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DEVELOPING STAGE PRESENCE AND AUDIENCE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF YOUNG POP (ESTRADA) SINGERS

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Abstract
This article examines the development of stage presence and audience communication skills in the training of young pop (estrada) singers. It describes the components of stage presence (voice, body language, emotional expression and contact with the audience), practical rules of microphone technique, methods of coping with performance anxiety, and an effective rehearsal structure. The article argues that stage performance should be taught systematically together with vocal technique, and offers practical recommendations for teachers and students of estrada departments.

Keywords: Pop singing; estrada; stage presence; microphone technique; performance anxiety; audience communication.

Introduction

Annotatsiya
Maqolada yosh estrada qo‘shiqchilarida sahna mahorati va tomoshabin bilan muloqot ko‘nikmalarini rivojlantirish masalalari yoritilgan. Sahna mahoratining tarkibiy qismlari, mikrofon bilan ishlash qoidalari, sahna qo‘rquvini yengish usullari va mashg‘ulotlarni tashkil etish bo‘yicha amaliy tavsiyalar berilgan.

Keywords: Pop singing; estrada; stage presence; microphone technique; performance anxiety; audience communication.

1. Introduction

Pop (estrada) singing is a performing art in which the quality of the voice is only one of several factors that determine success. A technically accurate singer may fail to impress an audience if the performance lacks emotional contact, natural movement and confidence, whereas a singer with less powerful vocal resources may win the audience through expressiveness and stage charisma. For this reason, the training of young pop singers must develop not only vocal technique but also stage presence, the ability to communicate with the audience and psychological readiness for live performance.

In Uzbekistan, estrada art combines national melodic traditions with modern musical styles, and many young performers begin their professional training in colleges and art schools. Observation of student concerts shows typical problems: tense posture, fixed gaze, lack of purposeful movement, incorrect microphone handling and strong performance anxiety. The

purpose of this article is to describe the components of stage presence and to suggest practical methods for developing them in estrada students.

2. Components of stage presence

Stage presence can be understood as the performer's ability to attract and hold attention and to create a sense of connection with the audience. Auslander (2008) emphasises that live performance is valued for its immediacy: the audience attends not only to the sound, but to the visible and emotional presence of the performer. Davidson (2001) showed in her study of a solo vocal performer that body movement, gesture and facial expression strongly shape how audiences perceive a singer's expression. Stanislavski's (1936) idea that an actor must sincerely live the situation of the role is equally relevant to the singer, who has to "live" the content of the song rather than simply reproduce its melody.

In practical teaching, stage presence can be divided into four components. The first is voice and sound: clear diction, expressive dynamics and appropriate tone colour. The second is body language: posture, balanced stance, natural gestures and purposeful movement. The third is facial expression and emotional communication: the face must reflect the meaning of the lyrics, and the gaze should be directed to different parts of the hall. The fourth is audience interaction: greeting the audience, brief spoken introductions, eye contact and the ability to react to the atmosphere in the hall.

3. Microphone technique and technical conditions

The microphone is the pop singer's main instrument, and its correct use directly affects sound quality and confidence. A student must learn to keep a stable distance from the microphone (usually a few centimetres), moving slightly away during loud, high notes and closer during soft passages. Plosive consonants such as "p" and "b" can cause unpleasant bursts of air, so the microphone should be held slightly below or to the side of the mouth. The singer should also learn to hold the microphone steadily, to avoid covering its grille, and to work with the monitor system, since hearing one's own voice on stage is different from hearing it in a classroom. Performing with a backing track requires special practice in rhythm and timing, because the singer cannot slow down or wait for the accompanist.

4. Performance anxiety and psychological preparation

Performance anxiety is common among young performers. Typical symptoms include trembling hands and voice, shallow breathing, dry mouth, and memory lapses. Kenny (2011) describes music performance anxiety as a combination of physiological, cognitive and behavioural reactions, and notes that it can be reduced through preparation, realistic goals and appropriate coping strategies. According to Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, a person's belief in their own ability grows through successful experiences; therefore it is useful to increase the difficulty of public performances gradually, from performing for a teacher, to a small group, to a school concert and, later, to a competition.

Several techniques help to manage anxiety: breathing exercises (slow inhalation through the nose and a longer, controlled exhalation), progressive muscle relaxation, positive visualisation

of a successful performance, a stable pre-performance routine, and thorough knowledge of the text and music. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow suggests that when the task is challenging but within one's abilities, performers can concentrate fully and enjoy the process, which also reduces fear. Teachers should therefore choose repertoire that stretches students without exceeding their abilities.

5. Practical programme for the classroom

An effective programme combines vocal training, stage movement and psychological preparation. Table 1 presents a possible structure of exercises for estrada students.

Table 1. Exercises for developing stage presence

Skill	Aim	Examples of exercises
Posture and movement	Natural, balanced stance and purposeful movement	Mirror work, walking and turning with a microphone, planned stage positions for each song
Facial expression	Emotional communication of the lyrics	Reading the lyrics as a monologue, singing in front of a camera, expressing different emotions with the face
Audience contact	Eye contact and interaction	Singing to different points in the hall, short spoken introductions to songs, performing for classmates
Microphone work	Stable sound and confidence	Distance exercises, plosive control, singing with monitor and backing track
Anxiety management	Calmness and concentration	Breathing exercises, visualisation, step-by-step public performances, post-performance analysis

Video recording of rehearsals is particularly valuable: students can analyse their posture, facial expression and gestures from the audience's point of view, and the teacher can give specific feedback. Peer feedback in the classroom, with a respectful and constructive tone, also develops analytical skills and self-confidence. Regular participation in concerts and competitions provides real experience which cannot be replaced by classroom exercises.

Assessment of stage performance should rely on clear criteria that are known to students in advance. A simple rubric may include vocal accuracy and tone, diction and expressiveness of the lyrics, microphone technique, posture and movement, contact with the audience, and overall artistic impression. Each criterion can be evaluated on a three- or four-level scale and accompanied by one concrete suggestion for improvement. Such feedback focuses students on specific behaviours rather than on a general impression of success or failure, and it helps teachers to monitor progress over a semester.

For students of Uzbek estrada, the cultural context deserves special attention. Performers often sing in different settings — theatre stages, festivals, holiday concerts and television — and

each requires different stage behaviour, repertoire and contact with the audience. Learning to adapt to the audience and the occasion, while keeping an individual style and respecting national traditions in costume, behaviour and repertoire, is an important part of professional culture.

6. Repertoire, image and technology

Repertoire selection strongly influences stage presence. A song that suits the singer's vocal range, age and personality allows the performer to concentrate on expression rather than on technical survival. Students should be encouraged to analyse the lyrics, to decide on the main emotion and the "story" of each song, and to plan the dynamics, pauses and key moments of the performance in advance. A balanced programme usually includes national songs, modern Uzbek estrada pieces and selected international repertoire, which develops stylistic flexibility and widens the student's audience.

Image — costume, hairstyle and general visual style — also supports the message of the performance. It should be comfortable for movement, suitable for the occasion and the singer's age, and consistent with national and cultural norms of good taste. Technology offers additional training opportunities. Recording rehearsals on a phone, listening to recordings critically and comparing successive versions of the same song help students to notice problems with intonation, diction and expression. In-ear monitors and a stage monitor train the singer to control pitch in the conditions of a real concert, while recorded backing tracks allow independent practice outside lessons.

Finally, young singers increasingly perform not only in halls but also online. Video clips and short performances in social networks create a new type of audience contact: the camera replaces the hall, and eye contact is directed to the lens. Teachers should therefore include basic video-performance skills in the programme — looking into the camera, adapting facial expression to a close shot, and ensuring good sound and lighting — while reminding students that live performance remains the main school of the profession.

Practical recommendations for teachers can be summarised as follows: begin every lesson with breathing and voice warm-up; combine vocal exercises with elements of movement and acting; record and analyse students' performances; increase performance difficulty gradually; teach anxiety-management techniques explicitly; and select repertoire that matches students' age, voice and cultural environment.

7. Conclusion

Stage presence and audience communication are as important as vocal technique in the training of pop singers. They consist of voice, body language, emotional expression and audience interaction, and can be developed through systematic exercises, correct microphone technique, video analysis and gradual public performance. Psychological preparation reduces performance anxiety and builds confidence. Teachers of estrada departments should therefore integrate stage performance, vocal training and psychological support into one coherent programme, adapting it to the age and individual abilities of each student.

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