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SOCIO-CULTURAL REHABILITATION OF PERSONS WITH HEARING DISORDERS BY MEANS OF AMATEUR THEATRICAL ACTIVITY

Abstract. The article demonstrates the importance of amateur theatrical activity as a major factor of socio-cultural rehabilitation of people with hearing disorders on the basis of long-term experience of work in the amusement and recreation department of the Regional rehabilitation centre of the All-Russian Society for the Deaf.

Key words: rehabilitation, socio-cultural rehabilitation, recreation activity, amateur theatrical activity, persons with hearing disorders, the deaf, gesture speech.

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Social integration of people with disabilities is one of the major tasks of development of the modern society. Social integration presupposes provision of equal rights and real opportunities of co-participation to persons of this category of the population, together with other society members, in all kinds and forms of socio-cultural activity (education, recreation, labor, socio-political activity, etc.) under conditions compensating for

their disabilities [4]. The social policy of the state with rehabilitation as its priority area becomes one of the major factors of inclusion of the people with disabilities in broad socio-cultural interaction.

Special place in the complex of rehabilitation measures is occupied by socio-cultural rehabilitation which is one of the most urgent and in-demand spheres of social practice and an object of particular attention of researchers in the sphere

of socio-cultural activity of people with disabilities of different age groups. Determining the essential characteristics of socio-cultural rehabilitation, researchers treat this area of rehabilitation as a complex process of interaction of a person with the social environment aimed at meeting the needs of the people with disabilities in getting information, socio-cultural services, chances of self-realization and participation in accessible kinds of creative activity [9]. Socio-cultural rehabilitation is also viewed upon as targeted personal assistance to a person with disability, as a process aimed at revealing their spiritual interests and needs, looking for and mobilizing the existing personal reserves which would help them realize their potential and integrate in the surrounding socio-cultural environment in recreation, communication and creative activity in the long run [8].

One of the tasks of socio-cultural rehabilitation is to involve persons with disabilities of various ages to cultural and moral-spiritual values and to healthy life style by means of introduction into the world of art and culture. Cultural-recreational activity is looked upon as one of the main components of the given task [7]. The content of cultural-recreational activity gives man a chance to experience feelings and emotions through different oc-

cupations in spare time and thus satisfy their needs of understanding the perceived information, artistic images, and general cultural context that comes in the focus of their attention and assessment [1]. Organization of recreation activity (leisure, festivals, self-education, creative activity, etc.) is especially significant for persons with disabilities because of their life limitations and problems with communication brought about by disorders of physical and psychological development. And inclusion of the person in various kinds of creative activity is considered to be a most significant kind of recreation, which also includes amateur theatrical activity [5].

Different forms of amateur theatrical activity perform various functions: informational, educational, relaxation (relaxation of tension, anxiety, etc.) and socialization [6], which is of prime importance for persons with disabilities of various categories. By its nature, theatre combines various kinds of art (literature, music, choreography, vocal art, etc.). Organization of amateur theatrical activity is extremely important for development of various aspects of personality of the participants of amateur performances (cognitive, communicative, emotional, etc.). This idea is corroborated by the pioneer experience of many years of work of the culture and recreation department of the Regional rehabili-

tation centre of the All-Russian Society for the Deaf.

The experience of functioning of amateur theatrical societies or clubs for persons with hearing disorders disproves a widespread belief that complex ambiguous works of fiction are not suitable for staging in such groups. We believe that the given approach to the choice of repertoire for deaf actors radically limits their potential opportunities. All literary works (plays, short stories, etc.) staged at the Regional rehabilitation centre for persons with loss of hearing are dubious in nature, touch upon deep worldview problems, and discover subtle psychological characteristics of the literary characters. The repertoire of amateur theater groups should facilitate the development of the worldview orientations of the deaf person and develop their ability to critically address social phenomena, ambivalence of life situations, etc. Our experience shows that persons with hearing disorders can successfully perform in dramatic works of any genre: from deeply psychological to strongly biased ones, from socially charged pieces of drama with salient civil pathos to satirical, comic and clearly parodic ones. This is demonstrated by the list of works of fiction which includes both home and foreign literary works: M. Karim "Do not Leave the Fire, Prometheus!", F. G. Lorca

"The House of Bernarda Alba", A. Ostrovskiy "The Storm", B. Gorbатов "One Night", A. Salynskiy "The Fame", B. Brecht "Señora Carrar's Rifles", A. Miller "Death of a Salesman", A. Galin "Stars in the Morning Sky", A. Dudarev "The Garbage Dump", V. Kudryavtsev "Ivan and Madonna", V. Tendryakov "Paranya", P. Mérimée «Matteo Falcone», "Heaven and Hell", "The Temptation of St. Anthony", "Carriage of Holy Gifts", M. Gor'kiy "Chelkash", M. Servantes "The Divorce Court Judge", "The Cave of Salamanca", V. Mayakovskiy "The Bug", "The Bath House", A. S. Pushkin's fairy tales «The Tale of the Priest and of his Workman Balda», "The Tale of the Golden Cockerel", N. Nekrasov "General Toptygin", N. Leskov "Levsha", K. Chukovskiy "Mukha-Tsokotukha", M. Zoshchenko "Nervous People", L. Ustinov "Old-fashioned Miracles" and many others.

Amateur theatrical activity of patients with hearing loss should be organized taking into account the specific features of their cognitive and communicative activity and emotional sphere of personality, and ought to be based on compensatory capabilities of persons with hearing disorders, usage of their visual, sensory and vibration sensitivity and written speech. Interaction between specialists of different profiles –

logopedists, teachers of gesture language, psychology, Russian, and specialists in theatrical disciplines is one of the basic principles of amateur theatre groups for persons with hearing disorders.

During staging, special attention is paid to the preliminary stage – work on the text of the play (“table work” period) and its literary analysis. An important condition of staging a play cast by amateur actors with hearing loss consists in conducting regular sessions in the art of direction by a hearing pedagogue. Lessons of direction help the deaf actor understand the motives of behavior of a character, see causative-consecutive relationships between phenomena instead of separate facts, and approach emotionally intensive life of the character via logic of their actions. The hearing teacher leads the deaf student to understand the life of the character impersonated on the stage through associations connected with the situations seen or lived through by the performers in their own lives. This is especially significant for determining moral positions and helps get in indirect contact with complex social problems. While analyzing the play by A.N. Ostrovskiy “The Storm” at a lesson of direction, the students were asked to assess one and the same phenomenon, for example, the scene near the church at the moment of Kathe-

rine’s confession through the eyes of all characters. Such analysis should not boil down to ready-made definitions of a character’s features or to clichés like *good – bad, kind – angry* and the like. The deaf person should realize the ambiguous nature of reality and the complexity of the concrete character’s psychological portrait combining sometimes polar ambivalent features which are unveiled in line with emerging circumstances and actions of other characters.

In the process of staging a play, it is urgent to reach agreement between the dramatic material, oral speech and visual associations. In the work of direction, the teacher should orient towards actively visual character of the play. At the lessons of direction, the hearing pedagogue should lay the main stress on visual perception of the surrounding world by the deaf students. At the same time, plastic means of movement based on kinesthetic feelings acquire special significance. This radically helps to create visual images of the scenes. The persons with loss of hearing are offered main and secondary imagery scenes which may express the author’s intention in plastic forms. Each direction session is connected with a dynamic theatrical action; it does not only explain the essence of the play with the help of a specialist in expressive gesture language but also trains the

deaf actors to rehearse the whole performance in a plastic active way. On the basis of the fact that feeling vibration has considerable compensatory significance for the deaf, the performers achieve wonderful results in dances of various genres, in gesture singing, in plastic pantomimes, etc. Matching light and music accompaniment to the main idea of the work of art has primary importance for staging the play. Thus, the compensatory potential of the persons with hearing loss connected with functioning of the safe analyzer systems help to discern the socio-psychological traits of the character and their behavioral motives, see causative-consecutive relationships between phenomena instead of separate facts, and approach emotionally intensive life of the character via logic of their actions.

It is a well known fact that underdevelopment of the ability to discern emotional states of other people is a significant problem of persons with hearing loss. As research shows, it is characteristic of the deaf people to have difficulties in understanding literary works, reasons, causes and consequences of the actions of certain characters, in determining the emotions and relationships between characters, and inadequate capability to show sympathy towards certain literary characters. All this emasculates the emotional world of persons with

hearing disorders, creates barriers in understanding emotional states of other people and simplifies the emerging interpersonal relationships [3]. Amateur dramatic activity has indisputable significance for the development of the emotional sphere of deaf actors. Theatrical activities project various life problems and emotions of literary characters. Influencing persons through their emotional sphere, literary characters make one experience emotions, suffer and exult; their impact is often stronger than real life collisions [2]. Many real life problems and emotions are seen by deaf persons as soluble after they have been looked at through the prism of theatrical imagery. Penetrating into the world of literary characters and scenic impersonations, and beginning to live their lives, persons with hearing loss develop their own involvement in sorrows, sufferings and joys of other people. Empathy with another person will be more complete if the observer is acquainted with the situation in which the perceived emotional state appeared, and presupposes generalization of already witnessed similar states and their verbal expressions. As long as emotional states are reflected in facial expressions, gestures, body language and verbal response, analysis of literary works is accompanied by the work on imagery gestures and

facial expressions and expressiveness of the speech of the characters.

Staging plays with persons with hearing disabilities as actors present difficulties which need special attention of the teachers. For example, direction of gestures and facial expressions comes across difficulties in translating the text of the play in the gesture language because it is not easy to find exact equivalents for the verbal material which would be equally expressive and adequate in semantic characteristics. In the process of work with deaf performers on compositions of such poets as A. Pushkin, N. Nekrasov, A. Blok, S. Esenin, V. Mayakovskiy, E. Evtushenko, A. Voznesenskiy there appear problems connected with necessity to convey most subtle nuances of individual poetic style through the language of gestures and facial expressions. In this connection it is also critical to match imagery scenes to verbal characteristics. Although it should be noted that text material should by no means be a mere supplement to pantomimic scenes. At the same time, visual images cannot be simply illustrations of gesture and facial expression language. Ideally, the process of staging should represent a dialectical unity of the language of gestures and facial expressions the visual imagery presentation of the dramatic scenario. The pedagogue should help the performer to

find the necessary intonation which would allow the actor to bring out the inner state of the character. Thus, participation in amateur theater groups and in staging literary works of different genres, themes and character teaches persons with hearing disorders to convey their emotional content with the help of facial expressions, gestures and posture.

The diversity of genres also facilitates the formation of independent thinking of deaf performers; each kind of creative activity used in cultural-recreational activity of persons with hearing disorders has its specific impact on their spiritual and intellectual world. For example, the genre of farce perfectly matches the specificity of the deaf people's perception of the surrounding reality phenomena and demands absolute sincerity from the person with loss of hearing. Brilliant acting of buffoons and the ability to improvise need perfect voice control skills. Farce performers must be able to convey the traits of the characters (such as blandness, guile, hypocrisy and cowardice of the Priest from the stage version of the well known tale of A.S. Pushkin; lust for power and voluptuousness of Tsar Dadon; audacity and gumption of the workman Balda, etc.) with their voice and gestures. Deaf performers face equally complex intellectual creative tasks in the

process of staging such literary works as “Levsha” by N. Leskov, “The Legend of a Magic Whistle” by N. Shergin, “Koschei the Deathless” by V. Belov, “Mister-Twister” by S. Marshak, “All Mice Like Cheese”, “The Wild Squire” by M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin and others. These works of fiction do not only create opportunities for the performers to demonstrate their dramatic talent and achieve certain results in oral speech development but also facilitate removal of psychological restraint and relaxation of emotional tension.

Thus, the technologies of amateur theatrical activity integrate pedagogical, psychological, social and culturological aspects. Amateur theatrical activity is an important means of widening the horizon of persons with hearing disorders, bringing them closer to cultural and spiritual values, and formation of their civil position. Inclusion in amateur theatrical activity facilitates stabilization of sensibility of the safe and impaired analyzer systems and represents a major factor of compensation for secondary deviations in psychological development brought about by the primary defect. Lessons of direction and acting contain a strong potential for improving speech development of the deaf due to constantly emerging situations which enhance the need to use new words, terms or phrases.

Staging literary works creates possibilities for activation of the emotional vocabulary of the deaf person, to perfect the auditory culture of speech, its intonation, grammatical structure and dialogic communication. Theatrical activity is a source of development of feelings and deep emotions, and presents an important tool for expanding the scope of means of expressing emotions and feelings and for widening social experience.

Artistic creativity, being part and parcel of the system of cultural-recreational activity of persons with hearing disorders, is one of the active significant factors in the sphere of moral-esthetical education of a person. The special role of culture in the development and self-realization of a person, and the positive experience of work on organization of amateur theatrical activity of persons with hearing disorders allow us to regard socio-cultural rehabilitation as an independent area in the system of rehabilitation of persons with hearing loss. At the same time, further study of psycho-pedagogical and compensatory potential of cultural-recreational activity of the deaf and the significance of amateur theatrical activity for the development of the adaptation-rehabilitative potential of such people is especially urgent.

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