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THE SUBJECT OF MUSICAL THEATER AND ITS CONNECTION WITH THE GRADUATE PROFILE OF THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN SINGING AT UAA-UAZ

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Abstract: The subject Musical Theater is a multipurpose subject: it involves in a multidisciplinary way several artistic expressions such as singing, dance and performing arts that offer an intrinsic development of skills for the student of Singing. The proposed objectives were: To determine the importance of the subject of Musical Theater, to relate its objectives with the graduate profile of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing and to propose a methodological approach. The research question was: Is it possible to efficiently insert the subject: Musical Theater Workshop within the curriculum of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing of the UAA-UAZ (Arts Unit of the Autonomous University of Zacatecas)? It was concluded that this subject provides the necessary elements to complement the intrinsic knowledge of the student of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing of the UAA-UAZ, as well as the development of skills and competencies necessary to achieve the corresponding profiles of graduation.

Keywords: Acting, theater, musical, subject matter, methodology

INTRODUCTION

The origin of musical theater is basically European, but it is highly represented in the United States exposing great works that arise from the popular vision of diverse political, social and cultural areas.

“Musical theater is a form of theater that combines song, spoken dialogue, acting and dance. Since the 20th century it has been referred to simply as musical. The story and emotional content of plays of humor, pathos, love, anger, etc. are communicated through the words, music, movement, and technical aspects of the show as an integrated whole.” (Walsh and Platt, 2003).

Thus, musical theater is a form of theatrical representation that combines several artistic disciplines, has an identity and markedly political and social background. Since the works

of Cohen and Harrigan, Gilbery and Sullivan, musical theater has been contextualized in different socio-cultural contexts.

Emotion in musical theater is transmitted through movement, dance, dance, the final result is divided between the use of motor skills as a key element and vocal interpretation as an indissoluble fusion.

“The interaction with the environment and others through motor behavior favors a greater involvement in the learning of other subjects, but from them it is possible to contribute -in different ways, of course- to the achievement and development of motor competence... Some subjects can make their contribution to motor competence from a conceptual point of view, deepening the knowledge of the body and movement.” (ULPG)

All these elements are developed in the subject of: Musical Theater taught at the Arts Unit (UAA) of the Autonomous University of Zacatecas (UAZ) and contribute to the development of communicative, psychological and emotional skills. In this research an exploratory study of the contributions of this subject for the development of the student of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing was carried out. Being a multifactorial field, we tried to examine through observation and research analysis the behavior of students in classes and evaluations.

OBJECTIVES

- Determine the importance of the subject of Musical Theater.
- Relate its objectives to the graduate profile of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing.
- To propose a methodological approach.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND ACADEMIC APPROACH

The first composers and pioneers of musical theater are Cameron McKintosh and Andrew Lloyd Webber, both Englishmen, who composed and produced works that have been immortalized in different theaters worldwide, especially Broadway, the theater specializing in this genre. "The origins of American musical theater are primarily European, although African influences became important at the beginning of the 20th century." (Boardman, 1987, p.8).

McKintosh is one of the world's most prolific producers:

"Cameron Mackintosh is one of the most successful producers in the history of musical theater. His list of credits includes several of the defining successes of the late 20th century: big budget, lavishly staged shows including "Cats," "Les Misérables" and "Miss Saigon." But towering above them all has been the longest-running Broadway show of all time: "The Phantom of the Opera." (New York Times, 2022)

His great contribution is to have opened the path of marketing to musical theater, which until now was a little corseted within the theaters, while maintaining his personal stamp and respecting the originality of the story and the essence of these works. Another of the titan producers of this genre is the composer of Phantom of the Opera: Andrew Lloyd Webber, who is probably responsible for experimenting with successful fusions between the most classical music and more extreme genres such as rock or pop. He is the composer of the musical Jesus Christ Superstar, which is a great success in Mexico and has been one of the most performed musicals in history. Another of his great contributions is to give that immeasurable eclecticism to the theater musical with proposals such as Evita, based on the life of the controversial Evita Perón, wife of the Argentine dictator Juan Perón.

The research and dissemination of Musical Theater among undergraduate singing students would allow numerous benefits that would enhance their abilities. Since musical theater is a genre that is widely worked and disseminated by artists, producers and directors in the professional field of art, even today, we can deduce that it is an interesting construct that could well occur within our classrooms, due to its success in the labor market, which would promote the possibilities of improving the profile of graduation and the terminal efficiency of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing.

The learning of musical theater for singers in training can be carried out within less rigid parameters than those of the training of lyric singers, but its consequences would be equally impacting and its results with much more creative purposes. In musical theater and specifically in this subject, the student takes his or her innovative capacity on a par with opening other terminal outlets and even impacting in a more effective way in an artistic labor market that now requires personal, manageable and entertaining projects. "Many have also been the theater companies that have emerged on the initiative of actors and directors who practiced their way of seeing classical theater in workshops and laboratories dedicated to the research of acting in verse." (Martinez and Ruiz, 2019, pp. 25)

In this way, the student increases other possibilities and more efficiently orients his or her journey towards the end of the career. Through this incidence in one more genre, which is also part of the very essence of art committing to one of its functions: to feel, think and perhaps transmit. "Our fundamental premise is that the essence of musical theater is the "representation of human emotions on stage, and the evocation of emotions in public, through the union of theater and music. "The unique aspect of musical theater, whether dramatic or comedic, is the intensification of the emotional

impact of a story or idea through music and song.” (Cohen, 2006. P.16)

METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL. PROFILE OF GRADUATION

The methodology used for this research is longitudinal and exploratory since we worked with a specific group of students who took the subject over the course of a year, but the results that will be shown will be in accordance with what was worked in the last semester January-June 2023. In the present research we intend to observe the behavior within the space through the presentation of specific scenes that promote and develop the psycho-drama, a key element within the artistic representations.

The methodology used includes summative pedagogical aspects that involve factors of constructivist teaching, for these reasons the students would have enough tools to create and innovate within their scenic proposal, although respecting the music and the essence of the work. In this way, the student is also trained in the historical, political and social knowledge of their environment within the performative art.

For this reason and according to the weekly hours in which it is taught respecting the school calendar, three scenes were worked per semester. Last semester we worked on: Jafar’s song from Aladdin, The Addams’ song and a group scene from West Side Story.

In this staging, lines were drawn for the acting, musical and scenic work. The students contributed with props and great disposition for the staging. The work was entirely in the classroom and the evaluations were carried out in two specific locations:

- In a private house with a large living room where family and friends were invited.
- In the Auditorium of the Arts Unit.

The graduate profile of the Bachelor’s Degree in Singing at UAA-UAZ is as follows:

-The graduate of the Bachelor’s Degree in Singing will be a professional with a solid musical education that will allow him/her to reach high degrees of flexibility, versatility, autonomy, creativity, critical sense and linkage with society. They will participate in actions that strengthen the cultural heritage through research, creation, interpretation and dissemination of musical art in its various genres and manifestations. The graduate in singing will have a high technical level, as well as diverse theoretical and practical knowledge that will enable him/her to perform successfully in the labor market and/or carry out postgraduate studies. The graduate will have the academic tools to exercise the capacity for analysis, critical spirit, research skills, as well as educational and technical competence to approach the repertoire of various genres such as opera, musical theater, choral repertoire and popular music in its various manifestations.

The first point is the link with society. In this matter, the breaking of the fourth wall is recognized by using the aforementioned strategies to create new audiences and interest them in the artistic endeavor. As a second point, an innovative way of caring for the cultural heritage in a tangible and intangible way is inferred by divulging and disseminating art in an identity-based way. As a third point, and through an adequate professional orientation, the student opens his range of proposals to be able to insert himself in a difficult and narrow labor market for the future artist.

This subject has an impact on all the lines of this profile, deepening even more in the scenic constructs. The musical theater course offers versatility, acting preparation and a more intense motor and body expression work. This subject influences the professional orientation that the student needs, especially at the end of the artistic career.

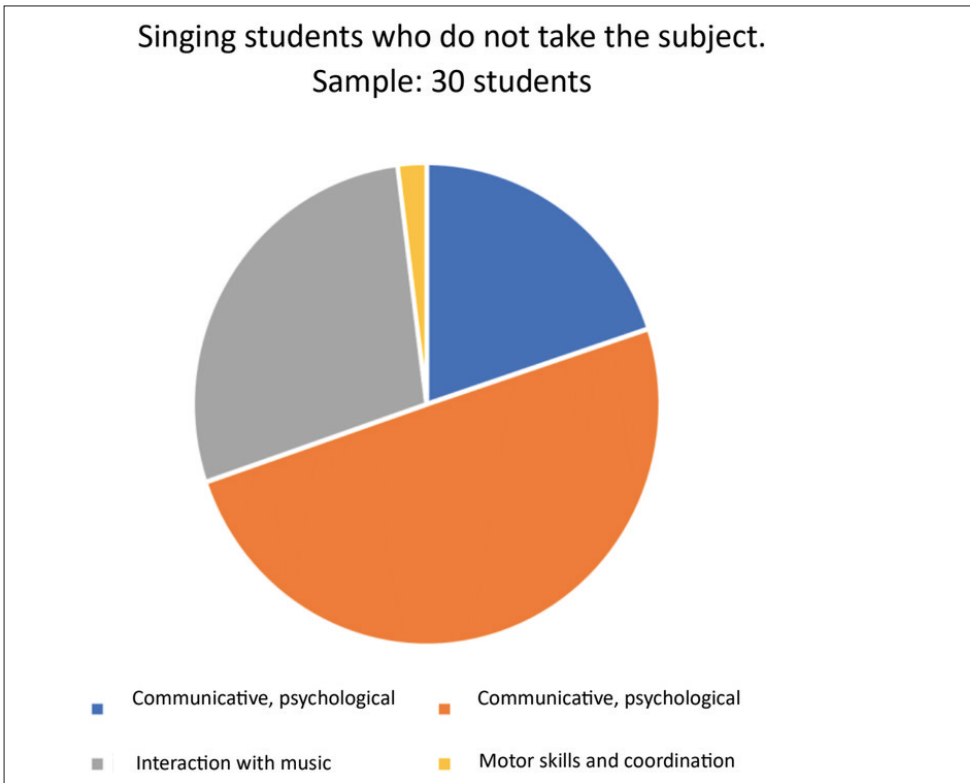


Figure 1: Students of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing who have not taken the course.
Source: Own elaboration.

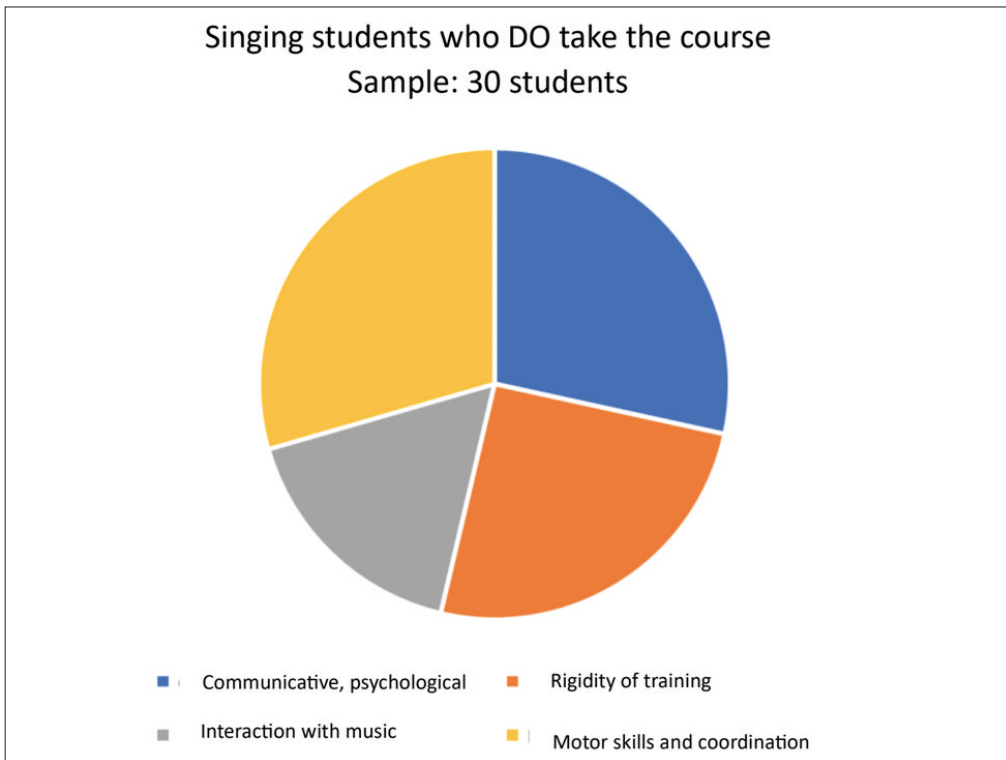


Figure 2: Singing students who have already taken the subject.
Source: Own elaboration.

RESULTS

The following table shows the results of skills with their progress, as well as the competencies that the students who took the subject in one year displayed

Skills and progress	Artistic competencies
Communicative and psychological. Development of empathy and group work. 80%	Knowledge of musical theater. Necessary and interchangeable tool.
Balancing the rigidity of training as lyric singers. 90%	Assessment of performance art in a Mexican-Zacatecan context.
Dance and dance skills. 78%	

Figure 1 shows the results of the students who did not take the course and Figure 2 shows the results of those who did take the course over the course of a year.

The following images show in a visual way some of the results as stage impact that the students had in these presentations.



Figure 3: Singing student performing the character of Jafar in the musical: Aladdin.

Source: Own archive



Figure 4: Students from the UAA Singing and Instrument majors performing a scene from the musical: Los locos Adams.

Source: Own archive.



Figure 5: Students of the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Arts in Singing performing a scene from the musical: West Side Story.

Source: Own archive.

In these assemblies, aspects of great importance were also noted within the work of an artist in training. These aspects or annotations add more structure to the formation of new projects and even encourage the formation of new audiences, due to their nature.

- Students as artists and as part of the audience. In the stage performances, the artists at the end of their presentation became part of the audience, which makes the audience feel more identified and more familiar with the act they are witnessing.
- Innovative, minimalist scenographies. Homemade costumes. Recycling. Students made their costumes and emphasized accessories to recreate their characters.

- Work on scenes, rather than complete works. This is an interesting element that brings diversity to the presentations, the presentation of selections from different works.
- Individual and group coordination. In some of the scenes, the children learned these skills in a patient and committed manner.
- A division in the language elements is proposed: Spanish for dialogues, English for musical interventions. It is important to keep some of the original language, which contributes to the development of the language skills they need.
- Research: On the play to be worked on, analysis of libretto and texts. The students elaborated a general research work on the theme of the play, as well as on the characters, which provides a more serious and diverse interpretation.

DISCUSSION

Musical Theater is a subject that stands out in the curriculum of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing at UAA-UAZ for several reasons:

1. It is a subject that exposes and develops unique skills within the program.
2. It is a flexible subject, since it can be taken not only by singing students, but also by students of other instruments. This is due to the particularity of the vocal treatment.
3. It is a subject that strengthens group skills and empathy.

In addition to this, the subject of Musical Theater shows a panorama of unlimited creation and innovation, due to the nature of its repertoire, which can be adapted to all social contexts. It is highly versatile and multidisciplinary, having the voice as a communicator and not as the only means of expression.

The graduate profile of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing exhibits a student with a multidisciplinary potential, with a high degree of polyvalence, so it is important for the institution to understand, understand and support this diversity of subjects that help and favor the fulfillment of these profiles in an efficient and pertinent manner.

The skills and competencies they developed are a factor of analysis to understand the complexity of this career that needs to be re-valued both by society and by teachers and students themselves. Artistic careers offer profiles of expression, communication, the humanistic is a vital part of their programs where methodologies of diverse treatment converge but necessary for the cultural development of any country.

The students of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing have been favored by taking it because their integral development is positively and progressively punctuated by having more contact with their body, their mind. In addition, this subject allows them to interpret scenes in a much more plausible way than operatic scenes or as the only character in a recital, which provides relevant contributions to meet the graduate profile of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing at UAA-UAZ. "...graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Singing must also be aware and capable of generating innovative projects through management and correct articulation, as well as acquiring different skills" (Caignet, 2021, p. 27).

But an artist is not made alone. It is an inevitable dialogue between performer and audience, and there is also a need for artistic and cultural re-education through the media, as well as better cultural policies that allow the insertion of new projects by national artists to enable a broader and more stable labor market. "One does not have to be a connoisseur in the field to perceive that this society should take more care of its artists." (Pardo, 2011, pp. 67)

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