

Excerpts from the

**Catalogue of Methods
of Dramatic Interpretation of Music Theatre**

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to be used along with the complete German edition

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Phase 1: Preparation

The essential elements of the preparation are:

- defining room and performing area,
- distributing roles,
- dressing up and putting on make-up,
- doing the warm-ups.

MET 1.1 The difference between „Du“ and „Sie“

This method is not necessary in English because the difference between „Du“ (you) and „Sie“ (the German polite form to address to some one) does not exist in this form.

MET 1.2 Structuring the playing area (classroom) and setting up the playing field

A clear structure is to be created while setting up the playing area:

1. Room for jackets, bags and personal belongings,
 2. Room for the playing field,
 3. Room for the observers and the reflection.
- Each thing which belongs to the playing field is clearly marked and will be respected accordingly.
 - The part of the classroom which isn't marked as being part of the playing field is divided from the playing field by an invisible or symbolic barrier (chalk line, etc.) It must be clear as to how one can and may enter the playing field. (Through a door, for example – *is the door open, or does it have to be opened?* – threshold, stairs...) The proper entering of the playing field must be practised.
 - Objects which are present in the classroom may be used as backdrops or scenery. Props and costumes don't have to be provided.
 - Setting up the playing room is a “theatrical event” in itself. The facilitator or an “authorised person” takes charge of this. This could be a pupil, for example, who's acting the role of the host. He sets up “his” bar with the help of the facilitator. It is important that the figures set up a room which they also really set up in the piece itself. In this way, for example, Mr. and Mrs. Peachum would be the ones to set up “Peachums beggar's wardrobe”, because they really did do that at some point. References for setting up the room can be found in the directing instructions or in the script.
 - It is helpful if the facilitator shows the participants how the room can be “used”. You take a piece of fruit from the bowl, look out the window, bump into the doorpost, push a chair into place, step up to the podium, open a window, close a curtain, place a vase on the table, wipe up the floor, etc. The participants should walk through the room and observe it from different angles, to see if it's small or spacious, bright or dark, how it smells...

MET 1.3 Dividing into roles

In general, there are two ways of dividing the participants into roles:

- a) Each role will be played by more than one person, as with pieces which have few roles, for example.
- b) Each role is played by one person. This can be the case with small classes and in pieces with many roles. However, more roles can also be created (like more “Jets” girls in West Side Story, for example).

All roles are considered to be equally important for the dramatic process. Participants who take on a role by the means of “identifying with the character” don’t just act as an “acting figure” on the playing floor, but also as an observer. The whole process between identifying with the character and removing oneself from the character is carried out and experienced from the character’s perspective.

There is a role card for each role (also see 2.7). The role cards which have been worked on by the Arbeitsstelle “Musik und Szene” (Working group „Music + Scene“ of the university of Oldenburg) contain all the important information for the identifying with the character with pictures, additional texts, music and characteristic “labels”. The wording of these role cards is very important in processing a music theatre piece for dramatic interpretation. All together, they contain the complete dramatic constellation of the piece, and often, they already contain the main emphasis of the dramatic interpretation itself.

The “distributing of role cards“ is also the (final) dividing into roles. With it, many points will be set for the following teaching units. However, it does happen now and then, that the actor for a role can be changed during the course of the dramatic interpretation. This can take place when the main role should be played by more than one participant, or when new roles are added at short notice.

There are many ways of dividing into roles. A basic rule is that it happens as spontaneous as possible, without becoming a problem or having to be “discussed fully in a rational manner”. For example:

1. The leader of the process briefly reads out the cards, and then informally hands them out.
2. The role cards are laid on the floor, and the participants choose a card for themselves.
3. The participants are left alone for 10 minutes, and have to deal with the situation themselves.
4. If the roles of a music theatre piece can be divided into two or three groups, then the groups can be formed first, and then the roles can be divided within one of those groups.
5. The roles can be divided by the leader of the process and then, after the warm-up and the first “identifying with the character” rehearsals, the roles can be exchanged, sold or auctioned at a “market place”.

Example: Now and then, the following can happen, and the leader of the process (facilitator) should be prepared to deal with these:

- Isabella’s role card reads : “*Lindoro is the love of your life.*” The pupil who has the Isabella role card then asks: “*Who’s Lindoro?*”, and then says “*No, I don’t want to be Isabella*”, as a certain pupil responds.
- The leader of the process is looking for a Musatafa with a card in the hand. A boy says: “*I first want to know who Isabella is being played by.*”
- “*I’ll only be Isabella if I don’t have to kiss!*”

The dividing of roles should be flexible. The roles don’t have to be divided according to gender. Female pupils can take on the roles of men, and vice-versa.

MET 1.4 Producing a cast list

Each participant writes down his or her name in the “cast list“ so that each person knows who’s who, just as it is done in a theatre. The list is hung up in the classroom on the board, for example, which is also the place where the role biographies and other written progress reports are hung.

MET 1.5 Dressing up and putting on make-up

A costume table is set up in the corner of the classroom. Donated costumes or accessories brought from home lie on the table so they are easy to see. Each person can choose a garment which suits his or her role. Often, something striking or characteristic is enough to serve as a costume (sunglasses with cap and runners, officer’s uniform with fitting headgear, colourful dress, etc.) A make-up corner should be provided for too, with mirrors, paint, brushes, sponges, make-up removal, etc.

Dressing up is of central importance. In dressing up, a role safeguard is built up, which allows the participants to also leave the role through a physical action (see *role safeguard* and *reflection*). On top of that, there is an artistic and aesthetic component to getting dressed up and putting on make-up. Inhibitions towards acting are also reduced through wearing a costume.

MET 1.6 Warm-Ups

Almost all kinds of physical exercises, musical warm-ups, and theatre-pedagogical exercises can serve as warm-ups. In dramatic interpretation, however, the warm-ups should be linked to the music theatre piece being interpreted or to the scene which will follow. Most warm-ups can be accompanied by the music from the respective piece. Here are some examples:

Exploring the room: Each person starts walking towards a specific point in the room. When he or she has reached that point, they then choose a new point. It is important that they, despite all their concentration, don’t run into other people, but rather walk past each other without touching. As far as the points in the room are concerned, specific points corresponding to the following scene can be chosen. Points in the room can be marked acoustically by playing a recording. The music can dictate the way the participants walk through the room.

Walking at different paces: Depending on the size of the room, there are different speeds at which the participants can walk towards a target: 0 = freeze, 1 = slow motion, 2 = leisurely, 3 = fast, 4 = run. The participants walk at the speed according to which number the leader calls out. The walking can correspond to the respective role or role perspective. Music at different speeds could be used in place of the numbers. It is also possible to replace the digits 0 to 4 with volumes, so that “pianissimo” = freeze, “forte” = fast, and “forte fortissimo” means “run”.

Body parts lead the movement through the room: Different parts of the body lead. An imaginary twine is attached to the chin, to the elbow, to the belly, to the rear end, to the foot, etc. The twine pulls the person.

Walking with emotions: The leader of the process dictates different emotions which the participants apply to their movements. Walk towards a point being sad, happy, in love, brutal,

scared, snooty, etc. With younger participants, different islands or planets may be visited: The island of sadness, of people in love, etc. Music which sets the mood can also be used.

Walking with different postures: The leader of the process dictates what kind of posture the participants should have as they walk through the room:

- pulled-back shoulders, arms tight on the sides, small steps,
- head up, chest out, arms stretched outward, large steps, etc.

Leading somebody by the nose in pairs (Warm-up for the topic master-servant, offender, victim.) One person leads, and has his or her hand 20 cm in front of the other person's nose, which has to follow the hand. The roles are exchanged after max. 60 seconds! Important: the leader has certain obligations and must take care. The person being lead mustn't get hurt. If possible, pairs should be made with people who don't know each other. Afterwards, it should be possible to have a short sharing session about the experience.

Voice warm-up: Clusters (random unstructured notes or tunes) are to be sung. One participant conducts while the others sing. Intervals and short motifs from the following scene may be applied.

Getting into groups: When the leader of the process shouts out a number between 2 and 5, the individual participants who are walking through the room should get into groups: pairs, trios, quartets and quintets. Specifications pertaining to the content of the following scene can be given (a couple, three people under one umbrella, a family of four sitting in front of the television, etc.).

Phase 2: Identifying with the character

The participants' identifying with a character which usually, at first, contains unaccustomed and unfamiliar roles, perspectives, situations and music is the most important requirement for dramatic interpretation. The outward sign of identifying with the character is the taking over of the role. Ingo Scheller explains the individual psychological background of getting into the role:

"In identifying with the character, the participants have to activate conscious, but also forgotten, half-conscious or preconscious experiences, feelings, life plan and pattern of action and transfer them to the characters. Looked at in detail, these are sensual perceptions and the connected sensation, body and speaking posture. Understanding which is linked to the identifying with the character, and the associated interpretation and learning processes are unusual, and can provoke opposition if they run into strange, scorned or derogatory behaviour" (SCHELLER 1989, pgs 37-38).

Foreignness is learned (even if it is so obvious) – the peculiarities are observed and examined for their backgrounds. This "research" takes place through the identifying with the character. The participants embark on the search for the person who they must represent. In that, they not only learn something about the music theatre piece and its persons, but rather also possibly something about people who aren't much different than them, and in that way, the participants can learn more about themselves:

“Loving your neighbour as yourself” in theatre is the identifying with other roles, with other people’s mannerisms, even if they are the most foreign. *‘Identifying with the new character’ means first distancing from your own character, finding the new character, and even finding the rejected attitude in yourself*” (STANKEWITZ, 1995).

In dramatic interpretation, identifying with the character takes place on three levels:

1. Identifying with the character in roles, groups or social milieus as an independent teaching unit.
2. Identifying with the character in complex situations, conflicts or scenes, as a relatively independent teaching unit.
3. Identifying with the character in individual plots as a component of a play unit or play phase

The following three methods can be used in all three levels.

MET 2.1 Identifying with the character using a spirit walk with music

In a verbally guided spirit walk, the participants lie on the floor, close their eyes and try to follow the spoken words with pictures in their own minds. The leader of the process reads out the text in a soft tone. Some background music is there to merely create a relaxing atmosphere. After the spirit walk, the participants are given the opportunity to share their individual experiences.

The spirit walk leads us into the land, the historical situation, the milieu or the ambience of the music theatre piece. It prepares the individuals for the roles they are about to take on and for the identifying with the character. Fantasy production takes place here, just as in the individual identifying with the character.

MET 2.2 Identifying with the character through “music and motion”

Besides the verbally guided spirit walks, there is a pure musical version, with which “body fantasies” are stimulated and picture fantasies are expressed with a bodily expression. Overtures or scenes with a lot of motion (with few words, or words which are difficult to understand – operas are famous for this!) are played, and the participants are to imagine suitable scenes, and then move to the scenes. If the leader of the process sees that the music is too “open”, then he or she can give a tip (by mentioning “tavern” to indicate the tavern scene from “Wozzeck”, for example).

MET 2.3 Identifying with the character through role cards, research material and music

As they are divided into roles (MET 1.3), the participants get role cards, perhaps supplemented by recorded music, by excerpts from characteristic scenes (citations from the libretto), or by other research material. The entirety of all the role cards exposes the complete dramatic constellation, and each individual card contains a specific viewpoint of this constellation. Usually, secondary information from contemporary history, social history, etc. flows into the role cards. The role cards also contain questions about identifying with the character.

(2.3.1) Reading the role cards: After the roles have been divided, all the participants walk through the room while reading their role card out loud (repeatedly), and at the same time, exchange the “you“ in the text with “I“.

(2.3.2) Preparing the role biographies: Writing a role biography forces the participants to deal with the character in a concrete and precise way. It makes them identify with “the whole life” of the character. The biographical moments in the role cards are logically linked to each other, which forms an overall picture filled with fantasy. In that, the participants project their own imagination onto the person who they will later play. The role biographies are written in the first person.

(2.3.3) Publishing the role biographies: It is important that the participants have the possibility to publish their roles “safely”. The basic rules of “creative writing” apply: Each participant only has to read out what he or she wishes. This could be a sentence, a paragraph, a passage, or the whole text. Another way of publishing is using a wall news-sheet, on which the biographies are shown with pictures.

MET 2.4 Identifying with the character through working with dramatic role mannerisms

The role card can contain a “typical saying” for the role. One can also ask each participant to come up with a typical saying, a defect, a certain walk, a characteristic gesture or also a musical motif. All these kinds of mannerisms belong to the character and can be understood to be a part of the role biography. We describe them as “role mannerisms”.

When we deal with the identifying with the character, we are often faced with questions such as „What is your favourite activity?“, „What are you most afraid of?“, etc. Because of this, the answers to these kinds of questions can also be included in the role mannerism(s), and are included here.

(2.4.1) Presenting the role mannerism(s): The participants present their role mannerism(s) alone, or in groups according to a set ritual which has a protecting function. In this way, a stool can be placed in the middle of the playing floor. Each participant is to sit down on the stool and present one or more role mannerisms. The participants can walk through the room in a particular way while humming, whistling or singing “their musical motif”.

(2.4.2) Examining the role manners by the facilitator: All the methods for working with drama (vocalise the inner thought, reflection, producer’s questions, etc.) can be introduced with role mannerisms. In this way, the leader of the process can step behind the participant and ask questions, which the participant must answer from the perspective of the role. Here, questions from the identifying with the character are often repeated, or interesting role aspects taken up and clarified. The questioning is exclusively there to clarify and present the role, and not preparatory for the upcoming scene. (see also MET 2.5!)

(2.4.3) Questioning the role mannerisms by the participants: Even the participants who are watching can have a chance to examine the role mannerisms. In order to avoid having questions which go off topic, rules can be introduced, like you may only ask questions pertaining to noticeable things about role mannerisms (for example: “Why are you limping?”, or “Why are you so sad?”).

MET 2.5 Identifying with the character through characteristic activities

The playing area is defined to be a „public area“ (market place, train station, arena, intersection, etc.) and is set up accordingly. Each participant thinks of an activity which is characteristic for his or her role, which has to do with their job or favourite pastime. They go to a place in the room which would be characteristic for them within the “public place”. Here, in the place where they won’t be bothered, they set up the surroundings (within the allowed framework) and they proceed with their activity. The activity should preferably make a monotone and repetitive impression. (A lawyer doesn’t have a lengthy conversation with a client, but rather spends his or her time stacking files in a monotonous manner, from right to left, and vice-versa...)

MET 2.6 Identifying into a scene or (short) play phase

(2.6.1) Through facilitator’s questioning: The participant has gone through the (general) identifying with the character, and should be „identified“ into a scene or play phase. The leader of the process stands behind or beside the participant, lays a hand on their shoulder and asks short questions. Information about the outward premises of the upcoming play phase can be connected to a few questions on expectations, hopes or fears. The participant’s answers come from the perspective of the role at hand.

(2.6.2) By presenting a singing manner (compare to 3.6): At the beginning of a scene, the people can portray their expectations for a certain situation by presenting an individual singing manner. (For example, a corsair sings an excerpt from a song of the chorus with a certain gesture.) This kind of presentation is also a kind of identifying with the character.

MET 2.7 Identifying with the character by singing a recitative

By singing a recitative, the participants can identify with their character’s role. First, they listen to a typical recitative from the music theatre piece. After a short interpretation, they get dressed and carry out a certain activity as outlined in MET 2.5. At the same time, they start talking while performing the activity. The text can be based on the activity itself, or on the life/situation of the respective character. The participants concentrate on one part of their activity which they keep on repeating and accompanying with spoken words.

The leader of the process plays the chord structure of the recitative at a slow tempo. The previous activity is carried on with “sung improvisation”. Each participant sings or noisily declaims his or her text as a recitative. The “typical saying” (or “motto for life”, compare MET 3.30), which was developed in the individual identifying with the character, can be used as a support.

MET 2.8 Questioning during or after a scene

Depending on the peculiarities of a scene, the facilitator can ask all those in the scene what just happened. He or she asks about the events, the experiences, the consequences, and what the characters are thinking about each other – the feelings are most often left out here. The characters can be asked a standardised question, or questioned individually. (For example, in “West Side Story”, the facilitator asks some questions after the fight *The Rumble*, in which both Riff and Bernardo are murdered by the escalation of violence: “What just happened?” Even though the questions aren’t about feelings, but rather about the events, the participants express their consternation anyway.)

Phase 3: The dramatic-musical work

Mannerisms - Pictures - Performing - Improvisation - Presenting

The goal of the identifying with the character was the taking on of the roles. The dramatic-musical work which follows the identifying with the character happens mostly *with* and *in* this role. The participants act as “characters” from the music theatre piece. The role offers them a formal and group dynamic safeguard. In reality, “performed” and “real” life are intertwined; the participants play someone else in a way which reflects their own personality in an open or secret way – and this is the pedagogical opportunity! The facilitator is a “process organiser”. He or she intervenes “from outside”, is responsible for the organisation and observance of the rules which guarantee the role safeguard. Participants who aren’t acting can also observe “from outside” and make comments. They constitute the real social surroundings for the performers. Often, though, the participants who aren’t involved in the dramatic work also observe and make comments from the perspective of their respective roles.

The contrast between the dramatic “foreign” and “own” life is used to construct meanings, or in other words, to “interpret”. In the participants’ getting into the fictional and foreign world of the music theatre piece through dramatic acting, the unaccustomed musical stage work is first filled with people who feel, think and act. The dramatic interpretation ranges from

- (1) the story of the music theatre piece
- (2) the social and biographical background from which the participants come
- (3) the way the dramatic performance is played

These three planes build the framework for the interpretation and experience in which “meanings” are constructed by the participants, participants who probably deal more with Adidas, Slatko, Bravo and skateboards than they can identify with „Le Nozze di Figaro“ or „L’Italiana in Algeri“.

The dramatic work entails 5 essential structural elements which are applied in the following order: working with mannerisms, working with pictures, the dramatic acting, the dramatic improvisation and lastly, the dramatic presentation. All 5 phases are connected to musical activities and refer to music.

Mannerisms

Mannerism is a concept which is central to dramatic interpretation. It has a meaning which extends past the colloquial meaning of mannerism: *“When I talk about mannerism here, then I don’t just mean the way a person expresses himself through his body, that means body posture (position and movement of head, torso, arm and legs), facial expression, gestures and style (intonation, volume, voice). I am talking about the interplay of inner perceptions, feelings, social and political attitudes and interests and outward physical and linguistic expressions and practises which are perceptible by people in certain situations, but also over longer periods of time.”* (SCHELLER 1982, pg 234)

The concept of mannerism has been extended further by the dramatic interpretation of music theatre. Here, the meaning is extended to include mannerisms which are conveyed musically - listening, singing and (instrumental) performance mannerisms. Purely dramatic mannerisms which are connected to musical activities can be developed into this concept too. The work with mannerisms, which is what dramatic interpretation lives off, is not just based on certain mannerisms being studied, but rather also that we experiment with mannerisms. The participants and the facilitator set in advance which way they should walk, speak, sing and perform. This makes them aware that standing, walking, speaking, singing and performing aren't just neutral ways of moving, expressing a text, singing or acting. These also present a possibility of interpreting the respective process.

One of the goals of working with mannerisms to music is to consciously become aware of the meaning as well as the communicative and expressive functions of mannerisms (keyword: "body language"). Another goal is to experience the relationship between (body) posture and music. With that, we recognise implicitly how music has a "mannerism" itself, and how this mannerism depends on the people performing the music (keyword: "moderate constructivism"). The "musical mannerism" is that which the musicians do with the music in terms of body language.

MET 3.1 Working with music and postures

"Standing" and "Understanding" belong closely together: the comprehension of the individual role can be developed by having a posture, and allows the character to be visually experienced by the observers. Standing isn't an arbitrary, random action, but rather a mode of expression and appropriation. It reflects the situation.

There are different ways of working with music and postures: taking up a posture with or without music, taking up a posture which fits to the music, changing the music and changing or keeping the posture, finding the fitting music to a posture (by singing, humming, whistling or beating a rhythm), etc. A concrete situation which can be explained by the facilitator through asking questions is the starting point for the work with postures: Where is the character standing? What is he/she doing there? How and why is he/she doing it? What's going through his/her head right now? – After that, we have the observing from outside, and the mannerism reflection to music.

If a posture is changed „from the outside“, then the work with postures leads to working with frozen images (see MET 3.14).

MET 3.2 Working with walking to music

Our walk expresses a lot and presents an important medium for nonverbal communication. To prepare for this method, we use simple physical warm-ups (see MET 1.6 Warm-Ups) which can also be accompanied by music. At the same time, the participants move like persons with certain feelings or personality traits, and not "like the music". That means the instructions should be like, "How does someone walk if he's singing like that?" and not "Move to the music!"

To increase the precision of walks, we use imitation exercises: one participant demonstrates a walk, and the others copy her, etc. The term walk mannerism becomes more specific when collectives/groups which appear in the music theatre piece (corsairs and slaves, Jets and Sharks, nobility, commoners and farmers, soldiers and gypsies) are asked to agree on a common walk. Then, the participants discuss what the walks have in common, how they're different, and what certain walks express and how they affect us. A common group-walk is studied and agreed upon, a common walk which is made up of elements from the individual walks.

It is necessary that the situation be defined in which the characters are walking. The instruction "Walk across Soho's market place", for example, already contains several factors which determine a walk mannerism: it is walking in public (Who's looking at you?), a walking with a purpose (What do you want to do at the market?), etc. The facilitator can help to develop the walk by asking questions: How does the character set down his/her feet? How big (short, wide, narrow, high, etc.) are his/her steps? How does the pelvis move (upper body, arms, head, etc.) while walking? How fast is he/she walking? In which direction is he/she looking? What is he/she thinking about in this situation?

There are different ways of walking to music: Taking on a walk with or without music, taking on a walk which fits to the music, change the music and change or keep the walk accordingly, finding music which fits to a certain walk (by singing, humming, whistling, beating a rhythm), etc. The walk can be combined with a certain singing manner (see MET 3.6 and following). The walk can be "made into music" by stepping, slurring or limping to characteristic rhythms, for example. This is not only possible in march or with the „Habanera“, but also with complicated forms like the Turkish "Hinketanz" in 9/8, which contains three "normal" and one "limping" step (3 x 2 eighths + 1 x 3 eighths).

MET 3.3 Working with speaking mannerisms

With speaking mannerisms, the participants express the fact that speaking is more than a means of communication and "digital" transmission of information, which can be sent off over the telephone, for example. The whole body "speaks" too. With speaking mannerisms, people portray themselves more so by acting than by the semantics of the words themselves. A speaking mannerism is a speaking action "brought to the point". In the role presentations (MET 2.4), the participants speak a sentence or motto for life which is characteristic of their role. This is the most obvious way of combining content and body posture.

The speaking mannerism can be best developed with one striking sentence. This sentence can either be from the libretto or from a freely-invented "motto for life" (see MET 3.30). This sentence can be fallen back on when working with singing mannerisms, recitative singing, or when imitating the gestures of an aria.

Speaking mannerisms are best learned when different mannerisms are used for the same text. When the participants speak the same text in different ways, be it a simple pass round exercise, or based on their role – they learn how the communicative function of the „speaking mannerism“ goes beyond the text itself.

Pass round exercise 1: Everyone is standing in a circle. A short text is given. (1) The facilitator gives musical parameters with which the participants should speak the text, one after another: forte, pianissimo, allegro, adagio, staccato, pizzicato, col legno, con sordino, crescendo,

accelerando, with fermate, maestoso, menuetto, alla turca, con fuoco, smorzando, con coccolo, con gran canario, con salza, rumbissima, technosimo, discositto, etc. – real and imaginary terms are possible! (2) The facilitator sets a certain mannerism with which the participants should speak the text: excited, weary, mysterious, aggressive, loving, sneaky, sad, joyful, bored, frantic, disgusted, cool, condescending, submissive, rebellious, preaching, lamentable, begs, challenging, etc.

Pass round exercise 2: Everyone is standing in a circle and a short text is given. Participant number 1 walks across the middle of the circle to participant number 2 and speaks the text in the mannerism which is set by the facilitator. Participant 1 goes back to his/her spot in the circle, and participant number 2 goes to participant number 3, and so on, until all participants have had their turn.

Pass round exercise 3: The same as exercise 2, except that the mannerism isn't set by the facilitator. The participant can choose the mannerism his or herself.

Pass round exercise 4: The same as exercise 2, except that participant number 2 tells participant 1 to use a certain mannerism, and participant 3 tells participant 2, and so on.

Pass round exercise 5: The same thing, except that participant 2 takes on a mannerism as a reaction to the first participant, and 3 reacts to 2, and so on.

MET 3.4 Finding vocabulary

Each character of a drama or an opera has his/her own set of vocabulary. In the scenes, these words are set, but if you want to work with improvised scenes, the facilitator needs a repertoire of words, which he/she can use. The facilitator reads out a list of words which appear often in the context of the piece, and each participant picks out the terms from jargon, slang, and argot which may be useful, and writes them down. This exercise can also be done in groups.

Our standard language has a limited repertoire of terms. For example, there are no useful words for sexual situations. Harmless and disguised paraphrases are used (“they’re doing it”, the establishment, etc.) or there are medical terms which are sterile in nature (intercourse, defloration, penetration, etc.) On the other hand, there is the direct language of pimps’ and prostitutes’ world, which has partially been adopted by adolescents (fuck, hooker, etc.) The non-standardised words can be used, experienced and „normalised“ as social speaking mannerisms in a pass round exercise (see 3.3.1). (Role safeguard statement!)

MET 3.5 Speaking characteristic sentences

A passage from the libretto is read as a group (pass round – see MET 3.29). Each participant pays attention to which sentences from the role seem especially characteristic. Everyone decides on one sentence with which they want to work. The facilitator can also write down some general sentences to choose from on the board which apply to a lot of people. First, we experiment with the musical parameters: loud/quiet, fast/slow, high/low, etc. Then we can try different mannerisms (strict, sly, devout, humble, etc.) In the end, each participant decides on one speaking mannerism with which the other peoples’ sentences are presented. (See also “motto for life” MET 3.30.)

MET 3.6 Singing mannerisms (collective, individual)

One of the philosophies of the Arbeitsstelle “Musik + Szene” (working group music + scene of the university of Oldenburg) is that through work with singing mannerisms, one can correct past mistakes made by singing lessons in school, lessons which were frustrating for the participants. When they think back to their experience with voice training and singing lessons in school, participants and adults alike often first say “But I can’t sing”, but then later admit “Singing is something which I especially enjoyed.”

A singing mannerism is similar to a speaking mannerism. It isn’t important to reproduce a melody correctly, but rather:

- grasp the Gestus of the music and fully express it
- in singing, take on a mannerism which is analogue to a speaking mannerism

When trained singers take over the performance of songs in music theatre pieces which were conceived for actors and actresses (like “Three Penny Opera” or “West Side Story”), then we can witness the power of singing mannerisms and the grotesque aspect of “proper singing”. Singing mannerisms can also be trained with children, who imitate pop stars, or make a parody of opera singers. In interpreting atonal music – and not just operas, but also instrumental pieces from Alban Bergs or Arnold Schönberg – we could observe that the complete gestus, or the musical “mannerism” of a melody or motif, is more important than the reproduction which is true to the sheet music. (We used this to our advantage extensively in the dramatic interpretation of “Wozzeck”.)

(3.6.1) Collective singing mannerisms: There are three steps to achieving a collective singing mannerism.

- First, as usual, the melody phrase is learned and practised. As accompaniment in dramatic interpretation, it is popular to use the loop of a recording. Depending on the structure of the song or melody phrase, more or less importance is placed on an exact rhythm or correct pitch sequence.
- Then we experiment with singing mannerisms. This can take place within the group, or when outsiders (facilitator or observing participants) suggest certain mannerisms with which the song or melody phrase should be sung. This procedure, in itself, is similar to exercises from MET 3.3.
- Finally, the group decides on a common singing mannerism and practises this like “choreography”.

(3.6.2) Individual singing mannerisms with the „Walkman-Method“: Individual singing mannerisms are best rehearsed and tested under a „cover of chaos“. The participants walk around and sing to themselves (compare MET 2.3.1). This works especially well if all the individual music excerpts have been recorded as a loop onto tape, and each participant uses a Walkman. Each participants listens to the music through headphones while walking around and singing to the recording. The “Walkman-autism” reduces possible fear of “singing bad”. In any case, an acoustic and gesture confusion creates an optimal rehearsal situation. The Walkman rehearsal can develop into an infernal singing mannerism chaos, something which someone like Mauricio Kagel would have seen with pleasure.

Work with and on singing mannerisms can be developed into an elaborate form of “dramatic singing”. MET 3.7 to 3.9 show three examples in which the „mannerism-concept“ is strongly expanded and the threshold to dramatic-musical acting is reached.

MET 3.7 Gestured singing and “Aria singing”

„Chorals, battle songs, national anthems, dance music, march music, lullabies, love songs, and work songs are gestured music, in the way they express relationships. Mannerisms underlie this music, and the mannerisms of the people shine through the music.” (RITTER 1986, pg. 62) In gestured singing we first take on a posture, a walk and speaking mannerisms with which a relationship is expressed. This can be a relationship to one or more persons, to a problem, to an event in the past or to an institution. Taking on this kind of mannerism usually requires an identifying with the character (according to one of the methods in Phase 2). It is important that the inner and outward mannerism is clear to both the singer and observers. Gestured singing doesn't have to be “beautiful” or “true to the sheet music”, but rather “fitting”: The singer's musical Gestus changes according to the mannerism. That means tonality, rhythm, intonation, articulation, phrasing etc. fit to the bodily feeling. Gestured singing can be collective or individual, or take place in a choir, as a solo, duo, trio, etc. See also MET 3.41.

MET 3.8 Commenting on songs

Commenting on songs is an important element in Brecht's and Weill's music theatre. With it, we can most easily see Brecht's and Weill's goals of making music and theatre political. The effect which they want to achieve – to face the scene in an alienated way – is created by having improvised or elaborated scenes supplemented with a song. This can mean:

- stepping out of the role and singing
- leaving the playing area and singing
- commenting on what's going on
- presenting the opposite of what's going on

The commenting on songs method can be applied to every kind of dramatic interpretation, be it collective or individual, as a spontaneous act, or a result of group work.

MET 3.9 Writing stanzas

In writing new words to a given verse scheme, the participants deal with a melody's musical composition. The rhyming, syllable structure, phrase structure and duktus have to be considered when working with new words. This process can take place intuitively or analytically. In any case, it sharpens the sense for the connection between sound and word.

MET 3.10 Musical Playing Mannerism

A musical playing mannerism is the most „professional“ kind of mannerism, and in that way, the most difficult. It is based on the assumption that playing a musical instrument is also a mannerism, just like with speaking and singing mannerisms. But playing mannerisms are strongly conveyed musically, because playing an instrument isn't directly connected to posture (body mannerism). “Taking on” a (musical) playing mannerism essentially corresponds to what we call “expression” in free (or improvised) acting.

MET 3.11 Combined Mannerisms

All types of mannerisms can be put together and combined. The adding of mannerisms can take place simultaneously or successively. Adding mannerisms *simultaneously* (at the same time) usually leads to each mannerism being more exact and easier to execute: a singing mannerism which is combined with a walk (walking mannerism) is easier, more succinct, and more suggestive than a singing mannerism without body movement. The *successive* addition of mannerisms usually leads to a more complex, choreographic presentation. The participants enter the playing area with characteristic walking mannerisms, freeze in a posture, say a characteristic sentence with a typical speaking mannerism, and leave with a singing mannerism...

MET 3.12 Deriving an individual mannerism from the collective

A character's individual mannerism is often derived from a collective mannerism which is defined by the social milieu or peer group. First, the collective mannerism is worked on, and then the individual members of the collective give this collective mannerism an individual touch. The "individualisation" is incited by the role card, the suitable research material, and the corresponding music (see MET 2.3). This individualisation has certain borders through the fact that each individual mannerism may only be an accentuation of the collective mannerism.

MET 3.13 Developing mannerisms to music spontaneously

The music recording is played and the participants take on postures or walking mannerisms (silently) which reflect the words and music from the recording.

(3.13.1) Posture example ("Frozen image"): In the Shark Song from „Three Penny Opera“, all the participants take on a mannerism which expresses their attitude to Mackie Messer. They point to his likeness and express gestures of admiration, disapproval and fright. In this way, the mannerism can be frozen once a verse, and can only be changed when the verse is changed. (This example is explained in detail in "Frozen images", MET 3.15 and following)

(3.13.2) Walking mannerisms example: If you have different social or ethnic groups in a music theatre piece (Le Nozze di Figaro: nobility, commoners and peasants; West Side Story: youth of Puerto Rican origin, youth of Anglo-American or European origin, adults), and if these groups are characterised by distinctive music, then the participants can develop walking mannerisms to each of these music styles. The exact changing between different walking mannerisms can be practised with the help of a corresponding music collage.

(3.13.3) Singing mannerism example: One of the most mocking, and not less enthusiastic and pedagogically interesting methods in dramatic interpretation is the practising of singing mannerisms to an audio recording of a music theatre piece which already presents people singing. The "tavern scene" in "Wozzeck" is a musical collage itself, and is set as real and psychological mess. It is possible to practise different singing mannerisms to the recorded music in this scene. These mannerisms can contain bits of recognisable sung phrases which the participants take up and continue. This method works best if it is prepared in one dry run of the scene, where the body mannerisms are practised first without singing.

Pictures

Dramatic interpretation *works* with music and mannerisms. Even taking on and presenting, practising and changing, discussing and specifying mannerisms is work, and in that way, also a learning process. The following discusses work on and with pictures with regards to music and mannerisms: The dramatic plot is stopped and the participants freeze like in a photo snapshot. With these kinds of pictures, we can examine attitudes and relationship constellations which are expressed in the scene. Pictures of a scene sequences can be assembled and choreographed. Pictures can arise spontaneously, they can be modelled consciously, they can be annotated, changed, released (un-frozen) and compared to each other. Pictures can be developed to music, or be tested against the music. Dramatic interpretation utilises three types of pictures: frozen images, sociogram (physical representation of the inner relationships), and statues.

MET 3.14 Freeze-frame method

A simple freeze frame method is suitable for the sensitisation to „pictures“: The participants move to a given walking mannerism - usually in a given situation (school yard, market place, discotheque, train station, etc.) - and freeze as soon as the facilitator yells “stop!” If music is played for the movement, then stopping the music is enough. In their frozen condition, the participants are asked to look at their surroundings without moving. After a sign, either from the facilitator or the restarting of the music, the movement continues, perhaps in a new mannerism.

If the class is divided in two groups, then the one half can take part in the freeze-frame method, while the other participants are allowed to „look at“ the frozen condition. They are allowed to walk around the frozen participants and observe them from all possible perspectives, as long as they are not touched and nobody says a word.

MET 3.15 Modelling frozen images

A „frozen image“ requires two people (groups): those who construct the frozen image (model), and those who are modelled, or who portray the frozen images. The participants are given the task of using the frozen image to depict a certain “character” or a character in a certain situation. Other possible tasks can be seen in MET 3.16 and onward.

(3.15.1) One person frozen image: The person who’s supposed to form the “frozen image” picks out a person who they think suits the character to be portrayed. The person who’s supposed to be modelled to the frozen image is passive – like a puppet on a string, and lets him/herself be put into the wished position. He or she doesn’t anticipate any poses, and doesn’t try to interpret the situation his/herself. The person who’s forming doesn’t give any verbal instructions. They only show the facial expression. Besides that, there shouldn’t be any imitating. The former takes a look at the frozen image from different perspectives and keeps on forming until the image is that what she wanted it to be, and until it fits to the exercise.

(3.15.2) Several-Person frozen images: Frozen images which are made up of several persons can be formed by one or more persons. The “putting together” of the frozen image with sev-

eral people takes place step by step, so that each added character can be related to the ones who have already been set up.

MET 3.16 Working with drama and freeze-frames (commenting)

The interpretation of freeze-frames usually takes place by commenting. With this, we don't talk *about* the pictures, but rather work *with* the pictures dramatically.

(3.16.1) Vocalising the inner thought: The most important form of commenting is vocalising the inner thought. One of the participants who's not participating, or the facilitator, steps behind a person in the freeze-frame and says a sentence (in first person) which expresses what the observer or facilitator thinks the person in the freeze-frame is thinking.

(3.16.2) Extending the freeze-frame: There is a non-verbal way of commenting on freeze-frames. The outsiders can take on a commenting mannerism, and place themselves or others in relationship to the freeze-frame. The added "commenting" person can be a part of the freeze-frame, or can be placed further away.

(3.16.3) Remodelling freeze-frame: The freeze-frame can be changed (remodelled) too, and the change can be justified verbally : "I arranged the person more upright, because I find she wasn't really standing proudly."

(3.16.4) Questioning: Questioning is a kind of commenting which goes further, and is already known from the work with mannerisms. A spectator asks a person from the freeze-frame a question, which is then answered from the perspective of the role! "Technical" or similar meta-questions aren't allowed. The questioner can be a character him/herself, and can ask the question from their role's perspective, or from the perspective of an outsider. The more exact the questions are related to the freeze-frame and the body posture, the more productive they will be. (For example, "Tell me why you've got your head hanging low?"). A general question like ("Hey, how are you feeling?") isn't very productive.

(3.16.5) Interrogation: The interrogation is an extension of questioning, where several persons in a freeze-frame can be asked (multiple) questions in turn.

The methods mentioned here, 3.16.1 through 3.16.5, are related implicitly to music in that the freeze-frame is related to music. We can achieve an explicit connection to music in that we have the changes and comments regard the (explicit) music recording. For this, see MET 3.20 and following.

MET 3.17 Walking into pictures

Pictures can also be created in the following way: The participants enter the playing field with their characteristic walk and freeze into a pose which they choose. Each new character which joins relates his/her pose to the picture which is already there. Once all the characters have reached the playing field, and have taken on a pose, we have a group freeze-frame which can be worked with: modelled, commented, changed, etc. (see MET 3.16)

Music can accompany the entering onto the playing field and the posing. This can be music which fits to the group freeze-frame, or characteristic music for each character, as he/she is acting.

The participants leave the playing field in the same order as they joined.

MET 3.18 : Producing a physical representation of the inner relationships

This is a combination of freeze-frame and “walking into pictures” (MET 3.17), and is connected with certain questions. First, the facilitator models a person to relate to as a frozen image. Then the facilitator asks the individual participants to enter the picture with their roles (as a character), and to freeze. They express something about their relationship to this person by using the following parameters:

- distance to the person
- position on the playing field
- body posture
- appearance

We can work with this physical representation of the inner relationships in the same way as we work with a group freeze-frame (see MET 3.16). In addition to what was said in MET 3.16, the commenting can be a sentence which each character says to the person to be related to (“you’re so ugly!”, “if I could only touch you!”, etc.).

MET 3.19 Making a statue

A statue should put a concept into pictures. Whereas the modelling of freeze-frames is based on concrete situations, making a statue seeks to explain something more abstract. In the making of a statue, we try to sum up into a picture the basis of a topic, different aspects of history, or a relationship. The observers give the statue a title.

MET 3.20 Comparing separate freeze-frames

Freeze-frames which were modelled by several persons or groups can be compared. The freeze-frames must have a certain reference to each other in their content. They can have the same topic, but be modelled from different points of view. The freeze-frames which are being compared can be commented on and placed together according to their relationship. If it fits the context, the freeze-frames can be put together to form a “large” freeze-frame.

One of the most common ways of working with this is to have small groups working on a freeze-frame to the same or different music, and setting this up at the appropriate place on the playing field. After that, the different freeze-frames are compared in a “plenary meeting”.

MET 3.21 Checking freeze-frames with the music

If we set up freeze-frames without music – for example, based solely on the libretto – then we can use the music afterwards to check if the freeze-frame fits to the music. The music is played, and we “discuss” (as in MET 3.16) using dramatic means whether the gestus of the music fits to the respective freeze-frame. We might notice that the participants’ dramatic imagination often goes further than the music itself. In other words, the music interprets, and determines something which is still left open by the script. The opposite could also happen, though: the music presents an ambivalence which doesn’t even seem to be there in the script.

The music can also provide another dimension – mannerism, gestus – to the scene, or explain the script further.

MET 3.22 Music stop freeze-frame

The music stop freeze-frame method is a sequence of several “music checks”. Before you start, a freeze-frame must be set up. Then the music starts. The participants listen to the course of the music and compare this with the freeze-frame. As soon as a participant thinks that the freeze-frame no longer fits to the music, he or she yells “stop!”. The music is stopped, and the participant changes the freeze-frame. After that, the music is continued.

With this method, the music’s dramatic implications are grasped and attained to a great degree. This is based on the assumption, though, that the participants can concentrate on the music, that they aren’t too shy to yell “stop!”, and that they have the ability to mould freeze-frames. If these prerequisites are met, then the music stop freeze-frame method should work quite smoothly. This procedure can be done several times back-to-back, as new ideas can always be brought in.

It’s quite difficult for the participants forming the freeze-frame to stay still for longer than 2 to 3 minutes. But because the freeze-frame shouldn’t be dissolved while the music is playing, we can exchange the participants between the different freeze-frames. When one participant yells “stop!”, the old freeze-frame is dissolved and the participants from that freeze-frame get to sit down. The person who yelled “stop!” picks new participants and moulds a new freeze-frame with them.

The music stop freeze-frame method challenges the participants to listen to music intensely. An alternative would be to choose the sung or spoken words as the reference point (**Text stop freeze-frame method**). Arias, duets and trios which have clear and understandable lyrics can be worked on with this method. A clear dividing of music and text stop freeze-frame is never fully possible. But the results of the two methods can be compared. This opens up the possibility of “discussing” the relationship between words and music (see MET 3.24).

MET 3.23 Choreography as a sequence of pictures

If the freeze-frames, which are created in the music stop freeze-frame method (MET 3.22), are added one after the other, then we have a choreography to music. The music is played continuously and the participants, who are presenting the freeze-frame, change their mannerism at the former “stop!” points. As this changing requires a good musical and physical memory, it is helpful if the participants who called “stop!” in the last stage yell out “now!” at the freeze-frame changing points. This kind of choreography is demanding, but also appealing, as it leads to a film composed of individual pictures which usually reflects the musical changes and/or form.

Each of the freeze-frames from this „choreography“ can be given a title, which, according to Brecht, can be shown on a board above (behind or beside) the picture. The titles can also be written on the chalk board, pinned onto a bulletin board, or read out loud by a participant.

MET 3.24 Compressing a scene into a musical sequence of freeze-frames

The choreography from MET 3.23 presents a scene which is compressed into individual pictures. The music is played fully, but the acting sequence is compressed. This kind of com-

pressing can be combined with working with the scripts for scenes which don't have music, or scenes which consist of inserted songs or short music pieces. The participants, working in small groups, read through the complete script and shorten it to a few sentences which reflect the content clearly. Each of these sentences is then presented in a freeze-frame, so that a sequence of pictures arises to which the music can be played if necessary.

Compressing music is more difficult than compressing scripts, and requires using hard-disk-recording, mini-disc, cassette or mp3 recorders, or having the technical know how (using sheet music, playing piano). It is possible, within the framework of one period, to have the participants work in small groups (in separate rooms with a piano). Each group gets a larger segment of the scene, and tries to choose a central passage from this segment which the group members can reproduce (instrumentally or vocally). An appropriate short text passage must be chosen for each music.

MET 3.25 Comparing freeze-frames to music and script

Foreign-language music theatre pieces are suited to comparing freeze-frames. We dramatically compare freeze-frames which were derived from working with the music with those which were derived from working with the script. The class is split up into groups which work on script-freeze-frames and music-freeze-frames separately. The comparison is done in the standard procedure (compare MET 3.20).

MET 3.26 Fitting random picture sequences to script and music

In dramatic work, we usually strive to bring music and picture together „in harmony“. But we can intentionally create picture-music relationships which are “random”, and in that way, usually have picture-music constellations which don't fit together. First, just as with “KATAs” in martial arts, we set a sequence of pictures or simple postures, like a sequence of every day things (shaving, reading the paper, phoning, driving the car...) or mannerisms from fairy tale characters (witch, dwarf, dragon...). This picture sequence, which is totally unrelated to a script or music, is then added to a script and/or music. In observing the comparison of picture, script and music, it becomes clear in a sensual way, how meaning is constructed by having a certain background.

MET 3.27 Musical analysis by using freeze-frames

Music pieces can be „analysed“ by taking single structural elements of the music (like the singing, accompanying chords and bass line in the “Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit” from the “Three Penny Opera”) and transforming them into freeze-frames. A precondition for this kind of “analysis” is that the structural elements represent different contents and/or differ significantly from one another in their gestus. This is almost always the case with Mozart, Berg and Weill.

MET 3.28 : Singing in freeze-frames

Singing freeze-frames seems to be a contradiction in itself, as a frozen picture can't produce any music. On top of that, the movement which is needed to produce the music distracts the observer from the real intention of a freeze-frame, which is to show the body mannerisms (postures). This means we need small movements from the mouths. Surely, some changing of body postures will be provoked by the music. The instruction to “sing in the freeze-frame”

should also explain that the people singing should move as little as possible. They should take on a pose which they think is “globally” characteristic for what they are singing. A singing freeze-frame can be introduced when a complete mannerism should be expressed musically (with the help of a music piece which is already known) and to the point (one single posture). For example:

- to express a character’s or the group’s mood by singing after a dramatised scene - that means, in order to establish the actors’/actresses’ situation (inner mannerism)
- to have two groups confront each other, which means developing or showing a mannerism to the opposite group
- to give a sung commentary to the scene, which means developing an opinion about the events which just took place

Acting

Dramatic interpretation does not seek to prepare a public performance of the opera or individual scenes. That’s why the dramatic acting procedure – whether improvised or studied – takes on a different meaning than typical theatre rehearsals. But even in this less structured situation, there is a difference between the acting and improvisation procedures in dramatic improvisation. The acting procedure is more planned, led and observed with goals in mind. In the acting process, it is important to guarantee that the actors/actresses can act in the safety of their role (identifying with unaccustomed characters, mannerisms and pictures) without having to fear sanctions as their own person.

The dramatic acting works with a set script, whereas the participants have the script in their hand (which causes alienation). In dramatic improvisation, we act freely according to a certain set framework and rules. With acting and improvising, there are various possibilities to refer to music and include musical activities in the dramatic process. It would also be possible, in borderline cases, to do what music education refers to as “musical exercises and games“ (like a musical group improvisation).

MET 3.29 Dramatic reading

Dramatic reading can be used as an initial orientation in an opera scene. It is read out loud – either one after another, or already in set roles. Various (stage) directions, sub-titles and other “technical” details are read out too. Even the punctuation may be read out loud. In reading in set roles, the names of the roles are also read out loud. We want to avoid having the participants establishing an interpretation of the script too soon.

The alienation which is achieved by this kind of reading can be amplified by a formal acting process. For example, each participant, one after the other, can read exactly one line. Certain parts of the script can be read with mannerisms which the facilitator sets (compare Speaking Mannerisms MET 3.3). The places where the readers are sitting or standing can be “staged” according to the relationship constellation.

In the second round, a ring of chairs for all the characters in the scene which have to read; the readers can sit in these chairs. One chair should always be there for a neutral person who reads out the directions between the spoken passages.

After the „dramatic reading“, an individual working with the script can take place. Here the participants (who have already identified with the character) answer the following questions: Which mannerism should I have in the scene? What are my intentions? What are my feelings in the scene? Which props do I use?

MET 3.30 Speaking characteristic sentences

During the dramatic reading or during the individual script work, each participant watches out for sentences (from their role) which seem to be especially characteristic. Each participant decides on one sentence to work with. The facilitator could, however, also write down on the board general sentences from the piece to choose from which apply to several persons. Working with the characteristic sentences takes place as in MET 3.3.

Finding a motto for life: A specific form of characteristic sentences is the motto for life. Here, the character’s basic opinion or attitude towards life is summed up. The motto for life fits well to the end of an “identifying with the character” sequence. With recitative singing (see MET 2.7), a motto for life can serve as a “lifesaver”; as soon as a participant can’t remember his or her lines, then he or she can repeatedly sing his or her motto for life... (in *Carmen*, for example: “Freedom is everything for me!”, or in *Wozzeck*: “This world is so dangerous!”)

MET 3.31 Dramatic reading to music

Dramatic reading (MET 3.29) can also be put to music. In many musicals and operas (“*Carmen*”, “*Three Penny Opera*”), spoken scenes are put to (film) music. In the score to “*West Side Story*”, we can see it written as “under dialogue”. The music leads the participants to fit their speaking mannerisms to the music, and it even partially leads to recitatives. If dramatic reading is accompanied by music, then the speaking mannerisms change. These changes can be reflected upon in a comparison.

MET 3.32 Dramatic acting with a given script

The simplest and most effective form of dramatic acting is when the participants have a script in their hand and act to it. The script must be well known by the actors/actresses, so that they know their “physical plot” really well. The facilitator generally reads the directing instructions. It is also possible to have the outsiders read the script and the actors/actresses acting non-verbally. The acting can be stopped at any time. Then the participants who aren’t involved, or the facilitator, can ask the acting participants questions, or can comment on the happenings (see MET 3.16).

Dramatic acting with the script can take place with or without music. If a music recording is played, then the script or singing from the loudspeakers doesn’t have to be synchronised with the read script. Based on experience, the participants quickly get used to having the singing coming from the loudspeakers.

MET 3.33 Dramatic acting to directing instructions

The facilitator has a piece of paper with worked out directing instructions. These are staccato-like directions, which have direct action requirements for single persons. Although the actors/actresses don’t have to say anything, they usually start using short sentences on their own.

MET 3.34 Dramatic acting without script or directing instructions

Dramatic acting as in MET 3.32 and 3.33 can be used as a rehearsing of a free scene. The actions which were given by the script or directing instructions are then acted out “freely”. If music happens to be there, then it takes on a sort of directing function.

MET 3.35 Dramatic Improvisation

In contrast to „free“ dramatic acting (MET 3.34), dramatic improvisation doesn't have a rehearsal or script. The framework of the dramatic improvisation is given by presenting a problem, a situation, or a relationship structure.

Most of the published dramatic interpretations from the Arbeitsstelle “Musik + Szene” (working group music + scene) (Berlin/Oldenburg/Stuttgart) contain references for the dramatic working with core scenes, as well as suggestions for identifying with the character. In these core scenes, moments are picked out in which the acting person (character) has to make decisions, is confronted with a dilemma, or has to solve a conflict. By dramatic acting according to 3.32 and 3.33, the participants act out the decisions or conflict solving which are exposed by the music theatre presentation: the “official version”. With dramatic improvisation, however, the participants should make their own decisions and solve their conflicts. They should make suggestions for the way the drama should continue – and in that case, later on, compare their suggestion with the solution in the music theatre piece.

Through dramatic improvisation, the dramatic sequence can be “thought over” in retrospect. We may ask, what might have happened differently? For example, in the “West Side Story”, the promise which Tony made to Maria, in connection with his following intervention, leads to the deadly end of the “rumble”. In dramatic improvisation, other alternative possibilities can be worked out (Maria goes to the rumble herself; Maria doesn't get involved; Maria persuades Bernardo instead of Tony, etc.).

MET 3.36 Dramatic improvisation according to the „W“ questions

The task of planning a scene with a set content or event presents many participants with the problem of finding a dramaturgically convincing solution within a short time. This often leads to discussions which are more hindering than helping. In order to help them, we can ask these 5 “W-questions”:

Who is acting in the scene?

This question is quickly answered, because the participants have usually already “identified with the characters”. If not, then they must think of a description.

Where is the scene taking place?

Setting the location is taken from the piece: countryside, city, indoors, outside, private or public location?

When does the scene take place?

Historical era, season, and time of day influence the happenings on stage.

What is taking place?

The situation is often given by the facilitator, but it must be concrete: what is the backdrop, how did the conflict arise, how did this result come about?

How does it take place?

This deals with the actions, mannerisms, feelings and intentions of the persons who are specifically interested in the scene.

It is helpful if all participants answer the questions, first in short form (later on, in written form). Then the improvisation should take place shortly after that, from which the best elements can be captured for the later presentation.

MET 3.37 Dramatic acting within the framework of a dramatic improvisation

A dramatic improvisation can be based on a dramatic acting which some characters do with directing instructions. In this way, a cinema scene can be improvised, for example, in which some characters act as screen characters to a set script. The acting movie-goers who are improvising react to what happens on the screen, without having had their acting set beforehand.

MET 3.38 : Clarifying relationships between characters in a dramatic improvised way.

The following section should, if possible, come after the „identifying with the character“. All the characters involved meet at a set public place – a place which could logically have them meet in the piece itself. The piece often names this place, like in the “Three Penny Opera”, where they meet at the Soho fair. While music plays in the background in order to intensify the atmosphere (the overture, for example), the actors/actresses enter the prepared playing area in their roles and start meeting other characters. There is contact and talking between the individuals, and likes and dislikes are expressed, or arrangements are made.

At first, everyone acts at the same time. Later on, the facilitator can highlight certain dialogues by “snapping” his/her fingers to indicate that this conversation should be listened to by the rest.

MET 3.39 Improvised scenes to music

Many pieces of music indicate a developing plot which can be presented dramatically. Often you will have the musical plot taking place at a different speed than the plot itself, which means the participants will often have to act slower or faster than “normal”. This often leads to a silent movie effect (the characters move too fast), or a slow motion scene.

In the digital (analytic) realisation, the participants work on the scenes by developing a script and then practising it several times to the music. They have the goal of synchronising the plot to the piece of music. In the analogue (integral) realisation, the participants act by improvising to the music which tends to activate global movement sequences and psychological patterns. Then the activities from the last column are taken and presented to music. The results of the group work are summed up at the end.

MET 3.40 Developing musical games and exercises

Musical games and exercises are a basis for musical experiences and experiments. The participants create music and/or sing in a musical structure, or experiment with substantial elements of the score. Musical games and exercises within the framework of dramatic interpretation fall

back on a musical core and are often limited to one single musical parameter. This musical core must have a meaning to its content, like a central conflict motif, for example.

As there is no standard method for developing musical games and exercises, here are some examples.

MET 3.41 Musical-dramatic Improvisation

Here, the dramatic improvisation is connected with an instrumental-vocal improvisation. Songs, marches, dances, etc. are improvised within the framework of a dramatic acting. Singing and instrument-playing mannerisms are used. Here are some methods which are correlated to specific singing mannerisms in music theatre pieces.

(3.41.1) Recitative singing: see MET 2.7.

(3.41.2) Imitating arias with gestures: The dramatic work with singing mannerisms can be transferred to the whole arias. With that, the “Gestus” of a complete aria is used for a musical improvisation (see MET 3.7). In this improvisation, we only use the singing mannerism which fits to the aria. Ways of dealing with this are covered in MET 3.6, especially 3.6.2 (necessary for MET 3.7 to 3.9).

(3.41.3) Coloratura improvisation: A passage from a coloratura aria is played from a CD. The players then choose a word from the coloratura or a part of their typical sentence or their motto for life (MET 3.30) and create a coloratura. The facilitator makes sure that all improvise loudly and at the same time, so that so single person can be heard above the others.

MET 3.42 Staging with music

Most of the previous methods have isolated single dimensions of music theatre. But with a “staging with music”, the complexity of a music theatre scene can be worked on and experienced. Because many things need to be taken care of, it is recommended that one plans and sets single steps. The following is an example of this kind of plan:

- Getting to know the scene by reading it
- Getting to know the music by listening or singing
- Isolated practising of single elements like a dance, song, script
- Assigning tasks for the actors/actresses and observers
- Explaining the procedure, and possibly a trial run
- Identifying with the character, acting, distancing from the character
- Comments from the observers
- Reflection

MET 3.43 Time-lapsed dramatic acting, acted description

If a longer stretch of actions has to be bridged, then this stretch can be played in a time-lapse. All actors/actresses to go a “beginning position” to the right and left of the stage. The facilitator or participant reads out the summary, as it is offered in opera or musical guidebooks, and stops at each sentence. The actions which are contained in that sentence are carried out. The participants act out miming, or possibly with short, improvised spoken lines.

MET 3.44 Acting scenes which don't exist in the piece

Scenes which don't take place in the music theatre piece, but which must (or could) have taken place at some point, are very important and should be experienced. This is the case in the "Three Penny Opera", where Mackie and Polly's intimate encounter in the octopus hotel happens before the wedding. It's only logical that they must have planned this. In this case, all three methods MET 3.32 to 3.35 are available for use. If a director's book or textbook is used, then the scene has to be prepared from the acting participants or the whole class.

Presentation

All the forms of dramatic acting which have been presented so far – the work with mannerisms and pictures, the dramatic acting, and the dramatic improvisation – all differ from other (scholastic) forms of acting in that they are work and play at the same time. In experience-oriented teaching, work means that *experiences* which are made through acting are processed simultaneously, or afterwards, into *lasting experiences*. While a participant's experiences are largely private, they can be communicated with other participants in order to deal with the experiences. The facilitator can ask questions which could be relevant in dealing with the contents of the music theatre piece being worked on.

All the methods of dramatic interpretation contain, more or less, moments of refraction, questioning, setting in relation, and argumentation – always where we find the word "work" in this methods catalogue. They do contain these moments implicitly, though. They become explicit when they are "presented", which is usually part of an acting phase, but they can also sometimes be an independent acting phase themselves. The presenting comes close to what experience-oriented teaching calls "publishing", project teaching calls "product", and what theatre calls "screening". A presentation is open to public evaluation, where the evaluation criteria are derived from the respective task designation.

The following sums up previously described methods as possibilities of presenting in this way, and adds further references and hints.

MET 3.45 Presenting the role biographies

Participants often put a lot of effort in the working out of their role biographies. That is why it's also important to give them the chance to present it. Each participant only reveals what he or she wants to. It can be a sentence, a paragraph, a passage, or a whole text. Because role biographies often contain pictures, photographs, or known and liked symbols from the youth's "diary culture", a poster is a great way of presenting the material. If there are groups in the music theatre piece with characters who belong together (like the Jets and Sharks in "West Side Story"), then a wall news-sheet can be made for the role biographies which is ordered according to themes (MET 2.3.3 has more on this!)

MET 3.46 Presenting the characters at the end of the „identifying with the character“ phase

At the end of the „identifying with the character“ phase, we can have a complete presenting of all the characters. For this, we take a simple scenario from the music theatre piece. In “West Side Story” or “L’Italiana in Algeri”, this would be a street; in “Three Penny Opera”, a market place, and a tavern in “Wozzeck”, etc. Each participant walks across the playing area with a characteristic walking mannerism which fits to music which is being played. The participant then stops at a set place, presents the mannerisms and defects which fit to the role, presents the motto for life, and presents him/herself using parts of the role biography. The presenting sequence is set beforehand and usually contains all the elements of the “identifying with the character” phase.

The presentations take place one after another, without delay, and are interrupted by a short questioning by the facilitator or other participants, if need be (for more on this, see MET 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). All in all, there should be a consistent and entertaining presentation which exposes the results of the music theatre piece in a direct way. These presentations usually take place after about one third of the teaching unit has passed, which means it can serve as a “publication” of a comprehensive work process.

MET 3.47 Photo shoot

The freezing of movements, scenes, mannerisms or plots into pictures is comparable to taking photographs. Participants are used to seeing movements, scenes, mannerisms or plots in a picture. A photograph is the best means of saving these pictures. So, if possible, taking pictures should be self-evident in dramatic interpretations, even if it is a video camera which is used. Downright photo shoots can be used and can be staged dramatically. A photo shoot in which the participants have certain mannerisms in front of the camera, with the goal of being up on the pin-board next class is an important supplement to the role presentations (MET 3.45).

MET 3.48 Pin-board, wall news-sheet and Posters

Concretising and publishing the results of the work process (photos, role biographies) on a pin-board can secure the complete overall picture of the dramatic interpretation. You will often have a visual documentation develop on the pin-board or wall news-sheet, which then can be worked into a poster. Working on the pin-board can be a means of occupying a part of the class in a useful way while another part of the class is practising or learning their parts.

MET 3.49 Mimicking mannerisms (as an additional “becoming aware”)

After a scene, the observers show the mannerisms they witnessed in that they get onto the stage and imitate what they saw in a picture. This clarifies various interpretations of the participants. In acting a scene, the actors/actresses always show mannerisms which are perceived by the observers. Because each observing participant has a different point of view, they all recognise different mannerisms. The exercise at the end of a scene is to make us conscious of this phenomenon. At the same time, the actors/actresses can be shown which of their mannerisms were especially clear.

MET 3.50 Semi-public staging

Even though dramatic interpretation doesn't strive to have a public performance, there can be phases which are done so well, that they can be worked out into a semi-public performance for another class, a project day, or a parents' evening. Compared to a public performance, these semi-public performances serve to show how lessons work.

For semi-public performances, „formalised“ presentations, like the role presentations (MET 3.46), are more suitable than taking complex scenes (like in MET 3.42). Acting complex scenes is too much like a “normal” theatre performance, and the alienation is too low.

Phase 4: Distancing one's self from the character

The distancing from (or leaving) the character is the complementary process to the identifying with the character. The participants are dismissed out of their roles. That's why the distancing from the character still takes place in the scene, when the participants are still in their role. The scene is first completed (left) during the following reflection phase. The distancing from the character takes place at all levels on which the identifying with the character takes or took place:

1. „Leaving“ roles, groups or social milieus as an independent teaching unit
2. “Leaving” complex situations, conflicts or scenes as a relatively independent acting unit
3. “Leaving” certain plots as a part of an acting unit or acting phase

MET 4.1 Individual distancing from the character

For this, the participants remain in the playing area and in their roles until the facilitator steps behind them and starts a „distancing from the character“ conversation. After this talk, the participant can leave the playing room. Distancing from the character can be standardised (for example: “What do you think of what just happened?”), but they are usually fitted to the individual. It is often better to not ask for a reflection upon the past events, but rather to ask what the person is thinking, feeling, or what they want to do, what they expect, what they're afraid of, etc. The individual distancing from the character should be linked to observations which the facilitator made during the acting. This lets the facilitator clear up what he or she perceives to be unclear from what took place.

MET 4.2 Distancing from the character by asking questions in the scene

Depending on the nature of a scene, the facilitator can ask all actors/actresses, usually in a standardised manner, what just happened and what certain characters think of each other. Simple, descriptive questions like “What just happened?” are often more productive than complicated questions like “What can we interpret from what just happened?” The same holds for questions on presumable thoughts of individual characters. A question like “What does X think of Y?” is better than “What is X's perception of what Y did?”. Answers which concretely describe the occurrence or name the thoughts form the basis for interpreting what happened or making presumptions about feelings. It isn't necessary to question in a “psychological manner” in dramatic interpretation. In the acting, the feelings are expressed enough.

MET 4.3 Bidding farewell to the role

Each participant takes a prop or costume which „accompanied“ their character throughout the scene or dramatic interpretation. By going through a symbolic gesture, the participant bids farewell to the role. All the participants stand in a circle with their left foot towards the middle of the circle. The prop is held up high with both hands. They all yell “Ha-ha-ha-hoooo” or “end of the Three Penny Opera” and with the last syllable, throw the prop into the middle of the circle.

MET 4.4 Bidding farewell to single characters – identifying with or distancing from the character?

There can be a ritual farewell from a character, especially if there are dead people (“Carmen”, “West Side Story”, “Wozzeck”). All the living go to the character who is leaving, take on a characteristic mannerism, and speak a sentence. These kinds of farewell scenes can not only lead to the participants “distancing themselves from the character”, but also lead them into the happenings in a new and deeper way. In a strict sense, we have a bidding farewell to the happenings here, but not a distancing from individual characters. One after another, the characters distance themselves from the dead person, and don’t distance themselves from their own characters. In the dramatic interpretation publications of “Carmen”, “Wozzeck” and “West Side Story”, there are suggestions for farewell scenes which are only partially fitting to the “distancing from the character” phase. Compare this with MET 2.8!

Phase 5: Reflection

There are reflection methods with which the participants are not „distanced from the character“ or despite a distancing, go back to the character (their former role) and „think about it“. Before the real reflection phase, however, the participants have already left their role with the “distancing from the character” phase. The scene has also been “dissolved”. The participants perceive the experiences from a distance, and talk about it. The reflection methods can use dramatic acting techniques, but with a different purpose as was the case earlier – there are spoken and silent reflection methods.

The „creators“ of music theatre dramatic interpretation are still, today, not in total agreement over which importance the spoken and silent reflections can and must have. A more extreme position is that all “problems” which arose should and can be solved (i.e. worked on dramatically) in phases 2 through 4, which means the oral reflection is merely a feedback for the facilitator. With that, it is also accepted that the reflection is a turning back to the reality of school – a rational talking ritual, leading to homework or tests, and fitting the experience into everyday life. The other extreme opinions on reflection say that dramatic acting can expose a bunch of problems, and should work on these problems in another way if they aren’t dramatically solvable. Reflection is a place where this kind of work can take place. This also opens up the possibility of interdisciplinary work.

Independent of this difference in views, which is being discussed in a research desideratum, there are many reflection phases outside of the dramatic happenings which use general, more

common methods of group dynamics and leading conversations. The following names some of these methods

MET 5.1 Reflection as a character (in the role)

Each participant comes alone, in their role, to the front of the class, sits down on a chair and thinks about the events out loud. What impacts did this have for their own character? Which knowledge and ways of acting have become important to the character? What does the character regret? What does he or she want to do in the future?

MET 5.2 Writing a diary as individual reflection (in the role)

At the end of an acting unit, the participants can write in a diary from the character's perspective. In doing that, they refer to the events, show their stance towards it, and write down thoughts and feelings. These excerpts can be read out or placed in a wall news-sheet. If these entrances in the diary happen regularly during the whole dramatic interpretation, then a complete diary comes about.

MET 5.3 Feedback (from outside the character): based on experience, and pertinent

In the framework of dramatic interpretation, feedback is a phase in which the acting experiences are developed into understandings. In experience-based feedback, a single participant gives feelings, disposition, partial experiences, observations, wishes, fears or apprehensions arising from the events in the play. There is no discussion, criticizing or commenting. In pertinent feedback, the subjective remarks of the group are discussed; an objective situation is broken and developed further.

The term feedback is used because there is a feedback process in developing experiences to understandings. In working out individual experiences, a person gives back to the group what she experienced in the group. At the same time, this feedback is useful for the facilitator in planning the activities that follow.

(5.3.1) Flash answers: The most common form of experience-based feedback is using **flash answers**. All participants say something to a question, or – as was originally the case in the group dynamic flash answers – say something about their current situation. The following rules must be followed:

- The original question doesn't contain a task which could be answered by the thinking process or by previous knowledge.
- The answers are short, in point form. They present facts, and don't contain argumentation or logical deliberation.
- The answers must remain as they are, without anyone commenting on them. Every sort of discussion is strictly forbidden! There can be no right or wrong.
- The answers aren't written down on the board, or somehow documented with the goal of using them later.
- The best way is to have the participants answer one after another, as it is important that everyone has a chance. But each participant only gets one turn.
- Saying "Everything what I wanted to say has already been said." is forbidden. That means that each participant says something, even if it is a repetition of what has been said before.

If one keeps to the rules, flash answers can contain a lot of valuable information, and have a positive group dynamic function. The rules have to be enforced strictly at the beginning (intervening if someone breaks a rule, like adding a comment to someone's answer). But the participants soon realise why it's good to follow the rules strictly, as it offers them protection.

(5.3.2) Brainstorming: Brainstorming is a technique for collecting material and associations. A certain topic/problem is taken, and associations are just randomly made, with the goal of creating a pool of ideas for solving the problem. The associations are written down, pinned to a pin-board and then sorted, assessed, sifted and ordered. Brainstorming can also take place at the beginning of a dramatic interpretation for probing for previous experiences and expectations. And, of course, it can be used within the framework of a pertinent feedback.

MET 5.4 Dramatic reflection (outside the role)

The feedback in a circle of chairs can be introduced or complemented by a dramatic reflection. In a formalised manner, the participants voice their stance, comments or feedback from the events from the dramatic settings. The settings can still contain props or started scenes. It is, however, important that the dramatic reflection doesn't become a part of the scene which was acted out earlier. That is why the procedure should be very formal. The rules are the same as with flash answers. There is no commenting on those voicing their stance, and also no acting.

MET 5.5 Musical reflection (outside the role)

Listening: At the end of each acting unit, the music is played once again for everyone. The facilitator formulates a listening exercise which links the play sequence with the music. Everyone relaxes while listening, and comments after they have listened to the music. When listening to the music a second time, any participant can stop the music by yelling stop, and then describe their listening experience at that point.

Discussion: The music which is listened to should be brought together in connection with the acting process as concretely as possible. The participants make sure that their comments are supported by their own experiences. Which memory is brought back by the music? How did the music affect the play? Where were there contradictions or congruity between the music and the play? Does the music have a supporting, background, commenting or parodistic character?

Observing the score: At some points, the facilitator can bring in the sheet music in order to bring in formal aspects into the discussion. We look at the composer's work, and analyse his intentions and musical approach and using the concrete play situation, we try to understand the music better. It is important that the participants consciously comprehend which measures the composer uses to present or alienate a figure's mannerisms, a scene, or a musical form.

MET 5.6 Continuing with questions

The questions from the pertinent feedback lead us from dramatic interpretation to musicological work of conventional calibre. It should become clear, that we can gain knowledge, with dramatic means, which can add to, continue, revise or refute what is published in musicological literature. The philological work with primary and secondary sources can be integrated well into a dramatic interpretation, as it deals with an identifying with the character which is as historically authentic as possible, which is what all available sources can be used for.