

# *Singingdrama: A therapeutic intervention instrument in bipersonal and group psychodramatic approach*

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## **Abstract**

In this socionomic research study, we examine and try the singing as a tool to achieve catharsis in the psychodramatic process in both types of research: individual (in the office - in bipersonal format), and in group, through psychodramatic experience of **Singingdrama**. We address qualitatively emerging content through a detailed description of this new phenomenon generated by means of singing. We aimed to analyze the facts and the specific situations in order to verify the effectiveness of the **Singingdrama** in the Psychodramatic approach. The singing act overcame words, by expressing the One who feels. Thus, it was observed that the singing and the drama – **Singingdrama** – united by Jacob Levy Moreno in the Psychodramatic approach, can and should be considered as one of the strategic possibilities of therapeutic tool.

**Keywords:** psychodrama, singing, catharsis

## **INTRODUCTION**

At present, we live in a dichotomous world, the result of a process which has been historically established along thousands of years, in which men have attempted the domination of their instincts and body impulses, which started to be controlled by the reasoning, creating, in this manner, a dichotomy between the reason and the sensitiveness, thus banning any form of knowledge by means of sensitiveness, that is, bodily.

Nowadays, in the area of Health, scientific rationalism reaches almost all its specificities, as well as in Psychology, where we see greater appreciation of the rational to detriment of the sensitiveness by the predominance of therapies, techniques and diagnosis in which the reason is used in an attempt to make the human being come to the understanding of their history both rationally and through the one conveyed by thought or its materialization, that is, the speech. Using art to correct its historical route, Psychology, based on existential-phenomenological Philosophy and in theatre, decided to put together science and art, in this way it gives rise to Psychodrama, which "emerged as a reaction to individualist and rationalist methods prevalent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and

privileged the study of man as a bio-psycho-social and cosmic being "(Ramalho, 2011, 37). "Psychodrama is a socio-therapeutic method that has unlimited potential for integrating all types of arts: drama (theatre), music, dance, and so on." and "The arts in Psychodrama can be used simultaneously and in varied combinations" (Moreno, J. J., 2005, pp. 8).

Jacob Levy Moreno, creator of Psychodrama, also used music as a method of intervention, he named it Psychomusic, because the musical experience meant to him moving back to the most primitive form of action, and so, he defined two forms of Psychomusic: The Organic Form - carried out by means of body sounds (voice and percussion) - and Instrumental Form - accomplished by the use of musical instruments.

Following in the footsteps of Organic Psychomusic created by J. L. Moreno (1946/2007), the Singingdrama – named by us in this way – is a psychodramatic instrument through singing and the dramatization of situations in the human existence, their conflicts, grumblings, desires, dreams, etc.

In this study, we examine the efficiency of singing, along with dramatization as an instrument for achieving catharsis in the psychodramatic process, not only as a warm-up activity, but as carrier of the catharsis integration process itself.

It also justifies the use of Singingdrama as a method that goes beyond the cognizant and rationalist approaches for it allows the patient or group to go into the act (acting out), as J. L. Moreno (1946/2007) states, that is, it allows them to leave the world of thoughts and rationalized words and explore the "as if", by means of acts and sounds, outsourcing the anguish and conflicts in a safe, permissive and warm environment.

Thus, with the aim to generate knowledge for practical application of psychodramatic technics of therapeutic intervention, we carried out a brief socioeconomic research through the study of empirical nature, seeking for the experimentation and observation of singing through two methods of research: individual and in the office, using the bipersonal format; when in group, through psychodramatic experiences.

Finally, we seek to analyse the facts to check the effectiveness of Singingdrama within the psychodramatic approach.

## **PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL ACCOUNT**

The experiment took place in our office, and the participants were, in the case of bipersonal Psychodrama, a 6 years old child, who is named "M." (in order to preserve her identity); and applying Singingdrama in a group, ten people participated (seven Psychology students, a Law student, a Secondary School student and a businesswoman, who are named P1, P2...P10 (Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on).

### **Bipersonal Psychodrama: M., 6 years old**

M.'s grandmother sought therapy for her granddaughter who presented symptoms such as recurring vomiting, with no real physical reasons, especially when she was at school. The first therapy session was with M.'s mother, who reported the fact that she and M.'s father had recently separated, and that he, without prior notice, abandoned their home. The father gave M. a phone so they could talk, though, according to M. and her mother, he hardly ever called his daughter, what caused her a condition of anxiety.

In her first attendance, I tried to let M. free to choose what she would like to do; so she chose the guitar and stroke it as if playing and sang songs in English, in *blues* style, improvising in fake English. "In the experiments of improvisation, the client makes music

playing or singing, creating a melody, a rhythm, an improvised music piece." (Bruscia, 2000, p. 124). In the author's point of view, improvisation establishes a non-verbal communication channel and develops the ability of personal intimacy, spontaneity and playful capability.

"By vocally improvising or singing meaningful songs defences are ignored and feelings are accessed more effectively than by words." (Austin, 2008, p. 127.) According to the author, "Each person has within themselves an undeniable voice awaiting to be discovered, listened and welcomed. Once that voice is heard, one's song can no longer be silenced" (Austin, 2008, p. 213).

Recurrently, we dramatized scenes proposed by M., in which I played the doctor and she played the sick patient (we apply role inversions); I used to call her both her mom and dad, but they were always very busy at business meetings. Perazzo (1994) says that a child, by repeating stories, enables the discovery of the world, through the feeling that he or she has or reviews by way of fantasy roles.

In a certain session, M. re-used the guitar, playing in the rhythm of blues and singing: "Whenever I want to pass you something, I can't." M. continued playing and improvising words in fake English. According to Austin (2008), when we allow ourselves to go beyond our natural voice, the result is the emergence of primitive sounds and primitive emotions.

We mirrored her by singing the same as her: "Whenever I want to pass something, I can't. " M. sings together and goes on:" Because I'm in deep trouble, I can't leave the meeting "; She doubles and flips the role with her parents. The mirror, according to Austin (2008), occurs when a patient sings his own melodic line, and we respond by repeating the patient's melody back to her, helping her to listen to and accept that part of her personality, providing her with incentive and validation.

We mirrored M., bringing her back to the chorus theme: "Whenever I want to pass you something, I can't. " M. goes on: "Because I'm in a meeting." We sing: "Very busy" (we sing a double). The psychodramatic singing, according to Austin (2008) can act as a double as roles are taking roles in the patient's history unfolds in improvisation, as the patient can either change or take other roles.

M.: "I can also do something or not. When I get home they're at work". We go: "And I'm very lonely at Home" (double). Singing psychodramatically, telically, we can feel just as M., how hard it is for her to be alone, internally and externally. For Austin (2008), there is another way to sing using the words the therapist's own words in response to the patient's words, when the therapist assumes a more active role questioning and using their counter-transference feelings to deepen the therapeutic process and thereby help patients understand and find meanings from what they are going through.

The goal of the double is to contact the unverballed, and sometimes even unaware, emotion of the patient, in order to assist him or her to express it. The more the therapist is identified with the patient, the better the double will be able to do it. (Cukier, 1992, p. 40)

M.: "It's annoying that my mom has to work. I am in my grandma's house every day and my mom have a maid. " We: "But it's not my mother." She strongly touches the strings of the guitar as if confirming what I had just sung. The structure of a song or a chord progression can produce a sense of security and achievement " (Austin, 2008, p.

17).

For Filipini (2014), role inversion enhances the power and stability of the child's ego, and decreases parental dependence allowing greater understanding and awareness of the therapist. We go on: "What I really want is my mother" (double). "But she can't leave work at night, or during the day. She can't answer the phone. " We sing: "And I just want my mother." (I repeat it singing three times then I stop, and she speaks: "Your Turn" (three times). "Singing is invaluable in this healing process. It can give us access to the invisible world of imagination, memory and association "(Austin, 2008, p. 22).

As we put together the data from previous sessions, parents' reports, dramatizations and improvisations, we came to the following hypothesis: As M. fell ill, in a way, "united" her parents, because they ended up having, by the physical symptoms (vomiting and frequent Illness), "real" reasons to leave work, get together again and take care of her.

We brought the suggested diagnosis to the attention of the family . The symptoms ceased in the course of sessions and they came to an end after six months of work.

Singing and playing the toy guitar worked as a warm up activity. According to Filipini (2014), its function is to stimulate body and mind for spontaneous attitudes and performances, and sung dramatization, which is the carrier of the cathartic moment. "When we improvise or resolve musical problems we become actors changing our own lives and emotion, we are agents transforming our own lives "(Lima, 2003, p. 8).

As for Austin (2008), songs have the ability to tell our stories, they are ways through which we explore emotions, expressing who we are and how we feel, that brings us closer to each other and makes us feel accompanied when we're alone.

### **Group Psychodrama: Open Experience**

Aiming to situate participants in the session, as well as focus attention and reduce resistances, we started to work with the first phase of psychodrama: unspecified warming up, through the awareness of the place they were and their breathing. It's the "Moment of the inner self – With myself", connected to the first phase of the Identity Matrix and, as regarded to the development of roles, to the stage of *role taking*.

After this initial warm up, we proposed a sound percussion with hands flattened all over the body. "Music, because of its abstract nature, deflects the ego and the intellectual controls and, taking on the deepest cores directly, it revolves conflicts and emotions, bringing them forth" (Tyler & Paper, quoted by Ruud, 1990, p. 46).

Keeping on the warm up, we come to the "Moment of my inner self and the other", connected to the second phase of the Identity Matrix, Myself – You, and, as regarded to the development of roles, until the *role playing* stage. We ask each one to choose a little tulle veil, to communicate in pairs, with no words, only sounds. We use the model presented by Schafer (2011), which proposes that we allow music to speak for itself, in a process of musical improvisation, through deliberate creation, exploring creativity, in the attempt to establish a dialogue that expresses emotions, thoughts and ideas, in a movement to exchange, express and listen to the other.

According to Benenzon (1988), the use of hands and sounds as intermediate objects lead to the opening of non-verbal communication channels because, for the author, we are a complex sound-humanbeing-sound by the fact that, since the maternal womb, we are bathed by sounds and movements all the time, by the amniotic fluid, by bowels and organs movements, etc.

In the specific warm up, the goal was to emerge the protagonist, a conflict

situation. We use some techniques suggested by Valongo (1993), who proposes a sequence that works the main elements of music: rhythm, melody and harmony. In our work we also add the main properties of sound: level, intensity, timbre and duration, as well as several musical dynamics, for the purpose of developing the spontaneity and creativity of the participants. We played a dancing African music with drum marking and binary pulsation, because according to Benenzon (1988), this is the initial rhythmic heartbeat of all of us, the heartbeats from the maternal womb. We ask the participants to make two rows, one in front of the other, and one should stand up right in front of one another. We created the binary rhythmic marking for the first row to clap their hands and we asked the second row to create another rhythm, while the first one kept marking.

Valongo (1993) considers the body itself as the most important instrument in the musical experience. By asking the second row of participants to create and improvise musically, we based ourselves in the thoughts of the quoted author, who considers the "improvisation a possible technique to improve the spontaneous capacity "(Valongo, 1993, p. 160). As we went on with the specific warm up, we worked upon the melody, harmony, and in this way we were working on several sound properties and musical dynamics.

We describe the patient's performance as an outcome of his own creative ego in the struggle for a spontaneous existence, and we prescribe the systematic training of spontaneity as an antidote. Such training provides a true paradise, a seedbed for the development of his creative ego. It sets him from the shackles of musical tradition, until his creative ego is matured and capable to make him succeed in integrating his creativity and musical tradition. (Moreno, J.L., 1946/2007, p.368)

J. L. Moreno says that the stage is the soul and every "actor" is, in fact, the creator of his *dramatis persona*, in order to develop roles in *status nascendi*, being born at that moment, the opposite to the rigid cultural tradition. As you create, you unstandardize. "Every man is his best agent to portray himself " (Moreno, J. L., 1946, p. 333).

We proposed a group improvisation, in which each participant created their music simultaneously in the group, and then in the form of a group, followed by the simultaneous creation of a single song. A unique, descending melody was created (A flat, G flat, F flat and E flat) and at that moment the protagonist P1 emerged. Her voice stood out to the group, emerging as the vocal protagonist through the repeated "Ah, ah, ah, ah" sounds until they finalized it decreasingly, ending together, in a telic encounter "in" and "through" music. For Valongo (1993), the Psychomusic allows the person to be in tune with his possibilities and so exchange them with the sound experience of other participants.

We asked them to verbally share the generated feeling and Protagonist, P1, was elected; she stated she was impressed by the fact that she was the center of attention, the "star", she was able to sing freely and lead the group, because often times she was used to repressing her feelings, always omitting and hiding herself. We explained that the song was a protagonist brought forth by the group and we asked them to make up a scene using from the generated music and that P1 as the representative of that feeling of freedom of expression and place in the world.

Protagonist "is the client that emerges for treatment and symbolizes the common feeling which permeates the group, and receives from them the acquiescence to represent them "(Almeida, 1989, p. 32). For Aguiar (1990), it is the group that integrates to build

the scene, revealing the collective in the individuality of the hero, who is the protagonist.

We asked everyone to sing the group's music once more and let the scene go spontaneously, and in this way we returned to our Dramatic Project, because "The scene will always be directed towards a dramatic resolution of the conflict that tells either the complaint or the initial proposal of the protagonist "(Aguiar 1990, 171).

In the "as if", as explained by Ramalho (2011), one works with a supplementary reality, the climax of the session, when the characters come to life, acting freely, the protagonist is invited to experience a world without limits, virtual, in which the real world is open; in this way, we can say that we are working with imagination, in a supplementary reality " (Ramalho, 2011, 50).

Austin (2008) states that vocal improvisations, with or without words, make it possible to patients freedom of associations and that they create musically a portrait of themselves or parts of themselves, which can reveal strengths, vulnerabilities, conflicts and feelings.

Following, we explained that, as they began to feel warm and moved, they could build an image from P1, who represented the dream of freedom of all of them – a body image, either with P1's movement or not, whereby they could make, speak, or sing things.

For Austin (2008), improvisation comes from a natural impulse that allows the free expression through the vocal and musical game, releasing and enabling the natural flow of impulses and thus healing can occur because customers can connect with their true voices, liberating themselves from the tyranny of duties, accessing and releasing genuine feelings thereby opening a channel to a more autonomous life.

In the performance, P5 raised P1's arms, simulating a flight movement, releasing and enabling psychodramatically the protagonist's "flying" in order to achieve her greater freedom goal, autonomy and self-esteem. P2 "taught" P1, psychodramatically, to cycle, one of her dreams revealed as they shared, enabling this psychodramatic experience in the "as if".

Almeida (1989) mentions that the egos, as they identify with the protagonist by the mobilization of affections and emotions, share feelings and promote the integration Catharsis. "This phenomenon would be the true healing phenomenon of Psychodrama, for it enables the intellectual and affective clarification of the psychoemotional structures and their resonance in human relationship... it opens to the protagonist and the group new existential possibilities "(Almeida, 1989, p. 35).

The cathartic singing was of spontaneous scenes and was the liberating means along with the scenes brought by the co-creator egos, in an active co-construction. "Catharsis means purification, discharge of emotions, confessions, relief of tensions... it occurs in the relationship of the various members of the group, from the staging of some to the involvement of others " (Almeida, 1989, p. 35).

"Music is... a resource of purging, catharsis, maturation, and by its practice one learns to organize his thought, to structure the acquired knowledge, to rebuild it, and to secure it actively "(Sekeff, 2007, p. 14)".

We applied the technique of "sculpture" from P1, presented by Barbera and Knappe (1997), who tell the participants to spontaneously construct an intuitive body image from the feeling brought by the present moment. For these authors, the body is used as a representative of the speech, of the feeling, and of the experience without rationalization.

"Your body – and that of each of the individuals who are part of the sculpture – will bring to each one its own message, its personal interpretation" (Barbera & Knappe,

1997, p. 158). According to Cukier (1992), sculpture is more resource to implement the patient's inner symbolic content, which, in this way, become alive. There was inversion of roles, doubles and mirroring.

On sharing, everyone said how they felt during their experience. P1 reported having begun therapy a few months before, but that experience had solved the inner content more effectively than her individual psychotherapy.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, we were able to investigate psychodramatic techniques allied to the use of the singing – which we named Singingdrama –, such techniques were observed as carriers of the catharsis and not just as warming up, in dramatization, thus representing a therapeutic possibility.

The Cantodrama was fundamental in this process, because it allowed the expression significantly, without the use of reason, but through the hidden and contained feelings instead, which could find an open channel to releases and cathartic re-meanings.

The improvised singing, original, unique, and spontaneous emerged and revealed feelings of more effectively than words, because by thinking we use the reason, but there may be defense mechanisms.

The protagonists singing voice took time and attitude, and said in a sui generis way what no one else could tell by them. The encounter with the true inner voice, free from the duties imposed by society opened doors to a more autonomous, expressive and authentic life.

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