

Special features of contemporary scenic speech education of students with “puppet artist” specialty

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Figure 1- Workshop: *Speech Teaching at the University of Puppet Theater*, with Viktorija Bogdanova. 3rd PRO-VOCATION, 2019, UDESC. Photo: Jerusa Mary.



Figure 2- Workshop: *Speech Teaching at the University of Puppet Theater*, with Viktoria Bogdanova. 3rd PRO-VOCATION, 2019, UDESC. Photo: Jerusa Mary.

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Abstract: The article presents the rationale that training for scenic speech for puppeteers should be specific, that is, differ in their structure, composition due to its focus on overcoming the physical obstacles of the actor puppeteer in contemporary theater.

Keywords: Puppet artist. Puppeteer student. Instrument-puppet. Masks. Scenic speech.

The history of the puppet theater development is accompanied by the search for new pedagogical methods of teaching students with the Puppet Theater Artist specialty. Each new artistic direction, a variety of puppet kinds: rod-puppets, stick-puppet, jiggling puppets, glove puppets and others require changes in the professional training of the actor. One of the main tasks in the upbringing of the actor-puppeteer was and remains the development of skills for transmitting his inner sensations through an instrument — theatrical puppet, “instrument-puppet”. M.M. Korolev, founder of the Russian puppets school, professor of Leningrad State Institute of Theater, Music and Cinematography, wrote: “The actor creates a stage image not directly by his own natural means, but indirectly, that is, with the help of an artificially made material tool.” (KOROLEV, 1973, p. 28). At first, he, the actor-puppeteer, must himself dramatically experience what he would feel in a given situation, and then convey these emotions through the puppet, thereby “animate” it. Puppet “animation” is a delicate matter. It’s one thing to take a glove puppet and tell a story with it, but another thing is a stick puppet, a huge wooden bear, for example, which you have to keep it elevated all the time, and this is another, hard job. Either very lively and expressive jiggling puppets or marionettes... Shortly, in order to cope not only with technical inconveniences, but also to be able to clearly convey the emotions and mood to your puppet, you have to work out with the actor all the details in different ways.

A new problem occurs when you begin to act with the word. After all, if in the puppet theaters they play mostly dramaturgy, and there is a puppet, which, naturally, acts with enough number of words, then the question arises: how does a speech in a puppet theater fit in with a puppet? Does the word in the puppet theater dominate or accompany? And many teachers ponder over this serious problem. The specific features of teaching the scenic speech of future puppeteers-artists were noticed by the teachers of the scenic speech of Russian State Institute of Performing Arts, Ph.D. of Art History E.I. Kirillova and Ph.D. of Art History N.A. Latysheva in their handbook, which provides information on the use of voice and speech in performances of puppet theaters from different countries and ages, generalized the experience of scenic speech teaching, correlated with the specifics of this kind of activity. The authors want to “help out in the fundamental ways by puppet’s talking (when puppet master provides the voice himself) ... Voicing the puppet, manipulated by him, the artist goes through all the difficult way of growing the role-image, with all the artistic components, including eurythmies and speech “animation”. (KIRILLOVA; LATYSHEVA, 2009) However, the connection of the actor’s voice with the body mobilities of the puppet requires additional study. Puppet either speaks in a performance or doesn’t speak. But, nevertheless, in the puppeteer no one “excludes” the internal speech, internal monologues, which means that the word is still used. The word, to some extent, is artistic one. The absence of speech is only an external manifestation, but in fact all the underlying psychophysical processes, thoughts, goals, the achievement of this goal are tied to inner speech, which cannot develop on its own, but is nevertheless brought up largely by teachers, as well as the scenic speech.

Students-puppeteers are not isolated, they have speech teachers from the very beginning. Meanwhile the following problems arise: the puppeteer should have a special voice quality, that is, such a trained voice, strong and responsive to intonations that can convey

the nuances of mental life. Everything, like by a dramatic actor, but even more. Why? Because there is a screen. And there are a lot of performances in puppet theaters on the screen. Although raised above the screen glove and rod puppets also got their “fans”, and the theater n.a. E.S. Demmeni gave his love to the marionette, as a whole the puppet artist has to “sound” in purely specific body positions, in which, probably, the puppeteer student should individually train the voicing of the puppet.

In addition, there is still another problem, the problem of selection. You always want to have “real puppeteers” on the puppeteers’ course. Those who do not accidentally “wandered in”. And although such things happen, and there are even “dynasties” of puppeteers, the problem still remains. The question arises: is it possible at the entrance exams to “make out” in the applicant a future puppeteer student? And now he is given a puppet... How to animate it? How to master the mask? And how the puppet breathes, how it searches, how it connects the flight of a sound from the stage to the audience? How a person, who has never taken a puppet in hands, can cope with it? Through the puppet... Reaction to the puppet. If the interest to the puppet stays, then the result will be obvious. Education of puppet artist continues. And consequently, the life of an actor-puppeteer, which he falls into, and which involves him on a long, interesting path, has common factors.

There is a need to create a specific speech training for the puppeteer, which will combine in itself many of the tasks set by the teacher to the student. And we have to start working with trying to “wake up” in students not only the physiological, but phonetic breath, aimed not only at the sound creation, but, probably, after all, first of all, at the sound of resonator areas. It is wrong to postpone work with the puppet, preferring first exercises on the development of voice and breathing, work on diction. Everything is intertwined, and parallel development is the only possible and correct way for the student to lead. After all, a puppet voicing is an important stage of its “revitalization”. Timbre, tempo and manner of speech enrich

the puppet with individual colors, and the obtained speech characteristic becomes an integral part of the puppet's image. Therefore, from the first lessons you need to connect the sound and the word.

At the beginning of puppet voice training, the hand can serve as a puppet. A hand that looks like a kind of vocal apparatus is our tool which we work with. And while working with a puppeteer's vocal apparatus, we transmit the main exercises through the student's hand, as if through a puppet.



Figure 3- Workshop: *Speech Teaching at the University of Puppet Theater*, with Viktoria Bogdanova. 3rd PRO-VOCATION, 2019, UDESC. Photo: Jerusa Mary.

We start with a warm-up. We take the simplest exercises for freeing the hands and modify them to work on the puppeteer's speech, previously adding sounds, various syllables, phrases, tongue twisters, and then texts:

Exercise 1 — While inhaling, we lift arms up. We throw them from top to bottom and back, as far as possible, with a fixed exhalation, then return them back up (the hands are completely relaxed).

Exercise 2 — While inhaling we lift arms up. While exhaling

with the movement of the hands, similar to the unscrewing of an imaginary light bulb, we spread our arms to the side to a position parallel to the floor. Add different combinations of syllables.

Exercise 3 — While inhaling, we lift arms up. While exhaling, crossing the arms like scissors, we lower them in front of us, without bending elbows. Add a fixed exhalation.

Exercise 4 — While inhaling, we lift arms up. While exhaling, we cross our wrists and, making circular movements towards ourselves (or away from ourselves), lower our arms in front of us to a position parallel to the floor. Doing the exercise, add tongue twisters. (“Betty Botter bought some butter, but she said the butter’s bitter, if I put it in my batter, it will make my batter bitter, but a bit of better butter will make my batter better, so ‘twas better Betty Botter bought a bit of better butter”, etc.)

Exercise 5 — While inhaling, we link the hands in front of us to the “lock”. While exhaling, we transfer impulse from one hand to another with wave-like movements. Then we disengage them, we spread them to the sides, continuing the undulating movement. Add sound. (Combinations of syllables with sonorous consonants in the training line of vowels: MNUM-MNOM-MNAM-MNEM-MNIM-MNYM, MNUM-MNOM-MNAM-MNEM-MNIM-MNYM-MNULLI-MNOLLI-MNALLI-MNELLI-MNILLY-MNYLLY, etc.)

Further exercises are repeated with weighting: balls, dumbbells. Complicated movement. We use high-pitched sound range.

We continue to warm up exercises for the fingers:

Exercise 1 — Hands in front of you, bent at the elbows, in a position parallel to the body, palms facing each other. Alternately bend and unbend fingers. We add various combinations with labial consonants. Then repeat with patters. (“Byck, byck, toopogoob...”, etc.)

Exercise 2 — Hands in front of us, bent at the elbows, in a position parallel to the floor, palms down. Rotate in a circle in the horizontal plane with all fingers in turn. Add sound to the sound consonants. (“M”, “N”, etc.)

Exercise 3 — Hands in front of us, bent at the elbows, in a position parallel to the body, palms away. Fingers alternately squeeze and unclench. Add different syllables.

Exercise 4 — Hands in front of us, bent at the elbows, in a position parallel to the body, fingers closed in a fist. Then we open the index and big fingers on both hands, connect them and spring them, bringing them as close as possible to each other. Add different combinations of syllables.

Exercise 5 — Hands in front of us, bent at the elbows, in a position parallel to the body. We connect the thumb of the right hand with the thumb of the left hand with all the fingers alternately. Add different combinations of syllables.

Exercise 6 — Hands in front of us, bent at the elbows. Connect the hands, keeping the height parallel to the floor. Add different combination of syllables.

Exercise 7 - Hands in front of us, bent at the elbows, in a position parallel to the body. We finger over like “claws”. Add tongue twisters. (Near an ear, a nearer ear, a nearly eerie ear!”)

Exercise 8 - Hands in front of us, bent at the elbows, with crossed wrists. Working with the palms, like wings of a bird, raise your hands up, then lower down. Add different combinations of syllables.



Figure 4- Workshop: *Speech Teaching at the University of Puppet Theater*, with Viktoria Bogdanova. 3rd PRO-VOCATION, 2019, UDESC. Photo: Jerusa Mary.

The exercises are aimed at combining words and gestures, coordinating words and movements; training the vocal skills of the puppeteer to overcome acoustic and physiologically disadvantageous for breathing and phonation body positions; the expansion of the sound range which prepares the connection of the voice of the actor with the eurhythmies of the puppet.

As mentioned above, screens and masks are a physical obstacle to the speech of the actor puppeteer. Therefore, you need to work on breathing, diction, voice, as well as articulation, both with your own and with the articulation of the puppet, while at the same time doing the exercises yourself and translating through the instrument-puppet.

For example, opening the jaw through the thumb. In this exercise the other hand can be used. Hand can be transformed into the puppet image. And then eyes-buttons appear with different size and color. We fix the gaze of the hand. It is not me who looks, but the hand. That is, the object is outside of me. I do not look,

listen, talk, send a voice... It is impossible without imagination to take out from your own life everything that you are experiencing at this moment, in your hand, like in a puppet model.

Articulation. How should the mouth be opened? In the course the paper goes from which the plane masks are made, having a mouth that can be opened. The articulation of the puppet is being worked out, which means that it is not a “detailed” opening of the “mouth” for each syllable, but only for the accented one. Exercising is useful before getting the role text. First, monosyllabic verses are used, where attention is fixed on each word, then lines, where one accented word, then, complicating the exercise, it is necessary to find an even longer period in the speech tact, to build it without articulating “hassle” of the puppet’s speech apparatus. Each vowel models are defined and tested with the help of various parts: boxes, rubber bands, as well as planar masks are used. Articulation can be worked through both the arm and the object that can “speak” (pots, inverted teapots with a rubber band on the lid, wallets, spectacle cases, etc.). The sound is traditionally built up vertically, and suddenly, as a violation of the norms, it becomes flat, performing a kind of artistic task, introducing something special into the puppet’s speech, not forgetting the flight of the voice.

So, at the first stage of mastering the puppet, we connect the sound and the word. Work on puppet voicing can include etudes where students pronounce the character’s inner thoughts out loud. This will lead you away from meaningless sayings to justifiable pronunciation of the text, allowing to act through the puppet, easily giving birth to inner speech.

Next stage. Man talks to a puppet. This is further developed as a dialogue using different parts of the voice range, as if they were two beings: me as an actor and a puppet. It is possible to use internal additional mechanical devices (eyelets, little cartridges), which are inserted into the fingers, and then the puppet obtains facial expressions. With such detailed work on the “seamy side” of the face, it becomes even more interesting to develop the possibilities

of changing the articulation expression of the mask of the puppet.

In addition, students are assigned to draw profile masks. One has to “hide” behind the mask. A prerequisite is that the mask should have a simple moving part (at the choice of the student: lips, eyelashes, etc.) that would wake the imagination. For example, what voice can there be with such a look? What is the speech characteristic of a mask with such a jaw? How does the character of a mask with such and such lips, etc., appear through a voice? Immediately someone else from the students takes the same mask, and we understand that it can be interpreted otherwise. Consequently, these masks work for a long time independently (in a monologue) on proverbs and simple texts, and then are connected in a dialogue by two students. And work with partners begins. The dialogue between two masks may be performed by one student, it would enable to work out voice and speech transformation, from one character to another, mastering voice-speech transformation skills which is in demand in the modern theater.

Of course, these are the tasks for more than one semester, and in parallel with them another work is being done on the technique of speech, which is planned by the program of studying this subject.

The value of a specific speech training for a puppeteer student is expressed in the fact that he disciplines courses: “The Artist of the Puppet Theater” - “Performing Arts” and “Scenic Speech”. This training not only helps students learn the basics of the birth of a word through a puppet, combining speech and eurhythmies of a puppet, but also contributes to the mastery of the skills of a puppet artist, obtained in the lessons on “Puppet Actor Skill”.

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