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Introduction

I am Zaza Gagua, a second year master student at Stockholm Opera Academy. I have been studying Opera for the past six years. I could say I have gathered good experience during these years as I took part in various shows in Tbilisi as well in Sweden, Denmark and Finland. I have auditioned for various roles from famous Operas, have had private masterclasses with different teachers and have performed in two different Operas with professional singers, orchestra and conductors. I will start my job as a bass soloist at Norway Opera soon.

In this thesis, I will share some advices to upcoming and ambitious singers, which I have learnt through my experience, talking with doctors and voice teachers over the years. Everybody starts as a novice and so did I. Sharing the knowledge with other singers is a huge pleasure for me and I hope these advices help another singer as it did for me.

Chapter 1

Discipline and Sleeping regarding Caruso's advice

If you want to be an opera singer, it requires not only a special set of sound, but it also requires discipline at the highest level, tireless work on the equilibrium of breath and range, sound flexibility, text of opera aria, recital and music. Analyse what the composer wants.

I think that the secret of all success is discipline. According to Enrico Caruso's opinion "The richer is the voice more care is needed for it, I personally see a solution of this problem in a smart and moderate way of life."¹

When you become popular, you receive more invitations for various parties from the society. To the singers Caruso advises to avoid visiting such places where they will have to speak loudly. He thinks that in the rare cases the singer should attend events and in most cases he should refuse "No matter how selfish it sounds, but the singer first of all should be worried about his health and voice".

I am also trying to avoid participation at the parties as much as possible, because I like to drink wine at the parties, since I am from the country which is a Cradle of wine at least. On the other hand, song is also an integral part of our culture and I often sing, and I sing a lot.

During alcohol consumption the throat is warmed up and it is not shown what harm can be done to the vocal yoga by alcohol. Under the influence of alcohol, control over breathing is reducing and sound intensity is increasing, which effects on our singing quality on the second and especially on the third days when the voice comes more inflexible and even deeper. However, I do not want you to think that singer should not either drink alcohol or avoid parties. On the contrary, I find it necessary to unload, but only with appropriately chosen measure and time.

The opera singer must keep up with the maximum accuracy. In order to avoid resetting the ligament or organs from damage, my recommendation is that in the last days we try to sleep early, at the same time. The night before the concert day, our organism demands us to sleep at the time we used to.

From my point of view, it is unacceptable to study and work on the text before bedtime, the night before the concert. I made this mistake several times and I did not get up to 4-5 in the morning. Moreover, the result was that my voice was not in the appropriate condition the next day.

I often hear from other people that when "I got back to sleep, I heard the music repeatedly and sleep bad". That is what exactly happens because before sleep, we forced to work our brain and think about music. Do not forget that, when we sleep, our brain continues to work and it does not need a special activation before sleeping.

I also share psychologists' recommendation that we do not have to use computers, telephones, and Internet before sleep.

¹ Caruso, Enrico: *The Art Of Singing/How to Sing*, Tbilisi, 1992 y., N16 p. p.54.

Chapter 2

How to learn new roles

Working on opera party requires special observation and attention. Great caution should be selected for the repertoire. I think the singer should know what the repertoire is useful and fits to him. Choosing the correct repertoire, we will prevent damages and problems with vocal yoga.

Caruso in his book *How to sing* wrote that the discipline is very important. I would like to note that despite the fact that Caruso had a huge diapason and had a good technique he was always motivated for the perfection in vocal. He paid great attention to the solving of vocal problems.

Now I will share my experiences with the last two roles I have played. The first was Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, where I played the role of Masetto and Commendatore.

Masetto and Commendatore are completely different characters. Masetto is a young man and he has aria, duet and many recitatives.

On the other hand, Commander's voice is simultaneously dangerous, wise and mature. The exclusive precision of the sound equilibrium. You cannot start with 2 forte this scene because the size and drama are especially needed at the last and the smart singer should not be able to show the maximum strength of his own from the very beginning.

My Masetto character is strong. Although he is not a person from the high social status, he has a dignity. He is trying to protect his wife's Zerlina's name and he is ready even to resist such a high status person such as Don Giovanni.

Some producers even perform Masetto as a pitiful person but I do not agree with them.

Masetto has many recitatives. My strong side was not really recitatives, because I always did not like study that. Nevertheless, when you are preparing a full party you cannot escape from the recitatives. During my study at Stockholm Academy, the pianist Martin Hellström taught me how to memorise texts easily. You should take the last 2-3 words of the recitation and repeat it, and then add 1 word by another and so on and so on.

It is necessary to translate the recitatives word by word since it helps us to perceive the entire picture of the piece. We also should translate all the words that are in the piece in which we are taking part in, because we have to know what the words are telling us about other heroes.

I think that the singer first of all has to learn recitatives and then he should learn how to sing duet and then Aria.

During my study at the academy, I took one recommendation: if you want to learn good recitatives, you should pronounce recitatives sometimes loudly sometimes slowly and sometimes fast. And it is known fact that the muscles have memorization ability. Also I think

that more often you practice how to pronounce recitatives your lips muscles will memorize technique of your pronunciation.

You have to study and once you learn each word, this means you can start working on music.

Caruso made special attention to the tempo and rhythm. In the autobiography, he writes that the singer should treat with special caution and respect for the rhyme when he performs with the orchestra. Caruso's opinion during the performance "It is important to have a knowledge how to use a break, since certainly at this moment we take a deep breath to prepare for the phrase. Such rhythmic accuracy gives to the performer more confidence, which is completely impracticable for some singers"².

Caruso believes that clear dictation is necessary, not a strict clear sound injury. He believes that the pretentious doctrine does not hurt the throat.

When I worked on *Don Giovanni* I made a mistake, because I had very little time and two parts to study, I decided to study recitations by listening someone records. However, when I was trying to study how the singers sings I have also studied his mistakes. That is why it is better to learn by vocal score. That is why this method of listening is not a good one. However correcting mistakes requires more time and effort.

While performing the work, we need constant attention to the freedom of throat. We had active rehearsals during the work. I tried to find a position that would protect my voice from damage. I have to say, that I found the position due which I can sing during 10 hours every day and my voice does not get tired. My voice is always in a good condition and it is a great deal of proper breathing. It can be said that it is possible to sing both roles by one peson. Even Mozart suggested and Giuseppe Lolli sang both roles during the first performance of "Don Giovanni" on 29th of October, in 1787 in Prague.

It is also necessary to work on yourself without a pianist.

² Caruso (1992) p.69.

Chapter 3

Importance of a voice teacher With Ruffo's example

It does not matter how much you are preparing under the direction of a famous teacher. The main thing is to grow with him. Ruffo writes in his book *My parabola*, that he was preparing under the direction of a well-educated pedagogue, but he was not able to grow up for months, and when he changed the teacher every lesson it gave him a great stimulus and energy. When Ruffo was studying under the direction of the famous teacher Persichini, the teacher did a mistake, he thought that Ruffo was a bass. Ruffo studied singing techniques with several teachers. In *Musical America*, December 27, 1913, Ruffo wrote the following: "In view of the fact that numerous vocal instructors have endeavoured to claim the credit of having been my 'teacher' I desire to state emphatically that my brother Ettore is the one to whom practically all such distinction is due. I studied four months at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome under Signor Persichini and he told me that I possessed neither voice nor musical talent. Afterward I received instruction from Signor Sparapani for two months and from Signor Casini for four months, but as this was not sufficient tuition for an operatic career; I placed myself under the tutelage of my brother. I remained his faithful pupil for six years and am the living proof of his scientific method of voice production. All those asserting that they have been my "teacher" and therefore responsible for my success arrogate to themselves false and mendacious prerogatives."

We know that the embarrassment is the change of the teacher, but we should take this step for our own future once we feel that we cannot grow with him.

The same should be done by a teacher. Teacher should feel that you are not developing under his guidance and should suggest you another teacher. Nevertheless, unfortunately it does not happen in most cases.

Chapter 4

Correct eating with advice from Caruso

The reflux is one of the main problems of the singer and it is safe to save it from the food.

I would recommend the beginner singer to study herself. Very important is the right meal for good song. With the right feed, we give the organism on the one hand to provide minerals and vitamins; on the other hand, we adhere to it from tiredness and reflux. We are all essentially individual and we should know which food is useful for us. That is why we should look at ourselves.

I would like to recommend a singer not to eat 2-3 hours before the concert. 2-3 hours require organism to process food and get full energy from it. Vegetables and seafood are easily processed. I recommend to eat salmon and chicken fillet. Goods and especially pig breeds need more time. In addition, we should note Caruso's recommendation, to eat a light breakfast.³

Italians prefer paste, it is easily processed and the ingredients included in it are good for yoga and song.

You cannot get a large amount of food. This is inadmissible because processing of large amount of food needs a great energy. Also during this period, the probability of heartburn is high. Heartburn is very bad for vocal cords, it can be said to be so irritated that we are burning. It is unacceptable to eat food before sleep because lying in the bed the food is very difficult to be processed.

³ Caruso Chapter 2 "My ration" (1992) p.55

Chapter 5

Cigarettes and alcohol with my experience and with advice from Caruso

Sometimes Caruso smoked up to two packets of cigarettes.⁴ It is a known fact that he had a lung disease.⁵ To the singers and especially to the beginners he highly recommends to avoid smoking as much as possible, since it will negatively effect to the sensitivity of vocal apparatus. From my past experience I would like to say that smoking damages and hurts the throat. An irritated throat exudate, an excessively viscous mucus that runs through out entire throat and touches the vocal yogas and loses elasticity. It needs several months to clean the throat and voice from the nicotine. When I quit smoking my voice became more resilient, long-lasting and healthy especially it effects when I take high notes during the song.

With the regard to Alcohol Caruso recommends wine. During the dinner and even before the performance he drank 1 glass of wine which was made by himself. He recommends refraining from drinking whiskey and alcoholic drinks.⁶

⁴⁴ Caruso Chapter 3 "Smoking and Alcohol" (1992) p.56-57

⁵⁵ Caruso Chapter 3 "Smoking and Alcohol" (1992) p.56-57

⁶⁶ Caruso Chapter 3 "Smoking and Alcohol" (1992) p.56-57

Chapter 6

Important medicines

I definitely think that the singer always should have medicines in the bag. Cooling for the singer is more than cooler. Because it takes weeks to enter the form of curve and sometimes even months. We have to be comforted, throat pills, yacht pills, pills of gastrointestinal tissue, allergy-free pills. With the timely approach of medication, we will avoid further complications.

I also recommend not taste new pills before the show, if you really do not know how it will affect on you.

Chapter 7

Overcoming stress before performance with advice from Caruso

Caruso believes that there are 2 types of nervousness. The first is from the responsibility and the second is not enough self-confidence that he cannot overcome the duties of the person. He advises singers at this time to make a sense of breathing.

Caruso writes “During the performance day the best thing is to stay alone in a completely peaceful environment in order to not overload yourself with talking and speaking,⁷ I am doing the same and it really works. I need to be alone before performance. Then I am more concentrated.

This rule is especially observed in my homeland, which I have not seen in many countries. Caruso recommends to attend such performances where singers with a good vocal technique takes part. He believes that singing manners and methodology of singers can be observed and learned by the observant gaze.⁸

⁷ Caruso (1992) p.70.

⁸ Caruso Chapter 16 “Voice and Singing Care Methods” (1992) p.70-72

Chapter 8

Acting

It is been know a long time that for the success is important not only good voice and technique but although it is also important to have acting skills. Modern performances also require physical preparedness that is important for a singer's searching as well. The founder of vocal art theory Manuel Garcia writes, „Physical condition of singer must be so strong and good that he could withstand the enormous stress that awaits him on his acting road”.⁹ When I read this recommendation I have started doing more active trainings. I would like to say that the result is great.

Speaking about actors Garcia believes that they are responsible for awaking feelings, since what does the actors feels the audience feels too.¹⁰

Ruffo refers to the same thought. He believes that singer with the middle voice but good acting neither singer with high vocal and technique but with unconvincing acting talent.¹¹

It is very important to notice Chaliapin. He was s a great reformer on the acting stage. His talent brought him a great success on la Scala's stage after he appeared for the first time behind Italian listener with the difficult task of singing Boito's *Mefistofele*, which was premiered 20 years ago. First of all, the hype was caused by his makeup and acting skills and then because of his vocal skills.

I am also trying to follow the recommendations that I have mentioned above. To be an actor and penetrate to the character of my hero have had a good effect on me and my listeners. When feel the character and personality of my hero and fit it with my apparel I leave behind only a little - control myself on the stage.

⁹ Varshanidze Nodar: Chapter "Students' Ability" (2016) p. 82

¹⁰ Varshanidze Nodar: Chapter "The art of expression in Singing " (2016) p. 89-91

¹¹ Varshanidze Nodar: Chapter "Ruffo Titta"(2016) p. 138-149

Chapter 9

Interview and practical advices from voice teacher and opera soloist Eldar Gewadze

I interviewed my voice teacher professor Eldar Gewadze. He is teaching at Tbilisi State Conservatory. He was a student of the legendary opera singer David Andguladze, whose students are singing at the best Operas of the world. Maestro Eldar has been a soloist for 46 years at Tbilisi State Opera. I asked him to give some advice for the beginners.

He told me that it is very important to have a good education in the music theory. This helps in learning Operas easily and correctly. It also helps you to sing in tune every time. He thinks every beginner should start singing in Opera theatres whose interest is to develop singers and not exploit them. He advises not to hurry with the growth, rather work hard and make sure every step is solid. He said it is important to immerse oneself in the roles and perform with passion.

When I asked him what are the most important three skills that the good singer should have? He answered: First is voice. Second is good acting and knowledge of hero's characters. And the third is that you should be clear what the composer wants from you. He mentioned that Caruso was a great singer because he really understood what the composer wanted to the point. Caruso's contemporaries like Ldzari had better high notes and Tamanio had a bigger voice than Caruso. But Caruso was the best because he sang exactly as the composer envisioned.

I also asked him how can one learn a role easily? He shared his personal way of learning. He said writing and rewriting the lyrics until there will not be mistakes. I really liked his advice; I am trying to rewrite lyrics before the performance.

Conclusion

Opera itself is a combination of music, poetry, acting and plastic where the central role-plays singer-actor. Each singer should try to develop itself every time. During my study period, I have learned a lot from the reading books of successful and famous opera singers; I noted recommendations of my teachers, professors, opera singers I have met; and tried to follow their recommendations. As you have already read, it really affected me. I hope that my work will be useful for the beginners since several year ago I was beginner too, studied a lot, and worked a lot for my future career.

As I have already mentioned below I have played the role of Masetto and Commendatore during performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. And from my point of view it is quite hard to play both roles but if you will follow the advices that I have mentioned here in each my chapter I am sure that it will help you to sing properly during your entire singing career. Since when I started to practice these two roles I had quite few time to study and met a lot of challenges. Hoverer I started to look for the solutions how to overcome challenges. First of all I have started to observe why I couldn't sleep sometimes well, why I had reflux, why my voice wasn't in a good condition and also I have started to think about faster ways of studying and started to think how I could learn faster and what are the important keys. I am always trying to follow the advices of the famous singers and trying to fit it to myself. I do not tell you how you should develop your voice skills or singing technique because I think that it is up to your voice technique teacher's job but what I am trying to share with you is that all my selected chapters will help and do not heart you.

References

1. Caruso Enrico: *How to sing* publishing "Tbilisi" 1992
2. Ruffo Tita: (journal) *Musical America* December 27. 1913
3. Interview with Opera soloist Eldar Getsadze
4. Varshanidze Nodar: *History and Theory of Vocal Performing Art*, Adjara, Batumi, 2016