

A summary of the main issues arising in our first session.

***** after Fajo saw my recording of Parto, parto – Carmen (G. Bizet).**

FAJO: There is a weak grounding. Connection with the full body is not always present. What you should aim for is to create a flow from the soles of the feet into the body. Through the spine, out of the top of the head, which makes the whole body collide together. We do not want to see forced gestures, but everything should feel natural. Only when the body feels free, the arms can move freely and the air can flow without obstruction. All parts of the body should feel glued together as if they are one instrument

FAJO: You should find a warm feeling in the body. This is a feeling which comes when you are focussed and concentrated in your singing. This can only be achieved if you know the text and melody by heart.

AIMEE: But it is more difficult in other languages to do this, right? Because we don't have the same affinity with the foreign language as we do in our mother tongue.

FAJO: It is not about the language where you are singing in, but about the feeling you want to express. For this you need to know really well about what you sing by making a good translation to your native language. Also, you should aim to perform the piece as much as you can in a performance setting. The piece really should become embodied. Everything you express should be known by the body and mind.

AIMEE: I agree on both things you said. Singing teachers proclaim often the same thing. However, on the second issue you mentioned I have a remark. We, as young singing students, do not always have the possibility to perform something for a hundred times in a performance setting. For example, consider a role of an opera: You probably will perform less frequently a recital with 10 arias than 10 Lieder. This is due to the fact that in The Netherlands oratorio is more popular than opera. Also, it is quite exhausting for the body to sing only arias in a recital. Therefore I wonder: 'How can my body become physically acquainted with the piece of music?'. Teachers often say: 'Sing in your study room as if you are performing in front of a big audience'. In some way this helps, but of course not tremendously, because the real factors which make a performance stressful, for example, the audience, the staying together with the pianist, different acoustics et cetera, are not present. What performances teach us is where our weaknesses lay. My weakness is that my focus during singing and the connection with my body is not always strong enough due to the stressful factors in a performance setting. This is why I developed a study plan in which I practise my physical utterances hoping that I then will feel physically more secure on stage in what I am doing.

AIMEE: "In my research I mention that I would like to find a way to physically express myself in the same way as I am doing in my speech in order to act credible. I assume that the amount of gestures I make in my singing, and the instigation to make them, have to do with how I express myself in daily life (which is with lots of gestures!). I should embrace the fact that I want to make gestures in my singing instead of going against it. However, I wonder how to do this without them becoming funny or distracting for the public. I obviously do not use the proper gestures in my singing. Otherwise the public would not be bothered, right?"

FAJO: "To answer your question, you have to go a few steps back. It could be that in daily life you already place your gestures incorrectly. If you do not experience a feeling of physical freedom, then it is likely that your gestures are created in one or a few locations in the body. Instead, they should be created by the whole body. Let us consider for example someone with bent forward shoulders. This impairs the impulse for his or her gestures to find a free passage through the body. The tension in

the shoulders blocks the inner flow. During singing this will cause for sure an obstruction in a singer's physical expressiveness.

AIMEE: "Okay, If I understand you correctly, you say that in order to find answers I should also observe the way I speak in daily life?"

FAJO: "Yes, this could be helpful. However, this takes time because you should observe your self many times and we do not have that time. But I think I can get a good sense already of your inner flow if we start to work on your study-plan"
