies, she has more tools to use when singing.

“The three planes (with sounds), inner attitudes and inner quests worked great for me...and I love the exercise *Amor vincit omnia* that I use sometimes to warm up.”

When asked whether others had observed or commented on any improvements or differences in her singing, differences that she thought she had achieved throughout the study, Rebecca responded by saying:

“I had comments that I have a better placement of the sounds and lighter voice colour. And I believe that it's because I used some tools from this method, and I also started to feel much better and comfortable while singing/practising. I'm just very grateful that I was part of this research experiment, because I gained a lot of knowledge that will definitely help me in my own professional development in the future.”

Susan

When it was Susan's turn to sing, she chose to perform Musetta's aria, *Quando me'n vo*, from Puccini's *La Bohème*. Once she had finished singing through the aria, I asked her to reflect on what was good and also on what could be improved. She replied quite frankly that she had not liked anything. Not wanting her to persist with that negative perception, I encouraged her to be more positive. After some thought she claimed that she was happy that she could sing through the whole aria, since she had found that challenging in the past. Susan also explained that going through the *passaggio* was no longer as big a problem as it had been only a month earlier. Her own observation was that the areas that she wanted to improve were the legato singing, the intonation (she observed that she had been flat at some places), and to sing a better b².

I suggested that we start with Malmgren's *ten questions*. We created a scenario very much in line with the real story in the opera. It is Christmas and we are at Café Momus in Paris. Musetta sings and her intention is to get Marcello's attention and to make him jealous. We came up with the idea that her concern, something that could be an obstacle for Musetta, might be that, should she act too vulgar and uninhibited, salacious or tease Marcello too much, he would just stand up and leave her. When asked 'by what means' she would seduce Marcello, Susan proposed that, besides wearing a fancy dress, jewellery and perfume, she would use her voice to seduce him.

I was pleased with that answer since I was looking for audible changes by exploring the technique. We analysed the music and the lyrics and interpreted the three b¹s played by a harp before the aria starts, articulated the perception of everything stopping and everyone focusing their attention on Musetta. We noticed how Musetta's words: "*Quando me'n vo soletta per la via, la gente sosta e mira*" ("When walking alone on the streets, people stop and stare") are accompanied by sustained half notes in the orchestra. We spoke about how the people around Musetta contribute significantly to constructing her identity, creating perceptions of her elevated status. Susan claimed how she assumed that Musetta had low self-esteem but acts in a way that leads to everyone believing that she is a very secure person.

Once we had completed the analysis of and the conversation about the aria, I asked Susan to sing the aria while keeping in mind the contexts and identity that we had discussed as best she can. I stopped her after two pages and asked how she had experienced her singing. Susan declared that it had felt as if she had concentrated more on the music and that she liked the flow of her voice. When I later watched the video recording of our session, I noticed that, at the time of the teaching and learning session, my reaction had been somewhat stingy – I had just nodded in confirmation of her thoughts. However, when I listened to the result of her singing on the recording, I realised that she actually had done very well.

Nevertheless, Susan's version was quite introverted in nature, as well as self-absorbed and, before she sang it a second time, I asked for a character who interacts with the other guests at the café more clearly. When she had finished singing, Evelyn commented that this version was much more interesting to watch than the previous one. When asked why she believed this to be true, Evelyn explained that there were bigger variations. Susan describes clearly in her written reflection how valuable she found it to work with the whole group together.

"Having these group lessons has been maybe the most important part of the process during the research to me. It was crucial to observe how my colleagues worked, what did change, in what way etc. I found those discussions we had and the feedback upon each other very productive and evolving for the process and our personal progress."

I asked Susan whether she perceived her singing to be different in any way after this second version and she replied:

“As I said before, if I just take my thoughts out of actually what am I doing... like a robot. I don't know if you guys do that, but I have the tendency to really criticize myself while I'm singing. But when I have to...like... 'but you are Musetta now, and you are charming them', it really takes my mind off. For me the Laban-Malmgren it's such...like a mental exercise...to take it out from where I used to have it.”

She illustrated with her arms lifting out something out of her head and put it behind her on the left side before continuing to say: "and to really find a tool and open another door". At that point she mimicked a movement as if she was using a key to open a door in front of her.

“And vocally, when I'm released and when I don't 'think' a lot, my voice just goes. It's revolutionary. It gives results and I don't even know how, because I don't understand it.”

In her written reflection she explains how "the most important outcome for me from this research participation was to find a way to let go of the struggle of trying to control everything at once". As mentioned earlier, many participants were acquainted with Stanislavski's method and Susan reflects in her written feedback: "The thing that I have not experienced so clearly before was that it can also help with how the voice is behaving and not only for staging a character". Susan continued by claiming that one creates one's "own sphere of thoughts about the character and then the voice follows". She stated that she had found it magical.

I listened to her reflections during the contact sessions and added that she was much more 'in the tone' the second time she sang Musetta's aria. I observed a greater measure of 'meaning' and explained: "You were going somewhere, and you were coming from somewhere...So your phrasing was different." Susan explained how she felt that her performance had been characterised naturally by various 'colours' without her consciously 'colouring' it. My impression was that her performance: had become coloured in different ways because she had created the right prerequisites. Susan

claimed how she had not thought of it in advance but that "it just happened...And I wasn't expecting the next phrase to be that way. Like...it surprised me!"

I asked her what *externalised drive* she had experienced and used mostly, to which she replied: "For sure it was *spell*, but also *passion*. Let's say 80% *spell* and 20% *passion*". Susan notes in her written reflection how she had perceived the *externalised drives*.

"It had a huge impact on the way that my voice came out...For me it was a VERY helpful tool in order to let go of singing in the 'traditional' way, singing happened to feel far easier for me, and I also believe that the result that came out was much freer and richer in sound and harmonics."

Susan and I did not have enough time to work with *inner attitudes*, which was a pity, and the regret about having too little time for each tool that she expresses in her reflection was justified. In the little we could do, Susan suggested that Musetta was *adream* or *remote*. We discussed it briefly and agreed that *adream* would be the most appropriate *inner attitude* to explore further. Susan states in her written feedback that she had found the *inner attitudes* to be "a tricky tool". However, she found it very interesting "how our voices even in a speaking form, would change so differently by trying to go into each *inner attitude* option". Susan wrote a very thorough reflection and, besides admitting to having gained technical and musical advantages, wrote how she had found her singing more joyful during this period. Susan summarises her participation in the study by writing:

"For me it became a trip when I explored how nicely I could release my voice...Every time I brought LM tools in my practice room in a concert or anywhere – and I do really bring this method with me in my practice room every day – it really 'saved' me in a sense, because it works in a way like mental training for me...cannot really describe how liberating that has been for me as a singer. I really have been enjoying singing much more when working with the LM technique. For me the LM technique has been a treasure box. The important thing in my opinion is how safe and well I feel by using LM method. It has been such a pleasure working through this research and a real blessing. Looking forward to reading this published."

Evelyn

Evelyn was the last participant with whom I worked in Gothenburg, and she was also enthusiastic about working with the whole group together. In her written reflection she mentions how much fun it was, but also how important and rewarding it was to give each other feedback and to follow each other's progress. Evelyn had chosen to work with Erika's aria, *Must the winter come so soon?*, from Barber's *Vanessa*. She claimed that she had chosen it because she perceives the *inner attitude* of the character to be *stable*. In order not to be one-dimensional and boring, she wanted to look for "discreet layers" in her '*stable*-attitude-performance'.

Evelyn explained how this story takes place in a house in the woods. There are three people in a mansion, Vanessa, her mother (the old baroness) and Vanessa's niece, Erika. Evelyn guessed Erika's age at around 17 and explained how the girl is trapped by Vanessa's depression. They live in isolation, in winter even more so. We agreed that the key and the sentiment in the first phrase, *Must the winter come so soon?* determines the approach to the aria. Evelyn sang the aria and, upon completion, stated:

"Opera is often more and more and more but here it's more like a less-is-more effect," she explained. "You want to do so much, but the tricky thing is...the simplicity."

I thought that the *inner attitude* might be very helpful in this case and suggested that Erika imagines standing at the window, watching the snow fall outside. In the room where we worked, we had these older windows with an embrasure where one could sit. I suggested that Erika might be sitting in a similar one in the mansion and asked Erika to jump up and place herself at the window with her back against the wall. I asked her to shift her gaze from looking out the window and back to the opposite wall while thinking:

"Oh no, the leaves are still on the tree and the snow is already coming. Oh, we cannot go there. And my friends cannot visit me anymore...the autumn ball where I was expecting to meet some nice guys will be

cancelled. Oh, I remember the winter two years ago, and it lasted for five months!"

Having decided to enact this scenario while referring to the *inner attitude* known as *remote*, Evelyn assumed her position at the window. I also told her to close her eyes as she sang the last phrases of the aria. She was able to reflect on her attempt once she had done singing.

Evelyn: "Maybe it was too much to think of sitting at the window and singing with an inner attitude. Because now I was focusing how I was sitting...[but] I found it easier now that I had something real to look at."

Rebecca: "The phrasing was much better now...and the calmness in general."

Bo: "I could really see you sitting there in the early afternoon in the countryside, lamenting your fate."

Furthermore, one could observe that Evelyn had not run out of breath at the end of the phrases. When I watched the video some weeks after the session, I pondered whether the resistance of the wall at her back had also perhaps contributed to the improved breathing process.

When Evelyn sang the aria again, I reminded her to keep imagining as much as possible of the scenario she previously had used and encouraged her to imagine as much detail of her surrounding as she could. After this attempt, Evelyn shared her vision with us:

Evelyn (pointing in different directions): "There is the sunset, there is the deer and there is the owl."

Bo: "And what happened to you as an artist when you did that?"

Evelyn: "I felt more grounded in my emotions. I was able to better prepare the phrases because I was seeing everything ahead...instead of just 'showing', I was now 'noticing'."

Evelyn also professed that her breathing process had allowed her to feel vocally more relaxed and more grounded in her body.

As mentioned earlier, I had asked Evelyn to close her eyes while singing the last phrases. My observation was that this strategy allowed Evelyn to achieve an *inner attitude* that corresponded with the action and her singing was characterised by smooth and calm musical lines.

Bo: “What working action would you say that you were using now?”

Evelyn: “Eh...I am a fan of *gliding*, but it felt...whenever I think *gliding* I... [holding her hands to her neck as if strangling herself]...I feel like I sing *sopra la voce*.⁷¹ And now, I felt I was a bit deeper than that.”

Bo: “Can it be a combination of some *gliding* with *pressing*?”

Evelyn: “Yes, *pressing* or *wringing*.”

Her response confirmed my own observation. She performed a *wringing* gesture with her hands while speaking the first phrase of the aria. Finally, I asked her whether she thought that *remote* was a good *inner attitude* to use here and she responded that she found it to be a good choice.

While Evelyn had achieved positive results when using didactic strategies based on the *inner attitudes*, her written reflection indicated less enthusiasm about these attitudes. According to Evelyn, the didactic strategies based on the *working actions*, *horizontal planes*, externalised drives and *inner quests* contributed most to her singing. She offers an example by stating how strategies based on an *externalised drive* can help her to clarify the feeling she wants to radiate, as well as the effect she wants to achieve.

Susan responded by saying:

“I was thinking while you were singing...it was so impressive how the voice could take another path by not changing anything at all but just [by] thinking other things...just visualizing...just imagine you watched that and that. It’s impressive how much it can bring to the music and the voice, and the actual [singing] technique.”

⁷¹ *Sopra la voce*: above the voice.

My opinion was that, although Evelyn had found it challenging, the didactic strategies based on the *inner attitudes* had allow her to control her energy and we were able to hear much more of her core in her voice. There had also been fewer *shadow moves* while she sang.

When we finally summarized what we had achieved during this research period, Susan referred back to metaphor of the soft ice cream I had used during my previous visit (see Chapter Eight). The participants laughed in recognition as she explained that this metaphor was indicative of how she perceived the didactic strategies based on the LMT, learning and applying them bit by bit.

9.3 Stockholm University of the Arts (SKH)

9.3.1 First session

The singers at the Stockholm University of the Arts were the last to participate in the second round of the data collection process. Due to an interruption caused by the summer holidays in Sweden and ill health of several parties involved, there had been a very long break between the first and second sessions of this round of data collection.

9.3.1.1 Externalised drives

As at UGOT, we started the first session at SKH by working with the *externalised drives*, using *Amor vincit omnia* as teaching and learning material. We started with the *externalised drive doing* and each participant was given specific instructions of what to do while singing. Eva had to sort pens, first by colour and then by size. Catherine was instructed to move chairs from one place to another and Eric had to take off his sweater, fold it and then put it back on again. I observed how their performances gradually became mechanical and almost compulsive while executing these actions, resulting in their singing being rhythmic, objective and without much phrasing, emotion or reflection, as might have been expected of this mechanical approach. I asked if they had thought or felt anything in particular, to which Catherine replied: "No, that was the point. You didn't think."

When working with the *externalised drive* known as *passion*, Eva was assigned to imagine being a big, blazing and dangerous fire. Next, I tried to play around with different qualities, and I asked her to sing while still imagining the intensity of the embers, but without the flames. Both versions showed a great enhancement in the legato and density of timbre, especially the first version. Finally, I wanted to connect the *degrees of intensity* to the *externalised drive* and asked Eva to sing *passion*, first with *normal intensity*, then with *exaggerated* and finally with an *extreme grade of intensity*. Reflecting on her own performances, Eva admitted to having felt a greater inner intensity and energy in her singing as the *grades of intensity* increased. She also pointed out that she had observed more intensity in her eyes and greater muscular tone in, for example, the arms. "There was a lot more text," Catherine interjected. We had also noticed that the breathing pattern had changed and that the whole expression had quite naturally become more anxious. I asked Eva how she perceived her airflow and, after having pondered a bit, she responded: "Freer perhaps?" Contrary to her perceptions, I thought she had regulated the airflow more and had sung with greater control.

When it was his turn to sing *Amor vincit omnia*, Eric was tasked to combine going and using *passion* by walking up to the piano while singing (and imagining *passion*). I suggested that he tried to relate passionately to the piano as he was approaching. He performed the task brilliantly with playful and flirtatious excitement, which caused the others to applaud enthusiastically while offering encouraging comments. When I asked him to reflect on the *grade of intensity* of the *passion*, Eric suggested that this version was on the verge of *exaggeration*. I then asked him to imagine the *passion* being *extreme*. We talked about how much passion there can be in hate, love or sex, and he got to choose what kind of *passion* he wanted to imagine as he walked up to the piano. I noticed that he paced his walk in different ways, sometimes walking slowly and sometimes quickly. When asked at which point he had experienced the most *passion*, he replied that it was right before he had moved quickly. My own observations confirmed Eric's perceptions and it was very clear to me how he alternated between *bound flow* and *free flow*.

Even though this approach is not one that one would use to sing an entire aria, one can, by refining specific qualities by using the approach, discover and explore things that one might not have found otherwise. In Eric's case, for example, we noticed that he had begun to articulate the words a little more clearly, something that I had requested from him earlier.

When it was Catherine's turn to work with *passion*, she was commissioned to act as if she were an artist, and she was instructed to paint while she sang. She was given pens and a white board. "But oh, now I'll think about what to paint," she exclaimed. I explained that the result was uninteresting and totally subordinated the investigation of the *passion* quality. To further emphasise how unimportant the motive was and to dramatize the result, she was given the task of painting with her left hand (she was right-handed). My observation was that her first version was a bit controlled and judgmental, as if she were observing herself critically from the outside. Therefore, she was tasked with going to the *exaggerated* variant of the *grades of intensity*. To elicit additional energy, I also raised the key of the song by a major third. Upon completion of the first attempt, Catherine also had to try the *extreme* variant of the *grades of intensity*. When asked whether she thought that any of what she had done had made a difference, she said she had felt a little freer and had stopped thinking about the result in her last version. My perceptions were that she had exhibited the features of a rabid and almost manic artist.

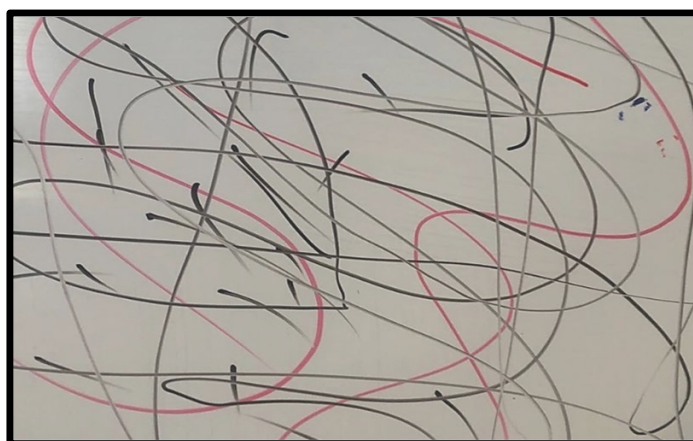


Photo 9.2: A part of Catherine's dramatic painting depicting the externalised drive known as *passion*.

Eva thought that Catherine's singing had become "a little denser somehow". Everyone in this group agreed with Eva.

When we switched to *spell*, Eric was tasked to enthrall a pre-school class with "the world's most exciting story, titled *Amor vincit omnia*". The first attempt was quite neutral and, to increase the *spell*, he had to imagine that he was telling a ghost story, and that the intention was to scare the children. After he had sung the song with this image in mind, the other singers commented that they noticed how he had clearly varied his phonation much more and how he had played with the dynamics when he used the *exaggerated* and *extreme grades of intensity*. I mentioned that I also had heard variations in the phonation quality and that it was more often breathy in the latter two variations. We also talked about how effective the *subito pianissimi* he used were, especially when used to capture someone's attention.

Catherine's task in the *spell* was to imagine that she was under the spell of a giant spider. I referred to *Maman*⁷² by Louise Bourgeois and Catherine was able to refer to the sculpture. Furthermore, I gave her a scenario which involved her friends having arranged a bachelorette party for her and how, much later, she wakes up under this nine-meter high and ten-meter-wide spider. "You think it's a real spider and you become totally paralyzed," I instructed.

⁷² *Maman* from 1999 is the artist Louise Bourgeois's most talked about work. The work depicts a giant female spider and is made of steel. The spider is nine metres high and roughly ten metres wide. Under her body she carries 26 white marble eggs in a basket. The artwork belongs to Tate Modern in London.



Photo 9.3: *Maman* by Louise Bourgeois.

After the first try, during which she sang restrainedly but with small movements, I added: "If you move, the spider might eat you so you must stand still!" She sang again and the others observed that the second version had become quieter and that her lips had barely moved. "Yes, you were really under a *spell* now," I stated. I observed that Catherine's singing had gained more intensity and more legato.

When it was Eva's turn, I asked her to sing with *spell* and to focus her attention on Eric. I explained that she could do exactly as she wished with whatever thoughts were in her mind. She stood in front of him singing a slow and intense version, in which her voice had a wonderful flow, and the phrases were sung with a beautiful legato. She claimed that it was a *normal* grade: "Listen to me!" But no more than that", she stated. Next, I asked her to use *spell* on him while standing behind him, with her back turned to him. We added that there was also a glass wall between them and, therefore, she had to use the *extreme grade of intensity*. Eva sang a very quiet version, and both Catherine and I expressed how impressed we were. We noted that Eva's singing had been full of intensity and Catherine claimed that it was almost like a ghost or a spirit from "the other side".

Finally, it was time to examine the *externalised drive* known as *vision*. Eric was given the task of using the song to tell the others about the fantastic ideology in which he believed. After his first version, which did not pay off so much, I asked him to go further and really convince the others how good it was for humanity to believe his words. After the second attempt I asked whether he had felt any difference between the first and

second version. "Yes, the first one was very inward in a way, while the second one... I got out of my head in a way," explained Eric. My perception of his second attempt was similar to Eric's. He seemed to have become more interested in a prospective convert in the second version and, as a result, I found him more energetic and eager in his expression. He became less aware of himself and, as a result, his voice also sounded more unhindered.

Inspired by Eva's previous work on Schumann's art song, *Er, der Herrlichste von allen*, Catherine was given a scenario in which she dreamed of her impending wedding when we worked with the *externalised drive vision*. I sketched the circumstances to Catherine: "Oh, soon I will get married, oh pink dress I will have, and beautiful meringue cake we will eat". When I admitted that the scenario might seem a little immature, Catherine immediately responded by saying: "*13 going on 30*, if anyone remembers that movie"? "Definitely" answered Eva. The film was unknown to me, and Catherine explained how the young girl in the film repeats her mantra: "Thirty, flirty and thriving".⁷³ After Catherine had sung the song the first time, I wanted her to make the context even clearer. I urged her to convince herself that "this is the absolute truth for all young women – this is the optimal life!" Once she had finished singing the song again, the others in the group shared their observations: there had been more physical movements, darker vowels and more extroversion. Catherine writes in her reflection:

"I feel that these new terms are wonderful ways of colouring the voice and a more emotional way of interpreting our sheet music. If you see an *f* noted in your music, it could be fun and useful to analyse that and interpret it as "passionate". That way it sits more in your body and perhaps it comes out more naturally – rather than just a difference in dynamic and volume which to me is a little flat."

Eva was tasked with investigating *vision* by imagining being Zelensky, Ukraine's tried and tested president. I asked her to imagine Zelensky exhorting his people: "We *are* free, and we shall *remain* free!" She clenched her fist and sang. I noticed that there

⁷³ When I watched the movie clip after the session, I found that Catherine's association was perfect for the situation – a young girl visualizing her dream life.

was a lot of *passion* in her expression and explained that in this scenario it was probably difficult to stick to only *vision*. So, in an attempt to achieve more *vision* and less *passion*, I suggested that she imagined herself sitting alone in her chamber and uttering the same words. I observed quite a big difference the second time she sang and noticed that she had achieved a higher degree of density in both singing and acting.

9.3.1.2 Inner attitudes

The second theme of the day was the *inner attitudes* and after a review of the six different *inner attitudes* it was time to explore them through the little monologue used with all the other groups as well. Catherine presented a definite *stable* as did Eva, whose *stable* very clearly lacked flow. Eric, on the other hand, was somewhat *mobile* in his *stable* and we noticed that a lot of *shadow moves* crept into his performance. Their different ways of portraying and experiencing *mobile* were also very different. Eva's portrayal of *mobile* was convincing, so much so that she got stuck in her own feelings and had a hard time coming to an end. So did Catherine's portrayal of *mobile*, albeit in a more self-absorbed form. It was clear how in their two different variations of *mobile* they were evaluating themselves emotionally in different ways. In Eric's case, it was also a clear *mobile*, completely lacking in weight. Their various performances became extremely different and caused much hilarity and laughter as they moved through their extreme shifts.

In order to relate their performance of the monologue to a perspective that involved more musicality and singing, I asked them to reflect on the differences also in phonation, articulation and prosody in the different attitudes. Eric stated that his *stable* sounded more monotonous, without pauses and pressed, compared to *mobile* where he noticed a breathier phonation, more frequent *mezza voce*, greater agogic freedom and much more varied prosody. Catherine experienced her *stable* as forced while her *mobile* became more varied, especially in terms of dynamic. Eva also experienced *stable* as pressed and *mobile* as freer. At the same time, Eva drew attention to how the outcome of the inner attitudes probably differs a lot, depending on the type of singer you are, an inference with which I fully agreed.

They all found the four inner attitudes – *near*, *remote adream* and *awake* – much more challenging. While Catherine's *near* appeared quite prosaic and grounded (*human*), Eva's *near* contained very little weight and completely lacked the *mental factors* known as *thinking* and *feeling*. The result was close to a *near* that strongly gravitated towards *cool*. I claimed that I had found Eva's version to be almost creepy and gravitating towards *remote*.

Eva (surprised): “Did you think? I almost thought a bit like a yoga instructor: ‘breath in...breath out.’”

Bo: “Yes, that’s what I thought at first too.”

Eva: “I imagine my aunt in front of me. She was the first person I thought of in connection with the label ‘down-to-earth’. When everyone is moving around and stressing, she just stands there. She is very spiritual.”

While Eva described a character with a stoic calmness and control over everything, I found her depiction of this character to be more like an *altruistic* version of *remote*.

When we worked with the *inner attitude* known as *remote*, there was a noticeable difference in the participants’ performances. Some maintained a fast tempo and an almost assertive, pressing character, while others’ performances were softer, veiled and slow in their expression. However, the common denominator was that the expression became rather monotonous. My perception was that they were performing with a lot of *spell* and a *vision* that had elements of *doing*. We agreed that their expressions recalled people with psychopathic traits, or perhaps some neuropsychiatric diagnosis. However, when I later listened to the recording, I thought their versions of *remote* as being *unsociable* or *egocentric*.

Adream was perhaps the inner attitude that showed the greatest differences between the participants. Eva's version of *adream* (*overpowering*) became super-energetic, varied in tempo and dynamics, and often combined with a breathy phonation. Eric’s perception of Eva’s performance was that she had resembled one of the characters in *Harry Potter*, Sybill Trelawny, the Professor of Divinity. After having watched and listened to Emma Watson’s performance in the movie version, I could certainly agree. There was, on the other hand, something snake-like and seductive about Catherine’s

expression in *adream* (*diffused*). Her performing was characterised by a tight legato and a soft *pressing*. Eric produced yet another, completely different version of *adream* (*irradiant*), energetic and with a resonant sound. Catherine responded by saying: "Oh...you sounded just like someone who would visit one in a dream in a comedy." Finally, in *awake*, the participants' characters became quite close to each other and, to some extent, also close to their own personalities. Their versions of *awake* were perhaps the closest to *certain*. Their performances, particularly when speaking the words "How to raise children", were characterised by a sense of matter-of-factness and soberness.

Since this group had quite a lot of experience with Stanislavski's method, we were able to quickly go through the activities based on his five questions. However, we spent a little bit more time discussing *shadow moves*. In addition to mentioning how these can manifest physically, we also reflected on how one can transfer *shadow moves* into sounds. I illustrated with different types of hoarseness, various ways of inserting small words or different ways of starting or ending a phrase with a verbal '*shadow move*' "uh". Catherine found this very exciting and declared: "I know we shouldn't focus on the dramatic performance, but it's so exciting how it all comes together!" In her reflection Catherine writes:

"I could see it being incredibly rewarding having this technique be a part of a larger course that stretches over the course of a semester or even an academic year."

9.3.2 Second session

As previously mentioned, there had been a long break for the participants from SKH between the first session and the second session of this round of data and, therefore, we started by refreshing the singers' recollections of previous work. The first step involved their reflections on how different singers relate to different vowels.

Catherine: “Yes, that was exciting...that different singers have different favourite vowel which come naturally, which you like yourself or which you have practised the most, sort of like that. And instead of thinking lighter or darker, you can think a different plane.”

Eva had benefited significantly from didactic strategies based on the *vertical plane*, achieving increased vocal freedom. She mentions in her written reflection that

“Thinking in different planes and directions while singing a difficult phrase has made me sing with fewer technical difficulties. The different planes influenced a large part of my way of thinking about vocal technique. Many of the thoughts and ideas that were planted then I use every time I practise now.”

I reminded them that we had observed how effective the didactic strategies on the *sagittal plane* had been for Catherine, bringing more warmth and roundness to her timbre. Catherine points out in her written reflection how beneficial she had found that part of the technique: “The planes and the vowels are still very much with me in every voice lesson and is still a very rewarding path I’m walking right now”. She continues writing how she liked the vocabulary and terms in addition to the terminology to which she was used. “It made it really easy for me to understand my natural timbre and sound”. Eric, on the other hand, had found much more projection in his voice when singing with the *horizontal plane* in mind.

We also reminded ourselves about the work we had done with the *inner attitudes*, using the monologue I had written. Contrary to the participants at the other research sites, the participants at SKH, while also finding the work with *inner attitudes* challenging, had succeeded in creating attitudes in several different instances, with many diverse qualities. We had focused less on whether their execution was completely in line with the respective *inner attitudes* and were content with the understanding that the artistic results were very different in the different attitudes. Catherine writes in her reflection about the *inner attitudes*:

"At first, I thought it [the inner attitudes] was benefitting my acting the most, but the more I thought about it, I thought it also contributed to my singing technique by bringing together other terms that I associate with acting."

Eva

Eva was the first to work individually in this session and she had chosen to sing the *Seguidilla* from Bizet's *Carmen*. While she sang, I observed an improved unification of the registers since my first visit to SKH and asked her whether she still hated e^2 . "A little less than before," she replied laughingly. She explained that she was still experiencing difficulties with her *passaggio*, but now had more knowledge about how to deal with it. I argued that she would probably always be aware of it to some extent, but that it had become less obvious to the listener.

We continued working on the aria by examining some of Malmgren's *ten questions*. Based on her answers, we were able to imagine a scene in Seville with Carmen standing in the hot backyard during a smoke break. She has worked hard and wants to amuse herself by entertaining the soldiers gathered there. She loves to get their attention and amuses them by dancing and charming them with lots of sexual innuendos. Eva shared her belief that, deep down, Carmen longs to share true love that is reciprocated. However, the way of showing love with which she is most familiar is through behaviour characterised by sensuality and sexuality. Carmen knows that sex is her trump card and that men perceive her value as being a sexual partner. Eva claimed to understand Carmen as an *adream* character, which means that her *motion factors* are *weight* and *flow*, and her *mental factors* are *sensing* and *feeling*.

Having determined Eva's understanding of the context of the aria and the identity of the character, Eva proceeded to perform a version of the aria while keeping perceptions and images of *adream* in mind. Upon completion of the aria, Eva mentioned that she had found it easier to sing legato. Catherine expressed the opinion that Eva had sung with a more grounded voice and a darker timbre. She also pointed out that the sixteenth triplets had become much more distinct. Eric claimed to have experienced that Eva had had more "grip on the voice". My observation was that Eva's

singing had become much more specific, which was expected, since she had given her mind and instrument clear instructions. For example, she had executed the turns in a more natural way with a very sustained *fermata*. Eva shares in her written reflection how much difference it made to work with the *inner attitudes*. She explains how she was now able to create a more human and less caricatured, exaggerated Carmen which, in turn, had led to a better singing technique.

“When I took these things into consideration, I myself experienced a greater and more natural flow in air, voice and body. And when I sang *Seguidille* at School a few days after our last session, my performance was noticed. I think it was funny because I had several things in mind that we discussed in our lesson! I focused on her [Carmen’s] inner thoughts and desires, and she suddenly felt more like a person...The aria came out with my own voice and not as a disguised, darkened ‘I am a mature mezzo’ sound.”

The next step was to focus only on the *externalised drive* known as *doing*. After Eva had sung while imagining *doing*, I declared that I had experienced her singing as being quite mechanical and unmusical. "Quite a different sound, really," exclaimed Catherine. She explained that she had observed that the sound had been "much thinner...it felt like the overtones disappeared. It sort of... became a voice for this small room instead of knocking out the wall. Crazy how different it was!"

We continued with *vision*, and I requested Eva to envision a Carmen who dreamed of her forthcoming future life with family, secure conditions and a home of her own. It was quite noticeable that Eva’s subsequent rendition depicted Carmen as a character who was less dangerous, more intellectual and, perhaps, even sentimental.

In *passion*, which one would think was perhaps the most obvious choice for this aria and character, I asked Eva to go all out for the imaginary handsome soldier she was approaching. "Let your whole body and mind burn with longing, desire and lust," I urged her. As Eva sang with this image in mind, it was difficult to resist her enormously strong power and expression and an incredibly passionate and dangerous woman emerged in her portrayal of Carmen.

Finally, I asked Eva to perform a version of *spell* where she herself was enchanted. I sketched a scenario for her.

“All of a sudden he's sitting there. The man that you had a crush on when you were a teenager. And he is even more beautiful, even more handsome. You become completely spellbound by his allure.”

Eva proceeded to present yet another version of the aria. I praised her for her ability to change the conditions with incredible speed and to present very different technical and musical versions of the aria. Eric claimed that he had preferred this variant of the *spell* compared to the other three *externalised drives*, thinking that Eva had achieved a higher status in this version.

When I asked Eva, by way of conclusion, to consider whether she had noticed anything else in any of her renditions of the aria, she mentioned that the breaths became very audible and palpable when applying *passion*. Once again, we were able to ascertain what a great effect audible or inaudible breathing could have when expressing emotion. As a group, we talked about how the participants had experienced correlations between the *externalised drives* and the various directions of the *sagittal plane* (advancing and retiring). They observed that retiring in the *sagittal plane* gave a sensation of *spell* and advancing in the *sagittal plane* made them relate to *passion*. Catherine also stated how obvious it was that some of the *externalised drives* were more physical, while others were more intellectual.

Eric

Eric had chosen to work with Sarastro's aria *In diesen heil'gen Hallen* from *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart during the second session. I praised him after he had sung through the aria the first time. Hearing him six months after my previous visit, I thought he sang with more flow in his voice and the flow was free. When asked who Sarastro was, Eric claimed that Sarastro is the high priest of this temple order. He also explained that Sarastro, in the scene in which he sings this aria, wants to convince, comfort and reassure his daughter, Pamina. He wants her to know that he is not angry with her mother, the Queen of the Night.

Before having him sing the aria again, I asked him to focus on the object of his affection, namely Pamina, instead of being so aware of his own singing. The others praised him afterwards and shared the observation that he had been able to sing with more legato. Eric's own observation was that he had sung more naturally in the second rendition of the aria. I had noticed that his timbre also took on a darker quality and he gave a more fatherly and grounded depiction of the character. Therefore, I thought he had come closer to a credible character in terms of interpretation, as well as vocal technique.

The first time Eric and I met, we had talked about his lack of gravity, his very aptitude for *flexible* when it came to *motion factors* and his tendency to have many *shadow moves*. I drew his attention to these conditions once again during this session. I reminded Eric that he had noted in his previous reflection that he, by nature, had a lot of the *motion factors* known as *sustained* and *flexible* and, therefore, his *floating* also became almost unfeasible.

"It's like the shoulders have a life of their own and have a kind of yoga session... This 'body leak' makes you send double messages. To me it's almost looks as if you are going to seduce your own daughter [Pamina]."

Eric was asked to sing the aria again, while focusing on a strong gravity with legs like pipes leading right into the earth and with an energy that was sheltered inside him, instead of spilling out. Following his performance, we all agreed that his voice and character had become steadier and more stable.

As we continued with *externalised drives*, Eric unconsciously chose to apply *vision* as the *externalised* drive while singing Sarastro's aria. Wanting to apply a different didactic strategy, I painted a scenario in which he stands in the evening twilight on his balcony, looking out over the mountains and imagining his ideal dream world. When Eric sang with this image in mind, his portrayal was at once keen, forward-looking and very specific.

Eva: “The entire first part had become one long and important sentence. You also had a sympathetic look with open eyes now and it would have been no problem to reach out to the third row in a large theatre.

We had also noticed that Eric had involved his body less – using fewer shadow moves. Noticing the importance of being able to integrate his concentration into his voice, Eric resolved to take this didactic strategy with him as he goes forward.

When working with *passion*, Eric/Sarastro was required to awaken his brothers in the temple order while being filled with devotion.

Catherine: “It sounded like a scene out of *Les Mis* now.”

Eric: "Yes, you mean...[singing] *Red the black of angry men!*"

Catherine (chiming in): "Yes, exactly...*Black the dark of ages past!*"

When, afterwards, I listened to the song to which they had referred, I understood exactly what they had meant. In *Les Misérables* Marius sings of his love for Cosette while the others – led by Enjolras - tutor him and sing of a higher purpose of the imminent victory in the fight against injustice.

We continued with *spell*, and Eric and I created a scenario in which he had been newly recruited into a cult and, for the first time, had to enter the secret golden halls. As he sang, we could observe how his expression took on much of the *sagittal plane*, resulting in his singing becoming softer, which led to the perception that the aria was performed with the idea of *inalare la voce* in mind.

Lastly, Eric was tasked to use *spell* the other way around namely, entralling the new young men in this sect. In his subsequent performance, we could observe a dense and slightly dangerous timbre that technically sounded free and easy. By the time we had finished working, it was obvious what a huge benefit it was for Eric to be so specific in his performance. During this time, he presented many diverse versions of singing and portraying the music.

Catherine

Finally, it was Catherine's turn and, as was the case with Eric, Catherine had made significant vocal progress since I first had heard her more than a year before. I observed a warmer timbre in her voice, as well as it being richer in volume than before. I asked her whether she was aware of her own progress.

Yes...yes! I watched my audition video for the opera school almost two years ago and...what a difference! I heard exactly that thin 'needle sound' and so I recorded myself the other day and it's quite a 'sick' difference."

Catherine also confessed that she found the didactic strategies based on the LMT to benefit her musical theatre singing, not least when it came to explicit belting.

For this session, Catherine had chosen to work with Giulietta's aria, *O quante volte* from Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. I found her initial presentation to be excellent – uncompromising. We continued with Catherine sharing her interpretation of Giulietta's situation in the scene. Catherine imagined Giulietta standing alone in her room, wearing a wedding gown. She suddenly truly realises that she is going to marry Tebaldo, a man she does not love. The decision has been made and is irreversible. Realising how powerless she is, she sees death as the only way out of the situation. Catherine explained that Giulietta feels hopeless and appeals to God. The first few phrases Catherine imagines herself conversing with God and then visualises Romeo, who is the one she truly loves, in front of her. We discussed the contexts in which powerless and oppressed women were completely controlled by strong, patriarchal structures. To cement an understanding of such gender subjectivity even more, I drew parallels between Giulietta's circumstances and 21st-century societies in which a dictatorial regime still oppressed and subjugated women, where, for example, morality police subjected women to the utmost degradation.

Considering the *inner attitudes*, Catherine stated that she perceived Giulietta as a character who had a lot of *awake* in her, but also features of *remote*. I agreed with Catherine's perception that she sings this aria with the *externalised drive* known as

passion. Wanting Catherine to have another experience while singing the aria, I suggested she uses *spell* instead. I suggested that she might imagine being paralyzed by the whole situation. Catherine, like Eva, seemed to have the ability to change focus and conditions with incredible ease. She proceeded to sing with a clear *spell* that brought less high-octane singing, with greater variation in dynamics and more warmth and roundness in the tone. Catherine herself noticed that she now sang more steadily, without pressing. Eva expressed that, in this version, Catherine's singing had become more vulnerable and had indicated a sense of fear.

Finally, I asked Catherine to use the externalised drive known as *spell* and, as Giulietta, was required to enchant her nanny. She was to order her nanny to go and murder Tebaldo, so that she will not have to marry him. Catherine pulled out a chair, sat down and sang intimately to her nanny. I observed how the vibrato changed a bit. It became a little smaller and slower and the dotted notes were softer. The singing became more dynamically varied. When she was done singing, Catherine confessed that she thought her bottom notes had disappeared a little, while Eric noticed that she had focused more on the individual words while singing, instead of the lyrics as a mass of text.

In the second verse of the aria, we switched to the externalised drive known as *vision*. I suggested: "What if I didn't have to marry Tebaldo and instead could dedicate my life to Romeo...oh how wonderful that would be". When Catherine had sung this version, Eric stated that she had achieved what he had been looking for in the other versions, namely *piano* nuances. In my opinion, Catherine's extremely soft singing would also carry on even a large stage. I explained that, with such singing, Catherine is able to "catch our attention and we become like flies around a sugar cube." Furthermore, she had been very successful in not only being able to achieve strong forte and very delicate and soft piano singing, but she had also found the dynamic levels in between these two extremes, namely *mezzo piano* and *mezzo forte*. I argued that maybe that is where a singer should be most of the time, and Eva concurred that

"it was so clear that you don't need more than that. And...it becomes more...it becomes stronger and clearer. It's fascinating that there is so little at first glance and yet there is so much more."

Catherine nodded and agreed with a satisfied smile: "Yes, it can be so small but so powerful when it's done right."

Our last session had come to an end and all my data collection had been completed. I thanked Eva, Catherine and Eric for their participation, commitment, contribution and benevolence throughout the process of the research study. In conclusion, I praised them, in addition to being such fine singers, for also daring to offer so much of themselves in this work.

"You have also made your emotional life available in our artistic exploration in a fantastic way and that is usually the hardest and most demanding part – a huge compliment to you!"

CHAPTER 10: SECOND ROUND OF DATA COLLECTION: TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH AFRICA

10.1 South African College of Music (SACM)

A long time had passed since I had first met the participants by the time I returned to South Africa for the second part of my data collection. I was looking forward to hearing whether the singers had continued with exploring the tools since the previous time and, if so, how. However, the situation had changed since my last visit to SACM and two of the participants had withdrawn for various reasons. The remaining singers were the mezzo-soprano Olga and one of the tenors, Carl. As was the case at the research sites in Sweden, I worked with all the participants at the respective research sites in South Africa being present during both sessions. I also used the same teaching and learning materials while recapitulating the work we had done during the previous round of data collection (see 9.1 and 9.1.1 in Chapter Nine).

Initially, especially since so much time had passed since we last saw each other, I wanted to hear what the participants remembered from the previous stay. I wanted to make sure that they had understood what we were doing and asked them if they themselves had incorporated the tools from the technique into their routines. Olga began by explaining how she had understood the importance of involving the body in singing. She spoke about the different *motion factors* and how they could together form different *working actions*. Then we rehearsed the song *Amor vincit omnia*, first just to recall the song, and then with the *working action wringing*. When I heard her sing, I clearly remembered her as a singer and was reminded of my observation that she leaned towards starting the note weakly and then swelling on each note, before ebbing away again – creating ‘sound sausages’. Singers who have this inclination strive to sing musically, but the lack of legato and smoothness is rather perceived as unmusical and is less technically favourable. Miller (2008:135) even regards this singing style as being potentially harmful.

I asked Olga to perform also with a *wringing* movement and the result was slightly better, but to further improve the legato I asked her to sing *pressing* instead. I

suggested different movements and she chose to use her arm to perform a *pressing* movement in the air, away from herself. In order to find a more fluid phonation, we then chose *gliding*. Olga herself noted that it had become easier to sing. When asked if she sang with a different register in her voice, she replied that it was more of a head register in *gliding*. My own observation was that she had been pressing her chest register too high (not only in the first version when we sang through the song, but also in the *wringing* and *pressing* versions). Now, without us talking about her register blending prior to her last rendition, she had – just by thinking *gliding* – redistributed the blending of the middle register, moving seamlessly from a chest *mix voix* to a more suitable head *mix voix*. The keys we worked with were d minor, e^b minor and e minor.

We then revisited Laban's *three-dimensional planes*. We started with retiring in the *sagittal plane*. I asked her to sing all the lyrics of *Amor vincit omnia* filtered through an [u] vowel while moving backwards. After that, I asked Olga to try the same plane, but with advancing in the *sagittal plane*. When I asked whether she had experienced a difference, she said that advancing in the *sagittal plane* had resulted in more flow and freedom in her singing. However, I did not observe such a big difference in her sound. After Olga had also sung while accessing a *vertical plane* with the help of singing all the vowels on [a] and a *horizontal plane* by means of using the [i] vowel, we agreed that perceptions of a *vertical plane* were most helpful for her. "To me, you are already a singer who sings in the *sagittal plane*," I said, "but when you add, especially the *vertical plane*, you get a good balance in your *chiaroscuro*."

The first thing Carl mentioned when I asked him to recount what he remembered from my last visit was how we had worked on his posture and how he thought it had helped him. During the first round of data collection at SACM, we had worked with, amongst other things, a lot with gravity and weight to stabilize the body and anchor the voice. Carl and I started this preparation for the first session of the second round of data collection by revisiting the various *working actions*. Starting with *punching* I asked him to punch my upper arm. Carl was obviously hesitant, and I assured him that it was perfectly fine, even though I was a teacher. I tried to create a comfortable, safe atmosphere by jokingly asking Olga whether she had also observed how pleased Carl was at the prospect of hitting me, at which everyone laughed. Overreacting when he

did punch my arm, I said: "OK, I'll remember that forever." This disproportionate reaction again caused laughter and relieved what might have been an awkward situation. The whole interaction was also indicative of how one can help a singer use a didactic strategy based on the LMT while the singer is experiencing some tension. Once we had worked through all the contending and yielding qualities physically in different ways, we went on to singing them.

Much of the work in this instance consisted of really refining the various *working actions* and clearly separating them. We noticed, for example, that Carl could make a clearer difference between *gliding* and *floating*. He started making spontaneous hand movements that correlated with the different qualities and I encouraged him to really involve his whole body.

Bo: "Did you feel or hear any difference between *gliding* and *pressing*?"

Carl: "Yes, in pressing I felt that I could open at the back more."

Bo: "And Olga what did you hear?"

Olga: "More anchored sound."

Bo: "I also experienced more presence when you sang with *pressing*. You can take this working action into account if someone ever expresses a wish that you should sing denser or with more presence, or vice versa. If you hear or feel yourself...straining your voice, look for a *gliding* quality instead."

We continued with the *three planes* and Carl achieved a particularly well-balanced resonance when applying didactic strategies based on the *horizontal plane*. When accessing the *vertical plane*, on the other hand, Carl's tongue again clearly retracted, and the timbre sounded backwards, heavy and less free. Using didactic strategies based on the *sagittal plane*, Carl got to try the advancing, as well as the retiring *sagittal planes*. When asked whether he had experienced any difference, he replied that he had experienced a more tense phonation when imagining the retiring *sagittal plane*. He explained his perception when singing while imagining the advancing *sagittal plane*: "I could see the voice flowing forward." My own observation was that Carl had made fine progress by improving his posture, anchoring his voice more and singing with a

much freer tongue, which had been a significant challenge during the first round of data collection.

10.1.1 First session

10.1.1.1 Externalised drives

Olga

Olga was already at an advanced level, having significant musical expression and emotional registers and, therefore, I did not consider it so meaningful for her to further devote herself to the *grades of intensity*. I had only mentioned the *externalised drives* very briefly during my first visit and now we examined each of the four qualities and started the practical work with *doing*. The didactic strategy based on this *externalised drive* involved Olga simply moving a few chairs from one side to another. She was instructed to act mechanically and robotically. She managed well and we agreed that the performance had become mechanical. I observed how her singing had become static – lacking flow.

In *passion*, I asked Olga to try to seduce a presumptive audience. I urged her to sing as passionately and fervently as she could. She did well and, when I asked what her experience was, she laughed and said: "It felt a little bit strange. I wasn't thinking of my singing." I suggested that it might sometimes be a good thing not to be so self-aware of one's own singing. Next, I wanted her to imagine that the *passion* was depicted while she imagined *being* the fire. As she used this didactic strategy, her singing became louder, and I noticed that she also sang more legato and with more resonance in the higher register. The final didactic strategy based on *passion* required Olga to be the embers, instead of the flames, in the fire. As I explained the strategy to her, I referred to an inner *passion*, more than an outer one.

Olga: "Yes, now the air was enough...and it felt like I created more intensity in the singing. I also felt a lot more involvement in muscle work here" - she pointed her abdominal and flank muscles and continued, "a bit challenging because my muscles are not used to do it."

Carl: "Yes, your singing sounded more controlled now...in a good way."

The purpose of gradually reducing the perceptions from the extreme form of a blazing fire to, ultimately, the smaller and more intense glow of embers, was to first establish an embodied voice clearly before reducing the loudness in favour of the intensity of sound. The intention was that the body and the mind would transfer the big gestures into a smaller expression as well.

When it came to *spell*, I asked Olga to share her thoughts when she heard the word *spell*. She thought for a moment before saying: "Witchcraft." I explained that one can both cast a spell on someone, but you can also be spellbound, hypnotized or enchanted by someone. I gave some examples: "You might *spell* a child when you tell a ghost story. A terrible example of being *spelled* could perhaps be when someone becomes petrified and frozen during a robbery or, even worse, a rape".

The first didactic strategy based on *spell* involved her imagining that she was alone out in the woods when suddenly two dinosaurs – at least 20 metres high – appear, looking down at her. Although she tried wholeheartedly to imagine being in a *spell* while singing, I felt that she was 'guarding' the notes and focused more on singing beautifully than being mesmerized by the two dinosaurs. I heard one difference though, namely the way she breathed while inhaling. She had taken more audible breaths, but it was a way of incorporating the breath as part of depicting the meaning of the song. The breathing had become more in line with the expression, or a part of the expression.

In order to further enhance her perceptions about *spell*, I pointed out that *spell* lacks *space* and suggested that she imagines that, should she flinch or move, she might be eaten by the dinosaurs. Using this didactic strategy, Olga's second rendition of the song was more exciting. I could hear that her legato singing was stronger and the perception that she was singing with great urgency affected the phrasing in a

favourable way. From a vocal technique perspective, it was interesting to note that she now also sang with a more relaxed jaw, which led to a freer timbre.

In the third version of the song, I wanted to see whether, in addition to the relaxed jaw, which in turn affected the freedom of the larynx, she could also achieve an internal activity via the zygomatic muscles that lift the velum, which in turn affects the velopharyngeal area in the vocal tract and balance the resonance favourably (Miller, 2004:92). I encouraged her to perform the song as if being simultaneously mesmerized and flabbergasted. "Be a little naïve as if you are thinking *Are they really dinosaurs? My teacher at school told they were extinct.*" When I asked her after she had sung whether she had experienced any difference, she replied: "I don't know...sometimes I see the dinosaurs in front of me and sometimes I don't". When I listened to the recording afterwards, I was able to hear a big difference in Olga's singing. The voice offered more higher harmonics in the final rendition of the song.

Up to this point we had used *spell* imagining Olga as the one being spellbound. The next step was to imagine her hypnotizing, mesmerizing or spellbinding something. I brought out a chair and asked her to imagine that there was a little girl sitting on it. I asked her to be the dinosaur and to use various spells or other means to try to mesmerize or enchant the little child. Believing that she could do more, I interrupted her shortly after she had begun singing, and said: "Sorry I don't believe you." She tried again, singing with much more intention. However, I noted that her solution was often to increase the volume of her singing, so I encouraged her to differentiate between sound volume and sound intensity. I suggested that she imagines being so superior that she could spell-bind the girl by doing almost nothing other than simply believing that she can do so. As she sang, I reminded her of her sovereignty by shouting: "Self-confidence!" I praised her effort and shared my observations that "now we have had two different versions of your flow. The last one offered us a more *bound flow* and thus the song had a higher density in both emotion and sound".

Finally, Olga and I worked with *vision*. Wanting to follow Malmgren's example of using Stanislavski's *magic if*, I asked her to sing while being filled with the *vision* that one day there will be a South Africa where there is no poverty, and all people have a well-paid

job. I wanted her to refer to something within a familiar context that might trigger the emotion necessary to relay a message.

Bo: "Wow, I really believed you!"

Carl (nodding his head and smiling): "Yeah!"

Bo (to Olga): "And how was that to you?"

Olga: "It felt...it felt real because I was actually thinking about what you said to me."

Olga reiterated her statement in her written reflection: "*Vision* worked instantly because for a moment I wasn't focusing on how I sound but rather the *vision*." To me it was obvious that didactic strategies based on *vision* helped Olga to relate directly to the given situation.

After the theory and the exercises with the *externalised drives*, Olga and I started working with the repertoire. She brought the same piece this time as she had done for the first round of data collection, namely *Nobles seigneurs, salut!* by Meyerbeer. Reflecting on the previous time we had worked on this aria, Olga recalled that we had worked on her posture. I actually found it interesting to observe how the collapsed chest, slightly hunched shoulders and a compressed back of the neck that I had noticed the previous time were absolutely absent now as Olga used the didactic strategies based on the externalised drives *passion* and *vision* with total abandon. Olga also remembered how we had worked with the various *working actions* previous time.

This time Olga sang the aria with a strong *appoggio della nucca* and, as a result was able to obtain the necessary support for her singing. In my opinion she gave a very good performance, and I observed two things in particular: the highest register in her voice had improved and her way of singing was overall more precise in details, varied in subtext and dynamics, and a contemplated intention on all the notes. This performance was contrary to the somewhat generalised version I had perceived it to be the previous time and I commended her on her improvement.

When asked to reflect upon her performance, Olga confessed that she was not really satisfied with the technical aspect of her singing: "I wanted to be able to come to the end so I had to think about the character, instead of the technique, so I could get the aria going." I found merit in Olga's perception about her performance, but wanted to reassure her that there were also positive aspects in her technique. I pointed out that she had developed a lot since last time and the high register felt more secure, to which Olga replied, "Yes, I've been thinking a lot about what you said last time about singing the highest register more horizontally and it's helped me a lot."

I also brought it to Olga's attention that, while she was singing, I had heard a singer who was a little too concerned with the vocal technique, while wandering back and forth when it came to being in character. I asked her what the first bars of *coloratura* in the aria might mean. She hummed the phrase and said: "Basically, I'm making fun of them!" "Yes, exactly", I replied "and perhaps showing off a little bit?". I encouraged her to stay in character and explore what *working actions* she was doing. instead of the other way around. I suggested that she should decide the *working actions* first and then perform them.

Since so much of what she was doing was so good, I wanted to challenge Olga further. In my opinion, she was not *in* the situation as much as one would wish for and, therefore, what one heard when she sang was not as precise or as vivid as was necessary. I asked her to imagine Carl being one of the audience members and to really challenge him, as well as to make sure she 'owned the initiative'. I pointed out that the "audience can really appreciate what you do without smiling back, so make up your mind to make him (them) fall for your charm and not give up until they smile back". I found the result to be more interesting when Olga sang the aria again. Once we had figured out which *externalised drive* was the dominant one, we agreed that it was a mixture of *passion* and *spell*. I suggested that Olga should look even more for *passion* in order to get the right amount of energy and expression since, sometimes, there are indications of shyness in her expression and musicianship.

When asked what *working action* she thought might be relevant to the second part of the aria, Olga answered that she thought it to be *gliding*. I pointed out that, even though

she perceived the *working action* to be *gliding*, she was in fact using gestures with her arms that implied *floating*. She reconsidered and determined that *floating* was correct. When she had sung part of the aria, I asked her what she thought. "Funny enough", she stated, "I was thinking *floating* but it sounded *gliding*". My observation was how Olga's singing had become more specific, regardless of whether she was thinking *gliding* or *floating*.

I asked her to sing the first part of the aria once again and to clearly combine the *working action*, *floating*, with the *externalised drive* known as *spell*. Olga did extremely well when she sang this part again." Very good! You are a fantastic singer!" I asserted. "You have a brilliant technique, and you have to rely also on your expression skills because you have a lot in there (pointing to her chest) and we want to take part of that!" I declared. She smiled and nodded her head.

As we concluded the lesson, I urged Olga to always be specific and never offer a generalised version of phrase. I also encouraged her to make sure that she did not stay in the 'learning stage', but to always continue to the 'performing stage'. In my opinion, many singers tend to stop developing and are satisfied when they have just learnt the right music, instead of challenging themselves with, for example, different ways of phrasing, dynamic variety and agogic displacements – always attempting to create in the moment and to give birth to the music anew every time.

Olga mentions in her written reflection how confusing she had initially found the *externalised drives*, but that she had realised how effective they were as time went on. She writes: "I noticed (while doing the externalised drives) that when we are not in control, the work becomes easier (breathing and relaxation of muscles)."

Carl

When we started working with the *externalised drives* with Carl, his task was to unpack and repack his bag while he sang *Amor vincit omnia*. I explained that I thought *doing* was good to "get out of one's head" and act more mechanically. It took a long time and many attempts before Carl finally let the voice follow the activity instead of the other way around.

The next *externalised drive* was *passion* and I explained that *passion* presupposes a strong inner participation. I wanted to offer him a scenario in which he could be comfortable, so I asked him to be a salesman. Olga suggested that he could sell sneakers and I asked her to be the customer. Carl worked frantically to sell his goods and I was able to observe intensity and power, as well as a *free flow* of air in his voice. Next, I asked Olga to turn around and instructed Carl to take up position behind Olga and, confidently and discreetly, ask her to go to her friend and tell the friend that he was in love with her. Speaking on his behalf, I whispered: "I give you fifty rand if you do that for me." I also suggested that his *passion* should be without flame – only glowing. Using the didactic strategy (imagination) based on *passion*, Carl performed a very clear version of *Amor vincit omnia* that now was filled with a *bound flow* but still with high intensity. I praised them both for playing out the scene and said that I admired their courage to jump in and unconditionally try and experiment. It was inspiring to me and made the job easy.

As we started working with *spell*, Carl took the initiative and suggested that he might imagine that he was spellbound by a mystical light. After he had sung the song the first time, I urged him not only to be spellbound, but also perhaps more enchanted in a positive way. Both renditions in which Carl had used didactic strategies based on *spell* were very fine and offered a fluid and dynamically varied vocal style. In addition, the second rendition of the song offered lightness and warmth in the sound.

Finally, we explored *vision*, and I asked Carl to envision that he was singing at the Metropolitan opera house. His rendition offered a wealth of colour and high technical quality. My own observations were confirmed when Olga gave an amazed smile and claimed: "It was sooo bright!" I shared my perception that a few of the top notes were so beautiful – straight tone for a few tenths of a second, before becoming vibrant and filled with warmth. I told Carl that I assumed he had not done that voluntarily, but that this was an example of what can happen when one is very specific in terms of the *externalised drive*.

The aria that Carl brought for this session was Handel's *Every valley* from the *Messiah*. When he had sung the aria, Carl stated that he wished to improve the *coloratura* passages, as he had experienced his throat tightening when he sang them.

Bo: "If you were your own teacher what instruction would you give yourself to make it easier?"

Carl: "To sing it a little bit lighter."

Bo: "Of course that could work but, at the same time it could result in what I call a bit of 'tiptoe' singing...a less embodied singing."

Considering what I had heard, it occurred to me that Carl already sang quite a lot with a *dabbing* quality. I reconsidered the didactic strategies we were using and decided to explore whether a *gliding* quality could be more beneficial. I warned: "To you it might sound more sloppy and less precise, but to us it will be clear enough and you will sing the onsets more effortlessly". Carl sang the aria again and both Olga and I agreed that his singing was softer and lighter in a good way. Olga further expressed how she perceived a phonation even between notes. I then asked Carl to add *passion* and, when doing so, his singing became even more urgent. I also asked him to consider the melismatic phrase on the word *exalted* as if mimicking popcorn popping in a pan. In order to further encourage him, I shouted: "Really?" between each *motif* and he managed to sing a wonderful phrase with free phonation and increasing intensity.

Carl summarised his experiences, perceptions and observations about the group lessons and the *external drives* in his written reflection.

"I am a very shy person by nature but working in a group lesson forced me to become vibrant, but at the same time I had to think very fast on the spot when giving an answer.

"I struggle listening to myself so that I can be able to criticize myself because my aim is to correct [I had done] wrong the first time".

In this written reflection he explains how the *externalised drives* had helped him to shift the focus away from thinking about his voice too much. This shift in focus had allowed him, for example, to sing the *coloratura* passages more freely.

10.1.2 Second session

10.1.2.1 Inner attitudes

In this session, we focused on the *inner attitudes*. As was the case with the participants at the other research sites, we initially worked only with the spoken little monologue. They performed the monologue and Olga, particularly, varied her depictions of the various inner attitudes a lot. There was, for example, a big difference between *stable* and *mobile*. In *mobile*, the pauses became longer and more numerous, the prosody much more varied, the phonation became more fluid, and the *motion factor space* turned flexible. She added a lot of *shadow moves* in her physical expression and there was greater flexibility in general. In *near*, both singers turned down the volume and acquired a strong presence. For Olga, *remote* in particular became very different, while Carl found considerable value in *adream*. Because they both had found the *inner attitudes* very difficult, I assured them that we were only skimming the surface and that I fully understood that they had found it challenging. At the same time, I pointed out that, since we could still hear clear differences in their way of performing the monologue, these *inner attitudes* still had the potential to serve as a filter through which the text could be considered.

Olga

Olga chose *Voi lo sapete, o mamma* from Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* with which to work during this session. Her first rendition of this aria already filled me with admiration. I praised her for the significant amount of emotional expression she had so generously conveyed. I asked her to name two things about her performance with which was satisfied.

"First of all, after our class on Monday I worked a bit on gliding because it makes the voice flow...and it's very easy to sing because, when you do a character and thinking about what you are doing and saying and trying to tell the story...sometimes the voice wants to be tight. But now, because of the gliding...if I tell myself before I even start 'I just gonna glide' everything goes so fine! I also found a good way to get into the emotions...I was a bit more into myself, like... thinking before I even sang something."

Taking a cue from her response I did not immediately start working on the *inner attitudes*, but rather urged her to be observant that *gliding* did not become *floating*. I also asked her to explore a lighter version of *pressing* (cutting) and we agreed that her singing gradually moved away from an uneven, almost sausage-like singing, becoming increasingly equal and steady. We also talked about what Santuzza sings in this scene and Olga explained how she felt that Santuzza was pulling herself together and, with restrained anger, conveys how she had been abandoned. We agreed that this restrained anger could justify a little more *weight* that *pressing* can offer. We worked further and also found phrases that contained *flicking*, as well as *slashing* and derivations of *punching* (*stabbing*).

I summarized what we had done up to that point, which was work based mainly on the musical content, and trying to gain as much expression and better vocal technique as possible. The time had come to see whether we could find Santuzza's *inner attitude*. Olga suggested *mobile*. After a brief recap of what *mobile* can entail, I asked her to try singing through the aria again with that *inner attitude*. I had already perceived a *mobile* attitude when Olga first sang the aria at the beginning of this session and when I listened to the recording of this new attempt at *mobile*, it was somewhat difficult to determine whether there was such a big difference. I also noticed while listening to the recording that unfortunately, probably triggered by her already high standard, I had wanted too many things at the same time. I had given too many instructions at the same time and, as a result, took the focus away from the *inner attitude*.

Something I often noticed when teaching in South Africa is the courage and ability of many singers to portray strong emotions without succumbing to them. This was often also the case among singers who may be perceived as being innately shy, but who

manage to portray strong emotional emotions when singing. Olga was such a singer – one with the ability to bravely internalise and depict the character's emotions. When I finally asked her whether she had any concerns, she explained that she found it difficult to get enough air in the aria. She was given two brief suggestions. One was that she should move backwards in the *sagittal plane* while she sang, and the other was that she, and not I (as the accompanist), should take the lead in the phrases. She accepted these suggestions and was very satisfied with the result, feeling that they helped her get sufficient air to sing through the phrases.

Carl

When it was Carl's turn to sing the repertoire he had selected for this session, he wanted to work with *Se il mio nome saper voi bramate* from *The Barber of Seville* by Rossini. After he had sung through the aria, I asked my usual question: "What are you happy with?" He replied that he had tried to sing with *floating* as a *working action* and thought he succeeded quite well with it and also that he sang with the tongue in a *horizontal plane*. What he wanted to improve was to find more relaxation in his singing and get away a little from constantly judging himself while he sang.

As was the case with Olga, I took his response to address this issue before we started working on the *inner attitudes*. I talked about feeling his voice more from the inside, rather than being guided by listening so intensely to his own voice from the outside. I asked him to put his hands behind his ears and cup them forward, thereby singing into his own palms and thus amplify his own hearing. I observed that he sang noticeably more quietly when he applied this strategy, and I asked him whether he had perceived any difference. He smiled and said: "Yes!". We agreed that the voice floated with less pressure and that the tongue had experienced less interference and that the voice had sounded less like that of Kermit⁷⁴ the frog. I perceived his singing to be more like the movements of a jellyfish, the animal we had previously associated with *floating*. Carl's technique had improved considerably since I had heard him during the first round of

⁷⁴ *Kermit* the frog from the well-known television programme, *The Muppet Show*.

data collection. I commended him for being able to adjust and release unnecessary tension so much more quickly this time.

We returned to the aria to work on the *inner attitudes*. Carl was aware of how Count Almaviva serenades Rosina and sings of his love to her. We explored the different *inner attitudes* and eventually decided that Count Almaviva's *inner attitude* is *adream*. I asked Olga to sit on a chair with her back to Carl and asked him to woo her. I suggested that, unfortunately, Rosina is blind, and Carl had to convince her of his love using only his voice. I pointed out again that, for now, we were paying less attention to the staging and, by using didactic strategies based on the LMT, were exploring how we could develop the vocal technique and musical performance.

When Carl had finished singing, I asked Olga whether she had perceived any difference from his previous renditions of the aria. "Yeah, mmm...I felt his feelings now," she said. I agreed and noted that his inner participation had been much greater. I had perceived his singing to be more specific – containing more intent. Carl shared his perception that he had sung more softly and with less force. I also pointed out that he had sung more *voce mista*⁷⁵ instead of, as before, *voce di petto*.⁷⁶ Additionally, I pointed out to Carl how important it is for singer to *be* interested in something instead of *acting* interesting (Brunetti, 2006:28). In the scenario created above, it would be possible for Carl, by clearly wanting something from someone else to be less self-aware, to focus less on his own singing and more on how to address someone else. We all thought that, by clearly being keen to address Rosina with *adream* in mind, Carl had noticeably delivered a better and more varied performance.

To get even more from Carl, I asked him to sing the aria one last time. Now Olga was tasked with falling asleep and snoring loudly if she did not hear clear intentions in his voice and phrasing. Carl managed to convey an intensity and an admirable sense of urgency, to which I responded: "Lucky you! She didn't fall asleep!"

⁷⁵ *voce mista* - mixed voice

⁷⁶ *voce di petto* - chest voice

The participants' written reflections summarised what they had perceived, observed and experienced during these two sessions, as well as during their involvement in the project in general. Carl wrote:

"I noticed that as much as we were to express the same attitudes, we did it differently. It showed me that you can be given the same story but how you tell it depends on how you relate to it and of course how it aligns with your character."

Olga also stated that during my first visit she had learned more singing technique and during the second round of data collection more about telling a story and convincing an audience about its content.

"After our first session my singing changed, from how I place my voice (especially high notes) to having a very present appearance posture on stage."

Olga wrote about how she loved *gliding* and *adream*. "I feel like they'll make my life easy going forward.". She claims that the research had inspired her a lot and ended by saying: "So it's Singing, Movement and Expression all together. Art is a wonder!!!"

In his written reflection Carl claims that the gravitation part played an important role in his development. He also stresses the *three planes* and the way we had worked with them. Carl admits that he should "develop trust" in himself, because the things he learned made sense and he could hear himself; he also received positive feedback from others about how his singing had improved when he worked with didactic strategies based on the LMT. Finally, Carl writes: "Applying everything at once is not easy but I have told myself that learning something takes time."

10.2 North-West University (NWU) School of Music

In August 2022 I returned to the NWU School of Music in Potchefstroom for the second round of data collection at this research site. As was the case at the other research sites, the activities during which I collected data were divided into two sessions.

To make sure that the participants and I were on the same page regarding the starting point for this second part of my visit, I followed a sound didactic strategy of revising what we had done the previous time I had visited the NWU School of Music to collect data. I wanted to determine how much they remembered about the work we had done before and was interested to find out whether they had used the tools since the previous visit. When asked if they had consciously used the technique, Gift replied that, together with his teacher, he now used a lot of *working actions* and had come to talk more about impulses. Nkosi said that she particularly used *gliding* when she wanted to achieve legato singing. Precious shared that she had found the *vertical plane* to be a great aid to her singing. She also mentioned that *working actions* had been good and, when I asked her to explain how these actions had been helpful, she pondered for a long time without finding the words. I urged her to express herself in her mother tongue, suggesting that someone else could translate. She let out a long stream of sentences in Xhosa and Gift translated that she had found it so useful when she wanted to attempt different variations in her singing. I reminded her of our work with Despina and argued that that aria was almost the clearest example I thus far had found of being able to utilize basically all *working actions* in one single work. Phillipe also reflected on the past sessions.

Phillipe: "As you may remember, I used a lot of punching in my singing?"

Bo: "Yes, I remember that well."

Phillipe: "So now I've been working more on...gliding, floating and... flicking."

Bo: "The yielding qualities...yes, you really did find a lot in these when we worked last time."

10.2.1 First session

10.2.1.1 Externalised drives

In the past I had only mentioned *externalised drives* in passing to some of the group. Therefore, I first did a thorough theoretical overview of the *externalised drives* and then we worked with them. As before, the participants did the different *externalised drives* while singing *Amor vincit omnia*. While using the *externalised drive* known as *doing*, Gift and Precious were given the task to move books from one bookshelf to another. We noticed how mechanically and somewhat rigidly Gift carried out the task, totally lacking flow, while Precious momentarily hesitated and planned and indulged in a bit of *passion*. Phillippe's job was to constantly tie and untie his shoes while singing. He went so completely into his task of *doing* that he even forgot to sing. We all laughed, and he tried again. We noticed that he added *passion* when he became a bit vexed about the shoelace getting stuck. Nkosi was also tasked with moving books from one bookshelf to another and we noticed that it was challenging also for her to be in *doing* without involving *passion*.

When Gift was to try working with the *externalised drive* known as *passion*, I asked him to arrange the books with which he had worked earlier once again, but now with *passion* in mind. I exemplified: "Oh, what interesting books! Oh, what beautiful envelopes!" Thinking that Gift's first attempt had not paid off so much, I suggested that he imagined being a book geek in an antiquarian bookshop who was absolutely thrilled about finding some books for which he had been looking for so long. When he completed the task, I asked the others if they had observed any difference in his singing. I emphasised once again that the focus should be on what we had heard, more than what we had seen with regard to stage presentation. Precious claimed that the second version was brighter and much more energetic. My own observation was that I had heard more, and partially different, consonant sounds in the second version. *Vincit* for example, sounded more like *fincit*.

When it was Precious's turn to sing, I wanted to challenge her way of creating *passion*. I explained to her that "now I want you to really *be* the passion while you sing...your

whole body is a fire with the burning flames, and you are to be a consuming fire". She looked at me with wide-eyed excitement, while at the same time seeming to be a little terrified. She exclaimed: "Yeah woo!". "Yeeah!" I replied, "and you shall burn down this chair in front of you". She started singing but soon burst out laughing and I urged her to be as out of control and a little crazy as I could see she was feeling. In her first version, I noticed that she was too focused on the reactions of the other participants, but Gift said encouragingly and calmly: "Don't care about us". I encouraged Precious and told her how brave I thought she was. I used the *grades of intensity* (asking her to imagine the *passion* being on a scale of 1–10) and asked her to do an *extreme* version. She proceeded to present a new and stronger version of *Amor vincit omnia*. When I asked her to reflect on how it had felt, she replied that it was out of her comfort zone, and she thought her singing was "just okay". Gift added that he had found her *passion* quite controlled with traces of *doing* present.

In order for Precious to experience a different level of *passion*, I asked her to sit on a chair and now, instead of the most extreme form of *passion*, to imagine *passion* in the form of an intense glow, a hot yellow, orange ember that glowed brightly inside her. Precious found the second version easier to portray than the first one, which had been challenging for her. Phillipe expressed his opinion that the second version of her singing had sounded more embodied and had contained a lot of *floating*, an opinion with which everyone present agreed. My own observation was that the first version, with the consuming fire, had partially stopped at *how* she would do it and what she thought it looked like from the outside.

Phillipe's assignment was to portray *passion* as an act of seduction. He had to choose a point in the room or one of the other participants to be the victim of his seduction. After careful consideration, he chose Nkosi. We talked about imagining being an excited lion while singing and imagining the *passion*. A great cheer and laughter erupted when he finished singing his version of *Amor vincit omnia*. "Very brave", I stated. "Beware of that man," I jokingly warned the other participants. However, when I watched the recording of this session, I observed an elevated level of energy and urgency, but also something less good, namely a voice that sounded somewhat tight,

with more interference from a withdrawn tongue. If I had noted it in the moment, I probably would have suggested imagining a *horizontal plane* in the tongue or pharynx.

Nkosi's scenario was to find the quality of *passion* in a forest full of rare, amazing berries that she loved. We placed the fantasy berries on imaginary bushes on the ground and higher up in tree branches. Her task was to spot them and 'eat' them while she sang. Not so much happened in her first attempt but when she became more specific, in her second attempt, one could hear a difference in her singing. There was a slightly more balanced vibrato than before, and one could hear clearer impulses at the beginnings of phrases. Nkosi felt a little uncomfortable with 'pretending' in this way, but I explained that it is part of being a singer to make things up, play and fantasize.

We moved on to the *externalised drive* known as *spell* and I asked Phillipe to imagine that he was out in the woods and suddenly everything goes dark, and he understands that it is because of the shadow cast by the huge giant standing over him. I suggested that "perhaps it can be both exciting and terrifying." When he subsequently sang, I could immediately hear how he phrased differently and used dynamic differences as a part of the expression. He sang long notes with *messa di voce*, and his singing was a little slower in general. He also turned down the volume compared to what he had done previously while imagining some of the other *externalised drives*.

Gift was assigned to cast a spell over someone. I asked him to imagine that he worked in a *Kindergarten* and that he wants to enchant the children by telling a fairy tale. I suggested a slightly nasty and eerie fairy tale and that he should try to scare them with the wicked witch. He used the other singers as 'children' and tried to cast a spell over them and frighten them. He sang very softly, with a breathy timbre and a slow tempo. With his restrained singing, interrupted by sudden *sforzandi* (going from *bound flow* to *free flow*) he succeeded well in the art of illustrating *spell* with voice and musicality, and he also managed to frighten the other participants with his sudden movements of body and voice.

I wanted Precious to try another form of *spell* and she was asked to sing while imagining that she was almost paralyzing her unfaithful partner. I suggested that the

message should be: "If you ever cheat on me once again... I'll slap your face!". A cheer broke out among the others when she had sung. "That was a good one!" exclaimed Phillipe. I observed that Precious, who was otherwise a bit withdrawn and shy, showed both temperament and pathos and her singing became relentless, condensed and quite soft with her threatening *spell*.

Nkosi also had a go at telling a fairy tale to young children as she sang while imagining *spell*. She sang a couple of phrases and interrupted herself laughing. I called from the piano: "What happened?" and she complained in a shrill voice: "Oh, the way they looked at me!" We all laughed, and I reminded her that she was in charge of the whole situation. She continued and managed to find *spell* in her expression.

Finally, we worked with *vision*. I used Martin Luther King's famous *I have a dream* speech that he delivered in 1963 in Washington DC⁷⁷ as example of a strong *vision*. To further contextualize *vision*, we drew parallels with the *Black Lives Matter* movement, and we discussed how these ideas and visions could constitute good fuel for the *externalised drive vision*.

Precious began and I urged her to step into the role of a political leader: "Imagine you are speaking to your people about a better world; no wars, no pollution, no injustice and no poverty!" Phillipe raised his fist and exclaimed "*Amandla!*" I did not understand what he had said and asked him to say it once again. Immediately everyone raised their fists and shouted with one voice: "*Amandla – power to the people!*"⁷⁸ I felt their passion and commitment and encouraged them: "Yes, exactly...wonderful". I asked Precious whether she could step back and stand at the far end of the room and imagine that she was speaking to an audience consisting of several thousand people as she sang. "Very good," I said when she had finished singing. "You gave me goosebumps!".

⁷⁷ "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal'...I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character".

⁷⁸ The cry *Amandla Awethu* is associated with the struggle for political freedom in apartheid South Africa. The word *Amandla* (power) is customarily shouted by one person, after which the crowd would respond *Awethu!* (To the people/to us) with raised fists.

It was noticeable how easily she could relate to the subject once she had a clear frame of cultural reference and I could not discern any of her previous shyness. Even Phillippe also spontaneously commented that her previously reserved way of singing was not at all noticeable in this version. However, we noted that it was difficult to stick to only *vision* with this subtext and a lot of *passion* emerged as well. On the recording, I could hear a singer who 'leads' with her voice – an approach both technically and expressively associated with advancing in the *sagittal plane*. Furthermore, as the accompanist at the time, I have to admit that it was easy to follow her while she sang. My observation was that Precious sang with a denser phonation, more chest register and very clear articulation.

Gift's assignment was to sing as if he was an artistic painter. I suggested that he should imagine having "a vision of the perfect painting". "You see how the yellow goes into the blue, which goes into the green etcetera," I prompted him as I encouraged him to imagine having a paint brush in his hand. When Gift sang, one could immediately hear how sensitively and flexibly he used his voice. His singing became meditative and had traces of thoughtfulness. However, we were able to also discern traces of *passion* in Gift's singing.

Phillippe's task was to use *vision* as if he were dreaming of his own future international career as a great opera singer. I suggested that he could think: "Hmm, the Metropolitan opera is waiting for me, they just don't know it yet!". Gift's version sounded confident and self-evident, but it also tended to tip over towards *passion*. I asked him to try again and this time without any movements in his body. "Imagine you're singing only through your eyes...almost like you've turned your eyes and are looking into yourself instead," I suggested. As he sang again, my observation was that this version had a more *yielding quality* than his first version, which was more *contending*. I also shared my observation with the rest of the group that the voice now sounded more colourful and freer.

Upon completion of the activities discussed above, we summarised what we had been doing and I stated that we could also see how we had used different *grades of intensity*

through the different scenarios while exploring the various *externalised drives* with which we had worked. We then moved on to work on the *inner attitudes*.

10.2.1.2 Inner attitudes

After a review of the *inner attitudes* (*stable, mobile, near, remote, adream, awake*), I worked in the same way with this group as I had done previously with the other groups using the spoken monologue. The male participants in particular managed to create big differences between the different attitudes. Gift writes in his reflection that the *inner attitudes* and the *mental factors* resonated well with his artistry and musicality. He states: “I work easier with these principles a lot in my musical interpretations when I practise and when I perform.”

We noted that Gift found a *stable* that was quite fast, he spoke with a lower tone frequency and was direct and rather monotonous in his expression (*practical*)⁷⁹. On the other hand, Gift’s *mobile*, which he experienced far from himself, became very varied in the prosody and he performed with a lot of flexibility in both body and voice, and offered a light comic expression (*concealed*). Phillipe’s version of *mobile* echoed that of Gift, and he also performed a *mobile* character who became very emotionally involved. Nkosi indulged a bit of *mobile* in the *stable*. It sounded as if it was a bit of an effort to ‘make’ the children, but as she uttered the words, *Me myself, I have fourteen children and they are just like angels*, it was clear that she was so very proud of them. Precious found a good *stable inner attitude* (*self-contained*) and made it sound like it was great fun raising kids. They all found the other four attitudes much more difficult to grasp. However, I thought that Gift’s *near* became *human* with a down-to-earth character; Precious’s *adream* had touches of *irradiant* and became more varied in pitch when compared to the others’ *adream*, while Gift’s *awake* became intellectual and tended towards *acute*.

Finally, it was time to work on the *inner quests*, considering *what, where, when* and *why* questions and the related *mental factors, sensing, thinking, intuiting* and *feeling*.

⁷⁹ See 5.2.3 for the four different versions of the six inner attitudes.

As mentioned earlier, Malmgren developed Laban's *inner quests* further and combined them with Stanislavski's ideas about the actor's will and conscious thoughts, which resulted in Malmgren's *ten questions*. However, Stanislavski's technique was unknown to this group. I explained how important it was for a singer, just as for an actor, to be specific with the wishes and choices in a scene or an aria. To clearly illustrate this principle, we explored the Count's motives in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* as an example.

Bo: "What do you think about the Count's overall goal in the opera?"

Gift: "Hmm, I think that he wants to be...the big boss...he wants to do wrong but he doesn't want to pay for it."

Bo: "Do you think he consciously is doing wrong?"

Gift: "Yes!"

Precious (simultaneously): "No!"

An interesting discussion followed, which immediately made them actively relate to the various issues by asking questions such as *Who am I? What do I want in the scene/the play? What are my obstacles?* etcetera.

They were given the task for the next time to choose an opera aria or art song they had sung and to try to answer the *ten questions* (see 5.2.7). I encouraged them to experiment with the song and act enthusiastically and playfully – more than worry about whether it would be perfect.

10.2.2 Second session

10.2.2.1 Inner attitudes

Phillipe

Unfortunately, Gift could not attend the second session and, therefore, there were only three participants present. Phillipe was the first singer to sing and had chosen to sing Guglielmo's aria *Donne mie, la fate a tanti* from *Così fan tutte* by Mozart. We all agreed that, because of the high *tessitura* and the fact that the session was scheduled early

in the morning, this was quite a challenging aria for Phillipe to sing. We started by working on some of Malmgren's questions and Phillipe's answers indicated that he had a clear understanding of what he wanted to do in this scene.

- Q:** *What do I want in the scene?*
- P:** "In this scene I want to comfort Ferrando because his woman Fiordiligi has accepted a gift from me (Guglielmo), but my woman Dorabella didn't accept a gift from him (Ferrando). So, my woman was faithful to me but not his to him."
- Q:** *What do I want in the play?*
- P:** "He wanted to use the bet into which he entered with Don Alfonso to prove Dorabella's fidelity and love for him (Guglielmo)."
- Q:** *What do I want in life?*
- P:** "Guglielmo's goal in life was to have a girlfriend who is faithful to him and from whom he could receive and to whom he could give love and trust to feel safe".
- Q:** *To whom or what am I doing it?*
- P:** "To Ferrando."
- Q:** *What is my obstacle?*
- P:** "What if my girlfriend were to give in to Ferrando's courtship?"
Sympathy for his friend...a sense of dual loyalties."
- Q:** *Where I am I doing it?*
- P:** "During an outdoor braai (barbeque) in summer, in the backyard of his house in Potchefstroom."
- Q:** *Who am I?*
- P:** "Guglielmo is 28 years old and active as a soldier. His life revolves a lot around his girlfriend, his work and the colleagues who are there."

Having developed an understanding of the aria by answering seven of ten questions, we continued to translate the lyrics of the aria more thoroughly. Then I asked Phillipe whether his perception of how he wanted to sing the aria had become clear and, after having pondered a while, he replied: "I think so."

After Phillipe had sung through a couple of phrases, I asked what his intention was at that point when he sang, and he replied that he wanted to tell the story a little more

clearly. Nkosi agreed: "Yes there was a difference now! The way he sang now, you could tell he knew what he was singing about!" I asked whether it had also sounded different; whether the phonation had changed in any way, and Nkosi continued: "Yes it was a bit louder now and more advancing in the *sagittal plane*". We continued to critically appraise his performance of the aria bit by bit, which led to his subsequent attempts featuring clearer phrasing and more varied dynamic levels, while his eagerness to tell the story emerged more clearly. These changes became particularly obvious when we finally put the various phrases together in slightly bigger parts. Phillipe declares in his written reflection how important the didactic strategy involving Malmgren's questions was to him. Not only did it enable him to understand the character, but he had experienced how the character "linked to his personal self" and, thereby, understood how to portray the "relevant emotions needed for the aria". When I later listened to the recordings I had made of my session with Phillipe, I observed how my accompaniment had also become clearer and more in line with Phillipe's intentions. It is possible that this empathetic music making between myself and Phillipe had also affected his improved singing.

Finally, we tried to find Guglielmo's *inner attitude*. Phillipe suggested *stable* and the others in the group agreed. After he sang the aria once again, I asked the other singers whether Phillipe's singing had changed. Precious was of the opinion that his employment of the *inner attitude* had made a big difference and that Phillipe's performance had conveyed more meaning. Nkosi also claimed that the most recent version had contained more variations. My observation was that, by thinking *stable*, Phillipe had sung with more flow and, at the same time, in a way that was vocally healthier (not overloading the higher middle register by keeping the volume down). I found it interesting to listen to the recording much later. I noticed that the difference in technical freedom became quite significant; the voice flowed more freely, and the tongue's obstruction of sonorous freedom ceased.

In his written reflection Phillipe states that he found the *inner attitudes* challenging at first.

"I did not feel like they were making any difference to my sound, but my colleagues heard something different just as I heard the difference in their voices. As we played around with them, I started feeling the music and was able to make adjustments that brought positive changes to my voice."

Phillipe further acknowledges the substantial contribution that his peers' active participation made during the sessions.

"To hear their reflections and actually notice that you are not entirely clueless about what you are doing...motivates you because you can hear that there is a progress, and you start being calm and that leads to more progress."

Phillipe reiterates constantly throughout his reflection how essential he regarded the clear 'guidelines' that he could follow while rehearsing and performing – guidelines resulting from having access to didactic strategies based on the LMT. Phillipe continues to assert that "[t]he second session helped me bring the character to life and that had a positive impact on my voice because my singing had direction". Furthermore, he writes that he had noticed how the didactic strategies based on the LMT contributed to a freer and less tense voice. He reports proudly how he has received compliments for his technical improvement during the research period.

Precious

Precious was next to sing and had chosen to work on *Vergebliches Ständchen* by Brahms. She summarised the lyrics of the song succinctly: "The boy says he loves the girl, and he asks her to let him in. The girl refuses though, but it's not like she doesn't want him". Precious continued in her honest, naïve way: "I don't want you, but still...I mean I want you...yeah, that kind of situation." In my opinion the song was good material with which to work, because of the two different and clear characters.

Vergebliches Ständchen

(Niederrheinisches Volkslied)

Er: Guten Abend, mein Schatz,
Guten Abend, mein Kind!
Ich komm' aus Lieb' zu dir,
Ach, mach' mir auf die Tür,
Mach' mir auf die Tür!

Sie: Mein' Tür ist verschlossen,
Ich lass' dich nicht ein;
Mutter, die rät' mir klug,
Wär'st du herein mit Fug,
Wär's mit mir vorbei!

Er: So kalt ist die Nacht,
So eisig der Wind,
Dass mir das Herz erfriert,
Mein' Lieb' erlöschen wird;
Öffne mir, mein Kind!

Sie: Löschet dein' Lieb';
Lass' sie löschen nur!
Löschet sie immerzu,
Geh' heim zu Bett, zur Ruh'!
Gute Nacht, mein Knab'!

Vain Serenade (Lower Rhein folk song)

English translation Richard Stookes

He: Good evening, my sweetheart,
good evening, my child!
I come because I love you;
ah! open up your door to me,
open up your door!

She: My door's locked,
I won't let you in;
mother gave me good advice—
if you were allowed in,
all would be over with me!

He: The night's so cold,
the wind's so icy,
my heart is freezing,
my love will go out;
open up, my child!

She: If your love goes out,
then let it go out!
If it keeps going out,
then go home to bed and go to sleep!
Goodnight, my lad!

As with Phillipe, we started our work on this song by asking questions based on who was singing and what the different characters wanted. Precious suggested that the characters in the song were education students and had met during classes at the university. Furthermore, Precious put forward the idea that the girl wanted to tease and play with the young suitor, while the boy in this song wanted the girl's love, and in the long run to belong to someone and to be loved. We considered the possibility that maybe the girl was afraid to show her vulnerability and, therefore, frightened to say yes to the boy's love. Or, Precious suggested additionally, she is afraid of disappointing her mother if she 'opened up' to the boy.

With these specific conditions in mind, she sang the first verse of the song again and the others' feedback showed that Precious now conveyed the lyrics in a different way. Phillipe declared that he only then heard the lyrics properly and understood that there were two different characters singing. Nkosi pointed out that one could clearly *hear* the boy's character and, because of the various small gestures that Precious intuitively added, one could also see the girl. I also observed the auditive differences between the two characters; the boy sounded a little louder in volume and more straightforward in his singing style, while the girl's singing was, if not breathy, then at least softer and more transparent.

We continued with the second verse and entered into a debate about whether the boy was really freezing, whether he was playing the victim, whether he was really begging the girl, or maybe whether he was threatening her that his love would end if he should not be allowed to enter her house. We used the German, as well as the English translation (see above), to make sure that everyone understood the lyrics.

After Precious had sung through the whole song with a clear scenario in mind, it was evident that Precious had gained a clear grasp of the girl's character. However, in my opinion, Precious was too flexible, levitating and yielding when it came to the boy's character. Therefore, I needed to rethink the didactic strategies we had been using up to that point. I asked Precious what would happen if the boy was allowed to be more contending (with the *motion factor strong weight* where the power is from the hips and down) and *direct space*, and perhaps more *pressing* than *gliding*. Or maybe, since the music has elements of *floating*, what if you get a bit inspired by that and you let him sing a bit *slashing* (*floating* with *strong weight*)?

Taking these questions and suggestions to heart, Precious sang again and we agreed that her singing, while applying *pressing* to a few phrases and *slashing* to others, depicted the boy's character better. When it came to the *inner attitudes*, we were content with simply discussing them. Precious concluded that the boy might be *adream* (the lover, with the *motion factors weight/flow* and the *mental factors* known as *sensing/feeling*), and we discussed whether the girl might be *awake* (the intellectual, with the *motion factors space/time* and the *mental factors* known as *thinking/intuiting*).

Precious writes in her reflection how she had found Malmgren's *ten questions* particularly useful in this second round. She writes: "I tend to be lost when I sing, and not because I don't know the meaning behind the lyrics but I don't know how to portray it". Summarising what she had found most beneficial for her singing, Precious mentions the eight *working actions*, the *ten questions* and the *externalised drives*. She also mentions how well the different movements related to the *working actions* have contributed to her improved singing. Precious, her fellow students and her teacher all acknowledged her improvement after her participation in this study.

Nkosi

Finally, it was time for Nkosi to present her aria. She had chosen to work with Handel's *V'adaro, pupille* from the opera *Giulio Cesare*. Nkosi had done a good job preparing for the session and knew the answers to the various questions. I was not as concerned with whether her responses were true to the original plot or not, provided that she was specific in her fictional narrative. Nkosi explained that Cleopatra was a beautiful woman – and very aware of it – and that all men fell for her. She imagined that, in this scene, we are in Cleopatra's palace and she is trying to seduce Julius Caesar. Cleopatra charms and flatters him in order to get closer to obtaining power. Nkosi explains how she imagined Cleopatra being obsessed with power and is willing to do anything to get it. She compares Cleopatra to Queen Cersei in the series *Games of Thrones*. She believes that the obstacle to her progress is the scheming brother, Ptolemy, and that he must therefore be eliminated.

In order to set the scene, I asked Phillipe to be Caesar and I urged Nkosi to investigate in what way she could seduce him. After Nkosi had sung the aria, Precious commented that Nkosi had used the articulation more carefully and that it had become a strategy to express greater intensity in her singing. I shared my own observation with the group, namely that I had had the sense that she was passionately and heartily “tasting” the words. We joked that Phillipe was mostly busy being seduced and engrossed, but he nevertheless observed that Nkosi's singing was now deliberate in another way. Nkosi's self-observation was that she really had felt how she was seducing Caesar and thus had been more specific with her singing. She pointed out that she had experienced her singing as being more connected. I added to their observations by commenting that her singing was more *schlank* (slimmer/streamlined) and a little more elegant, with pleasing phrasing at the end of the phrases. When I listened to the recording afterwards, I also heard more presence in her singing. Her singing was rich in detail with, for example, varied and expressive inhalations, effective *crescendi* and the singing in general sounded more stable and anchored.

When asked what *inner attitude* she would suggest for Cleopatra, she answered *near*. We also discussed the possibility that Cleopatra, according to Nkosi's conception of

her, could be *remote* (*motion factors space and flow* and *mental factors thinking and feeling* – the *egocentric* subdivision of remote). Again, however, I reminded the singers that, in this work, we delved into different ways of improving the vocal technique and different ways of changing the musical expression, rather than building a character. Nkosi writes in her reflection that this last visit of mine had pushed her out of her comfort zone. She claims that it had been challenging to take in so much information in a short time. However, she confesses that she had found the *inner attitudes* and the *inner quests* very useful. “They help my singing to have intent...I have clear thoughts of what to do when singing. Even the way I do dynamics, it’s not all over the place.”

The last thing Nkosi was asked to do was to sing the whole song with Caesar placed in the audience. Nkosi was tasked with really pleasing him in order to enjoy the sweetness of power. She sang the aria again and did it with bravura! “Wow!” I exclaimed. “Do you find it easy to express your emotions?” I asked her, to which she answered in the affirmative. I commended her for her ability to be that expressive. “Yes, I was under a *spell* now!”, Phillipe stated with something soft in his eyes. Nkosi laughed and stated that it had felt good and that she had had more control over herself and over her voice. I agreed with her and suggested that the next step could be to also work with scales and other singing exercises in the same way. I encouraged them all to be specific and not leave anything to chance. I also praised the other singers and told them that they all so easily had access to their emotions.

Gift

Gift, who did not attend the last session, did submit a written reflection in which he shares his experiences with the didactic strategies based on the LMT. He points out that “[t]he *working actions*, *planes*, and *grades of intensity* encourage a singer to be more conscious than just memorizing and singing the correct notes.” He claims how he appreciates that there is not so much right or wrong, but more how different singers can approach the principles in different ways. He states that, having participated in the research, he sings with “more inner participation, more musical impulses and really just active singing.” Gift summarises what he deems he had gained from being a part of this research study.

"The Laban-Malmgren approach is valuable and beneficial for all singers. My voice lecturer and I work a lot with working actions and grades of intensity. We find that these tools help me with musical phrases, dynamics and a lot on vocal technique, especially tension in the body and letting the voice be free on high notes."

CHAPTER 11: DISCUSSION

In Chapter One of this thesis, I stated that the purpose of this multiple method research, involving self-study, participatory action research (PAR) and interpretive description (ID), was

to understand how didactic strategies based on the principles of the Laban-Malmgren technique (LMT) might enable a voice pedagogue to develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers who specialize in Western art music.

This chapter describes my understanding of how such didactic strategies might benefit the development of singers' vocal and musical proficiency. The content of the chapter is based on data obtained by analysing

- the literature about relevant concepts belonging to voice pedagogy, as well as to the LMT,
- my own teaching approach as an experienced voice pedagogue,
- the data collected during the teaching and learning sessions at the four research sites.

The discussion of the didactic strategies used during the teaching and learning sessions at the four research sites, and how they contributed to the development of the technical and musical development of the participants in this research, is guided by those LMT concepts that emerged strongly during the coding and categorising of the data.

- Laban's three dimensional planes
- Working actions
- Externalised drives
- Shadow moves
- The four grades of intensity
- Inner attitudes
- Malmgren's ten questions.

11.1 Laban's three dimensional planes

The first didactic strategies that this research investigated relate to Laban's three dimensional planes, which are the *horizontal*, *vertical* and *sagittal* planes.

11.1.1 Horizontal plane

It was possible to create several didactic strategies based on Laban's *horizontal plane*. One such strategy based on the perception of a *horizontal plane* involved singers holding their arms straight out in front of them and, during inhalation, quickly spreading their arms outwards as if heartily welcoming someone. While exhaling, the singers gradually moved their arms back to their original position, imitating the shape of their ribcage. Using this strategy with some of the participants in this research resulted in the quick release of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles during inhalation, and a more even airflow and higher subglottal pressure during exhalation. This increased airflow and subglottal pressure allowed some singers to achieve better breath control and breath support, enabling them to sing through phrases easier. Several of the participants in this research also improved their inhalation before singing by achieving more expansion in the chest and a more open throat when using strategies based on the horizontal plane. Sundberg (2007) and Lehman (1993) are two of the many scholars who firmly believe that the breathing process for singing is essential for good phonation and artistic singing. The use of didactic strategies such as the one described above helps the singer to develop a much better understanding of this process.

Sundberg (2007:40) states that the breathing apparatus and the larynx are closely connected and, therefore, the breathing process affects the functioning of the laryngeal musculature. Miller (1996b:196) asserts that there is a direct correlation between a good onset, a good breathing process and a vibrant tone. Strategies used in this research to elicit perceptions of horizontality included changing all the vowels in the lyrics of a song to [i]. Because the vocal folds open horizontally and a higher laryngeal position is achieved while phonating on an [i] (Bainbridge Cohen, 2015:85; Sundberg, 2007:143), this strategy can increase the occurrence of higher overtones and improved top notes. Other strategies included perceptions of the tongue being in a horizontal

position, with its sides touching the top molars, and imagining an ‘inner smile’ that affects the pharyngeal space.

The work with the participants in this research showed that it is possible for these perceptions of the *horizontal plane* to be combined with movements (such as those based on the working actions upon which Malmgren principles and ideas for actor training rested) and imagery (one of the elements of Stanislavski’s system) (Moore, 1984:37). This combination created the possibility for some participants to adjust their laryngeal positions, brighten the vocal timbre and enhance the harmonics because of a more forward ‘placement’ of their voices. Examples of didactic strategies based on the LMT that involved movement imitating a *horizontal plane* included participants moving their heads from side to side like a periscope or ‘drawing’ a horizontal infinity sign with their noses while singing. These strategies proved helpful to release unnecessary tension in the head and neck musculature and allowed freer phonation, qualities that Goren (2017:59), among others, highlights as important.

These didactic strategies also contributed to the vibrancy of the sound, the prevention of the laryngeal setting becoming too low, better projection of the voice and ensuring that the participating singers were able to maintain a wider pharyngeal space and elevated soft palate. The improved breathing process, freer laryngeal functioning, increased pharyngeal space, enhanced harmonics and the vibrant tone quality not only contributed to the general vocal resonance, but also to an improved higher vocal register and better projection of the voice.

11.1.2 Vertical plane

Didactic strategies based on Laban’s *vertical plane* also presented several interesting results. Bainbridge Cohen (2015:85) points out that the vocal folds elongate vertically when performing an [a] vowel. Changing all the vowels in the lyrics of the song to [a] or imagining a thin cotton sheet hanging down to dry on a washing line, resulted in some participants relaxing their jaws more. The ripple effect that one aspect has on another was often very evident during the teaching and learning sessions at the research sites. When a participant’s jaw relaxed in a more vertical position, the tongue

lost unnecessary tension, which aided a lower laryngeal position and allowed freer phonation. These benefits, which are the results of didactic strategies based on awareness of the *vertical plane*, proved to be conducive to better singing, especially when simultaneously imagining the tongue being on a *horizontal plane*, as described in the previous section.

As is the case with the *horizontal plane*, didactic strategies can also include a combination of the *vertical plane*, movement and imagination. Chapman (2016:84) blames the lack of an effective breathing process or bad postural alignment as often being the origins of challenges that a singer faces, while Callaghan (2014:144) asserts that vocal mastery requires body alignment and breath support and is necessary in any singing style. Based on my observations during my visits to the research sites, I deemed it necessary to explore some didactic strategies that involved movement in the *vertical plane*, as well as imagination, to address challenges related to posture. One example of a didactic strategy based on a *vertical plane* involved a participant squatting – breathing while descending and singing while ascending. The improved balance in the participant's posture (the knees were prevented from locking) was enhanced further when the singer imagined assuming a stance befitting someone belonging to the nobility, thus elongating the spine. The strategy involving squatting also allowed the singer to experience a lower centre point in the body and reduced clavicular singing, which focuses too much on the elevated chest. Therefore, the singer sang with considerably less restriction.

Linklater (2006:121) states that a low and large breathing capacity also implies a larger capacity in terms of emotions. She points out how aspects of breathing and expression can be of great help to free the voice. In this research the use of didactic strategies based on the *vertical plane* allowed for the quick release of the abdominal wall, as is the case when using strategies based on the *horizontal plane*. This quick release led to the deeper and lower inhalation of air, and an increased sense of gravity.

Another strategy used in this research involves the voice pedagogue gently placing one hand on the singer's chest and the other on the singer's back (always asking permission first) and pressing downwards during phonation. This vertical movement

offered participants in this research a tactile experience of the *vertical plane* and enhanced perceptions of gravity, as well as the body-voice connection. Perceptions of gravity were also elicited by imagining the heaviness and movements of large animals. By imitating the movements of such animals while applying a contending force from the hips downwards, some participants were able to improve the breathing process – inhaling lower into the body. This correlates well with Laban's (2011:95) belief that the practitioner can rely on the feeling and experience of the movement more than on an intellectual analysis of it.

When the descending *vertical plane* was combined with movement and imagery in this research, the results included a darker vocal timbre, lower laryngeal position and a lower 'placement' of the voice in which the lower harmonics were enhanced. One such didactic strategy used in this research involved a participant imagining that he was communicating downwards from a position high above the person whom he was addressing. The participant starts by first just calling out, using projected speech. Then he continued by calling on pitch before performing the utterance while emulating a recitative and, finally, by singing. All these steps were performed while constantly keeping in mind what his throat and body felt like when simply calling out across the distance using projected speech. This strategy allowed the infrahyoid muscles, to darken the timbre quite naturally (Sataloff *et al.*, 2017:20). More importantly it allowed a lower laryngeal position, better breath support and freer phonation, and consequently an even higher register in which the lower harmonics were enhanced.

11.1.3 Sagittal plane

The third dimensional plane on which I had based didactic strategies with which to explore how they might develop the participants' technical and musical proficiency was the *sagittal plane*. According to Bainbridge Cohen (2015:85), the vocal folds stretch sagittally when performing an [u] vowel and Sundberg (2007:143) points out that the [u] vowel has a lower laryngeal position. Because of this link between the *sagittal plane* and the vowel formation, one didactic strategy based on the sagittal plane involved changing all the vowels in the lyrics of a song to [u]. Another strategy based on Laban's retiring *sagittal plane* involved a participant imagining being a funambulist moving

backwards on a tightrope, waving his arms in a beckoning gesture, or for a participant to pretend raking in leaves. Dayme (2022:50) strongly advocates using imagination and playfulness as important elements in a singer's teaching and learning experience. In this research it became clear how imagination became a way for singers to see, hear and experience singing in new ways.

During the teaching and learning session at the research sites, it was clear that these strategies created perceptions of *inalare la voce* and, because of the fourth and fifth formants being richer, helping some participants to achieve more *squillo* in their voices. Another strategy required participants to imagine the *sagittal plane* retiring through the eyes while singing. This strategy speaks to Nelson and Blade's (2018:153) claim that the eyes are the "dominant external sensory system for guiding movement". The focus on the limited scope of the area around the eyes also corroborates Laban's (2011:72) assertion that the precision resulting from perceiving a narrower passage leads to *bound flow*. Those participants who applied this increased *bound flow* achieved a less breathy phonation and a more effective use of their voices. The lack of breathiness, which is the result of more energized singing and better vocal fold closure, is the best way to find a dense flow phonation (McKinney, 2005:82)

The advancing *sagittal plane* and the retiring *sagittal plane* can be combined with a *working action*, such as *gliding*. The data collected while working with the participants at the research sites indicate that didactic strategies based on the retiring *sagittal plane* brings about a darker vocal timbre which sounds round, while allowing the singer to maintain a lower laryngeal position and a wider pharyngeal space. The strategies further allowed the listeners (myself and other participants) to perceive the voice 'placement' to be more to the rear, a placement that amplifies the lower overtones, which contributes to the darker vocal timbre and a higher density of sound.

Didactic strategies based on the *sagittal plane* affected some of the participants' breathing process, as in the case of Laban's other two planes. One such didactic strategy required the participant to imagine being a big wheel turning, while constantly moving their arms in imitation of the movement of the water streaming over this wheel. The data analyses of this research showed that, using these strategies, the

participant's airflow increased, a more even air pressure (breath control and breath support) became possible, and the singer's vocal resonance and legato singing improved.

The preparation for singing is paramount. Bunch (1997:55) declares that pre-phonatory work in the body takes place 200-300 milliseconds before the actual singing. Suggesting that a participant imagined preparing to throw a ball while inhaling before singing (retiring *sagittal plane*) enabled the singer to breathe lower and deeper into the body and also activated back breathing. Physical and mental perceptions of advancing in the *sagittal plane* resulted in better preparation for singing (also in the breathing) and improved the onset of tone. These results correlate with Marek's (2007:85) view that great singing requires excellent breath support, controlled breathing and a balanced flow of air during the onset of phonation.

In addition to an improved preparation for singing, the above-mentioned strategy (advancing) also allowed participants to achieve a better, naturally forward placement and more vivid presence. However, it is important to notice how different individuals perceive sensations of voice placements differently. These discrepancies in perceptions are completely in line with what Miller (2004:81) and Guinn (in her interview with Blades (2017:32) claim when they express how different singers' sensations of the sympathetic oscillations are perceived, and how a prompted front placement in the mask can even contribute to nasality, by-sounds, constriction, distortion or breathiness.

Having finally worked with didactic strategies based on all three dimensional planes, several participants in this research testified that they had found the didactic strategies based on Laban's dimensional planes were by far the most significant aspect of the studies. Some of the participants testified to the effectiveness of the didactic strategies based on the three-dimensional planes, and how incredibly easy it was to access these tools to create different timbres. They also professed that the use of these strategies inspired their overall creativity. Results of the data analyses showed that perceptions of Laban's three-dimensional planes can affect the breathing process, legato singing, the shape of the singer's mouth or the pharyngeal space (and thereby change the

resonance) and vocal freedom in general. These results are in line with some of the criteria that scholars such as Fisher and Kayes (2016), Miller (1996b), Sundberg (2007) and Titze (2010) deem to designate good singing. The participants testified that, by using didactic strategies based on Laban's three-dimensional planes, they had experienced more intense physical work, which created better breath support and embodied singing. Those who had observed by listening to the other participants claimed that it was obvious that the strategies resulted in vocal tone characterised by more resonance.

11.2 Working actions

When creating didactic strategies based on the LMT's *working actions*, one should consider not only the four contending qualities of the *working actions* (*punching, slashing, pressing* and *wringing*), but also the four yielding qualities (*dabbing, flicking, gliding* and *floating*). It is also important to remember the *motion factors*⁸⁰ that constitute each of the *working actions* when creating the didactic strategies. This research has shown that the participants benefitted significantly from the physical activities used to reach a better understanding of how the didactic strategies based on the *working actions* might develop their technical and musical proficiency. The discussion that follows offers suggestions on applying didactic strategies based on the *working actions* that have contending qualities and some of the results that using them might have on a singer's technical and musical proficiency.

11.2.1 Punching

Using various degrees of strength (strong *weight*), directness (direct in *space*) and speed (quick *time*) (*motion factors* that constitute *punching*), physical activities can include imitating punching something, poking a hole in a balloon with a needle, sticking a fork into a freshly grilled sausage, stabbing a bull with a sword, attacking an opponent

⁸⁰ This research showed that it is beneficial to let singers explore each of the *motion factors* separately – first while using only movement, then by using both movement and speech, followed by movement and singing, and finally, while only singing. This strategy allows singers to understand the *motion factors* relatively quickly and to combine them with the various *working actions* to which they relate.

with a sword during a fencing duel, or blowing a party horn. This particular didactic strategy, i.e., imitating *punching*, resulted in

- new and clear impulses where necessary (e.g., before a high note or when singing a large interval); impulses that, combined with a high degree of vital energy, is one of the cornerstones for singing, according to Hemsley (1998:41),
- less anticipatory tension while preparing for a note (Bunch, 1997:102), thus allowing it to happen with the necessary increased amount of energy in the body,
- higher subglottic pressure and better vocal fold adduction – prerequisites that Kayes (2004:71) regards as important for resonant and well-projected singing,
- more balanced, embodied singing and better breath support,
- more vocal resonance, and
- more secure intonation, a quality that Swank, in her 2017 interview with Blades, claims is one of the requirements for an even and healthy sound.

For a less courageous singer, *punching* can also serve as a way to perceive power and strength, without the singer necessarily having conscious thoughts about the act of singing, intentions that correspond well with what McKinney (2005:86) suggests as a corrective for hypofunctional singing. The *punching* action encourages spontaneity and unconscious behaviour that underscores Laban's (1952:14) belief that working actions encourage spontaneity and imagination in a completely different way. However, this research has also shown that some perceptions of *punching* can be too powerful and that derivations of the concept, such as *thrusting*, *stabbing* and *shoving*, produced more desirable results.

11.2.2 Slashing

It is possible to create a number of didactic strategies based on the *working action* known as *slashing*, which can be combined with the *motion factors strong, flexible and quick*. Didactic strategies explored in this research included suggesting that a participant, using an imaginary tennis racquet (the arm and hand), imitates the act of serving during a tennis match. A quicker slashing movement required the singer to

imitate cracking a long whip as if training a circus animal. The *slashing* action can be performed with strength if one just throws one's arms forcefully and freely out into the air like a big, nonchalant movement. Images of a fiery tango with fast strong movements or a selfish baboon snatching away food from another also conjured up images and perceptions of *slashing* actions.

The didactic strategies based on this *working action* were very effective in this research. The images and perceptions that these strategies created, as well as the physical gestures the participants used while applying these strategies, helped to create an increased awareness of the body and enabled them to make a connection between sensation and function, a connection underscored by Goren (2017:55) and Winnie (2018:7). This awareness of sensation and an understanding of the function of the strategies can affect a singer's performance positively. In this research the strategies mentioned above were very beneficial, specifically for participants who, for example, tended to be overly controlled, allowing them to move from *bound flow* to *free flow* while singing. The increase in energy and the clearer impulses resulting from the physical nature of these strategies allowed the singers to achieve a freer and more open sound. For some of the participants in this research the didactic strategies based on *slashing* helped them to sing *coloratura* passages with greater ease, while others found that applying the strategies (physically and mentally) enabled them to avoid overly heavy phonation.

11.2.3 Pressing

It is possible to create several didactic strategies based on the *working action* known as *pressing* (*motion factors* are *strong*, *direct* and *sustained*). Didactic strategies used to enhance perceptions and experiences of *pressing* in this research included, for example, having participants respectively

- lean against an opposing force,
- press a hand against a wall,
- imagine pulling a rope, and thereby letting the elbows perform the *pressing*

- imagine pushing a heavy chest of drawers or lifting a chair with arms stretched straight out to the front,
- imagine that their legs were pushing down into the ground or pressing a hand straight up into the air,
- hold and press their arms across their chests with their hands on their shoulders,
- putting their hands on their heads as if they formed a lid.

It is important that the singer is constantly aware of the sensations in the body as they perform these actions. Furthermore, the singer can constantly remind himself to strive for gravitation instead of levitation. The voice pedagogue can enhance perceptions and experiences of gravity by gently pulling downwards on the singer's arms or by pressing down on the singer's shoulders, head or chest while the latter sings. The participants' performances indicate that these strategies have the potential to facilitate lower breathing during inhalation, prevent a sternum that is held unnaturally high, enable a tracheal pull and a way to balance the neck muscles.

It is also possible to create didactic strategies that will guide the singer's perceptions and experiences of the various derivations of *pressing* (for example *cut*, *crush* or *squeeze*). In this research didactic strategies based on *pressing* required participants to, for example, imagine gently cutting a freshly baked loaf of bread. This image resulted in a lesser degree of resistance and more *free flow*. Other suggestions and images, such as squeezing juice from a lemon, cutting the fascia away from a fillet of pork, cutting butter that had just been taken directly from the refrigerator, gently cracking a walnut with a nutcracker or walking into a strong headwind, were all used to suggest a *pressing* quality, but do not require so much physical effort. It became clear that these strategies can help a singer to find a balance between using too much force, which might lead to unnecessary tension, and insufficient support.

In this research the didactic strategies based on the *working action* known as *pressing* created perceptions and sensations of support. Several participants shared their impression that the didactic strategies based on *pressing* (and *wringing*) were a tangible way to experience good breath support. Therefore, it is possible for a singer who uses these strategies to achieve a sound that is more embodied, that is

characterised by an even flow phonation⁸¹, good vocal fold closure, and a vocal tone with fine *squillo*.

While exploring these didactic strategies with the participants, it was also clear that these strategies can potentially contribute to the improvement of a singer's intonation, controlled vibrato, phrasing and legato singing which, according to Reid (2018:87) and others, are essential for all singers and entails a good balance between registration and resonance. In some instances, the use of these strategies helped participants access and explore the chest register and in other instances the strategies contributed significantly to credible characterisation.

11.2.4 Wringing

The final working action with contending qualities is *wringing* (*motion factors are strong, flexible and sustained*). Examples of the didactic strategies based on this *working action* included suggestions that the singer imagine being

- a big snake slowly crawling on the ground,
- a smaller snake emerging from a snake charmer's basket,
- a flamenco dancer who plays the castanets with hands rotating in a lighter version of *wringing*.

The physical and mental experience of perceiving one's voice in a new way is something that scholars, such as Linklater (2006:19) emphasises. Exploring the relationship between one's body, mind and voice by applying the above-mentioned didactic strategies can see the singer working either with the whole body or, alternatively, for example, using only the arms in snakelike patterns. Focusing on the lower part of the body when involving the whole body in the activities, especially the lower abdomen and feet, enables a singer to find a lower centre of gravity (Laban, 2011:53). This lower centre of gravity allows for a lower point of inhalation, while the energy, gravity and the muscular activity generated by the wringing and winding

⁸¹ Titze (2015) asserts that flow phonation is the target to achieve an increasing acoustic outcome.

movements create a greater sense of breath support and breath management. This relationship between gravity, energy and physicality is something that Callaghan (2014:34) also mentions.

Participants in this research testified to the efficacy of the didactic strategies based on *wringing* (and also *pressing*) when it comes to breath support. The strategies based on this working action were conducive to the participants' understanding of breath support. It was possible to observe how singers' increased understanding and experience of the support as a result of these strategies resulted in a better tonal quality. Didactic strategies based on the working action *wringing*, combined with the *motion factor* referred to as *sustained*, also resulted in good legato singing, beautiful phrasing, an even air flow (bound or free), and a greater density of sound. A singer who wishes to achieve a meaningful performance characterised by a sense of earnestness, is one who is "concerned with simultaneously conveying both musical and verbal meanings" (Callaghan, 2014:138). Ultimately, the *wringing* quality that the didactic strategies based on this *working action* elicited in some participants' voices allowed them to be expressive, rather than simply producing sound. It became possible for the text and the music to merge into a unit where the performance element, together with the meaning-bearing content of the words, carry the expression.

The next four points offer suggestions of didactic strategies based on the *working actions* that have yielding qualities and explains how using them in this research affected participants' technical and musical proficiency.

11.2.5 Dabbing

In this research the participants were introduced to didactic strategies created to achieve a *dabbing* quality with *motion factors* that include *light*, *direct* and *quick* while singing⁸². The aim of the didactic strategies based on *dabbing* was to

- find small light impulses,

⁸² The voice pedagogue should keep in mind that some singers might confuse *dabbing* with *flicking*.

- achieve more precise onsets of tone,
- improve staccato,
- relieve excess tension in various parts of the body, and
- enable singers to sing with less vocal fold mass.

This research showed that didactic strategies that can be used to achieve this *dabbing* quality include that the singer imagines

- playing pizzicato on a violin, cello, double bass or a harp,
- applying make-up with a makeup brush, using small dabbing movements,
- burning himself on the hotplate of a stove,
- typing lightly on a computer keyboard,
- using a needle to embroider in little, quick stitches,
- being a bird picking at something on the ground,
- being a little grasshopper or a very small bird hopping around.

The *working action* known as *dabbing* can also be combined with emotions. Participants in this research responded well when asked to sing gingerly and timidly while imagining *dabbing*, a bit like when one very tenderly plays a peek-a-boo game with an infant.

Using didactic strategies based on *dabbing* help singers to experience small, light impulses. Laban (2011:42) explained that such accents were a result of a suddenly or gradually arise tension for a “rhythmically important movement”. *Dabbing* worked effectively for singing staccato more precisely and to make more effective vocal onsets at the beginning of phrases. Miller (2004:27) explains how effective staccato singing can contribute to the improvement of *attacco del suono* (the vocal onsets). The favourable outcomes of the improved onset of tone at the beginning of phrases include a more vibrant tone immediately after the onset of tone. This vibrancy of tone is an “essential ingredient of the professional chiaroscuro timbre” (Miller, 2004: 239) and is the result of effective vocal fold functioning, as well as because of breath support that is conducive to fluent singing.

11.2.6 Gliding

The didactic strategies based on *gliding* (*motion factors: light, direct and sustained*) were the ones from which all participants in this research benefitted to at least some extent. The effectivity of these strategies is not surprising as they have the potential to fulfil multiple purposes. One of these purposes is to find what Marek (2007:85) regards as important for good singing, namely a balanced air pressure (which leads to excellent breath support and breath control) and air flow, thus creating a flow phonation. Another purpose is to relieve unnecessary tension in the neck and shoulder muscles, and the abdominal wall. Furthermore, one can regard *gliding* as being directly connected to legato singing, a characteristic that Miller (2004:200) regards as “the most musical thing possible.” Additionally, this research has shown that focusing on didactic strategies based on *gliding*, like those based on all *working actions*, also functions as a diversionary manoeuvre away from an exclusive focus on technical or musical challenges, by shaping the music while imagining a continuous *gliding* quality. Legato singing is considered to be one of the pillars of classical singing, in that it contributes to a vibrant vocal timbre, vocal health and artistic expression (Jones, 2017:179; Miller, 1996:122). Therefore, didactic strategies based on *gliding* aim to improve legato singing, helping singers to experience and sing musical lines and phrases.

In striving to achieve these purposes, the voice pedagogue should create didactic strategies that require singers to use their imagination and sensory memory. Examples of such strategies used in this research included referring to images of animals; a stealthy predator sneaking up on its prey, a flying eagle or an elegantly walking dressage horse (like those in the Spanish Riding School in Vienna). Other images to which we referred during the teaching and learning sessions included the sensation of a soft wind, a light wave, or of blowing gently on an overgrown dandelion.

There are several didactic strategies that the voice pedagogue can use to help singers experience and recall sensations of flow and help them distinguish between *gliding* with different degrees of Laban’s (2011) concepts of free flow and bound flow. Strategies used in this research included suggestions that a singer imagines going down a water slide that is sometimes filled with only a little bit of water and, at other

times, a lot of water. The image of less water conjures up sensations of *bound flow*, while perceptions of more water filling the slide create a sense of increased *free flow*. The suggestion that participants imitate the continuous flow of water in a mill wheel also enhanced perceptions of *free flow*.

It is also possible to combine physical actions with imagination and sensory memories when creating didactic strategies based on *gliding*. Suggesting that singers slowly turn their heads from side-to-side, gliding like a rotating periscope on a submarine can result in the easing of muscular tension in the neck. Encouraging some participants to imagine softly caressing an infant's head with one hand evoked perceptions of a gentle approach to flow phonation. Combining physical movements with dimensional planes and *gliding*, such as moving an arm horizontally like a stalk of wheat swaying in a breeze, or painting a wall by moving the paint brush vertically or horizontally, enhanced sensations of, for example, a continuous lower centre point in the body, a lower inhalation, and creating a sense of space in the body. The results brought about by using didactic strategies involving movement demonstrate Bozeman's (2013:91) belief that physical movements that model the flow or the shape of the phrase contribute to more free flow in the singing process. Actions imitating the forward rolling out of a light carpet on the floor, or thin dough, as well as the inviting gesture of beckoning someone towards one, all contribute to the sensation of letting the phonation flow freely or *inalare la voce*, as if the the singers are drawing tones towards themselves. This research indicates that the act of sliding one's hands across a smooth surface (like a grand piano), first directly and then with a cloth between the surface and the hands, can enhance a singer's ability to experience different levels of inertia and flow in the *gliding* quality.

The benefits of using of didactic strategies based on *gliding* in this study speak to the qualities that the scholarly literature attributes to good singing and are supported by the outcomes of this research. These strategies can, for example, result in the pharyngeal space becoming more open. Sällström (1988:70) argues that, when the pharyngeal space is open, it allows the laryngeal position to be conducive to the sound that needs to be produced and also results in the body being connected to the sound in a balanced way. Furthermore, the results in this research indicate improvements in

- legato singing, something that Jones (2017:179) regards as essential for vocal health and artistic expression,
- the ability to sing *coloratura* passages which, although regarded as often being a natural skill (Goren, 2017:47), can be improved with exercises,
- the participants' awareness of the airflow and flow, an endeavour that Miller (2004:59) regards as very important for good singing,
- register unification and balancing the volume throughout the whole register, a requirement that scholars such as Callaghan (2014:99), Reid (2018:52) and Smith (2007:69) regard as an essential characteristic of good singing,
- the embodiment of sound while singing, which Callaghan (2014:144) suggests optimizes vocal function,
- relaxing the muscular tension in the neck, shoulders and abdominal wall, which is in line with opinions of scholars such as Laban (2011:75), Newlove and Dalby (2013:173) and Ullman (1969:17), who all stress the need for muscular freedom,
- the breathing process, including the balance in breath support; a balance that Morris and Hutchison (2017:17) regard as essential to maintain the necessary breath control and air flow,
- the vocal resonance (because of the improvement in the breathing process and embodied singing),
- the quality of the top notes (because of the pharyngeal openness, laryngeal positions and lack of tension in the neck and shoulders),
- the phrasing (result of, for example, good legato singing) and a focus on the whole picture of the music instead of getting caught up in details,
- finding more vulnerability and personality in timbre and expression, which one can argue relates to, amongst other things, the breathing process. Linklater (2006:121) draws a link between singers' breathing capacity and their expressive capacity in terms of emotions.

11.2.7 Flicking

In this research, didactic strategies based on the working action known as *flicking* (*motion factors: light, quick and flexible*) were used as much as, for example, those

based on *gliding*. The research indicates that images which can be used successfully to elicit perceptions of *flicking* include a fluttering bat, quickly opening a fan with the flick of one's wrist, the little, light gestures that can be seen in the wrist movements of a flamenco dancer, flicking away a fly, flicking fluff from one's clothes or flicking someone on the nose who comes too close to one.

To help singers perceive the *flicking* quality, the voice pedagogue can also refer to compositions that resembles *flicking* qualities, such as Piaf's *Padam!*, which gives a snappy, slightly nonchalant character. When used correctly, didactic strategies based on *flicking* can find, for example, small, light impulses where necessary for high notes that should not be sung as powerfully. These impulses help generate the necessary energy and support to sing the note or even the phrase. Reid (2018:175) claims that one of the most difficult mental tasks for a singer is to let go without fear and without control. Using didactic strategies based on *flicking* helps the singer not to spend unnecessary time trying to control or obsess over the note, but to only just softly 'flick' it.

Additionally, didactic strategies based on *flicking* are effective for specifying and neatly articulating rhythmic patterns and also for accentuating the textual content by using this working action's immediate, slightly snappy and cocky qualities.

11.2.8 Floating

The fact that *floating* was not used to any significant extent in this research is perhaps not so surprising. *Floating*, which consists of *motion factors light, flexible and sustained*, is slow and lacks direction and is even described as being aimless (Newlove & Dalby, 2013:139). Didactic strategies based on *floating* played a less significant role than those based on the other *working actions*. However, it became clear during the teaching and learning sessions in this research that there are a few didactic strategies based on this *working action* that can serve different purposes, e.g., to achieve an even flow of air and sound, to release muscular tension in the neck, prerequisites for good singing underscored by scholars such as Callaghan (2014:54) and Miller (1996a:233).

These strategies also distracted some participants from being too worried about singing high notes that they normally found challenging.

In general, the image of a floating jellyfish is one that can be used to create perceptions of this *working action*. This research indicated that it is possible to create perceptions of an even flow of air and sound by using didactic strategies based on *floating*, such as imagining that one sits on a raft on a lake, allowing the raft to be moved along simply by the underlying current. However, it is important that the singers should be made aware of the underlying energy still necessary to support the *floating* sound. In this research, one image that helped create an understanding of this support involved the suggestion that the singer imagines how a duck floats seemingly effortlessly on the water, while its feet are paddling frantically under the water. Another strategy was for me to ‘accompany’ the participant’s attempts at *floating* by clapping the division of beats as a reminder of the underlying energy that accompanies the flow of air on the surface.

A strategy that aims to release muscular tension and to eliminate an unhealthy focus on challenging high notes, combines the *working action* known as *floating* with the *horizontal plane*. During the teaching and learning sessions in this research, some participants were requested to perform a movement imitating an infinity sign, using a ‘floating’ neck and head while singing. Some singers found it beneficial to imagine drawing the horizontal infinity sign with the tips of their noses. In this research, the outcomes of this strategy, especially when combined with other didactic strategies, were beneficial and resulted in participants’ voices beginning to float more freely, having a richer flow of air and achieving a more appropriate vocal fold closure.

In conclusion, one can argue that a mixture of musical examples to which singers can listen, careful explanations by the voice pedagogue, the use of appropriate visual images and physical actions, combined with speech and singing, are ways to help singers experience the different qualities of the *working actions* while drawing on multiple senses.

11.3 Externalised drives

The intention of exploring didactic strategies based on the *externalised drives* of the LMT was to understand how *doing*, *passion*, *spell* and *vision* could function as tools to develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers. By not only contextualizing these *externalised drives* (which constitute the roots of the tree used as a metaphor for the LMT metaphor), but also by working with them as explicitly separate tools, the aim was to determine how these drives might inform and affect the singers' technical and musical development.

11.3.1 Doing

In this research, examples of didactic strategies based on *doing* involved participants performing various basic physical actions while singing. These tasks included

- moving chairs back and forth in the room,
- sorting pencils by colour and size,
- taking off and putting on a sweater,
- packing and unpacking a bag,
- tying and untying shoelaces, etcetera.

The results indicate that, when using the didactic strategies listed above, participants became mechanical and static, and that there was an obvious lack of *flow*. The participants' performances became rather boring and mechanical, in some parts feeling even compulsive. The vocal result often sounded unmusical, monotonous and even resonantly poorer and thinner. However, there were advantages to *doing* which, for some participants, meant increased rhythmic accuracy. There were also indications of a more objective approach, where the singers were less emotionally involved. This can be an effective tool to help a singer avoid becoming too encumbered by their own thoughts. The didactic strategies based on the *externalised drive doing* also facilitated, for example, performing *coloratura* passages with more ease, or the ability to sing unhindered up in their higher registers.

11.3.2 Passion

When it came to didactic strategies based on the *externalised drive* known as *passion*, the aim was to find activities and emotions related to *passion*. Love, hate and sex are obviously strong and powerful triggers to elicit passionate responses. Imagining different types of fire is also conducive to creating perceptions of the constructive, as well as the destructive, qualities of *passion* as an *externalised drive*. Participants at the research sites were asked, for example, to portray a large fire, using their bodies completely, moving their arms and legs like flames flickering in a wringing pattern. Alternatively, were asked to sing while imagining a fading fire or one with hot, glowing coals. The value of activities that required both mental and physical involvement can be substantiated by Gärdenfors's (2010:222) claim that using both body and mind in a teaching and learning situation enriches the experience, and the learning content is embedded more successfully in the memory.

In this research, other examples of didactic strategies based on *passion* included the participants imagining themselves

- being a passionate book geek, finding exciting books in an exclusive antique bookstore,
- passionately discovering and pick amazing, rare berries in a forest,
- portraying a large, excited lion,
- passionately seducing someone,
- acting as a passionate salesman.

Another strategy with which to regulate the different degrees of *passion* was to use a short song with which the participants were very familiar and let them sing it in different keys while using the *four grades of intensity* (see discussion later in this chapter). The higher keys often enabled the participants to enhance the intensity of the imagined *passion*.

The outcomes of this research indicate that there are several benefits for a singer who applies didactic strategies based on *passion*, not the least of which is finding an

effective way to help some singers overcome their shyness because the results of their depictions of *passion* are not judged. Participants who employed didactic strategies that involved more exaggerated and extreme versions of *passion* were often able to achieve, for example, greater intensity of sound. Reid (2018:193) states that the intensity of the tone, besides conveying the physiological and acoustical aspects of loudness, also depicts emotional states. He believes that it is almost impossible to separate the physical and the emotional, and points out that “musical interpretation is a projection of the emotional through the physical” (Reid, 2018:193).

Additionally, the participants achieved clearer perceptions of breath support and increased muscular involvement, a superior sensible ability that Callaghan (2014:30) argues singers might be taught even more comprehensively. Moreover, the didactic strategies based on *passion* contributed to an increased expression by way of body language and facial expressions, audible breathing as part of the expression and, finally and clearer articulation. According to Stanislavski (1998:4), clear articulation is one of the most important aspects for singers to develop.

It was interesting to observe that when some participants in this research were working with didactic strategies based on *passion* while imagining the fire as only similar to an inner glow – in other words with less external intensity – the density of tone and the degree of urgency in their expression became even more intense than was the case with participants working with exaggerated or extreme versions of fire. There was an underlying energy that was held back and the performances were characterised by *bound flow*. From this it is evident that, in some cases, a lesser degree of intensity of *passion* can result in a favourable, more significant physical experience. This approach can be a good tool to find an inner energy combined with an outer calmness. The results of this research indicate that in these cases the singing will come across as, for example, intimate, seductive, menacing, etcetera. This internalised version of *passion* also contributed to improved legato singing, vocal resonance and articulation. The results further show that an approach that encourages the singer to move from perceptions of big, external feelings of passion to those of intense interior *passion* helped establish a sense of an embodied voice before reducing loudness in favour of the intensity. This approach enables the singer’s body, voice and mind to recall the

sensation of the more intense external *passion* and to transfer that sensation to the high inner intensity of an internal version of *passion*.

Based on the discussion above, one can argue that singers can benefit significantly by using didactic strategies based on *passion*. However, in this research it also became evident that there were participants for whom stronger versions of *passion* produced less favourable results. Such participants tended to get carried away in the moment and, in some instances, their intonation suffered. It also became clear that the use of didactic strategies based on the more exaggerated and extreme versions of *passion* might possibly result in singers singing heavily or clumsily by 'shooting away' the voice in a less than appealing way.

11.3.3 Spell⁸³

When using didactic strategies based on the *externalised drive* known as *spell* during this research, it became obvious how different variations of *spell*, such as *surrendering* or *dominating*, resulted in different outcomes. However, all the variants of *spell* displayed the timelessness that characterises this *externalised drive* (Fettes, 2015:225).

Didactic strategies based on a surrendering spell included images that required the participants to be on the receiving end of the spell and to surrender to it. Images and scenarios such as the participant suddenly hearing a voice from the 'other side' or becoming paralysed or spellbound by a giant, a dinosaur or a large spider were used to imagine being spellbound – surrendering to the *spell*. Another possible strategy was to suggest that the singer imagined being breathlessly fascinated by a magical place or being enchanted by a mystical light.

It became evident that the intensity of a *spell* also affected the outcomes. These outcomes show that the intensity of a spell can be enhanced by asking a participant to

⁸³ Some participants in this research experienced didactic strategies based on *spell* and *passion* as clear physical activities, while *doing* and *vision* were perceived to be more intellectual, *externalised drives*.

imagine trying to get a message across while singing behind a glass wall. The research also indicated that the most intense and extreme version of surrendering to a spell can be achieved by conjuring up the scenario of someone being unable to move while experiencing an extremely nasty event, such as an armed robbery or a brutal rape.

The results of this research clearly show that didactic strategies that contribute to perceptions of being under a surrendering *spell* have the potential to create a more specific focus in body and expression, with greater inertia dominating in *bound flow*, as well as in *free flow* at times. Participants tended to sing softer and used fewer facial expressions and mouth movements while imagining being under a surrendering *spell*. Additionally, the intensity of their tone quality and expression, as well as the legato singing, increased. The benefits of using these strategies were also evident in the more effortless singing, relaxed jaws, steadiness in phonation, more dynamic variations, and the warmer and rounder timbres. The overall impression was that using the didactic strategies based on the surrendering spell was that the singer projected more vulnerability and sensibility.

Furthermore, the results of this research indicate a distinction between two types of surrendering *spells*, based on different emotional settings. When, on the one hand, a singer was bewitched in a more horrifying way, the performance was more controlled and precise. On the other hand, a version of a surrendering *spell* where the singer imagined being enchanted and positively flabbergasted resulted in a performance in which the instrument was more open, with less inertia in the flow and where the sensation contributed to an elevated velum, which affected the velopharyngeal area. This elevation of the velum contributed to a more balanced resonance, something that Miller (2004:92) underscores. Apart from the differences between the two versions of surrendering *spells* mentioned above, there are also similarities. Both versions resulted in improved legato singing and a greater sense of urgency, which affected the phrasing in a beneficial manner. The vocal presence that emerges – a combination of well-coordinated vocal technique and “total dedication to the moment” – is what Dayme (2022:176) refers to as being “in the zone”; instead of singing, the singer perceives that he “is being sung”. The outcomes also included more lightness and warmth in the vocal

timbre, as well as the emergence of a natural relationship between the breathing process and phonation, a relationship underscored by Sundberg (2007:67).

As mentioned before, there are two variants of *spell*. Besides the surrendering *spell* discussed above, it is also possible to imagine dominating *spell*. Didactic strategies used to evoke perceptions of dominating spells in this research included asking participants to

- act like the leader of a group who spellbinds his subservient and obedient underlings,
- spellbind his political followers by means of a feverish speech,
- spellbind his religious followers by means of a doomsday prophecy,
- enchant a group of children by telling them a ghost story,
- enchant someone he wants to seduce, or
- enchant someone you want to challenge or threaten.

Using these suggestions in this research resulted in

- more supported and straightforward singing (partly related to advancing in *sagittal plane*),⁸⁴
- a natural, darker vocal timbre with high density in tone, as well as in emotional output,
- freer and more effortless singing,
- improved legato singing,
- variation in agogics and dynamics,
- singers sometimes choosing slower tempi, and
- a more controlled vibrato.

⁸⁴ Some participants in this research experienced similarities between surrendering *spell*, retiring *sagittal plane* and *inalare la voce*.

Additionally, it was clear that a dominating *spell*, with its inherent energy, can be an effective tool for a singer to use in order to overcome inherent shyness and, as such, raise the temperament of a performance. The efficacy of the use of didactic strategies based on a dominating spell when it comes to confidence gained is significant. Dayme (2022:115) asserts that, “[a]fter all, it is much easier to feel confident when you are imagining”.

11.3.4 Vision

Didactic strategies based on the *externalised drive* known as *vision* also presented interesting results in this research. *Vision* (*motion factors: space, time and flow*) creates a feeling of weightlessness, due to the absence of the *motion factor* known as *weight* (Fettes, 2015:233). *Vision* relates to ideas and problems, and Nordin (2017) claims that when *vision* is predominant, we go into our dream world. These stipulations were considered in the didactic strategies based on *vision*. Examples of the didactic strategies based on *vision* during this research included suggestions that the participant

- imagines being an artistic painter in the midst of a creative thought process of producing the perfect painting,
- imagines being a great singer singing his dream role in a famous opera house,
- visualises her impending fairy tale wedding,
- visualises a dream world in which there are no wars, poor people or climate crises,
- imagines telling someone about a fantastic, ideological political or religious idea, or
- imagines dreaming of living his life within a safe environment and under happy conditions.

The positive outcomes achieved by using the above-mentioned strategies in this research were multiple. The results pointed to these strategies having the potential to help a singer to

- get away from singing with too much *passion* or *spell*, allowing the singer to avoid overloading the voice with expression,
- sing more freely in the absence of the *weight factor*,
- choose singing a song at a slower tempo, while adding more pauses,
- depict a thoughtful character, while still maintaining an urgent expression,
- achieve a more colourful timbre pallet with which to sing, resulting in multiple layers of warmth, lightness and softness,
- perform longer phrases and more legato singing, and
- sing the intermediate dynamic levels, such as *mezzo piano* and *mezzo forte* more successfully.

It is also possible, when a singer concentrates on *vision* – in combination with extended inner participation – to limit the occurrence of *shadow moves*, as well as to cultivate musical phrases. However, one should guard against perceptions of *vision* being overtaken by those of *passion*.

11.4 Shadow moves

Laban (2011:77) referred to movements performed unconsciously and involuntarily as *shadow moves*. An actor, for example, can make a conscious choice to use *shadow moves* as a way to portray an *inner attitude* (Laban, 2011:104). However, in this research, where the focus was not on the participants' dramatic performances, but rather on their vocal technical and musical development, it was noticeable how unconscious *shadow moves* might affect a singer's technical and musical performance negatively. In this research, the manifestation of *shadow moves* in participants indicates more a lack of stability, gravity, concentration, inner calm or direction, rather than a strategy used to develop technique and musicality. The *shadow moves* in the participants ranged from involuntary shoulder movements, swaying of the body, flicking fingers to a fluttering gaze.

In some cases, it was also evident that a focus on unconscious *shadow moves* can also reflect in a singer's sound. In classical singing, vocal *shadow moves* are limited as a result of traits such as pulse, pitch and appropriate free phonation. However, the

spoken monologue in this research shows that *shadow moves* emerged as a natural consequence of certain *inner attitudes*. These *shadow moves* manifested as, for example, a clearing of the throat, stuttering, clicking the tongue or different ways of inserting small words or syllabi (e.g., *uh* at the beginning of a phrase).

A stronger focus on *one* pure working action or approaching a performance from the perspective of one of the three dimensional planes or one externalised drive can limit unnecessary *shadow moves* and can enable the singer to deliver a performance that is more solid and deeply grounded, both with regard to physical work and musical expression. In those cases where participants followed his principle, there was more density of sound, less breathiness, less unnecessary tension in the facial muscles, which hinders expression and free phonation and, finally, an expression that imparts an emotional level more precisely.

11.5 Grades of intensity

One of the issues with which this research was concerned was how effective Laban's (2011) four *grades of intensity* could be as a strategy for adding or reducing energy in a singer's performance. This research has shown that singers can use Laban's (2011:174) four *grades of intensity*, labelled *reduced*, *normal*, *exaggerated*, and *extreme*, to reflect on the nature of their performance.

One of the strategies used in this research involved allocating a number to each of the grades of intensity to clearly indicate the differences between the degrees. *Reduced* was designated as being -10, *normal* as +10, *exaggerated* as +50 and *extreme* as +100. Participants used this classification (and the degrees in between) to imagine the degree to which to apply different qualities. Some participants in this research found didactic strategies based on the LMT principles, combined with the *grades of intensity*, to be effective tools with which to reflect on whether their singing was too forceful or forced. They were able to experience how they, by thinking in term of *normal* or *reduced*, were able to adjust, for example, the *working actions*; sometimes performing them with varying degrees of either yielding or contending qualities. The use of such

strategies also helped participants to overcome their shyness and prevent them from planning too much in advance, thereby creating unnecessary tension.

In this research some didactic strategies based on the *degrees of intensity* included asking the participant to

- stand at the far end of the room and to speak with increasing volume and energy,
- imagine their body in an extreme way and stretching their kinesphere as much as possible,
- imagine filling the room with their whole body,
- articulate in an exaggerated or extreme manner.

Results achieved when using strategies based on the various grades of intensity include

- more volume of sound,
- more *free flow*,
- more stability in the tone quality,
- an improved legato,
- a lack of pressed phonation because of the presence of (a more balanced) vibrato, a relationship that Bozeman (2013:91) acknowledges,
- more chest register function, speaking to Reid's (2018:71) claim that a singer will "intuitively add more of the coordinated chest register, a mechanism which provides greater thrust" when the "music is dramatic and passionate", and
- better anchoring in flank/abdominal muscles, and especially in the transverse abdominis, which Chapman (2016:48) and Callaghan (2014:48) regard as the most important muscle for breath support.

The *exaggerated* and, especially, *extreme grades of intensity* often resulted in participants performing with

- increased volume and *free flow*,

- a tone characterized by greater intensity,
- better body support,
- freer high notes,
- greater musical expression,
- greater stage presence and
- more dynamically varied singing.

11.6 Inner attitudes

Hayes (2010:150) argues that an *inner attitude* represents a way of perceiving or dealing with reality. An *inner attitude* is concerned with the way that an actor creates a character. Nordin (2017) asserts that an *inner attitude* is determined by both *motion factors* and *mental factors*, which all form a unit that enables the actor not only to conceive a character, but also to experience or perceive the character. The results of this research suggested that Mirodan's (2015) and Nordin's (2017) understanding of the relationship between characterization and the *inner attitudes* is sound. It is possible to imagine, understand, conceptualize and create a character by using didactic strategies based on the *inner attitudes*.

Understanding the *inner attitudes* is not easy and, therefore, applying didactic strategies based on these attitudes can be challenging. However, despite having some difficulty with understanding all the intricacies of the *inner attitudes*, the participants in this research managed to achieve not only clearer characterization, but also positive outcomes in their vocal technique and more credibility in their expression. Using a spoken monologue to explore didactic strategies based on the *inner attitudes* proved to facilitate the participants' understanding of the attitudes. This didactic strategy shifts the focus from an approach that requires the singer to shift their attitude from 'doing things correctly' to one that encourages the singer to experiment unconditionally and, consequently, expand their artistic toolbox.

As mentioned in Chapter Six, this research investigated how didactic strategies based on *inner attitudes* might affect phonation and resonance, as well as dynamic and musical elements. It was obvious how differently each of the participants in this

research connected to the *inner attitudes*, despite being given exactly the same suggestions and conditions. It was possible to observe small differences in the participants' voice qualities, the dynamic levels, tempi, musical expressions and phrasing. There were also differences in facial expressions, pauses and body language when participants used didactic strategies based on the different *inner attitudes*.

The results of this research indicate that didactic strategies based on *stable* often generate a monotonous, pressed and forced sound and expression (especially when it was applied in the spoken monologue). The tempo tended to increase slightly and there was a lower tone frequency. It was evident that more flow can be achieved when *stable* is used while singing. The didactic strategies based on this *inner attitude* also seemed to contribute to healthier voice production, greater variety in dynamic levels, and performances that conveyed more meaning.

Didactic strategies based on *mobile* elicited considerable variations in prosody, tempi and an increase in *free flow*. The strategies based on this *inner attitude* allowed participants to become emotionally involved, create a sense of weightlessness, and generate a lot of physical movements. Didactic strategies based on *mobile* indicated that breathiness of the phonation can increase, and more significant agogic freedom can be achieved. It was also possible for participants to sing *mezza voce* more frequently when using strategies based on *mobile*.

The main characteristics of the didactic strategies based on *near* included the enabling of a softer volume and helping the singer to convey a strong stage presence and to depict a clear, down-to-earth character.

As is the case with *stable*, didactic strategies based on *remote* (consisting of the *externalised drives* known as *spell* and *vision*) often resulted in monotonous expressions. Sometimes there was also an increase in tempo, with the sound becoming more insistent and even compulsive and pressed. At other times, participants perceived these strategies as leading to slower tempi and a weaker, more veiled, but sometimes warmer sounds.

Strategies based on the *inner attitude* known as *adream* were the ones that resulted in the most different qualities in the performances rendered by the participants in this research. The use of these strategies resulted in increased energy and urgency, considerable variations in tempi, clearer rhythmic patterns, a tighter legato with effective vocal fold functioning, good resonance and an overall improved vocal technique. With some participants, other vocal qualities resulting from the use of didactic strategies based on *adream* included a breathier phonation (conducive to portraying certain emotions), more *voce mista* (mixed voice), darker vocal timbre, better musical lines and more dynamic levels, as well as strong and believable characters. Participants were also able to access a wider range of emotions.

The last *inner attitude* on which to base didactic strategies was *awake*. Contrary to *adream*, there were more resemblances between the participants' characterizations in the spoken monologue than when they worked with the other *inner attitudes*. Their performances in the monologue were characterized by a sense of matter-of-factness; an intellectuality and soberness that almost resembled the *certain* inner attitude.

11.7 Malmgren's ten questions

The final principle of the LMT on which this research based its didactic strategies involved Malmgren's ten questions. As mentioned before, Malmgren developed Laban's four quests (what, where, when and why) and Stanislavski's seven questions further, eventually generating ten questions (see Chapter Five). This research considered whether these questions (and the participants' answers) can be used as a didactic strategy with which to develop the participants' technical and musical proficiency. The intention was to observe how, by answering the questions with great clarity, participants were able to contextualise their repertoire and create a strong framework within which they could perform. The expectation was that the participants' dramatic performances – as a result of their character constructions – would become more specific. The anticipated outcome was that a generalised approach to characterisation, referred to by Stanislavski (1998:8) as “the enemy of art”, will subside in the light of the specificity brought about by the participants' answers to the ten questions. In some cases, participants created scenarios which are completely in line

with the repertoire's original contexts but, in other cases, they gave free rein to their imaginations, thus creating unexpected conditions.

The expectations mentioned above were met when the participants had a clear understanding of their intentions with the repertoire – even before they began singing. Their insight and intent (based on their answers to the ten questions) became evident in the ways that they employed their bodies, gestures and facial expressions while performing. The participants were able to internalise the content and meaning of the lyrics and to draw links to their own lived experiences. Upon observing each other's performances, participants indicated that they had been drawn into the performances in a personal and strong manner.

However, the ten questions were not only relevant to the dramatic performance (acting). A significant difference between an actor and a singer is the musical framework provided by the composer's interpretation of the text, a framework to which a singer has to relate. While the actor can create his own pauses, tempi and rhythms while performing the lyrics, the singer has to adhere to, for example, the composer's chosen tempo, rhythms, the key of the song, the accompaniment and the accompanist's interpretation of the composition. Therefore, it was also important to spend some time in this research exploring how the composer's indications and the musical text as a whole (e.g., melody, harmony, rhythm, metre, texture, etcetera.) relate to Malmgren's questions and how such a relationship contributes to the whole performance. Relevant questions asked included, amongst others:

- What meaning might be inferred from the prelude, interlude or postlude of the composition?
- What meaning can be attributed to the pauses and what affect do they have?
- What does the tessitura, intervals of the duration of notes mean for the expression of the work?
- What expressions do *acciaccaturas*, a fermata or staccato generate?
- Why has the composer designated a specific instrument in a specific bar?

The outcomes reached by answering Malmgren's ten questions, as well as those mentioned above included

- more energised singing in general and better voice control,
- clearer impulses,
- greater dynamic variation,
- more free flow,
- an improved breathing process,
- increased legato singing,
- an increase in specific stylistic characteristics, e.g., *portamenti*,
- a greater variety in timbre, as well as a timbre that is adapted well to the content of the lyrics and the music, and
- more detailed work in general, with more focus on main words and clearer directions in the phrasing.

Ultimately, it became clear that the questions provided a focus on conveying an artistic experience based on the examination of the lyrics and the musical text, rather than simply getting bogged down in vocal technique and self-criticism. The participants in this research became emotionally more grounded and acted as channels for the content, instead of being the focus themselves.

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION

12.1 Introduction

In Chapter One of this thesis, I stated that the main question of this qualitative, multiple method research study was:

How might didactic strategies that are based on the principles of the LMT enable a voice pedagogue to develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers who specialize in Western art music?

Therefore, the purpose of the thesis was to understand how didactic strategies based on the principles of the LMT can build on and enrich existing practices to develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers who specialize in Western art music. The need to realise this purpose through self-study, participatory action research (PAR) and interpretive description (ID) was based on my belief that, by understanding and improving one's practice as a voice pedagogue, one can contribute not only to innovative and enriched teaching practices, but also to future research about practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009:49). Because this study is concerned with the field of vocal pedagogy and classical singing, it called for the transference of the principles of the LMT, an accepted training method for dancers and actors, into innovative didactic strategies that would allow the voice pedagogue to develop a classical singer's technical and musical proficiency.

Based on the analysis of the data and the discussion on the findings in Chapter Eleven, it is possible to infer how the strategies based on the LMT can be used to develop not only a singer's technical but also musical proficiency. The conclusions reached in this research are structured according to the markers (LMT principles) mentioned in the discussion in Chapter Eleven (Laban's three dimensional planes, the working actions, externalised drives, shadow moves, the four grades of intensity, inner attitudes and Malmgren's ten questions).

12.1.1 Laban's three dimensional planes

This research has clearly shown how effective strategies based on Laban's *three-dimensional planes* are, especially for developing a singer's technical proficiency and also for raising an awareness of singers' different approaches to their own singing. The development of a singer's technical and musical proficiency through using strategies based on the dimensional planes can be tangible and sometimes even dramatic. These strategies are easy for singers to comprehend and to use on their own as well.

Strategies based on the *horizontal plane*, the *vertical plane* and the *sagittal plane* can all contribute to the development of the singer's breathing process. Those on the *vertical plane* contribute to a deeper and lower inhalation process, and also enhance the breath support. Strategies based on the retiring *sagittal plane* result in more *bound flow*, leading to improved vocal folds closure and therefore less breathiness and more energized singing. Strategies based on the retiring *sagittal plane* also enrich the formants necessary for the singer to sing with a good *squillo* and create perceptions of *inalare la voce* which help the singer to manage the breath flow.

The strategies based on the retiring *sagittal plane* also hold benefits for developing a singer's technical skills. As is the case with strategies based on the *horizontal plane*, such *vertical plane* strategies have the potential not only to enable the singer to sing with a wider pharyngeal space and elevated velum, but also to achieve a better onset of tone because of an improved inhalation process mentioned above. Technical elements that can be developed by using strategies based on the advancing *sagittal plane* include legato singing, increased vocal resonance and free flow of air. Furthermore, strategies based on both the *horizontal* and the *vertical planes* contribute to the relaxation of the singer's muscular system and articulators, such as the jaw and the tongue. The muscular relaxation achieved by using strategies based on the descending vertical plane, the increased pharyngeal space and elevated velum, as well as the lower laryngeal position, also assist with free phonation.

Strategies involving a combination of phonation, physical movements and invented scenarios can lead to different perceptions of the sound by the singer, as well as the

listener experiencing significant audible differences. An overall holistic approach that focuses on strategies involving movements and phonation on the different planes creates a muscular freedom that regulates airflow and air pressure in different ways. Strategies based on the descending *vertical plane* can be particularly beneficial to a singer's posture, alignment and perceptions of gravitation. These strategies also affect the singer's vocal timbre (vibrancy and enhanced harmonics), laryngeal position (lower), and ability to achieve a consistent timbre throughout the vocal registers.

12.1.2 Working actions

The research has shown that it is often fruitful to use strategies based on the contending *working actions* when working with singers who have lower energy, and who need to enhance the intensity of sound, air pressure, air flow and muscular activity. The results of strategies based on the *working actions* will depend on the singer's technical and musical level, as well as their prior knowledge and experience, and the content of the repertoire. The *working actions* with yielding qualities are beneficial for those singers who, for a variety of reasons, use too much pressure and muscular activity. By using strategies based on the *working actions*, singers can gain many new tools that they can easily apply when working by themselves. Furthermore, these tools can stimulate singers' creativity and enable a greater extent of expressive and personal variation, and also improve their technical and musical proficiency.

Strategies based on the contending *working actions* (*punching, slashing, pressing, wringing*) can all contribute to the development of all the aspects of a singer's breathing process. The awareness of the embodiment of the sound, as well as perceptions of gravitation that stem from the use of these strategies, facilitates lower breathing during inhalation and improved breath support. The singer is able to achieve a more embodied sound that is characterised by a technical proficiency that includes, for example, good vocal fold adduction, a vibrant timbre, rich resonance, equality and unification in the registration, secure intonation, controlled vibrato and good legato singing. Musically the singer who applies strategies based on the contending *working actions* is able to assimilate the lyrics and the musical text into an expressive and meaningful performance.

Strategies based on the yielding *working actions* (*dabbing*, *gliding*, *flicking* and *floating*) can be beneficial for the development of a singer's technical proficiency. These strategies enable the singer to find small, light impulses which create energy and improves the precise onset of tones. They also improve not only legato singing (*gliding*), but also staccato singing (*dabbing*). The use of strategies based on the yielding *working actions* are very conducive to releasing unnecessary physical and muscular tension. The absence of muscular tension resulting from using strategies based on the yielding *working actions* also allows singers to sing with less vocal fold mass, as well as an even airflow. Along with the embodiment of sound and the good breath support, this even airflow enables the singer, for example, to sing *coloratura* passages, as well as the higher register much more easily. Musically the strategies based on the yielding *working actions* enable the singer to achieve more nuances in vocal timbre and expression.

12.1.3 Externalised drives

In the light of the discussion of the *externalised drives* it is evident how didactic strategies based on *externalised drives*, especially *passion* and *spell*, can be beneficial for developing singers' technical and musical skills. Different *externalised drives* can be used successfully for different purposes, depending on the level of a singer's artistic development and personal qualities. Imagining different scenarios provides various contexts through which singers can find their way into the different *externalised drives*. This plurality accommodates the fact that singers have different perceptions and experiences of the externalised drives. Often a clarification of the prevailing conditions is needed to 'sharpen' the tools and, consequently, achieve greater vocal technical or musical results.

Because of the obvious benefits that strategies based on *passion* and *spell* hold for the development of singers' technical and musical proficiency, this section of the conclusion will only include inferences made about these two principles of the LMT. When it comes to the development of a singer's technical proficiency, strategies based on *passion* can contribute to an increase in the singer's intensity of sound, an improvement in the *free flow* of sound and air, a more stable tone quality and balanced

vibrato and increased chest register function. Strategies based on exaggerated and extreme versions of *passion* can lead to improved breath support, *bound flow*, improved articulation and richer vocal resonance. Musically, all three versions of *passion* (normal, exaggerated and extreme) can enhance the measure and urgency of expression, including body language and facial expressions, as well as the breathing process as part of the expression.

It is important to remember that, just as is the case with *passion*, the intensity of *spell* will affect the outcomes. When developing a singer's technical proficiency, strategies based on surrendering *spell* often lead to warmer and rounder timbres, more effortless singing, more relaxed articulators and more stability of phonation. Depending on the intensity of the surrendering *spell*, the vocal tract can also be affected, e.g., the velum lifts, allowing the singer to achieve a more balanced vocal resonance. Just as in the case of strategies based on surrendering *spell*, those based on dominating *spell* affect the vocal timbre. Strategies based on surrendering, as well as on dominating *spell*, can facilitate appropriate breath support and, consequently, improved vibrato.

Furthermore, the use of didactic strategies based on the *externalised drives* can also significantly affect the dramatic performance. Strategies based on both types of *spell* can also contribute to the development of a singer's musical proficiency. The use of these strategies affects the emotional output, the intensity of the tone quality, the singer's facial expressions and body language.

The outcomes of strategies based on *vision* correlate closely with those achieved when using strategies based on the two *externalised drives*, i.e., *passion* and *spell*, discussed above.

12.1.4 Shadow moves

The various *shadow moves* can strongly contribute to creating an *inner attitude* of a character in performance, but they can also emerge as a natural consequence of the *inner attitude*. When the focus is on vocal technique and musical development, however, it is desirable to eliminate unnecessary and unconscious physical movements for the time being. The expression of the vocal, musical and dramatic

performance becomes more intense when irrelevant and unconscious physical movements are eliminated. Unnecessary *shadow moves* can be avoided by employing a strategy based on a single *working action*, *dimensional plane* or *externalised drive* at a time. This will allow a singer to deliver a performance that is physically, technically and musically grounded in a specific focal point – a performance where any movements are functional. Technically, strategies based on a single principle of the LMT also contribute to an increase in the density of sound, the elimination of unnecessary breathiness and tension in the facial muscles. Musically, these strategies contribute to an increase in the freedom of, especially, emotional expression.

12.1.5 Grades of intensity

As a regulator for energy, intensity and sometimes volume, combining the four *grades of intensity* with strategies based on the principles of the LMT (Laban's *three dimensional planes*, *working actions*, *externalised drives*, *shadow moves* and *inner attitudes*) can contribute significantly to developing a singer's technical and musical proficiency. When it comes to developing technical proficiency, strategies combining the degrees of intensity with the LMT principles can result in improved embodiment of sound, an increase in volume and intensity of tone, more *free flow*, and more freedom in the higher register. Musically the combination also becomes a way to create more nuances in their sound, more variation in dynamic levels, a greater stage presence, and more significant musical expression. Ultimately, one can argue that the didactic strategies based on the principles of the LMT, combined with the *grades of intensity*, enable singers to find new, sometimes even unfamiliar, physical and/or vocal qualities.

12.1.6 Inner attitudes

The *inner attitudes* are often the most challenging principle of the LMT to comprehend. Strategies based on the *inner attitudes* can affect the singers' vocal technique and musical performances. Strategies based on the *inner attitudes* (*stable*, *mobile*, *near*, *remote*, *adream* and *awake*) can contribute to the singer's technical proficiency in that applying these strategies can help a singer to achieve an increase in *free flow*, a healthier voice production, clearer rhythmic patterns, effective vocal fold adduction,

and a rich, resonant tone. They can also facilitate successful *voce mista* and a warmer, darker vocal timbre. Musically, strategies based on the *inner attitudes* can develop a singer's ability to achieve better musical lines and a greater variety of dynamic levels, as well as to better portray certain emotions. Strategies based on the *inner attitudes* are effective for opening up the emotional centre of singers and, as a result, the credibility of the character that the singer portrays will also be enhanced.

12.1.7 Malmgren's ten questions

As is the case with the *inner attitudes*, the ten questions can enable a singer to clearly construct a scaffolding for the character in a song or aria. Using Malmgren's ten questions as a didactic strategy to imagine and depict a credible and trustworthy character can not only influence the dramatic performance but do so to the highest degrees of musical variables and vocal technical parameters. The strategy involving Malmgren's ten questions allows singers to contextualise their repertoire and to create a framework within which they can situate and construct a character. Singers' internalisation and depiction of a character's specific traits and emotions, informed by their answers to the ten questions, become evident in their facial expressions, body language, gestures and their application of the dramatic conventions.

Singers who reflect on their answers to Malmgren's questions are also able to develop their technical proficiency. They manage to sing with more energy and better voice control, clearer impulses, more free flow and increased legato singing, more nuanced vocal timbre, an improved breathing process and greater dynamic variation.

Upon completion of this research, one has to acknowledge that the didactic strategies used during the visits to the four research sites are merely examples of what can be created using the principles of the LMT. The fact that solo singers who specialize in Western art music are individuals who each have unique vocal qualities and challenges calls for voice pedagogues to be innovative and creative when creating didactic strategies based on the LMT technique. It is also essential that the voice pedagogue considers a singer's lived experiences when suggesting a didactic strategy based on

the LMT because that will allow singers to better contextualise and reference the strategy and the effect it has on their voices.

In the light of all the inferences set out above, it is safe to conclude that it is possible for a voice pedagogue to successfully use didactic strategies based on the LMT to develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers who specialize in Western art music.

12.2 Suggestions for further studies

This research study focused on the way in which a voice pedagogue can use didactic strategies based on the Laban-Malmgren technique to develop the technical and musical proficiency of young adult soloists who specialize in Western art music. However, it will be interesting to consider how such strategies might be used with other age groups and musical styles, as well as with instrumental and vocal ensembles. Therefore, research questions that might be considered in future research include:

- How can a voice pedagogue use didactic strategies based on the Laban-Malmgren technique to develop the technical and musical proficiency of singers who specialize in contemporary commercial music?
- How can the principles of the Laban-Malmgren technique be used to develop the somatic vocabulary of conductors?
- How can conductors use the principles of the Laban-Malmgren technique to facilitate a choral sound that is appropriate for specific repertoire?
- How can conductors use the principles of the Laban's three-dimensional planes to facilitate the performance of a symphonic work?

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