

# *Dionysus in Chile*

by Enrique Pardo

Original Español :

<https://enriquepanblog.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/dionisio-en-chile-perfeccionamiento-vocal/>

Français : [www.pantheatre.com/pdf/6-dionysos-chili-fr.pdf](http://www.pantheatre.com/pdf/6-dionysos-chili-fr.pdf)

“Perfeccionamiento Vocal”  
A *Pantheatre Chile* course  
School of Theatre  
*Universidad de Chile*

A mytho-pedagogic analysis  
of the VIDEO presentation of the program of  
Vocal Advanced Training - “Perfeccionamiento Vocal”

Good idea to see the video first / or during on :

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVKES\\_v7IN4&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVKES_v7IN4&feature=youtu.be)

0:00 First scene: two very beautiful sirens (these are not sea-mermaids: these have wings!) fly around a somewhat dazed woman. They laugh and prance with dizzying vitality and joy. What luxury! Two teachers



for one pupil, and, are they having fun!  
(The director suggests: "...with no husbands around".)

1:07 The director, Linda Wise, now steps in, wisely, and on a more sober tone she suggests some distancing, and seems to say: “Watch out with emotions in singing!”

– which, in mythological terms, is the same as saying: “Watch out for those sirens!” Yes: nowadays we call “emotions” what mythology called angels, and sirens. But then, we are in Chile, and the craving for emotion is too immediate and strong.

1:25 Tears make their appearance. They believe they are always invited and welcome. And they are ... of course! In these mythologies, tears are a godsend. Pearls for the performance necklace.



1: 56 The director-teacher gives a second warning: “Beware of the victim!”, and then: “Listen to the piano”. She clearly wants to take special care of the shipwreck in the valley of tears – the valley into which the soul (Psyche) descends, “moaning and crying”, in search for Eros, or Dionysus, (or Christ, for that matter): three alternative, mythological “husbands”...



2:16 The other master-teacher, Enrique Pardo, appears, with some sharp percussionists; he laughs and seems to say something like: "... cut into the theatrical emotion ...". A gorgeous young satyr takes his shirt off (yellow card!) and ventures on stage. He stops, looks around and seems suddenly dumbstruck: "Where have I landed myself? Where am I?" Good question.



3:30 A Bacchae emerges from the dark, with blue-black hair. She is also crying, and says repeatedly (to Dionysus?): "your voice lingers on." Where we are? Is this some kind of Dionysian voice school? Frolics, hugs, prancing tremolos, deep sighs, boasting attitudes, shrieks and sensual extravaganza: everything gets metamorphosed into sentimental glory. Even out-of-tune moments declare victory! It's a good beginning: we have what alchemists call *prima materia*. We are ready for the "*perfeccionamiento vocal*"!



The ominous Ezra Pound once declared: "Only emotion endures". Louis Zukofsky, another American poet, dared to correct him: "Only emotion objectified endures".

And a song is precisely that: an objectified emotion. We touch here the core of Linda Wise's proposals and we are possibly at the heart of Roy Hart's voice philosophy. A song is an object that simultaneously idealizes and materializes the balance between lyrics, music and emotion. It is an allegorical shrine for the philosophy of singing. And for *perfeccionamiento vocal*: fine-tuned sentimental sophistication, honed emotional (and erotic) intelligence, musicalized genius – including the darkest crevices of its voice. This is where we are heading for: a school of genius!

Towards the end of the video a perplexing announcement appears: IF YOU FIND YOUR VOICE YOU FIND YOUR PLACE. It comes, apparently, from *maestro* Enrique Pardo's vocal proposals in choreographic theatre.

"To find your voice" can be seen as the achievement of the emancipation of emotion: a proud and jubilant way to find place, identity and authenticity. This is fundamental for a voice school. And, given the importance of emotional release, it often appears with Dionysian revelry, it certainly does in this video: emotional celebration, exuberance (lots of "ex" words), passion, blood-sweat-and-tears, hair let loose, etc.

The wonderful (and indispensable) generosity of the emotional voice invites us to its honeymoon party (orgy?). What happens next, the morning after? What is meant by “*perfeccionamiento*”?

Just like Linda Wise’s pedagogy of singing and of the art of interpretation, Enrique Pardo’s proposals also lead us into considerably more complex, intricate and demanding practices. In fact, the *maestro* never said: IF YOU FIND YOUR VOICE YOU FIND YOUR PLACE. That is an inversion produced by the youthful enthusiasm (and voice idolatry) of the sympathetic video-maker. The proposal is in fact quite the opposite: IF YOU FIND YOUR PLACE YOU WILL FIND YOUR VOICE. A formulation that calls for less “Who am I?” and a lot more “Where am I?” It also requires ‘taking position’ (even politically.) To find your place means first of all to listen: consider, discern and figure-out where you are. Inspiration is poetic breathing in, capturing and adapting to the *genius loci* (the genius of the place). These priorities give a radical cultural twist to what is usually implied by “placing the voice.”

The voice is not only "the muscle of the soul" (another video announcement). The voice is also the soul’s thinking<sup>1</sup>: articulate sensitivity, eloquence and cultural intelligence - the spokesperson of the emotional body. The voice sings (chants) and enchants the world, especially when she dances with ideas.

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Note 1: The idea of a school of genius comes from the headquarters of the Spanish military genius in Granada, which was located right next door to the School of Architecture where Pantheatre organized its 2002 Myth and Theatre Festival. The motto over the barracks’ portal read: "Doctrine and Dressage". *Maestro* Enrique Pardo was so impressed he used it for his definition of Pantheatre’s work:

Note 2: “Voice performance training involves a dynamic blend of technical finesse and expressive risk. It also seeks the affirmation of personal genius - character and musicality - and a commitment to the relevance of what one has to voice, be it in speech, song, scream, silence, image or movement - or their synthesis in choreographic theatre.”

Note 3: “Doctrine and Dressage”. Artistic doctrine must include an antinomic purpose: artistic norms are made to be broken. Rules are made to confirm exceptions. Critical ‘dressage’ must contain iconoclasm to achieve genius. Nevertheless, one cannot bypass the technical and cultural disciplines, (which looks very much like “military dressage”!) And especially: poetic dissociation, counterpoint.

Note 4: Granada is in Andalusia, where genius is called *duende*. If you want to see *duende* at work in a voice performance, take a look at this video recording of Pantheatre Chile’s director: Annie Murath. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bd3AQv9-nvl>. “Annie Murath is one of those very rare jewels who can combine the feeling and musicality of singing with the articulate intelligence of acting - and she does it in dazzling fashion and with the sort of passion you'd dream of from a Latin star.”

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<sup>1</sup> A philosophical note on voice and soul. The Soul Always Thinks, is the title of a book by German psychologist, Wolfgang Giegerich, an ‘antinomic’ student of James Hillman (Pantheatre’s main reference), to whom Giegerich reproaches the use of notions such as soul, or *anima*, and of mytho-poetic language. Giegerich seems to make an about turn and head back to conceptual philosophy. He uses mythology, however, to support his point of view, especially the terrible myth of the death of Actaeon, to illustrate (think?) the dialectical notion of sublation proposed by Hegel, which leads him to his synthesis of a thinking soul. Giegerich visited Malérargues in the 1980s with James Hillman. The voice does not appear in his reflections, perhaps because it is so close to the notion of soul (especially the soul of Romanticism), and to Hillman’s take on the notion of anima. Voice, soul and anima are mediating (feminine) figures of the core human thinking-feeling-imagining.