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Features of Communication between the Stage Director and Members of the Group during the Preparation of Choreographic Performances

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Abstract---Communication is the cornerstone of co-production, and the director is the cornerstone that brings together the different parts of communication. Basically, communication is "the process of exchanging information between people through a common system of symbols, signs or behaviour". A director does everything in a form of communication during a production. Whether it's blocking, scheduling rehearsals or calling a show; communication is as "vital to stage management as memorisation is to artistic skill". Communication allows the production director to effectively manage the production. Since communication is a broad topic, this study will first consider the two forms of communication that the production director uses, how these skills can be applied to very specific communication aspects and what these benefits look like. This study examines the works on the development of choreographic art, the development of personality within a dance group, and the features of interaction between members of a large artistic group while working on a production. As a result, the most effective methods of communication between the participants of the choreographic performance were discussed.

Keywords---communication in the group, dance art, director training, interpersonal relationships, production.

Introduction

Nowadays, communication, communication culture and competence determine the possibilities for expanding relationships between people and affect the development of the socio-cultural process (Segrin & Taylor, 2007; Zlotnick et al., 2000). The understanding of the sociocultural process is multifaceted and multidimensional and is based on the rational behaviour of subjects in the life organisation, a conscious approach to uniting spiritual and moral values with the desire to improve living conditions (Kriyakiarana & Jongkamonwiwat, 2016; Faulkner, 2020; Ma, 2020; Maric, 2019). In this sense, communication allows preserving the enrichment of the spiritual and moral potential of society, changing culture towards its enrichment, expanding the sphere of cultural communication, and serving as a basis for preserving the identity of society.

Due to social changes, the role of culture is being rethought, its forms and functions are being renewed. On the one hand, culture still reproduces conventional attitudes and patterns of behaviour, but it is the behaviour that determines people's thinking in many ways. On the other hand, modern media (television, cinema, print) and advertising are spreading, strengthening the development of ideological and moral stereotypes of mass culture, a "fashionable" way of life. The media offers various meanings and new identities, it transforms the way people think. Therefore, the interaction of culture and the process of mass communications are of particular importance; they develop "human capital" and a moral resource for the socio-economic development of the state. The modern understanding of culture within the framework of social history can be viewed as a system of human orientations in life and defines culture as the form and method of communication between people. This topic has been studied by both communication studies scholars and art and cultural studies researchers (Parjanen, 2012; Guanah et al., 2020; Faulkner & Blackmon, 2018; Kuleva, 2018; Kozai et al., 2020; Leach, 2001; Lotman, 1993; Pocheptsov, 2001; Kinckman, 2013).

Although the work of the choreographic group on the production requires a lot of concentration, the result of the rehearsals becomes visible rather quickly. However, this is not the end of the work on the production. It is being repeated. They move on to the next production and so on. This cycle continues with the corresponding paradigms as well. There are auditions, rehearsals, technique, speeches, and discussion and bug fixes at last. This cycle is well known in the world of dance. Even though each production is different, the cycle remains relatively unchanged. Once the participants get used to how the processes work within the team, everything accelerates. However, as well as in the theatre, a dance group is a living, breathing organism that requires attention. Therewith, it is important to remember that art should always be a challenge; it should never be easy for those who create it (Koroliova et al., 2021; Keohin & Graw, 2017).

However, no matter what specific obstacle may be in the production, they often all have a common source. The goal of the dance group production director is to create

new methodologies for solving and eliminating these problems. Thus, based on many studies of the history of choreography and the features of communication processes in the cultural sphere, the most problems occur usually due to a lack of communication, respect and/or trust. It is possible that the rehearsal went awry as there was no clear information on the rehearsal schedule. Maybe the dancers are afraid to step out of their comfort zone because mistrust has developed between them and the director (Baltes et al., 2002; Chiu, 2002). Maybe dancers feel disrespected for being used throughout the production. The goal of the director of any production is to ensure a smooth transition from reading to discussion and work on mistakes. It places the director in a unique role as a visionary, where one seeks to maintain order in this chaos to achieve one's goal. It is crucial to understand that the best way to overcome any problem is to use communication, respect and trust in one's advantage (Bronner et al., 2018; Lu et al., 2020; Turner, 1965; Blagova, 2010).

Thus, if we know that these three aspects actually contribute to a more successful process, then it is important to understand why these problems persist. Perhaps, a better question to ask is whether scholars ever discussed these three aspects during production work. There is an opinion that every director knows how important it is for the team members to trust each other. There is also an assumption that the dancer knows and understands how to follow the rules of the group, and the director knows how to communicate well (Collard-Stokes, 2012; Bhattacharyya & Das Gupta, 2013). However, the only way to shed light on this issue is to emphasise why communication, trust and respect are critical to the production process and how they can even solve these inevitable problems. Thus, in this study, the authors attempt to explain why communication, respect, and trust are vital to production work; how each of these factors affects the work environment within artistic culture; and how a production director has to use them to develop one's management approach, all to ensure a smooth production process.

Materials and Methods

The theoretical and methodological basis of this study was the fundamental provisions of foreign and Ukrainian scholars on the study and generalisation of the features of communication skills in a cultural environment. The works about the development of choreographic art, the development of personality within the dance group and the features of the interaction between the members of a large artistic group with each other during the work on the production were studied. In this study, general academic and special methods were used: the systemic analysis method is a methodology that combines the study of any objects represented as systems, their structuring and subsequent analysis. The main feature of systemic analysis is that it includes not only methods of analysis (from the Greek analysis – separation of an object into elements), but also synthesis methods (from the Greek synthesis – the combination of elements into a single entity). The main goal of systemic analysis is to detect and eliminate uncertainty in solving a complex problem based on finding the best solution choosing from the existing alternatives. The systemic analysis allowed analysing the stages of building communication between members of the choreographic troupe and the stage director, to determine the types of this communication.

Content analysis is a method of qualitative and quantitative study of the content of messages in order to obtain reliable information about social reality. The use of this method involves the algorithmic selection of certain content elements in the text, their classification in accordance with a previously developed scheme, the subsequent counting of the selected content elements and the quantitative presentation of the results. This method allowed identifying the main types of non-verbal communication within a dance group, to highlight the ways of manifestation of this communication and its effectiveness in theoretical works. Benchmarking is a powerful and versatile tool that expands the ability to understand and describe processes and changes in any structure in accordance with the existing reality, concepts and goals of any system. The advantages of various methods of verbal and non-verbal communication between the stage director and members of the dance group during the preparation of the choreographic performance were determined by using a comparative analysis. In addition, the method of a systemic approach was used in the study. This made it possible to analyse the data obtained due to the theoretical and practical database and to reveal the features of the organisation of the dance group and the work of a large group under the guidance of the stage director (Stark et al., 2018; Carr et al., 2021).

Results and Discussion

Communication is a process of consistent and mutually directed actions and behavioural acts in time and space continuum. In a choreographic group, communication has different types. In this group, the information can concern directly the art of choreography, and the participants of the choreographic performance. Communication goals can meet the social, cultural, cognitive and other needs of the participants. The main goals of communication in a choreographic collective are:

1. Cognition:
 - of the art of choreography;
 - of self-knowledge;
 - of the surrounding world.

In this case, communication is a process of interaction focused on transmitting and receiving information about oneself, about creative activity, and about objects.

2. Organisation of joint activities:
 - planning;
 - execution;
 - evaluation and control of joint activities.

Information between the production director and the members of the choreographic collective is transmitted in different ways. It can be communicated through speech, through body movements, and through technical means. The structure of communication in a choreographic collective is as follows:

- Communication (in the narrow sense of the word) consists of the exchange of information between communicators, which is all members of the group;

- The interactive side consists in organising interaction (exchange of actions) between students, members of the choreographic group;
- The perceptual side of communication means the process of perceiving and knowing each other, establishing mutual understanding between all members of the group.

During the communication, encoded information is transferred by the subjects of communication. This is how information is exchanged. The communicative process happens through communication, which can be verbal and non-verbal. For example, speech is a verbal communication system. Conventionally, the communicative process is based on the speech but due to the specifics of choreographic art, the communicative process in a choreographic group happens through both a verbal and non-verbal means of communication. A vivid example of non-verbal communication can be a students' greeting a teacher of choreographic disciplines with a bow. An important factor in the communicative process is the presence of a common language, i.e., the ability to "speak the same language". However, in the art of choreography, one uses two common languages of communication – voice and plastique. Therefore, the communicative process in choreographic art can happen through non-verbal means of communication. Several sign systems belong to non-verbal means:

- Extralinguistic and paralinguistic;
- Optical-kinetic;
- Proxemics;
- Visual contact.

The leading teacher of the choreographic group requires all the sign systems of non-verbal communication during one's work. Only then the participants will express an interest in choreographic creativity, which means that this will provide an opportunity for their development and improvement as performers, which is crucial in choreographic activity. The interactive side of communication is the features of communication components that are connected by joint activities. There are two types of interaction – cooperation and competition. Cooperative interaction is coordination of the forces of the participants. Competition is rivalry between participants. Verbal communication is used throughout the day to call the show, chat with the cast, and exchange information related to the production. Therewith, the ability to convey information clearly will simplify the process and prevent confusion. The director should always be careful if confusion spreads among the cast. Even such a small thing as not having a sense of timing in a conversation can create a mess. Thus, it is in the director's best interest to make sure that the information is articulated clearly.

The stage director must be able to communicate verbally in order to direct the production. Directors are responsible for convening all rehearsals, for the form and discipline of rehearsals and performances, and are the executive tool in the technical execution of every performance. This also means that the director will have to report to heads of every department. The burden of responsibility falls on the stage manager. It is necessary to communicate effectively and efficiently to manage these aspects of the work. What does the director call the rehearsal? They make sure that they have a schedule and communicate this information to

everyone. How do they become an executive tool in technical performance? They organise the technology and facilitate together all the technical and design elements by communicating with the heads of these departments. Communication is a director's best friend. What has always helped to make sure the communication is clear is asking where communication could get lost in the process. Return to this point and see if a lack of communication happened or not.

A large part of a theatre manager's job is to be an affable figure on a show. One needs to be able to talk and work with people. The director acts as an advocate for the actors, but they are also the director's right hand. Whether in the rehearsal room or in the light booth, the theatre manager will always be in touch with people. Interpersonal skills will play an important role in building a sense of respect and building a foundation for trust. This will be discussed throughout this study but for now, it is necessary to treat people the way you would like them to treat you (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014; Berry et al., 2008). It is crucial to communicate honestly and sincerely with the group and don't look fake to them. Therewith, one should not ignore people. The ability to listen actively is crucial. It is important to be a listener and a speaker at the same time.

With the director's role comes responsibility. This often means that one must be a disciplinary figure, which in any case means fairness in dealing with group members. Reprising dancers and crew members can be frustrating. These situations appear throughout the director's career, even though they can hardly be called frequent. Placing blame on a particular person does not solve anything. If a dancer is late for a rehearsal and the director starts scolding, it would probably not stop the employee from being late next time. When a director needs to exercise discipline, one always looks at it from their point of view and sees what could have caused this problem. When tactics change from discipline to help, the "disciplined" one is often caught off guard. The leader is no longer angry with them but worried about them. Dancers may even begin to feel responsible for their actions.

Then, there is non-verbal communication, where information can still be exchanged between people, but does not rely on labels. Non-verbal communication does not even have to rely on language; it can still be exchanged through gestures, actions, and impressions. It plays a significant role in the theatre and in the director's work. Thus, as well as with verbal communication, it is important to understand how non-verbal communication can affect production. When a director is actively performing the job as expected, very simple yet meaningful forms of non-verbal communication are created. These small gestures can often have a big impact. For example, opening a rehearsal room early creates a sense of hospitality. This makes it clear to the artists that the stage manager is here to help everyone and that they are ready to go. The same can be said for sweeping the rehearsal room before calling, working on presents, or recording strings/locks. These little gestures of responsibility and predictable behaviour signal that a sense of trust is building up. First impressions can make a difference. How one envisions oneself as a stage director during the first rehearsal is the key to success. Here, one can determine what kind of director one is and set that record. Does one want to be the stage director who can be trusted by actors because one is always ready? Or does one want to be a director that actors don't trust because one comes without knowing what to do? Acting as a stage director is actually a form of non-verbal communication that can make a strong impression. For example, one imagines the

role of a director as a character in a play such as “Our City”. In a world without physical objects, the director in this play acts as a storyteller by drawing scenes. They are an active force in this world, and the audience trusts them because of their leadership and guidance. While this should always apply to directors, the same should be said for stage directors! Their presence should indicate responsibility, organisation, trust, respect and all other leadership qualities that a stage director should have. This quote from Alexander Pope, really answers this question: "Act well on your part, that's all the honour."

Evidently, words play an important role in shaping a production. This means that the way one uses your words is significant. However, they can also do the opposite. When communicating, information may be misinterpreted by the listener due to the tone you use. Thus, one has to be careful with what and how they say it. The last thing one should want to do is speak in a manner that might inadvertently offend, disturb, or make someone feel uncomfortable. When words are juxtaposed with certain tones, people inadvertently create connotation or subtext for them. Ultimately, this can affect how the people in the production interpret the director's word. On the one hand, this is when the stage manager has to give direction such as fixing a lock or requesting rows. On the other hand, connotations and implications are not necessarily negative. They can also be positive and helpful in terms of the sense of trust, stability, and leadership that production needs. It is believed that what really matters is not what one says but how it is said. In the end, it is not the words that define the stage manager, but the way they use those words that really defines them.

The rehearsal period gives the directors the opportunity to interact with the dance staff. However, they must be careful not to step on the dancer's heels while reading lines or acting out. There are so many effective ways to communicate and articulate without reading the lines. And if someone has reached the end of one's wit and the only way to get the message across is to say the phrase oneself, then it should be done with great exaggeration. Thus, the essence is conveyed without telling the actor exactly what to do, and helping one find their own form of expression. In favour of the Socratic method, many directors simply ask the dancer or the actor questions until they come to a decision themselves. It's also beneficial, since often the artist sees the role differently, and talking about it gives everyone more and sometimes better ideas. Basically, the dancers need to show their movements, but the directors believe that this depends on what the choreographer wants.

In rehearsals, directors usually use standard teaching phrases in addition to structured improvisation to generate new movement ideas. There is no room for interpretation with standard phrases. They physically demonstrate quality, speed, rhythm and repeat it until it reaches the body of the dancers and reaches the level of performance. Therewith, directors usually direct the dancers with storytelling in structured improvisations (Azunwo, 2017; Lu, 2021; Tarakanova, 2017). Usually, notes are taken after each rehearsal, and most directors use this time-honoured practice. Taking group notes in person is always better than taking notes in writing or through an assistant; this allows all actors to have the same understanding of what is expected to be changed next time, as well as allowing them to voice questions or concerns. People often distinguish between harsh and honest criticism from constructive criticism. Some scholars and choreographers believe that the two

are not mutually exclusive. However, dancers should not be afraid. They need to feel like they can make certain choices and then rely on the director to tell them if one's working. However, it is important to consider some rules here. For example, it is significant to try to always first say something positive about the play since here is almost always something positive to say and then talk about what is wrong and try to find out the reason for this with the group members.

Conclusion

The communication process is one of the most interesting, multifaceted and mysterious processes that contribute to the establishment and further development of a personality. The effectiveness of the process of personality development in a choreographic group largely depends on the optimal implementation of personal and group capabilities. A favourable "friendly" atmosphere in the choreographer group influences the creative results of all members but also rebuilds a person, reveals one's possibilities, and also forms new ones. Communication in a choreographic collective is an important part of the life of the collective. It acts not only as the organisation of the relationship between the leader and the group members but is also an essential condition for the implementation of the entire educational process.

Communication in a choreographic group has a huge impact on the development of the participants' personality, it contributes to the development of a worldview, value orientations, ethical and aesthetic norms of behaviour in society, develops important qualities in children necessary for life in society. As a result, it is concluded that the hypothesis is fully reflected in the implementation of the integrated approach. The study of this topic allowed identifying new facets and forms of communication in the choreographic collective on the part of the participant and the director. After all, the process of communication in a choreographic group happens with its inexhaustible possibilities of education and spiritual enrichment of a person.

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