

# THE SYMPTOM OF PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN RELATION TO ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

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The symptom of performance anxiety is always an obstacle for the artist's endeavour. Although the symptom can be described objectively in terms of physiological and cognitive variables, the psychological meaning might differ qualitatively to a great extent. The obstacle to good achievement always occurs in a context consisting of various processes and factors. The obstacle turns the artist into an under-achiever instead of over-achiever which may have serious consequences. The artist's greatest professional concern is his or her positive development. There are many obstacle to overcome. The problem arises for the caregiver to make the proper diagnosis for the proper treatment. However, the artist's symptom can be due to work overload, marital problems, musical challenges, childhood issues etc. In each case, maladaptive processes have contributed to the symptom and its presence. It is beneficial to look at the symptom from a wider scope.

The concept of artistic development is based on the assumption that at each state of development or process, organized structures of 'elements' are the results of previous processes and forms, at the same time, the basis for current processes (Magnusson, 1999). Quantitative and qualitative studies with opera singers and classical dancers indicate that the artistic development is shaped by

individual characteristics (personality, motivation), psychosocial factors (meetings with significant others, roles/musical pieces, family life) and phases (positive musical experiences in childhood, age-related issues, learning of specific skills). There is a constant interaction taking place between social world, individual characteristics, certain life and artistic phases. These factors and interactions promote on one hand change in terms of progress, insight and failure, on the other hand stability in terms of maintenance of adaptive processes. The occurrence of obstacles can be interpreted as a sign of maladaptive processes and factors. Among the group of very successful opera singers, early signs of outstanding musical or singing skills were not noted. A discussion about obstacles and facilitating experiences for artistic growth and development will follow.