

DOI: 10.31866/2616-759X.6.2.2023.288165
УДК 378.147:792.071.2]:784.9-028.46(73:477)

APPLICATION OF ARTHUR LESSAC'S METHODOLOGY ELEMENTS IN ACTORS' VOCAL TRAINING

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the formation of Arthur Lessac's methodology, systematisation of its main elements and specification of the possibilities of their application in the process of vocal training of actors. **The purpose of the article** is to systematize the elements of Arthur Lessac's method in the vocal training of actors. To realize the goal, a system-analytical method was used. **Research methodology.** To achieve the purpose, the researcher used a systematic-analytical method, which specifies the methodological foundations of "kinesis training" and identifies those elements that can be used in the process of vocal training of actors. **The scientific novelty** is to clarify the components of Arthur Lessac's methodology, as well as to identify opportunities for applying the elements of "kinesis training" in the vocal training of actors. **Conclusions.** The methodology developed by Arthur Lessac in the mid-twentieth century, called "kinesis training", has become widespread in many countries around the world. It is based on conscious control of one's own body and awareness of its natural capabilities, and is an important part of actors' training. The technique can be a significant methodological component in the process of professional training of actors in higher education institutions in Ukraine. The main elements of Arthur Lessac's "kinesis training" (the concept of "three energies" (consonant energy, tonal energy, structural energy); "environments" (internal and external), "body-mind") should be used in the process of vocal training of actors in order to develop stage speech and vocal articulation, awareness of the functioning of the phonation organs, and actors' plasticity. Prospects for further scientific research in this area are to develop a comprehensive programme for the vocal development of future actors in the process of professional training based on Arthur Lessac's methodology, as well as to adapt "kinesis training" for the development of stage speech of future actors in higher education institutions of Ukraine.

Keywords: Arthur Lessac; "kinesis training"; "Lessac Institute"; "body-mind"; vocal training of actors

Problem statement

The development of domestic theatre pedagogy and its integration into the global higher education space, combined with the universalisation of training in the performing arts, driven by employers' demands, necessitate revising and expanding the methodological foundations of various components of training future actors. Accordingly, research on the systematisation of the components of methodological developments in the field of professional training of actors from different countries with a view to their possible application in the educational process in the speciality 026 Performing Arts in Ukraine is of particular relevance.

Analysis of the latest research and publications

The study of A. Lessac's methodology is based on the study of primary sources ("Body Wisdom: The Use and Training of the Human Body" (Lessac, 1979), "The Use and Training of the Human Voice: A Bio-Dynamic Approach to Vocal Life (Lessac, 1996)). Some aspects of A. Lessac's methodology are developed in the works of R. Blair (2007), F. Zarrilli (2008), S. Kozel (2007), M. Hurt (2017). At the same time, the systematisation of the components of the methodology that can be used in the process of vocal training of actors, was not the subject of these publications.

The methodology of the study is based on the systematic-analytical method used to systematise the methodological foundations of A. Lessac's "kinesis training" and to identify those elements that can be effectively used in the vocal training of actors.

The scientific novelty of the article is to clarify the components of A. Lessac's methodology and to determine the possibilities for applying the elements of "kinesis training" in the vocal training of actors.

Accordingly, **the purpose** of the article is to systematise the elements of Arthur Lessac's methodology in the vocal training of actors.

Main material

Before analysing the use of certain elements of the methodology of the American "coach" Arthur Lessac in the vocal training of actors, it is advisable to highlight the content of "meaning training" and the conditions of its development. A. Lessac, in the process of mastering the text (including vocal text), teaches the "feeling process" of identifying vocal sensations in the body aimed at developing tonal clarity, articulation and better combination with the text and rhythms of speech. The foundations of his methodology were laid by A. Lessac while studying at the Eastman School of Music, from which he graduated in 1936. A significant stage in the formation of Lessac's methodology was the 1937 production of "Pins and Needles", written and performed by members of the cultural programme of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU). A. Lessac taught his ideas of feeling to amateur performers and helped them develop their voices. Lessac's next work on Broadway took place in 1939, when a group of European refugees needed to eliminate the accent for their show from Vienna. When the show opened, the famous critic Brooks Atkinson

wrote that the actors spoke English better than those for whom English is their native language.

A. Lessac received a bachelor's degree in voice and speech clinical therapy from New York University in 1941. Four years later, he founded the National Academy of Vocal Arts (NAVA) and taught there until 1950. Together with his 21 teachers, he developed a process of feeling voice and movement. From 1951, he continued to develop his methodology when he taught stage language for a year at the Stella Adler Theatre Studio, continuing his research. In the same year, A. Lessac also began his work at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Lessac was responsible for teaching students how to deliver sermons with good language, voice, and enthusiasm. Instead of just preaching sermons, Lessac taught them how to communicate with the text and inspire the audience with their voice.

In 1953, he received a master's degree in speech therapy from New York University and began working with speech therapists at Bellevue Hospital until the late 1950s. A. Lessac continued his research in neurology and anatomy, helping patients to restore facial and oral sensitivity with the help of his vocal and methodological developments. By focusing on what the patient can do (rather than on their disabilities), patients have empowered themselves and engaged their healthy spirits in therapy. Moreover, Lessac's work confirmed the importance of the pleasure of feeling the vocal vibration or body energy to guide a person toward optimal self-expression and well-being.

Lessac's work with actors changed significantly with the publication of his work in 1960. It formed the basis of "Kinesis training". Lessac (1996) used the term "kinesis" for his methodology and defined it as "an 'inner sensing process' in which energetic qualities are physically felt and perceived, then tuned and used for creative expression" (p. 3). When asked how he defined the term, A. Lessac replied: "I have always worked with kinesthetics, kinesics, kinetics – and they are all 'kinetics'. Yes, "kine" means movement. Everything I did was a movement, even my speech and voice. To get to the very essence of any of our work means to feel it and to feel it differently than others think they have achieved this feeling. In fact, many people think what they feel when they do this through a thought process. I see 'essence', which means getting to the bottom of it. Then you have the word "sense" which means "feeling". So I have something that uses only movement and something that gets to the very essence. So, there's "kine" and "sense". So, "Kinesensics" (Hurt, 2017, p. 13).

The renowned directors Elia Kazan and Robert Whitehead appointed A. Lessac to teach voice, speech, singing and dialects for their historical repertoires at the Lincoln Center Company in 1962. Here, Lessac worked with two of the best acting and dance teachers, Robert Lewis and Anna Sokolow. Although the company lasted only a season, working with the leading theatre professionals of the time shows how much his work influenced the theatre community.

In the summer of 1969, the theatre programme at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Binghamton hired Lessac as a professor with a mandate to develop a bachelor's degree programme in acting. In the summer after his first year of study, he began conducting intensive 8-week workshops that included all the principles of his voice and bodywork that make up his methodology. Such seminars continued to be held

every summer for 4 weeks and were taught by his students until the introduction of COVID-19 quarantine restrictions. Lessac left SUNY in 1981 as a professor emeritus, but continued to teach in educational programmes in the United States, Puerto Rico, Germany, Yugoslavia, South Africa and Mexico. Lessac's students felt the need to preserve the pedagogical practice of their work and also wanted to expand research in the field of kinesthetic training. They founded the Lessac Institute in 1998 and developed an exam for teacher certification in 2000. "The Lessac Institute" still exists today, with dozens of certified instructors in sixteen states in the United States, as well as instructors in South Africa, Germany, Belgium and England.

Among the performers who have been affected by Lessac's methodology are Martin Sheen, Beatrice Straight, George Grizzard, Faye Dunaway, Irene Daly, Carol Haney, Christopher Lloyd, Michael Douglas, Frank Langella, Michael O'Keefe, Peter Scolari, Linda Hunt, Nina Fosc and Katherine Malfitano.

A. Lessac (1969) argues that his teaching "is based on the recognition and consistent control of patterns of physical behaviour naturally produced when the body as a whole is functioning most effectively" (p. 119).

"Kinesis training" involves the constant discovery of the important core of voice and body sensation when they are combined. The body determines the meaning of perception, and the actor develops his or her voice and movement with them, not by copying someone else. Lessac's (1979) methodology of voice development is based on "three energies" (p. 16): consonant energy, tonal energy, and structural energy. Consonant energy "sharpens the perception and expression of the individual qualities of consonants in the association of the physical sensations of each with the other instrument of the orchestra" (Lessac, 1969, p. 120). The actor develops the quality of consonants by experiencing the inherent musicality that they reveal within, thus investing his creative spirit in the acquisition of competences. A. Lessac brings the actor to a sense of the musicality of language by including a musical metaphor for consonants, in which he calls each consonant sound a musical instrument. D. Kinghorn, a trainer at the Lessac Institute, said in an interview:

The musical metaphor gives us a point of reference for the differences between consonants: not all drums sound the same, and strings have different qualities. Our task is to find these nuances and differences within ourselves, first by connecting with musicality, and then by developing that musicality within ourselves." (Hurt, 2017, p. 14)

Tonal energy "is the physical perception and control of sound waves through vibratory sensations rather than through manipulation of the flow of breath" (Lessac, 1969, p. 120). The actor develops his voice by experimenting with the quality of vocal vibration and its sensation on the bony surfaces of the mouth, namely the teeth and hard palate, and further into the forehead and skull. A. Lessac (1969) pointed out that: "they can and should be felt as vibrations transmitted through the hard palate, nasal bone, sinuses, and forehead" (p. 120). Structural energy is the perception of the sensation of a particular muscle and the kinesthetic memory of these sensations to establish a flexible, specific shape for the oral cavity, which is the vocal sound box (Lessac, 1969, p. 121). The actor tunes in to the movement of the cheek muscles and the softness of the palate, which create what Lessac calls a "reverse megaphone". Structural

energy creates eleven vowels and diphthongs that have a specific shape and/or size of the lip opening.

Lessac's research includes what he calls "internal active meditation", through which the actor maintains a constant awareness of the internal events of the study of voice, speech, or movement. The actor uses it to explore the tactile and kinesthetic sensations of the body, psychophysically learning how to enrich vocal tone, resonance, and articulation with optimal breathing, posture, and attention to the body's inherent rhythms of movement.

In Lessac's methodology (Lessac, 1996), the actor uses the process of feeling to trust the natural use of the body and voice, as opposed to imitating an imaginary standard: "The artist must know and feel how the body's systems work and how his or her creative tools function. He or she may have technical knowledge based on intellect and experience, but can only understand them organically and vitally by physically feeling them, while also experiencing behavioural experience" (p. 1).

Lessac's concept of the "organic" means that the actor has opened his or her body to function through a process of self-reflection, rather than based on a standard set by a teacher that the actor will try to imitate. Instead, the teacher ("trainer") teaches the discipline of voice, language and body and creates the conditions for the actor's self-discovery, so that the actor ultimately becomes self-taught, identifying his or her own qualities of performance and reproducing them anew. The actor finds himself participating through his tactile and kinesthetic senses as he experiences his voice, speech and body in motion. His tactile sense awakens to the quality of what he is experiencing and where he is experiencing it. His kinesthetic sense attunes him to the balance and rhythm of her voice and physical movements. This sense of rhythm leads the actor to achieve musicality in his or her speech. In addition, the actor becomes more self-aware and grounded throughout the training, because he is constantly focused on what he is feeling and doing.

A. Lessac promoted a systematic combination of the actor's voice, body, and creative spirit. He guided the actor to a more sensitive attention to himself, to the feeling of voice and body when he works with awareness. It is not only the physical sensation of voice vibrations in the mouth, face, and body rhythms, but also the emotional sensations that arise to deepen the connection with oneself, language, text, and one's environment. If an actor comes to negative emotions, it is best to acknowledge this because they are interfering with the process; they are "toxins". Therefore, the actor must focus on working to tune into what feels good, and soon they will find that their voice and physicality will feel like they are flushing out the "toxins". When an actor does kinesthetic training, he allows his perceptual awareness to guide him through the innate wisdom that feels good. He learns how his body and mind combine kinesis through his perception of how he learns the skills to embody his impulses.

To understand "kinesis training", phenomenology is useful as an embodied practice, as the actor consciously experiences and perceives himself – his expressions, his rhythms of movement, and his connection to vocal power and articulation, based on how he relates to his environment. A. Lessac considered two environments. Everything that exists within the actor was referred to by Lessac as the "inner environment" – a place that only the actor can access and develop for his or her own

personal health and well-being. The inner environment contains everything in the body and mind, including the physiological processes of the body, the sensations of the body and voice, emotions, and attitudes of the mind. The actor tunes into his or her inner environment to develop their voice, language, and movement, allowing what feels good and natural to influence other sensations to feel good and natural. The more an actor knows himself and feels his voice, the more he is connected to what A. Lessac called the "external environment", or everything that exists outside of him. It is important to understand how an actor perceives the world that exists inside him or her, as well as the world around him or her. These are internal phenomena that the actor develops to connect more fully with his environment and other people, and then share them with the audience.

Sensations cannot exist on their own because the body and mind always act as a background to them. To be clear, a sensation is a product of feelings that affects the body, mind, and perception – it is what the body and mind collect and process from a sensation that creates an attitude or behaviour. However, it is possible to focus on sensations as they arise in the moment. All of the actor's senses perceive his environment, and he (his body) creates meaning in the moment. He reacts to the world because his body (he) connects perception and action (Hurt, 2017, p. 19). A. Lessac (1996) has repeatedly said: "The more we learn to feel things, the more things we learn to feel" (p. 261).

All references to the "body" in Lessac's (1979) "The Wisdom of the Body: The Use and Training of the Human Body" are reduced to two meanings: the body as a living, sensual container for the imagination and creative spirit; the body as a "body mind", which refers in particular to the actor when he is not fully aware of what he is feeling or how he is performing (which may be the case most of the time). The "body mind" develops when an actor works with an awareness of what he feels, does, and understands in his acting practice, noting his perception through learning. In this case, he is both body and mind. Of course, both the body and the "body mind" are involved in an actor's training. Both senses of the body connect perception and action, thought and impulse, and feeling and behaviour. The actor is aware of his experience and exists through it (Hurt, 2017, p. 21). It may seem that Lessac's methodology establishes a duality between identity (the actor's sense of self) and "body-mind" (the actor's physical awareness and awareness of himself in action). However, the "body mind" focuses on the actor's training, which aims to improve and develop the actor's skill (its awareness through actions) so that he or she, in turn, can discover all the possibilities in himself or herself.

The "body-mind" contains the actor's sensations, perceptions, moods, and somatics, components that constantly exchange information in a biofeedback loop. Somatic knowledge is knowledge gained through the body, not knowledge about the body (Zarrilli, 2008, p. 637). The "body-mind" is reflexive through the body in action and is a key agent in learning acting techniques. Learning through the "body-mind" positions the "body-mind" as a knowing subject (Kozel, 2007, p. 102). The actor learns to trust what he knows through his "body mind" because it includes sensations, perceptions, intentions, and somatic ways of knowing. The actor who judges through his intellect separates his experience from his body. He is a "feeling-judge" operating in somatic

knowledge. In feeling-judgments, "knowing it" and "feeling it" are one and the same in the constitutive impulse of judgement formation" (Zarrilli, 2008, p. 638). The actor knows that something is true because he feels his instincts deep inside and is in tune with their perception. He cannot intellectualise his process because he separates his attention from his experience and denies the perception of his body. Unfortunately, many acting teachers promote mind-body dualism because they focus on the analytical skills needed for the craft of acting while also using dualistic language. Rhonda Blair (2007) states: "Different kinds of dualisms are taught as a prerequisite in various acting classes ('get out of your head', 'don't think, do') (p. 26). A. Lessac criticised acting teachers who paid more attention to the psychology of character study, observation and analysis of the text, focusing on the environment without involving the actor's feelings, and focusing on oneself.

The training of an actor according to the method of A. Lessac recognises the actor as rich in perception, instincts, imagination and experience, respectively, actor training is the discovery of truth and the development of inner energy and focus necessary for dynamic and diverse performance. Actors work to uncover the truth about themselves, the truth about their characters, the given circumstances of the story, and the truth of relationships. Once the actor is aware of all of these elements, he or she is able to bring this truth to the audience in their story through the filter of their own experiences. The actor embodies his or her personal truth. Researchers call this "pictorial truth", and it is when a person transforms their own facts and experiences into the truth of the story without fooling themselves into believing that it is their story (although they have emotional reactions when they perform) (Titze and Verdolini, 2012, p. 33). The actor has to move, go beyond his or her habits and become flexible to the demands of the performance.

Several researchers and trainers have created practices based on Lessac's methodology that develop the "body mind" and explore how an actor can eradicate habits that interfere with spontaneity, enrich their self-awareness and connect with others through their perception, in particular, F. Zarrilli (2008).

As the actor begins to develop the "body mind", he learns how he exists through it. At the highest level of development, the actor discovers that "mind and body are experienced not as separate but as a single system of co-synthesis. The actor obtains a progressively finer or higher degree of psychophysical integration or attunement with the mind-body relationship" (Zarrilli, 2008, p. 85). The actor finds that his body and mind accumulate a list of perceptual knowledge that he can learn through self-awareness, while simultaneously bringing external attention to the environment. The final stage of the actor's learning is reaching "an intersubjective relationship between self and object or between self and other. The goal of personal attunement would be to achieve a completely unstressed state within oneself as a person" (Zarrilli, 2008, p. 85). This last stage involves communication between body and mind, so that the actor expresses himself through the "body mind" and remains open to the environment. He remains easily receptive to his body's processes and reactions to the environment, including other people. The actor moves beyond planning responses or how she should connect with her body, mind, and environment. Instead, she is now existing and acting, her "bodily mind ebbing and flowing energetically with her sur-

roundings" (Zarrilli, 2008, p. 85). Therefore, the actor must be aware of the debilitating effects of fear and destructive emotions and the impact of self-consciousness on his or her learning. This necessitates respecting oneself and how one feels, remembering to breathe, and giving oneself permission to be inspired to act.

It is quite obvious that A. Lessac's work should be used in the vocal training of actors. Thus, considering the metaphors with A. Lessac's "energies", we can use them to develop the actors' articulatory expressiveness. The voice inexplicably reflects the inner state of a person, his or her mood. Often the problems of everyday life have a significant impact on a person and are reflected in their voice. By freeing the actor's voice from everyday life, we free the actor himself from internal psychological inconveniences. By refining your voice, you also refine your feelings.

The processes of acquiring articulatory expressiveness consist in the gradual transformation of "home" spoken language, simplified voice sound into an unusual sound system of professional speech, expressive colour of the voice. Focusing future actors' attention on resonance and vibration in the process of articulation is a significant part of the methodology of vocal training and independent work of students. By mastering specific skills of "lip vibration" in various aspects of vocal training (plastic, timbre, breathing, articulation), the next step towards expressive stage sound is taken, including: 1) vibration in the lips as a way of acquiring a "sense of freedom"; 2) removal of excessive tension in the body, in the muscles of the lower jaw, in the lips, in the muscles that form the correct phonation exhalation; 3) vibration as a way of adjusting elastic exhalation, which largely depends on the freedom of the airways; 4) vibration as one of the methods of influencing the muscles of the articulatory organs through internal vibration massage; 5) vibration as one of the methods of influencing the muscles of the vocal apparatus by means of internal vibration massage; 6) vibration as the main method of warming up the lip muscles in the first stages of articulation training; 7) vibration as one of the ways to activate sensations in the muscles of the epiglottis: in the system of muscles involved in the articulation of vowels and consonants; 8) vibration as a method of pre-tuning the "sense of resonance" in the facial bones, in the occipital bones, in the bones of the shoulder girdle, chest bones, spine and arms; 9) vibration as a preliminary way to expand the volume of the epiglottis and increase the volume of voice and speech sound.

The development of conscious body work, which is emphasised in A. Lessac's "sensory training", can be actively used at the initial stages of vocal training for actors to become aware of the work of the phonation organs and conscious control of breathing. In the course of working with the voice, the EVT is consistently developed. In accordance with modern approaches to training singers, special attention is paid to each of the structures involved in the phonation process, allowing beginners to first experience the work of a particular part of the phonation apparatus, and then to control them independently. This principle is reminiscent of the work of a sports coach who teaches an athlete to control his or her body and develop individual muscles. In this regard, it seems quite logical that many contemporary singing teachers are increasingly calling themselves vocal coaches or coaches, as A. Lessac was called. The expediency of such an approach in vocal pedagogy has been repeatedly pointed out by domestic teachers and researchers, emphasising the importance of kinesthetic

feedback that controls the work of the vocal apparatus and is well known under the term "muscle feeling". This feedback begins with the sensitive nerve endings embedded in the muscles and tendons of numerous muscles of the larynx, respiratory system, articulatory organs, in short, all the muscles involved in sound production.

A significant methodological achievement of A. Lessack is the combination of movement and speech, as well as movement and singing in his methodology. The development of the ability to perform vocal works in active stage movement is surprisingly important for both pop singers and actors, who in many contemporary productions combine active stage movement with singing. Obviously, the development of stage movement and plastic culture of future actors occurs primarily in the process of mastering the basics of stage movement, while stage movement is an important component of all types of professional activity of an actor, and, accordingly, should be based on the pedagogical experience of higher education, since there are common features in the plasticity of actors of different genres. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account the specific feature of choreography in combination with singing, which requires special approaches in the use of traditional methods. Although the fundamentals of stage movement are universal, it is advisable to apply them in the system of forming the actor's plastic culture: from general plastic training to those sections that are closest to the specifics of singing.

Conclusions

A. Lessack's "kinesis training" can be a significant methodological component in the process of professional training of actors in higher education institutions in Ukraine. The main elements of A. Lessack's methodology should be used in the process of vocal training of actors in order to develop stage speech and vocal articulation, awareness of the phonation organs functioning, and actors' plasticity. Prospects for further research are to develop a comprehensive programme for the vocal development of future actors in the process of professional training based on kinesis training, as well as to adapt A. Lessack's methodology for the development of stage speech of future actors in higher education institutions of Ukraine.

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ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ ЕЛЕМЕНТІВ МЕТОДИКИ АРТУРА ЛЕССАКА У ВОКАЛЬНІЙ ПІДГОТОВЦІ АКТОРІВ

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Анотація

Статтю присвячено дослідженню становлення методики Артура Лессака, систематизації її основних елементів і конкретизації можливостей їх застосування в процесі вокальної підготовки акторів. **Мета дослідження** полягає в систематизації елементів методики Артура Лессака у вокальній підготовці акторів. **Методологія дослідження.** Для реалізації мети використано системно-аналітичний метод, за допомогою якого конкретизовано методичні основи «кінесенс-тренування» та виокремлено ті елементи, які можна застосовувати в процесі вокальної підготовки акторів. **Наукова новизна** полягає в уточненні складників методики Артура Лессака, а також визначенні можливостей для застосування елементів «кінесенс-тренування» у вокальній підготовці акторів. **Висновки.** Методика, яку розробив Артур Лессак у середині ХХ століття, що отримала назву «кінесенс-тренування», набула значного поширення в багатьох країнах світу. Вона базується на свідомому контролі власного тіла й усвідомленні його природних можливостей, а також становить вагомий частину підготовки акторів. Методика може бути вагомим методичним складником у процесі професійної підготовки акторів у закладах вищої освіти в Україні. Основні елементи «кінесенс-тренування» Артура Лессака (концепт «трьох енергій» (енергія приголосьних, тональна енергія, структурна енергія); «середовищ» (внутрішнього і зовнішнього), «тілесного розуму») доцільно використовувати в процесі вокальної підготовки акторів з метою розвитку сценічної мови та вокальної артикуляції, усвідомленості функціонування органів фонації, пластичності акторів. Перспективи подальших наукових пошуків у окресленому напрямі полягають у розробці комплексної програми вокального розвитку майбутніх акторів у процесі професійної підготовки, що базується на методиці Артура Лессака, а також адаптації «кінесенс-тренування» для розвитку сценічної мови майбутніх акторів у закладах вищої освіти України.

Ключові слова: Артур Лессак; «кінесенс-тренування»; «Лессак Інститут»; «тілесний розум»; вокальна підготовка акторів



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