

FEAR DURING PERFORMANCE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE VOICE

Agona ÇUPI-ALIU¹, Bajram ÇUPI²

^{1*} Department of Musical Art, Faculty of Arts, University of Tetova

² Department of Musical Art, Faculty of Arts, University of Tetova

*Corresponding author e-mail: agona.cupi@unite.edu.mk

Abstract

Fear during acting is a phenomenon which accompanies the singer at every stage of his career (Debra et al, 2017) regardless of age and professional maturity. Fear begins and arises before performance, and increases during performance. It is important to note that the impact does not end there, it continues in the post-performance period. Stage fright manages to affect our physiological side which is manifested by symptoms such as: increased heart rate and blood pressure, dizziness and vomiting, trembling of body, lips and voice, contraction of the throat muscles, etc.

To measure our hypothesis whether fear has an impact, has little impact or no impact at all on the voice, we conducted an assessment through a questionnaire with 25 respondents. From the collected data we can say that the performance of soloists is influenced by external and internal factors that can affect the color of sound, timbre and tension and that many times exactly these factors, at their highest degree can cause damage on stage as well as health.

Keywords: *stage fright, singing, interpretation, vocals, stress.*

Introduction

Live performances can affect the loss of cardiovascular responsiveness complexity as a result of the body's difficulty adapting to stressful situations (Williamon et al, 2014). This finding is especially present in performances in front of a very wide audience. According to explanations from the field of psycho-biology, psychosocial stress has been shown to have a tremendous impact on the endocrine system, activating the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and affecting the restoration of the stress hormone adrenocorticotrophic. This stimulates glucocorticoids, including cortisol, which together with other metabolites suppress immunity. (Smith SM, Vale WW, 2006; Frod K, O'Keane V, 2013). Such a mechanism can generally explain the state of the body even during stress on performance.

Because of this complexity, the analysis of subtle events of the voice can provide a window into the impact of fear and stress on situations where human performance needs high functioning but where environmental circumstances or related tasks make it difficult to monitor stress effectively. Due to the limited and qualitative research done so far in the areas of emotion and musical performance, mainly due to the difficulty in obtaining quantitative data, these experiments are a fundamental step in trying to answer questions related to the relationship between music and emotion.

This paper aims to explore the impact that fear and stress have on the singer's vocals whether professional soloist or amateur. Discovering the factors that drive fear, its manifestation and management.

Fear during performance

Fear during performance is a phenomenon which accompanies the singer at every stage of his career (Debra et al, 2017) regardless of age and professional maturity. Emotions have a significant role in every musical expression. There is suggestion from empirical and anecdotal research that performers “attempt to convey particular moods to listeners” (Patrick Juslin page 310). A study made by Roland Persson in 1996, showed that the importance of being able to induce pleasant emotional experience in the audience while performing was one of the fundamental reasons for pursuing a musical career (Persson,1996).

According to Juslin and Sloboda, the question of how musicians express emotion in their performance, and subsequently, if and how they induce emotions on the audience has been widely neglected by both the musical science and psychology research communities (pages 3-4). This is not due to the lack of importance of the topic, but mainly because of “the difficulty involved in studying emotions in the laboratory”. (Plutchik, 1994). Fear begins and arises before performance, and increases during performance. It is important to note that the effect does not end there but continues in the post-performance period until the body stabilizes and returns to its previous state.

There are different opinions about fear before performance. In our text, we will be guided by the opinion of professor Neygauz, who says that the most important prerequisite for a successful concert is rest, good health of musicians, mental clarity and freshness of the body (musicians should be in good psycho-physical condition). Before going on stage, we must be careful with food (not eating so much), because it makes the work of the digestive organs difficult and with this many body functions lose the balance of well-being. But, on the other hand, we should not be hungry so we lose concentration during the performance.

Many people feel uncomfortable and bothered while appearing on the podium and in front of spectators. From an early age, the teacher should practice and advise how to get out on stage, how to greet, which way to get to the piano, how to greet the conductor, the concertmaster and others, which means that the performer should feel calm and would adapt to any situation that he will be in. After such a show, different people react and show different feelings from each other. Beginner singers are usually not fully aware of how they played during the concert. Some are satisfied only with what the memory served them and did not stop thinking about other factors.

Some others, although sang very beautifully, are dissatisfied, summing up their work not as realistically as it has been, but through it how they have felt and what they have experienced. Great artists who have a lot of experience can easily evaluate their performance as successful or not. Based on the previous examples, we can conclude that in addition to the musician, whether he is a pupil, student or artist, who in addition to what he carries in himself by nature (talent), what and how he has achieved, is subject to or not subject to destructive tremor, a big important role in all this has the music leader-teacher. Working with the individual, he observes your fathers, analyzes the conditions and the process and follows the successes and failures, takes care of what different students, in a unique way, express their emotions, and because of these circumstances, expects different results.

The physiological manifestations of fear and its impact on the vocal apparatus

Stage fright manages to affect our physiological side followed by the release of neurochemicals, manifested by the following symptoms:

- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Dizziness and vomiting
- Trembling of the body, lips and voice
- Throat muscle contraction

Compensatory strategies used to stabilize these symptoms indirectly affect the larynx. Usually, the extrinsic muscles of the larynx are recruited to create stability in the voice. The tongue, jaw and neck tension increase in the regulation of the timbre of the voice. Increased forces from these muscles can cause the vocal cords to close violently, resulting in swelling, hoarseness, and a tendency to rupture. Vomiting can also cause swelling and hoarseness. It also reduces the strength and intensity with which we can control the diaphragm or breathing. Narcotics and tobacco use also negatively affect the vocal cords (Goupta, 2017).

In terms of trembling especially the lips and in general the organs that make up the vocal apparatus directly affect the accuracy of intonation and voice control in total. Singers localize stress around the vocal muscles. This results in ligament tension and pain that produce voice loss, inefficiencies and loss of timbre in general. Muscle tension management can be done through stretching techniques and other exercises be they manually (Goupta, 2017). It is necessary to implement healthy strategies for managing and controlling anxiety and fear, especially the prevention of muscle tension, prevention in cooperation with the doctor and the elimination of other harmful factors such as meditation, exercise, biofeedback, etc.

Research Purpose and Hypotheses

The purpose of this research is to identify the impact of fear and stress that it causes on the singer's vocals whether he is a professional or amateur soloist. Discovering the factors that drive fear, its manifestation and management. The hypotheses presented are:

Hypothesis 1 " In the vocal apparatus stress affects performance "

Hypothesis 2 "In the vocal apparatus very little stress affects performance."

Hypothesis 3 "In the vocal apparatus stress does not affect performance"

Type of methodology used for research

Due to the main variables of this paper and the nature of the data collected, the resulting method is more suitable for use is quantitative. The quantitative method allows us to process and analyze the collected data using quantitative analytical techniques such as: tables, graphs and various statistical techniques, to research, present and examine the relationships and trends within the data. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p. 496).

Because the method defines the instrument, but also the instrument dictates the techniques for processing the collected data (Buzarovski, 2012, p. 105) according to our method, the main research tool will be the questionnaire. A questionnaire in the form of a survey consisting of 15 questions was used for data collection and processing. Due to the large population, samples were used, including 20 singers. Some of them are professional soloists and some are amateur. The survey was conducted online. Questions include the degree of stress measurement, during and after performance (subjective measurement) by the subject, on a scale of 1 to 10 where scale 1 represents the lowest degree, and degree 10 the highest degree of stress (1- not at all stressed, 2-very little

stressed, 3-a little stressed, 4-stressed but manage, 5-stressed, unable to manage, 6-very stressed, 7-very stressed, tremor, voice, 8 -very stressed, difficulty breathing, 9-very stressed, can't make a sound, 10-extremely stressed-panic attack). Respondents were also asked if they noticed changes in their voice during performance and if they sought help to manage their stress. And finally, they were asked about stress self-management methods.

Results

In the questionnaire on the impact of emotions and stress on singing, 25 respondents answered, 12 (48%) females and 13 (52%) males. 60% of respondents belonged to the age group 18-25 years while 32% of them belonged to the age group 25-35 years. One respondent was 43 and one 16 years old.

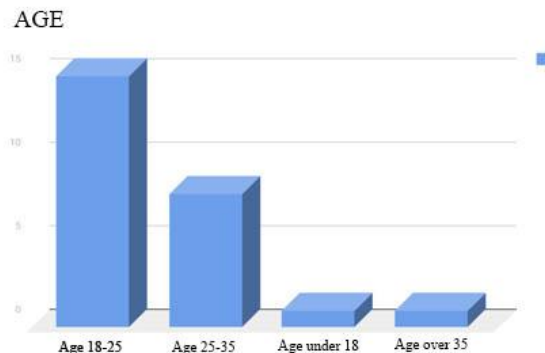


Table 1.1. Age groups of respondents in the questionnaire, with the highest percentage presented in the age group 18-25 years.

Respondents who participated in the questionnaire, 60% (15 people) of them belong to the category of students in the field of music. 28% (7 of them) are active musicians on stage while the remaining 12% include passive musicians, teachers and other employees.

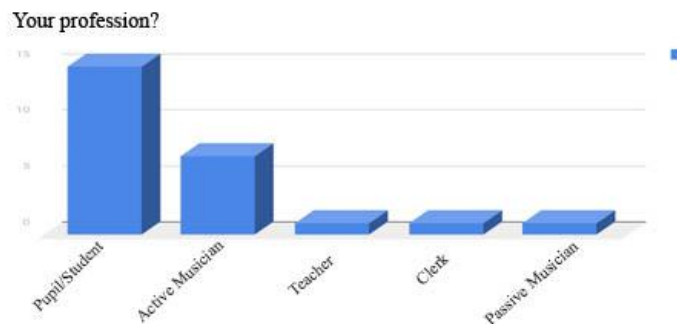


Table 1.2. Professions of respondents presented in tabular form.

The most preferred musical genres, according to this questionnaire are: Rock Music with a liking of 28% and Classical Music with a liking of 24%. Other percentages belong to these genres: Heavy Metal, Pop, RnB, Popular, with the lowest percentage, the last two (RnB soul and folk music). Of the male respondents, 5 of them belong to the voice of Baritone (20%), 4 of them belong to the voice of Tenor (16%) and 2 of them belong to the voice of Bass (8%). Of the female respondents, 6 of them belong to the voice Mezzo-Soprano (24%), 4 of them belong to the voice Soprano (16%) and 2 of them belong to the voice Alt (8%), others belong to other voices (8%).

When asked to subjectively assess the degree of stress before going on stage where 1 is the lowest level of stress (no stress at all) and 10 is the highest level of stress, 52% of respondent's state that they have stress, but they can manage it (value 4), 12% of respondents estimate that they are slightly stressed, the other percentage have other degrees of stress, but neither has the 9th and 10th degree of stress.

6. Rate your stress levels before going on stage from 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all stressed and 10 is very stressed?

25 responses

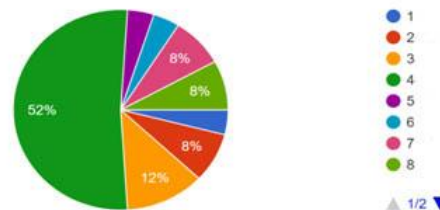


Table 1.3. Degree of stress before staging,

When asked about post-stage stress management, 28% of them state that they are a little stressed, while the other percentage have a scale of 2-8, while 4% stated that they have a stress scale of 10. During the performance on stage, 20% of them state that they are slightly stressed, out of 16% of them are slightly stressed or have manageable stress, while the other percentages (from 4%) belong to the stress scales of 1, 4, 5, 8, 10. During the soloists' performance, 56% stated that they sometimes notice changes in their voice 28% state that they notice changes in their voice while the remaining 16% do not notice changes in their voice.

9. Do you notice changes in your voice during the performance?

25 responses

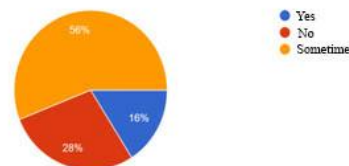


Table 1.4. Changes in voice during performance.

According to a research conducted on the impact of vocal function on the vocal cramps of solo theatrical professionals, conducted by Debra Phylant et al. When asked how they could explain their perceptions of voice alterations after performance, 97 different terms were used to describe voice alterations, of which 45 were positive descriptions, while negative descriptions of voice alterations included breathing and singing difficulties. When asked if they noticed tension during the performance in voice, 44% stated positive, while with the same percentage, out of 28% stated that they did not notice tension in the voice.

Respondents were also asked what relaxation methods they use. 40% have chosen the other option from the presented options (directed images, meditation, progressive muscle reclassification, artwork, yoga, etc.) and 20% of them use the progressive muscle reclassification method.

11. Do you practice any of these methods to relieve stress?

25 responses

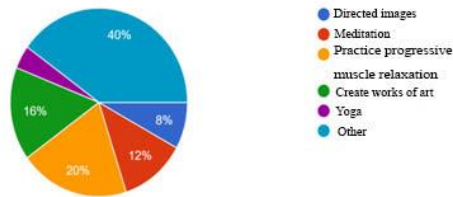


Table 1.5. *Methods applied for stress management by performers.*

While in the question of which methods help you the most for relaxation, with the right to choose up to three, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation and works of art are the most used.

12. Which of the above practices helps you the most, you can choose up to 3

25 responses

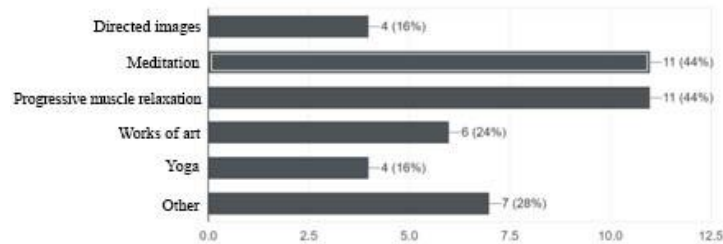


Table 1.6. *Tabular form showing the most commonly used forms of stress management.*

Through this questionnaire, the source factor of stress was assessed as well as the aspect of seeking help for stress management from performers. The main factor influencing the appearance of stress in performers is the psychic factor (negative thoughts), with confirmation from 68%. On the other hand, the public pressure is the other factor confirmed by 36% (9).

13. What causes you the most stress as a soloist (choose up to three options)

25 responses

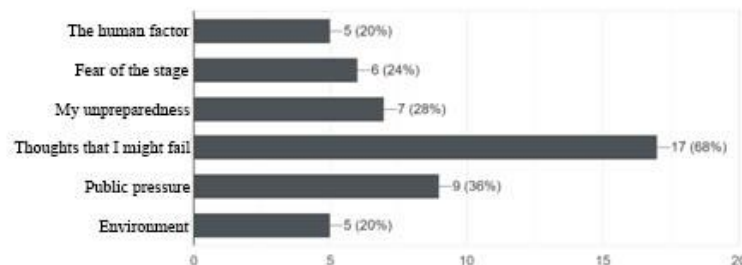


Table 1.7. *Stress factor in performers.*

When asked if they have sought help from stress management professionals and do they estimate that it has helped them, 44% have asked for help while 61.9% of them estimate that this help has helped them in managing stress.

Conclusion

- According to the results, most of the soloists have stated that they have manageable stress before going on stage.
- Most soloists have stated that they are a little stressed (level 4) after going on stage and have the same level of stress during the performance.
- 56% of respondents notice voice changes as a result of stress sometimes during performance.
- Respondents use different methods to manage stress.
- The most common stressors listed by respondents are the psychic factor (negative thought that they will fail) and the human factor (public stress).
- Soloists also seek help in managing stress.

The results of this research confirm hypothesis 0 and 1 that stress has an impact on the vocal apparatus and performance and that the stress rate is low. In general, the performance of soloists is influenced by external and internal factors that can affect the color of the sound, timbre and tension and that often these very factors, to their highest degree can cause stage damage as well as health.

However, the stage of stress and the degree of its management is in a close relationship with the professional development of the person. Through these results, comparing them with the work of Debra et al, stress is an accompanying factor of soloists in any stage of their professionalism. Considering that most of the respondents were students of the Faculty of Music Arts, it is implied that the level initial professional development corresponds to the highest level of stress.

However, based on the data, we also estimate that professional seeking help for stress management is necessary. In general, vocal health and hygiene, while treating the stressors is more than necessary to maintain.

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