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TEACHING MUSIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO STUDENTS OF NON-PHILOLOGICAL SPECIALTIES

To the non-musician, music - as a discipline - is a foreign language. What is G-clef; what is *crescendo* and *diminuendo*; what does *staccato*, *espressivo* and *rubato* mean? The reading of music and its intricacies, terminology, and notation are formidable; but to the uninitiated, the idea of learning an artistic composition, mastering, and performing it on with others a stage before a live audience seems more fantasy than reality. Where does one begin?

Each year, I receive a different group of students for my choral music elective course at Ariel University (and a few years back, also at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev). Neither institution has a formal music department. Students are drawn from various faculties: economic, business administration, architecture, electronics, engineering and more – a melting pot of academia. While some may have been exposed to music as children, they left it early on, and most have had little or no exposure to it as a subject - either in their elementary, middle, nor high school education. The course meets for 2 hours once a week during the academic year, sometimes, limited to only once semester, or 12 meetings in all. Each time the architect requests a "musical scale" from the engineer, while at the same time the business manager asks to borrow a "note" from the economist, and so on - but this time we are not speaking about a construction site or business plan, we are speaking about an artistic adventure. At rehearsals students develop basic skills such as: cooperation, standing together, and the ability to receive instruction. In addition there are common technical obstacles such as: opening their mouths to breathe, bring out tone from their throats, and sing in-tune (when possible). Generally, they arrive with no concept of tone production, rhythm, and beat, following a conductor, or reading music. These they must learn from the ground up. Surprisingly, the most important

learning activity is not singing – but listening: listening to oneself and others, adjusting, blending, initiating and responding in a flexible give and take.

The essence of the pedagogy in teaching such a group is: 1. sensitivity to the character of each students, and, 2. structuring the lesson in such a way that time is not lost. Developing the student's concentration is the most important challenge for the teacher. Sustaining it for an entire semester until performance is the goal. Each minute must be directed towards this final goal. The basics follow. A complete musical composition must be pre-prepared, presented, and practiced in such a way that learning is effortless. The student should not be aware that he is learning. Only at the end of the process, the student, surprisingly, realizes that he knows to sing a passage, a phrase, a section and is delighted with himself.

How does one accomplish this? It requires great patience on the part of the teacher, as well as ability to analyze the difficulties required in each part, break them down into very small increments, prepared each interval and motif by memory, guide them through continual challenges and questions. Most of all sequence the process in such a gradual – but persistent - way that students are constantly attentive even intrigued about what comes next. One small step after another one must never tire the student - either as individuals or in sections of women or men, but go back and forth between them – but only taking so much time that the previous group feels neither or become bored by inattention from the teacher. Most the learning is by rote.

Literature

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