

THE MUSICAL CONNECTION

The Visual Expression of a Musical Experience

By Frederick Storfer

The current standard practice in presenting a music theatre piece is to break it down into its basic elements of drama and music. Usually this results in a lack of vision as to an overall point of view. By organically interconnecting the dramatic and musical elements of a work, we enable a flow of behavioral logic leading toward an organic whole. This connection between the two facilitates the construct of a logical flow of its episodic elements within the organic totality – the musical connection.

The achievement of an organic whole depends on the logical analysis of all the dramatic and musical elements of the work; consequently, the synthesis of each character in the play becomes a logical structural element of that organic whole.

The process always demands imagination, and often times fantasy, to fulfill the demands of a well-reasoned, interpretative reconstruction.

We find that when there is a logical manifestation of human behavior on stage, we have arrived at the only possible conclusion: the body is the ultimate visual tool for the expression of thoughts, images, and feelings as the voice is the aural expression, and they should act in tandem as cooperating partners in the communication process.

It is not that there exists no systematic answers to the interpretative process—there are many excellent guidelines, from Stanislavski to “Second City”. However, we believe this to be the first comprehensive training program leading toward a complete understanding of the interrelationship of character, plot, play structure, *and* music.

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INTRODUCTION

The increased demand for an organized method of music theatre analysis using a process of interpretation valid for any work in the music theatre genre (opera, operetta, musical comedy etc and therefore any song, whether folk, rock, blues, jazz, classical, pop, or what-have-you) has accompanied a growing awareness of a concomitant requirement for a 'working' system of analysis in the field.

The following system is so designed as to meet that need, providing the trainee's commitment to the process is 'total' in that the course requirements demand dedication, concentration and a sense of completion.

OUTLINE FOR THE MUSICAL CONNECTION

Unit 1 - The Boss Speaks (How the Body Affects the Song)

How does the use of the body affect the song?

How is the body affected by the circumstances?

Use the group to sing while doing calisthenics, 'rah-rahs' of football rally, etc.

This session will include what I plan to do & where I intend to go to get the end result.

Group work: 'Follow –the-Leader' or 'Simon Says' or 'Conga-Line' leading to a line by the leader acting out his melody. The leader chooses an action and constantly changes it, acting out his body. The others follow the leader's body pose as the leader keeps changing his poses.

Thesis: "Bodily change affects the song" (This is the basis & needs to be repeated at every session and the next 14 sessions will demonstrate not only the truth of that statement but how to achieve an organic and logical connection between the body positions and their logical source, ie: how to find the correct one to apply.

Unit 2 – The Stock Exchange (How Circumstances Influence the Song)

Samples are placed in a hat of different circumstances. Singer chooses one and has to sing a song with the circumstances given.

The 'who' is implied and needs to be filled in by the singer.

Unit 3 – "You Who..." (How Character Influences the Song)

The singer has to make 3 things clear about the character in the circumstances.

'Who' in the singer's own circumstances contrasting with 'who are you' in the given circumstances.

Samples of 'who's' as opposites: king/slave; only one person sings.

Unit 4 – The 5 W's (The Given Circumstances)

‘Who’ remains the same but the contrasting circumstances differ for the same song. (king is about to be married versus about to be beheaded) Only one person sings.

Unit 5 – The Detective (Finding the clues regarding the 5 W’s)

Choose a song (maybe from a list of 10) and through the character and circumstances, choose 3 actions that will make it all clear. In the episode beforehand, look at 5 lines leading into the song and 5 lines afterward, or to the end of the episode.

Unit 6 – The Intruder (Duets)

Same circumstances exist but contrasting objectives by the singers.

How does the addition of a character on stage affect a singer?

(Possible monologue/dialogue and episode breakdown occurs here, ie: break down a song just as you would a scene.)

Example: Give singer A, a song with given circumstances and a ‘who’; he sings the song; next he sings the song with actor B on stage; Actor B is given a task to perform; How does this affect Singer A’s delivery?

Unit 7 – Duel Equality (Double Trouble)

How does singer B affect A throughout the song, and vice versa?

Improvise a dialogue of actions with nonsense syllables or letters and opposing actions (ready to marry vs: dissuading the marriage) using the body to express the actions.

Then, use the dialogue of opposing actions as recitative (a dialogue song) still using nonsense syllables or letters as substitute for the words to the song in an interactive process.

Unit 8 – Action! (The Dialogue Song)

Given 10 – 12 songs to choose from, sing back and forth to each other.

Possibilities:

Put Your Head on my Shoulder

Baby, It's Cold Outside

I can Do Anything Better Than You

Unit 9- The Detective Returns (Building the Biography from the Book)

Take the duet completely through and include the following:

Beginning (dialogue before the song)

Middle (the song itself)

End (the dialogue after)

Unit 10 – Stimulating Response (Actions at Work)

Silent response is important here (inner monologue)

Unit 11 through 14– The scenic View (Actions in Episodes)

Use a two character play sample (“I Do, I Do”) for the whole play.

Then breakdown the play (main idea of the play, super objective of each character, episodes & their titles, actions within the episodes etc)

Unit 15 – Fredly Speaking (Summary and overview)

Question and answer session – Socratic technique