

Nahaufnahmen

On the Status Quo of Alexander Truslit's Tutorial of Musical Movement

Zum Status quo der musikalischen Bewegungslehre von Alexander Truslit

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Abstract

In his practical tutorial Alexander Truslit tries to make a holistic sensation of musical expressiveness accessible through physiologically grounded motion patterns. His ideas about the connectedness of music and motion are being increasingly addressed in music psychology and music pedagogy. The article reflects Truslit's approach and suggests new connections that argue the case for his teachings and their solid foundation.

Keywords: Truslit, musical movement, musical flow, tension, embodiment, physical expressiveness, kinaesthetic perception

Zusammenfassung

In seinem musikpraktischen Werk versucht Alexander Truslit durch physiologisch fundierte Bewegungsmuster eine ganzheitliche Wahrnehmung des musikalischen Ausdrucks zu erschließen. Seine Ideen über die Einheit von Musik und Bewegung werden in letzter Zeit in der Musikpsychologie und Musikpädagogik wieder verstärkt thematisiert. Der Aufsatz reflektiert Truslits Ansatz und argumentiert mit neueren Zusammenhängen für dessen Wohlbegründetheit.

Schlüsselwörter: Truslit, musikalische Bewegung, musikalischer Flow, Spannung, Embodiment, körperlicher Ausdruck, kinästhetische Wahrnehmung

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Taken on its own terms, the musical tutorial “Gestaltung und Bewegung in der Musik” (Shaping and Motion in Music) by Alexander Truslit (1889-1971) in 1938 could be considered an exceptional phenomenon. A guide with the aim of communicating something conclusive and fundamental about music, the body and movement, which also purported to provide empirical evidence for it, was, for a long time, preferably left aside by the musical and educational establishments. Therefore, for a renewed appraisal of the work, as well as the re-publication of the book and the educational film by Alexander Truslit are of great significance (Brandner, 2012; Haverkamp, 2013; Truslit, 1938/2015).

The basic arguments made by Truslit, seen in the right context, are not as unusual as they appeared to be for a long time. Until today in many Sarabande rhythms, e.g. the theme from the 3rd movement of the Sonata in E by Beethoven (Op. 109), the ascendant physical gesture belonging to the dance can be clearly registered. In ac-

cordance with this Truslit would have had this musical shape notated beginning with a convex, so-called closed movement curve. On the basis of the originally intimate relationship between music and dance, which was experienced viscerally, this would no doubt have been common knowledge during the Baroque era and beyond. Thus, one can imagine this was what the musical theorist Johann Mattheson had in mind when he wrote of a “true movement” that should be realised in a musical performance (Mattheson, 1739, p. 173).

Obviously a physical technique of playing music was first thematically discussed when it became an urgent necessity – and indeed this concerned piano players particularly. With the rediscovery of the central role played by the core muscles as well as a flexible bodily tension while playing the piano, by Frederic Horace Clark and Truslit's teacher, Elisabeth Caland, Alexander Truslit was predestined to reflect consciously about a holistic approach to music playing. His graphical curves represent a serious attempt to notate and communicate a musical sensation of expressiveness in a physical form.

Recent literature confirms this holistic premise as the basis of artistic music playing. For Wolfgang Rüdiger, a specialist in body and breathing techniques, is the physical support of the hara (Japanese for “belly”) sphere a matter of common sense (Rüdiger, 2007, p. 65). Yet Truslit went even further, by making the connection between the core support, from the inverse rotary movement of the upper and lower arm, derived from the helic bone and muscle structure, with the human musculoskeletal system. But only now, through the Spiraldynamik of the physician Christian Larsen has this become a recognised medical and therapeutic principle (Larsen, 2007).

The fact that Truslit's ideas are not at all unusual can also be seen in the attempt by Jürgen Uhde and Renate Wieland, to objectivise the mimetic nature of expressiveness which is articulated by dynamic and agogic gestures. They too are convinced of a kinaesthetic consciousness and also view the spiral bodily movement, anchored in the core, as fundamental (Uhde & Wieland, 2002, pp. 28, 248) to music playing, leading to a realisation of an “inner thread of musical movement” (original: “innere Linie der Klangbewegung”; Uhde & Wieland, 2002, p. 44). Conceptually their approach is identical to Truslit's except for the fact that they do not draw mimetic curves but make symbolic notations in the score (Uhde & Wieland, 1988). Also similar to Truslit is the methodological approach of Alexandra Pierce. In order to give depth to the musicality, she suggests drawing melodic contours with one's arm. Her graphical curves can be compared to Truslit's, and she also connects them to a holistic, kinaesthetic contact to the tension of phrases (Pierce, 2007). But she is not as systematic as Truslit in distinguishing different types of motion.

These examples should suffice to demonstrate that the very basic features of Truslit's method can also be found in more recent reflections that have presumably emerged independently from him. While in this sense Truslit's approach is conceptually indisputable, the question remains: whether his curves could be elaborated into a more objective notation of physical musical phenomena. To ascertain this, further artistic and pedagogic, as well as scientific, research will be necessary. The author has pursued a path to achieve a concrete understanding of Truslit's curves in his musical practice, and has attempted to develop these further (Brandner, 2017). In the meantime, even music history (c.f. Stollberg, 2015) and music psychology (c.f. Kim, 2013; Wöllner & Hohagen, 2017) have more recently addressed Truslit's ideas and have begun studying them. However the insufficient discussion of corporeality in the pure behaviouristic research remains problematic. Practical methods like Truslit's conceive musical movement on the basis of a corporeality that is unfortunately not taken as a given. Therefore, pure outward movement, captured without drawing conclusions as to the mode of the move-

ment, is not enough. But the difficulty of an adequate reflection can be seen already within the field of piano teaching methodology in which, still today, contradictory approaches face each other. But careful analytical observation demonstrates that the so-called coordinated school, within which Truslit can be included, offers distinct benefits that raise the hopes of reaching a physical-technical understanding (Ydefeldt, 2018). So Truslit's work remains highly relevant and convincing. No doubt it will continue to be a source of many surprises in the future.

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