Handout Two: Additional Studio Exercises

Tomatis specified certain auditory traits as being prerequisites to successful musicianship (Tomatis, *Ear and Voice,* 2005, pp. 122-126). Those traits, also measurable on the Tomatis Listening Test, include the ability to differentiate between frequencies (selectivity), identify sounds in space (spatialization), and right ear dominance (laterality).

If we draw upon the criteria of the Listening Test as a starting point, then we can proceed by exploring ways to exercise pitch discrimination (selectivity), spatial sense, (spatialization) plus exercises that explore auditory laterality. In addition to the postural exercises and the listening tasks you heard described, here are three more suggested exercises.

Pitch Discrimination - Selectivity

Mimicking the selectivity test on the piano: an exercise in pitch discrimination for beginners, or others who struggle with pitch matching.

The selectivity test in the Listening Test consists of listening to a series of pure tones delivered in succession. The listener must decide whether a second tone is higher or

lower, or the same as, the preceding sound. The tones are delivered across the audible frequency spectrum.

Working within the voice studio environment, we can adapt this exercise by using it as an auditory warm-up, playing tones on a piano. We will be working with complex tones instead of pure tones, and without benefit of an audiometer, to introduce a simple listening task.

Exercise: Ask the student to listen to a succession of perfect fourths and fifths (or occasional repeated tones) played on the piano, across the entire range of the instrument, pausing after every internal to identify whether a given sound is higher, lower, or the same as the one just heard. Sometimes, a student will have consistent difficulty making this determination within a certain couple of octaves. This is the range to which their ear must become increasingly "attuned" through conscious listening. After a period of weeks, students become more practiced at discriminating between different pitches, even in the ranges that were previously 'trouble zones' for them. Once this is achieved, students become more confident and successful at reproducing a tone with their own voice.

Rhythm and Spatial sense - Spatialization

The auditory kinesthetic vocabulary has much to do with what some Tomatis practitioners have called "the ear of the body": the vestibular integrator. As practitioner

Paul Madaule points out, listening problems connected to the vestibule can manifest as under-energized, disconnected body image, and musically can manifest as rhythmic difficulties [Madaule, "Listening and Singing," Journal of Singing 57, no5. (May/June 2001), 17. IIMP]. Anecdotal reports cite significant improvements across these areas in response to systematic sound stimulation training in the Tomatis Method.

Tomatis's work positions rhythmic articulation as a function of the ear, under the same regulatory control by the vestibule as physical movement. Teaching the student to physicalize rhythm spatially therefore exercises the same system of the ear that regulates rhythm, leading to improvement in the execution of rhythmic articulation in music.

It's instinctive when working with student singers on improving rhythmic sense to invite the student to walk, march, or dance in order to integrate the body in first sensing, then coordinating the rhythm. The Tomatis perspective allows us to view the use of such movement as following the lead of the vestibular integrator. Improvement in the functioning of the vestibule offers us a clearer perception of where we are, both physically and sonically, in both time and space. This perception is necessary for dancing, as it is for emitting vocal tone in a precise rhythmic organization. Does a sharpened articulation of physical coordination translate into a sharpened articulation of vocal rhythm?

Exercise: Employ movement in the studio to help students improve poor rhythmic sense.

If a student demonstrates a poor sense of rhythm, ask them to physicalize the musical beats through dance or other movement. Begin by physicalizing the strong beats, then later add movement on the internal beats. It's important to note the student's placement of feet or hands when articulating the internal beats physically. Are they precise? Or do they drag through space without clear definition? Close observation of the student's movements will allow the teacher to discover where – or even whether! – the student perceives the internal beats in a passage to be. Those who struggle to repeat a rhythmic passage vocally can learn to identify each beat and sub-beat by articulating them in physical space through the movement of their bodies. Then they become able to translate gross body movement into the subtler movement of vocal emission, while retaining the correct rhythmic articulation.

Articulation, Diction and Laterality - hand exercise.

Tomatis pointed out a functional unity of ear and face – a reciprocity of facial expression and what he called an "open" ear, i.o.w. a listening ear. He also posited that vocalism is controlled by the dominant ear, and in high-quality vocalism, the right ear is dominant. He observed that ear dominance is observable in the face. A right sided listener will speak with a slight upward tilt of the lips towards the right ear.

Caveat: Issues of hearing acuity can complicate apparent ear dominance, as can temporary psychological states (ear dominance be "mixed," i.e. fluctuate between right and left). Some people with hearing loss must listen mechanically through the left, yet they continue to process language through a previously acquired right ear dominance.

Exercise: Tomatis practitioners often assign maintenance "homework" for the weeks and months post-training. This "homework" consists of speaking/ reading aloud with your hand raised in front of your mouth, positioned ever so slightly towards the right side of the lips. Then speak into your hand as if it were a microphone. This reflects the sound more strongly to the right ear. Using this exercise when working with students with under-energized, unclear diction can engage and heighten their self-listening through the right side by reinforcing perception of the high frequencies of language sounds, improving diction and intelligibility in articulation.