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Sophrology

Becoming a self-confident musician

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ABSTRACT

This work deals with the practice of the Sophrology in order to get more self-confidence as an orchestra flute player. Sophrology is a practice based on the connection between the body and the mind. With both physical and mental training, Sophrology enables one to become aware of a lot of resources that one possesses and how they can be used in order to feel better in general and in stressful playing situations. I did research through books about Sophrology and the connections between the body and the mind. The main part of this thesis is based on my own experiment; I practiced exercises during the first year of my Masters Programme and I wrote down observations about my feelings in orchestra sessions, auditions... I observed a lot of improvements in my self-confidence while performing and also in my view on life.

Key words: sophrology, self-confidence, orchestra flute player, relaxed musician, mental and body training, expressing music better.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	5
1. Sophrology.....	7
1.1 Origen and definition.....	7
1.2 Connections between body and mind.....	8
1.2.1 Body affects mind.....	8
1.2.2 Mind affects body.....	9
1.3 Session setup.....	11
2. Self-confidence.....	13
2.1 Becoming self-confident.....	13
2.2 Why does an orchestra player need it?.....	13
2.2.1 Especially for an orchestra wind player.....	13
2.2.2 For an orchestra flute player.....	14
2.3 Succeeding in audition.....	16
3. My Experiment.....	16
3.1 Planning, time frame.....	16
3.2 Description and observations of the first five weeks.....	17
3.3 New model session.....	22
3.4 Reflexions/observations: auditions, orchestra projects & collective classes...	23
3.4.1 Mock auditions and real auditions.....	23
3.4.2 Orchestra projects.....	26
3.4.3 Collective classes.....	29
Conclusion and discussion.....	30
Bibliography.....	33

Introduction

It was a very bad day. I felt very down, I thought that I could not be positive. I tried to practice the flute but did not succeed: my sound was stuck, I could not focus on my phrasing, my tongue attacks were imprecise and I thought that my playing was ugly and that I would never be able to play well. I decided to tell my boyfriend about my feelings. He told me very seriously: "Move your body!". I was very surprised because I thought that we would talk about my feelings and exchange our points of view. Instead, I started to do what he said. He encouraged me by saying: "Move your body in every direction, shake it without stopping, clap your hands, jump, imagine you are dancing". I could not believe it but I started to smile. I could not understand but I began to feel better and stopped having negative thoughts. Then he said: "Now take your flute and play!". I did not reflect, I just began to play. I was amazed at how wide my sound was, I began to practice again. I understood that I had removed tension from my body and in turn, this removed the negative thoughts from my mind and the bad energy from my being. And it is like a circle, when you start to feel better in your mind, you also feel better in your body and vice versa.

For a long time, I have known that it is healthy to exercise. For six years, I have run at least once per week, and while it is not a lot, it makes me feel better. I have realised that when running I never have bad thoughts but rather constructive thoughts. However, it was not until my boyfriend told me to move my body that I realised the immediate consequences exercising can have on my state of mind. This day I became aware of the power the body has over the mind. I understood that there is a strong link between body and mind, and I realised that I should make use of it. I had heard about different techniques like the Alexander technique, the Yoga, and so on but I never took the time or dared to try it. Not long ago, again after having lost my composure because of the stage fright at one audition, a friend of mine had told me about the sophrology. At the same moment I had read a book about the stage fright in which the author was talking also about this technique. I decided to start to practice it and to read books about the concept.

As a flautist and a future professional orchestra player, this thesis gives me the opportunity to investigate if and how a musician and especially an orchestra flute player can improve her/his self-confidence by using sophrology. I am interested in finding out how to be able to play with the same self-confidence in auditions as well as in the practicing room and in situations in the orchestra that are more difficult and stressful. So, in this work, I will study the connections between the body and the mind.

During the first year of my Master programme I made my own experiment. Every day, I did my own sophrology exercises given by my sophrologist. By practicing, when I observed something was happening in my body or mind, I wrote it down. I also observed my feelings and my evolution in the mock or real auditions, orchestra projects and I wrote them down. At the same time, I read books and some articles on the web about well-being, stage fright and sophrology. Furthermore I connected what we were doing or talking about in my ergonomics and stage presence classes which are subjects from the Academy of Music and Drama. I recorded my mock auditions, in order to listen to them while being emotionally detached so that I could assess my playing and improve.

There are at least two master theses that deal with mental training for musicians. *Det inre spelet* by Sofia Eklund (2012) deals with mental training, nervousness and self-confidence and it is very connected with the book *The Inner Game of Tennis* by Timothy Gallwey who also wrote *The Inner Game of Music*. The other master thesis *Listen To Your Body And Improve Your Music* by Ana Belén Berenguer García (2011) deals with body training especially with the techniques Yoga and Pilates. These theses however do not discuss sophrology. The books about sophrology and well-being like *Vaincre par la Sophrologie* by R. Abrezol or *Mettre en pratique le pouvoir du moment présent* by E. Tolle do not talk about music nor musicians. However *Le pianiste réconcilié* by M-C. Gomila-Bonifacio and both books by M. Ricquier, *Traité méthodique de pédagogie instrumentale* or *Vaincre le Trac* are plenty of information, advice or exercises for musicians. This documentation enabled me to understand better and have new ideas about the concepts that I was studying. In this thesis I do my own and personal work based on both mental and body training which are part of sophrology in connection with the self-confidence that I need as a musician, especially as a flute player in an orchestra. I share my own experience with the results that I could notify which is an aspect that I did not find in any books that I read.

So I will begin this work by explaining what sophrology is and by observing the connections between body and mind. How does the body affect the mind and vice-versa? In the second part, I will discuss self-confidence and why it is important for a flute player in an orchestra to have it? Finally, I will try to answer through my own experiment how sophrology can improve one's self-confidence especially for musicians and orchestra flautists who have a very exposed role.

1. Sophrology

1.1 Origin and Definition

Sophrology was founded in 1960 by Alfonso Caycedo, a Colombian psychiatrist, practising in Barcelona. When he began working in a hospital in Madrid, he was shocked by the brutal techniques employed to treat some of the patients. He decided to research conscience-based therapy methods to help the patients. He travelled to Switzerland, where he worked with phenomenological psychiatry with professor, Binswanger. Caycedo also studied therapeutic hypnosis and relaxation techniques with the German professor, Schultz. He then travelled to India, where he studied Yoga and Tibetan Buddhism, and then travelled to Japan, where he studied Japanese Zen. Following these studies, he made a synthesis of them and thus established the basis of the Caycedian Sophrology in 1964 (Sofrocay, Académie Internationale de Sophrologie Caycédienne, 2012).

In its early stages, Sophrology was only used and taught in the medical field as a new therapy but during the past ten years it has been opened for everyone. Thus we can find two other branches: Social Sophrology and Pedagogic Sophrology (Abrezol, 2007, p.15).

Sophrology comes from the Greek “SOS” meaning balance and harmony, “PHREN” meaning mind and conscience and “LOGOS” meaning study. The “experience of the conscience in balance” shows its goal which is the modification of the conscience state by positively activating qualities and resources that we possess. “In Sophrology, the human being is always considered a free body-mind entity that is unique, dignified, and entirely responsible of his/her existence”¹ (Sofrocay, Académie Internationale de Sophrologie Caycédienne, 2012).

The daily exercises seek to develop the awareness of the body and the mind by developing positive attitudes to find a balanced state of well-being. For Caycedo, it is a “pedagogy of the existence” based on the existential phenomenology that consists in understanding the essence of the things through awareness (Sofrocay, Académie Internationale de Sophrologie Caycédienne, 2012).

¹ All the translations from French are mine, checked by Eliazer Kramer: “En Sophrologie l’être humain est toujours considéré comme une entité corps-esprit, unique et libre, digne et pleinement responsable de son existence.”

1.2 Connections between body and mind

The goal of Sophrology is acquiring and maintaining the perfect balance and unity between the three parts that make up the Being: the body, the mind and the soul. My sophrologist explained to me that “if you are only in your mind, you *are* not, you think, you judge, you do. If you are only in your body, then your body is a machine: an instrument of efficiency. If you are only in the soul, which is the capacity to feel, to like and to contemplate, then you are in an excess of sensibility.”

1.2.1 Body affects mind

*The body (...) speaks to us through its posture (determined by the centre of gravity), the respiration and the ratio of tension and relaxation*² (Dürckheim, 1983, p.144).

Each one of us has experienced bad feelings at least once in our life: for instance, when we have the flu and our body is suffering, we feel very down. The more our body suffers, the more we feel down. Also, when we are very tired, the smallest action or problem seems enormous to us, and we often feel unable to do or resolve it. After being well-rested, we feel better and we realise how easy these things are. Thus, we can put more focus on our body in order to be more efficient in our thoughts and to feel better mentally. This is what Sophrology offers with one part of its exercises.

In his book, *L'Homme et sa double origine*, Karlfried Graf Dürckheim, the German diplomat, psychotherapist and philosopher, writes that the body expresses our attitudes: “In the defective body shapes, especially the release and the tension, appear the bad attitudes of the person. Stiffness, for example, betrays either a bloated figure of vanity and ambition, either a suffering or anguish seeking reassurance. A sudden slackness reveals not only the physical exhaustion, it also reflects the despair and a deficient self-confidence”³ (1983, p.144).

The basis of practice in Sophrology is finding a good way of *breathing* through a proper *bodily posture*. This relaxes the body and improves the brain's capacities, which

² “Le corps (...) nous parle à travers la *tenue* (déterminée par le centre de gravité), la *respiration* et le rapport de *tension* et *détente*.”

³ “Dans les formes corporelles defectueuses, en particulier le relâchement et la crispation, apparaissent les mauvaises attitudes de la personne. La raideur, par exemple, trahit soit un personnage bouffi de vanité et d'ambition, soit une souffrance ou une angoisse qui cherchent à se rassurer. Un laisser-aller soudain ne révèle pas seulement l'épuisement physique, il traduit aussi le découragement et une confiance en soi déficiente.”

often suffers from lack of oxygen due to our bad way of breathing (Abrezol, 2007, p.56). It is very important *to be aware of this general relaxation state*. We have to be in the present moment and to be aware that “this moment is the unique moment *to be* and that *we have*”⁴ (Tolle, 2002, p.14).

The therapy of a person, which is addressed to these erroneous attitudes, passes through an awareness and an experience of the disposition that expresses and produces the safety and the confidence. (...) it is necessary to be rooted down in the *pelvis area*, [that we must consider] (...) as an instrument to achieve the way to be "there" in the world, as a total man (...) Any affectation, any façade concealing the true personality, a false tone in the voice, a floating look, the artifice or the languidity of attitude, for example, can be, and are, the symptoms of a lack of implantation in the BEING, so a bad state of the person. (...) A good attitude is always determined by the right centre of gravity⁵ (Dürckheim, 1983, p.145-146).

This centre of gravity is called the “Hara” meaning stomach. The practice of the feeling of the Hara is very important in Japan where it is taught. This refers to the Caycedo definition of Sophrology “the science of the conscience and of the being values”. I present another explanation from Françoise Vigier, my sophrologist: “Awareness means perception or knowledge through feeling. Awareness of the body means perception of the body through feeling which brings, an awareness of the presence. When one is doing one's breathing exercises, one's movements for instance, one is in the feeling. One can ask oneself: “what am I feeling right now in my body?” One's mind guides towards one's body and one's soul. When one welcomes positive and negative sensations without judging, interpreting or analysing oneself, then one's being is mobilised. One IS and one's quality of presence is going to increase”.

1.2.2 Mind affects body

Imagination is much stronger than will, keep that constantly in your memory. What we imagine has always tendency to become reality (Abrezol, 2007, p.35).

⁴ “ce moment est l'unique moment qui *soit* et que *nous possédons*.”

⁵ “La thérapie de la personne, qui s'adresse à ces attitudes erronées, passe par une prise de conscience et une expérience de la disposition qui exprime et produit la sécurité et la confiance. (...) il faut s'enraciner vers le bas, dans la région du bassin, [que l'on doit considérer] (...) comme l'instrument de réalisation de la manière d'être “là” dans le monde, en tant qu'homme total (...) Toute affectation, toute façade dissimulant la vraie personnalité, une tonalité fautive dans la voix, un flottement du regard, l'artifice ou la mollesse de l'attitude, par exemple, peuvent être, et sont, les symptômes d'un manque d'enracinement dans l'Être, donc d'un mauvais état de la personne. (...) Une bonne attitude est toujours déterminée par le “centre de gravité juste.”

In the same way that our body affects our mood, our mind can be the cause of many, even serious, changes in our body. Feeling down, a suffering mind and being stressed may lead to illness; our body reacts and tries to remove the problems in our mind. The “power of the mind” can also be used in the opposite way. This means using our mind to make our body feel better. A topic that the French trumpet player and pedagogue, Michel Ricquier, explains in his book, *Traité méthodique de pédagogie instrumentale*:

We ignore, generally, the possibilities of our mind and the help that this one can bring us in the daily life. (...) Thanks to the work of the famous director of the Duke University parapsychological laboratory in North Carolina, Dr J.B. Rhine, we have the formal proof of the existence of the “thought strength”. (...) he could establish scientifically that thought influenced the drop of the dice thrown mechanically. (...) It is important to know that in order to perceive maybe more easily and without shocking our rationalist and cartesian mind, that if the thought can have a certain influence on matter, then it can certainly have it on our own body⁶ (1982, p.107-108).

Another very concrete example for musicians is stage fright. We can observe all the bodily changes when we have to perform in public. Your stomach might hurt, your heart rate might increase, your hands might become cold, you might sweat, etc. This does not happen if you are playing the same music in the comfort of your practice room; knowing that there is audience changes everything. However, despite our best intentions, it is difficult to avoid these symptoms just by telling ourselves “Ok, now I don't want to doubt or panic or feel bad”. Indeed, these symptoms depend on our vegetative nervous system, the same system that is dedicated to our digestion and the beating of our heart (Ricquier, 2000, p.26). Nevertheless, we have solutions to get in touch with this part of our brain. The Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) shows us that we use the same zones in our brain to do or to imagine something. In the case of our vegetative nervous system, there is no difference between an imagined action and a lived one (Ricquier, 2000, p.28).

That is the reason that the other big part of Sophrology is based on visualisation through imagination, a process that allows us to program our brain by installing positive thoughts. So, once we have managed to relax and consequently made the mind more

⁶ “Nous ignorons, en général, les possibilités de notre esprit et l'aide que celui-ci peut nous apporter dans la vie de tous les jours. (...) Grâce aux travaux du célèbre directeur du laboratoire de parapsychologie de l'université de Duke en Caroline du nord, le Dr J. B. Rhine, nous avons la preuve formelle de l'existence de la “force pensée”. (...) il a pu établir scientifiquement que la pensée influait sur la chute des dés lancés mécaniquement. (...) Il est important de savoir cela afin de concevoir peut-être plus facilement et sans trop choquer notre esprit rationaliste et cartésien, que si la pensée peut avoir une certaine influence sur la matière, elle peut certes en avoir sur notre propre corps.”

receptive, we can visualise a positive memory of a place. For instance, a place that reminds us of good sensations in order to make our body feel better. We also can visualise positive results, like managing to play without stage fright, being self-confident and so on.

1.3 Session setup

This section synthesises information from my sophrologist Françoise Vigier and Patrick Fiorletta's dossier (2010, p.31-36). A sophrology session lasts from ten minutes to one hour during which phases are developed following the chosen technique and the level of training. In this part, I described one general session one can have with a sophrologist, however, when I am doing the exercises at home by myself it is a bit different. I put into practice exercises that come from the session but I do not do the presophronic talk for instance (see below). The *Alfonso Caycedo Method* is a particular method and process into the Sophrology practice and differs from other employed exercises, which are shorter and more precise that seek answers and which are easily exploitable by the *sophro-pratiquants*⁷. The postures are "sitting" or "standing". "Lying" is rare because "sitting" and "standing" enable a better body awareness.

The first phase is the presophronic talk. In this phase, an understanding is established between the sophrologist and the *sophro-pratiquant(s)*. They build the whole session together, the proceedings and the proposed exercises. Objectives are chosen according to the interest of the person or the group.

The second phase is the sophronization (meaning relaxation). The sophrologist guides the *sophro-pratiquant(s)* with a persuasive, monotonous, slow and soothing voice called the *terpnos logos*⁸. This relaxation is physiological and it is associated with an awareness of balance, form and breathing. The form is what characterises one's identity. This is the limit between the inner world and the outside world. The objective is to be available and attentive to what is happening in the body. Description of the three key techniques:

➤ The sophronization of the basis of living (*SBV: Sophronisation de Base Vivantielle*)
In order to relax, the SBV seeks to release system by system (a system corresponds to a body part) without tension, to become aware of the shape of each studied system in the process of releasing. Finally, to be aware of the shape of our whole body in the process of

⁷ French term which means the persons who are practicing sophrology

⁸ Specific term to the Sophrology with greek origin which means the "way of talking"

releasing. With inspiratory or expiratory ventilation, we create a whole tension throughout the body. Then, we observe the presence of the body directing on the perception of the shape of the body, balance and breathing.

➤ The sophro-displacement of the negative: evacuation of the negative

This is destined to remove all tension (painful or unpleasant sensations) in a way as natural as when we sigh. Unnecessary physical tension (which is not useful for the balance, the posture and movement) or parasitised ideas are considered to be negative. This is a "cleaning" of consciousness.

➤ The sophro-vitalization

This is an exercise to reinforce the vitality of the different body tissue present in each body system by slowly increasing the heat in each one. This technique enables the organs to be present in one's conscience and strengthen their biological structure.

The third phase is the intrasophronic activation. This is a set of physical and/or mental exercises (take a particular posture, imagine a future situation for example) that requires active participation, which generates perceptions and sensations or sentiments. This is an awareness training and the relationship between body and mind is going in both directions. After each exercise and at the end of the session: integration in order to memorise and live all the activated, it is an awareness of all the sensations without prejudice. It consists of an activation of the three basic capacities in the Caycedian Sophrology: Confidence, Harmony between body and mind, Hope or positive project.

The fourth phase is the desophronization: Recovery of the muscular tonus and the level of initial awareness by stretching each system.

The final phase is the post-sophronic description: description of the contents of the session by the practicing person, this is a possibility to express the felt sensations and perceptions during the session.

In order to summarise, Sophrology is a psycho-physical training of the conscience based on the positive perception of our inner world as well as the positive relationship with the outside world.

2. Self-Confidence

2.1 Becoming Self-Confident

In all my years of experience as a flute player in ensemble and solo, I have learned and become aware that being self-confident makes it possible to assess oneself well. One needs confidence to know oneself, to admit one's qualities as well as one's defects, to admit what one is able to do, and not to always judge oneself severely. It is also needed to admit and accept the fact that one is a human-being with the possibility to fail even if one does not want to. One does not need to torture oneself because of failure or doing an imperfect thing. Since achieving perfection is impossible for humans, wanting to do one's best or having an ideal that one strives for seems healthier than being a perfectionist. It is very hard to live as a perfectionist because it can make one insecure and suffer a lot.

2.2 Why Does an Orchestra Player Need Confidence?

As a musician, one is very exposed on stage by performing in real time for and with others. As an orchestra player, one must additionally find one's place and way of playing amongst all the other musicians. Furthermore, a musician must also comply with the conductor's demands. That is the reason why one needs to be secure while performing.

I am convinced that we share different types of energy with everyone. These types of energy have a relation with one's being. So if one has bad self-confidence and always doubts oneself, bad energy can be passed to the other musicians that are performing. The conductor can also feel this energy. It is really important that she/he and the other musicians trust each other in order to relax and communicate, so as to transmit music to the audience which is, as I see it, the main goal of the musicians. M. Ricquier explains this in his book, *Vaincre le Trac*: when several people have one negative thought, bad energy accrues between them and forms a bubble of stronger energy. The same phenomenon happens with good energy (2000, p.37).

Evidently, the audience can feel the good or bad energy; they can feel if there is direct and honest playing or if the musicians are hiding.

2.2.1 Especially for an Orchestra Wind Player

Effectively, the wind players each have their own music to play. When one plays a wind

instrument, one's part, in most of the cases, is unique. It can be a solo or one note of a chord, an addition of colour for the chord that is being played by one's section or inside another section. Each player has her/his own responsibility because what she/he plays needs to be brought out or because she/he has to know how to balance her/his voice in relation to the others.

Being sure of oneself is required to create the sound that one wants, to project wide sound and also to play softly. If one is not self-confident, if one is always focused on insecurities - like "will I manage to play that?", "what are they thinking of me?", "I hope I won't fail this passage", "My goodness! There must be very good musicians in the audience", "I don't want to disappoint", "maybe they can see that I am insecure", etc... - If one's mind is occupied by all these negative thoughts, one cannot concentrate on the music; the mind grows tense and in turn, the body becomes tense. This might cause one to produce a bad sonority. Also, because one's mind is disturbed by bad thoughts, one's ears are not so efficient. A bad sound will affect performance immediately. Indeed, it prevents one from transmitting the music in its pure essence and its meaning. Again, it is the case for all the instrumentalists but when one is a wind player, sound is created through breath. Furthermore, for the flute, the only way to produce sound is through one's lips and one's breath. There is no reed and no mouthpiece.

2.2.2 For an Orchestra Flute Player

One of my teachers in France explained that the flute is the only instrument that needs the human body to sound. Indeed, this instrument does not have any sound box or any bell. She told me that an experiment was done with all the wind instruments in which they sent air into each one with a pipe. The result was that each instrument produced a sound except the flute. They realised the flute needs a sound box, this means the contact with the bones; in other words: the sound box for each flautist is her/his skeleton. That is the reason why one's "sound box" does not resonate well if one's body and muscles are tense and one's bones are compressed. The sonority can seem "stuck" and is not as wide as when one is relaxed. It is also much more difficult to control the tuning if you do not master your sound. If some muscles like the lips are tense that is to say they have unnecessary and bad tension, they do not have flexibility to model the sound and the pitch.

- *As Principal Flute*

Being self-confident helps one correctly lead the other flautists if one plays as first flute. One has a responsibility towards the flautists and also towards the first oboe player and generally the other wind players, like I have explained above. When one plays as first flute, one has to be able to play solos and/or notes softly in the high register, sometimes, after a long time without playing. One has to be ready even if one's instrument and one's body are cold.

- *As Second Flute*

If one is playing as second flute, one has to adapt all the time. Indeed, one's sound has to melt into the first flute's sound; one has to find the same tuning, the same colour, the balance. It is really complicated and one has to be always ready to listen to the others. So if one is insecure or preoccupied by one's own problems, one cannot do this job; self-confidence is really needed. Also, if the second flute is self-confident, then her/his surrounding colleagues, like the first flute, will be able to count on her/him. It is much more relaxing and easier for everyone.

- *As a Piccolo Player*

If one is playing the piccolo, each note is heard by everyone because of the sound's power. One has some very important solos and also one's sound is a coloration of the orchestra's chord. It is in the very high register, so it passes over all of the orchestra. One can absolutely not hide.

For all these reasons, it is very important to feel as though one's body and mind are completely free in order to express the music that one is playing. Being sure and not doubting what one is doing and about what the conductor demands, is necessary to be flexible and openminded to the others. Otherwise it is not possible to make music. Finally, having good self-confidence enables one to enjoy playing and to feel good in what one is doing. It is certainly the main reason why I chose to play in the orchestra: to share pleasure by playing great pieces with others.

2.3 Succeeding in Auditions

If one does not have enough self-confidence, one cannot succeed in auditions. Even if one manages to play correctly, the jury will feel the insecurity in one's playing. Self-confidence must be in one's appearance and posture as well as one's sound, if the jury does not see the person who is auditioning behind the screen. The jury will mostly likely not hire the applicant that lacks confidence; they will place their trust in a solid person. Even if one is not a solid person in general or, if at this moment one is weaker, one has to show that one can be solid for the orchestra, that the conductor and the colleagues can trust that person. Obviously, it is not the only reason that one will be chosen. Nobody knows the “recipe” to get the job but I am sure that between two people that please the jury, the self-confident one will be chosen.

Here is an example that illustrates this: when I was student in the bachelor programme, our teacher organised our semester exam as an orchestra audition. I arrived in the final round with a friend and at the end the jury called us together in the room to play some excerpts in order to decide between. I remember that it was a very bad feeling for me. Each time my friend was playing and I was waiting and listening, I was thinking that she was playing better than me and all of these kinds of bad destructive thoughts that are described above were present in my mind. So when I was playing, I felt worse and worse. Finally, the jury chose my friend as the winner and they told me that it was just because they felt she was stronger in her mind and more self-confident.

3. My Experiment

3.1 Planning, time frame

In this section, I describe exercises I did during the first two semesters of my master studies and my reflections and evaluations of them. I got these exercises from my sophrologist a few months before living in Sweden when I had five sophrology sessions with her. Even if I am continuing with my different exercises, I am basing this written work on this first year experiment.

At the beginning of my Masters, I decided to restart doing them. I did all the exercises from the first session every day during one week. Then, I did all the exercises from the second session every day during the second week and so on and so forth during

five weeks with the exercises from the five sessions. It represents the first five weeks of my first year in this Master programme.

I was doing the body exercises in the morning and the visualisations in the evening except for the first week because I only had a small visualisation following the body exercises. So that first week, I did nothing in the evening.

I had planned after these five weeks to start again with other five weeks based on the same model but finally, I felt that it was better for me to take my favourite exercises from each session and make a new model from them that I would do every day (see the following part). I continued with this new model for the rest of the next semester.

3.2 Description and Observations of the First Five Weeks

1st week

In the Morning

- 1st exercise: placing my body in a good standing posture to feel the different parts of my body and loosen them.
- 2nd exercise: 4 relaxed movements.
 - Pelvis rotation with relaxed arms that follow the movement.
 - Lateral swaying of the body with relaxed head and neck.
 - Inclination of the whole body towards the feet, staying a few seconds down and standing up little-by-little.
 - Swaying back and forth.
- 3rd exercise: 3 big breaths: by raising my arms very high on the inhalation and on the exhalation, I bring the energy towards myself with my arms.
- 4th exercise: seated with a good posture.
 - Feeling the contact points between the body and the chair.
 - 10 abdominal breaths by inhaling through my nose and exhaling through my mouth with more time. Feeling every part of the body and loosening.
- 5th exercise: evocation of a pleasant place.

- Thinking, with closed eyes, of this place and trying to remember the feelings with the five senses. Assessing the peace and the beauty.

Take a big breath and install this positive feeling in each cell of my body.

This session enabled me to awaken the different parts of my body. One day, in the middle of the week, I could not do my exercises and I realised that my body was more tense and my breathing, while playing, was not as good as usual. I realised that doing fifteen minutes of exercise was not a waste of time. At the end of the week, I was aware that my body was generally very tense when I played. I felt locked, as if I were handcuffed, I felt that for that moment my body was hindering my musical expression.

2nd week

In the Morning

- Inhaling the upper energy through my nose and exhaling it through my mouth in the direction of my feet. Imagining that the air is going in my roots deeply.
- Inhaling the lower energy by imagining that it is going up through one leg, putting the air in my pelvic area, blocking a few seconds and exhaling by imagining that the energy is going down through the other leg.
- Walking slowly and becoming aware of the vertical height, imagining the roots and feeling the movements of my ankles, calves, thighs, hips.

I realised that my back had a tendency to subside so I tried to use it as support as often as possible. In the same way, my shoulders had a tendency to close so the vertical height exercise helped me keep them open. Before, I had the tendency to feel guilty when I realised that I had a bad posture or that I was tense but since practicing sophrology, I know that I have to think about my body as often as possible so that I am aware of its state and can correct it. I am not “allowed” to blame myself anymore! Otherwise, the body will do the opposite of what I want. The muscles are not used to do this posture so they are not strong. It made me think of what my flute teacher told me during the first lesson we had at the beginning of the Masters programme. In the first moment, he saw that the upper part of my body was tense and he said: “you do not have to expect to do big changes in one go

but little-by-little, it is like that you will progress quicker.”

In the Evening

- Massaging myself softly by passing my hands on my face, my chest, my stomach, my legs.
 - Relaxation, observing my feelings and realising the presence of the different parts of my body.
 - Being aware of the breath without changing anything and on the exhalation address one positive word to the body. For me the word was “trust”.
 - Feelings welcome and awaken the body.

This week, I became aware that by playing, if my mind is concentrated and involved and that I put all my will to express something but the body is passive, the part “body” misses in my involvement, I could not really transmit the music and my expression.

3rd week

In the Morning

- Quick loosening and creating good posture.
- Concentrating on the interaction points and removing negative energy by exhaling.
- Turning my head and my neck very slowly on each side.

I felt good after doing this exercise. I became aware of tension in the higher part of my body.

- Clenching one arm for a few seconds and relaxing the rest of the body.

This exercise was very difficult but very useful because, as a flute player, one has to have some tension, like in the diaphragm or in some muscles of the arms to hold the flute but not in every part of the body.

In the Evening

- The same as in the 2nd week.

During this week, we had an ergonomics lesson where we were doing some similar exercise to stretch the body. The lesson lasted one hour and after it, I went to practice and it was so much easier to breathe! We also had the class, “stage presence”. This class complemented the ergonomics lesson because it dealt with the mental side of our profession. We talked a lot about the themes that I am becoming aware through the sophrology so it is very interesting for me.

4th week

In the Morning

- Standing in a good posture: on the inhalation, loosening each part of the body and on the exhalation, being aware of the “presence” of the part.
- Concentrating on the interaction points and removing the negative by exhaling.
- Stretching exercises while standing:
 - making faces and moving the neck
 - shrugging and lowering shoulders
 - clenching my fists in front of them in my chest region and, on the inhalation, spreading my arms. Feeling that my thorax is opening.

Sit down between each movement and, on the inhalation, say “presence” and on the exhalation, imagine a positive thing or word.

For me, it was a way to say “good morning” to my body, to be aware of each part of it.

In the Evening

- Massage etc. in a faster way.
- Visualisation of a moment as a flautist on stage. This text was written by my sophrologist (I did the translation in English) by taking inspiration from an example in the book *Le pianiste réconcilié: Comportements pianistiques par la sophrologie* by Marie-Claude Gomila-Bonifacio (2009, p.101) and according to the things I told

her. I recorded it to listen and to do what she was saying. We can also find a similar and more comprehensive text in the book *Traité méthodique de pédagogie instrumentale* by Michel Ricquier in his part about self-hypnosis (1982, p.125-127).

Observe mentally the place in detail. Rejoice in being able to do this audition as a possible chance to be flautist in an orchestra. The jury is/is not visible but it is composed of musicians who came for you too. Thank them mentally. Feel with joy the moment to enter in this place. Install yourself and take a big breath. On the exhalation, loosen all your body and think of a pleasant word. Feel that you are concentrated, quiet and be at the height of your powers. Your breath is quiet, you feel the presence of your body. Start your piece, your playing is secure and musical. You are totally concentrated and you follow each excerpt with self-control. You are preoccupied by the music and nothing else matters, it is an absolute moment. You place the last note. You take a moment of silence. You thank the pianist with a look and you go calmly in the corridor, happy about the accomplished work.

5th week

In the Morning

- Standing with the flute in my hands, loosening each part of my body. On the exhalation, telling mentally “aware of the relax face” etc. for each part.
- Coordinating the body energy: concentrating on the interaction points, on the inhalation mentally saying the word “harmonisation” and on the exhalation mentally saying the word “vital”.
- Saying this sentence to myself: “I trust in the life that is in me”.

In the Evening

- The same visualisation as in the 4th session.

During this week, I was becoming aware that I did not manage to separate the good from bad tension when I was playing.

Concluding Observations

Of course, doing all of the sessions can not change me in only a few weeks, I know that I have to do them every day for a long time but I observed that, in general, I was calmer and

above all, I was aware of a lot of things about my body. For example, I was more aware of tension, my bad posture, and so it was easier to correct them. The best I hoped was to be aware of my body in almost every time of the day to feel better in every situation (especially when I played the flute).

Before doing these five sessions, I thought that when I would finish, I would begin from the first and continue to the fifth, again and again. But actually there are exercises that I preferred and I thought it would be better to do a model session with all the exercises I liked to do every day.

3.3 New Model Session

In the Morning

➤ 4 relaxed movements

- pelvis rotation with relaxed arms that follow the movement
- lateral swaying of the body with a relaxed head and neck
- inclination of the whole body towards the feet, staying down for a few seconds and moving up, little-by-little
- swaying back and forth

➤ Stretching exercises while standing:

- making faces and moving my neck
- shrugging and lowering my shoulders
- clenching and letting my fists meet in front of the chest region and, on the inhalation, spreading my arms. Feeling that my thorax is opening.

Sit down between each movement and, on the inhalation, say “presence” and on the exhalation, imagine a positive thing or word.

- 3 big breaths: by raising the arms very high on the inhalation and on the exhalation, I bring the energy towards myself with my arms.
- Inhaling the down energy which corresponds with the energy coming from the ground, the earth by imagining that it is going up through one leg, putting the air in the pelvic area, block a few seconds and exhaling by imagining that the energy is

going down through the other leg.

- Turning the head and the neck very slowly on each side.
- Standing with the flute in my hands, loosening each part of the body. On the exhalation, telling mentally “aware of the relax face” etc.
- Coordinating the body energy: concentrating on the interaction points, on the inhalation telling mentally “harmonisation” and on the exhalation telling mentally “vital”.

In the Evening

- Visualisation: I try to adapt it according to my next event: mock audition, audition, group class.

I did these exercises for another eight months with one gap in January that resulted in some consequences as I describe in the third part with my observations about mock auditions.

3.4 Reflections/Observations: Auditions, Orchestra Projects and Collective Classes

3.4.1 Mock Auditions and Real Auditions

The auditions are organised by any orchestra which needs to employ a new musician. There are several eliminatory rounds in which applicants have to play a part of a concerto and excerpts from the orchestral literature that require special skills for the applicant’s instrument. Generally one has to play behind a screen during the first round and sometimes the second one as well.

At the Academy of Music and Drama, three mock auditions take place every semester, in order to prepare the students for the real auditions. The students have to perform an extract from the usual required concertos or orchestral excerpts, sometimes behind a screen. The jury listens and gives the students feedback, which helps them improve.

In the first mock audition that took place during the fourth week of my exercises: I felt very stressed before playing but I became better little-by-little when I was playing. I

cannot say that I felt very good but I was quite concentrated and it was not so awful! I also cannot say that I managed to play as well as I can when I am alone but I know that it could have been worse. I hope doing these exercises will cause me to feel better each time that I perform a mock audition.

At the second mock audition, just before coming in the audition room, I was feeling anxious but I think I could control it with my breath. When I was playing, there were moments that I felt bad because I lost my concentration some times and I thought “what are they thinking about me?”, “they must think that I play bad and that I am not good”. This time, when I started to have those bad thoughts, I tried to think in my body, my breath and what I was working with in my visualisations.

A week after this audition, I listened to my recording of it. With time, I was able to listen with detachment like if it was another person who was playing. The first thing I heard was that I was not calm. I could hear that it was well done, the sound was quite good but I felt the person was playing (myself!) was not calm nor serene.

Despite this, the jury told me that it was a good audition. They said that I could control my nerves and that visually I was able to hide that I was nervous. It was good to know because I was convinced that I was revealing my negative feelings. I was wrong to believe the bad thoughts that I was having. Eventually, I told myself that I was not so ridiculous when I was playing and if I would do a real audition and I would not pass the round, I could ask the jury the reasons for their decision in order to improve and not to leave feeling very bad and demoralised without knowing what I would have to do better.

I prepared for the third mock audition quite well through visualisation. I remembered to imagine that I was playing in a big room and even if one of my legs shivered, I felt quite good and tried to express the music even if I knew that it was not perfect. However, I felt that I played less well than in the small rehearsal ten minutes before the audition. I felt that I gave everything in the rehearsal, I enjoyed playing a lot and so when I had to play for the real audition, I felt that I had given too much and I did not feel the same pleasure and energy. I realised that it was not the first time that this had happened to me, so I had to think of that and find a different approach to those short rehearsals. Perhaps not playing everything but only some passages, like the entrances, would help me perform better during the mock auditions. Indeed, in the feedback I had from the jury, they said that the best place was the cadenza, which I did not play in the rehearsal before. They also told me in the positive comments that I had a really good posture and presentation and one of

them wrote, “very secure playing”.

In the same week, I was reading books about sophrology and I was reminded that my sophrologist gave me other visualisations to do. I remembered that before doing the visualisation that I explained on p.21, she asked me to imagine myself in a professional orchestra playing the flute and feeling all the good sensations and emotions that I could have. The other one was visualising that I would pass an audition. She told me, “imagine you are invited to a friend's place for dinner and they congratulate you. You explain to them how it went, what you did to succeed in the audition etc. with a lot of details.” I had to organise my visualisations for the next mock audition considering this.

I felt quite bad in the fourth mock. It was the first mock audition behind the screen and for me playing in that condition was very hard and strange. I did not dare to take the time before playing to relax me and concentrate correctly. I was thinking: “they are waiting for me.” My heartbeats were quite fast and I did not like my sound, so I was very disappointed and I played one excerpt very badly. When I finished, I was very ashamed to go to talk with the jury. But I was quite surprised because they told me a lot of good things. By thinking, I realised that even though one excerpt was bad and I had to improve some small things, there were also very good excerpts that I could still play. I realised that I did not do my visualisations very well before this mock. A few days before, I was anxious because there were very technically difficult excerpts. I learnt from this because for the one that scared me the most, I wanted to be very deeply into the music and it was the best one I played.

In the fifth mock, we had to play the first movement of a romantic concerto which corresponded to what we generally have to play in the second round of a real audition. I was very calm, concentrated and enjoyed playing, very good feeling. I was not at ease with the tempo because the pianist was a substitute and did not know the concerto so it was difficult to find each other. At the same time, I knew that I had to improve my way of leading the music in order to make clear what I want with pianists. The preparation of including the fact that I would have to play behind the screen worked well. The jury told me that I could give even more musically and they made some suggestions about the vibrato but in general I received good comments about my playing and they told me that if it was a real audition, I would have passed the round.

I did the first real audition for an orchestra in Jönköping. For the first round, everything happened exactly as in my visualisations that I did regularly. I was very calm

and concentrated in the music. I was very happy. For the second round, I was quite relaxed too and not perturbed by the jury (without screen) but I thought that I was slightly anxious during one excerpt because when I was in my preparation room I heard somebody playing it so fast and so well and I thought “Oh, I should play it like her/him or something like that”. In short, she/he made me doubt my playing.

The sixth and last mock audition was quite good. I remembered that I felt some stage fright physical symptoms but I could manage to control them with my breathing. In my mind, I was totally focused in what I wanted to do. I had very good comments from the jury.

I prepared for the second real audition (for the Opera of Copenhagen) more than I had ever prepared for an audition. I was really motivated and I spent a lot of energy to prepare for it and I improved my playing a lot. However, I realised after the audition that I wanted to trust in myself but I was not convinced at the 100%. When I was doing my visualisations, there was a kind of “but are you sure that you are really able to do it?” I thought the jury felt that in my playing so I did not pass the first round.

The third and last real audition I did during this period of experiment was in Lisboa. In this audition, I was very well prepared for the Mozart concerto but not really enough for a few of the excerpts. I realised that on the day of an audition, one cannot lie to oneself. Indeed, when the jury announced the excerpts to be played for the first round, I felt a little insecure about myself. I did not take the time to do my sophrology exercises before the audition and I felt a lot of unpleasant stage fright symptoms. I understood that I could not avoid the exercises. I was happy because I played the concerto well despite of the bad physical symptoms. The jury then asked me to play the excerpts with the piccolo.

3.4.2 Orchestra Projects

The main focus in the Master's programme in Orchestral Performance is playing in an orchestra; every month we have a week, during which, we have rehearsals with a guest conductor in order to prepare at least one concert at the end of that week. Generally, I enjoyed these periods very much even if some circumstances made me feel more or less anxious, stressed or doubting but I could see that the sophrology helped me to cope with that.

In the first project, for instance, I was quite anxious, very impressed by the

conductor and all my colleagues. I was playing the piccolo, I had the heartbeats very fast after each passage I played and I could not really manage to enjoy playing. I was too inexperienced with sophrology, it was not assimilated enough and I did not have the reflexes to think of my body/mind or breath exercises to feel better. However, I knew very deep in myself that playing in orchestra was what I had always dreamt.

I played the piccolo in two other projects during the year and each time it was a source of doubt and bad thoughts in my head: “what the others must think about me?” etc. In one session, there were two really hard excerpts for intonation and sound quality. I thought that my level was not high enough. In these moments, I was doubting and feeling down. In the other one, it was not so difficult but at the beginning of the session, I had difficulties to place myself. Indeed, I had difficulties to find the sound balance and the tuning. I realised during this session that I had always had a very bad day during these orchestra weeks and actually it was the bad day of my menstruation, so I understood what was happening! Then I decided to apply one positive visualisation and I realised that some people were not very clear and stable in their playing, so it meant that it was not my fault or only my fault. In both cases, I was beginning to think too much, imagining that I did not have the capacities or that it was my fault if it did not work in the orchestra or in the wind section. I was conditioning my mind even before something occurred. During the concerts I managed to be quite calm and to enjoy the music and the great conductors.

The same happened the first time I played the part of the first flute. The weekend before beginning rehearsals, I was stressed. I felt unable to assume the “role” and responsibility of the first flute. Finally, when the rehearsals began, I was not so bad. I did not feel the fast beating of my heart. The bad thing I felt was that I was often wondering if what I was doing was good or not. I tried to trust in myself but it was quite difficult. I felt that I needed to be reassured all the time.

During the other project, in which I played first flute, I realised that my self-confidence was a little better but had still to improve. At the beginning, I felt better and I was more confident about my playing but this week was a little strange. There were a lot of people with a lower level who did not play normally in this orchestra and the tuning was awful. We never managed to play in tune and as we went along the week I was thinking that it was my fault, that I was wrong. I did not know how to hear and how to play until the first oboe told me that it was not my fault but everybody's. Actually, when you play the flute, you have the notes in high register and if the chord is not in tune, we hear the flute out of

tune even if the flautist plays in tune, it is quite sly and unfair. So I felt better after the first oboe talked to me because she reassured me. I thought the self-confidence makes possible to feel good and not to doubt about yourself if anybody plays wrong near you and that I really needed to improve it more.

Other situations that I learnt about self-confidence were in two different projects I played with a very good colleague. Always this bad thing of comparing each other... In the both first rehearsals in section I was quite anxious but I realised that they worked well so in the project week I was quite relaxed and happy to learn from good colleagues and the amazing conductor. In the first concert, I think it was the first time in my life that I felt totally relaxed and concentrated. It was amazing!

The second time I played with this colleague, I had the first part and he played the second one. I knew that my thoughts were ridiculous but I could not avoid feeling "guilty" because I was still thinking that he was better than me. So, along the week I had difficulties to find my place as the first flute, I could not lead (because I avoided myself). Finally I talked with him and I had the chance that he was a very understanding person, so I could find more energy and self-confidence. I adopted an invigorating posture, I payed more attention to my breathing and I could enjoy the music during the concert and lead more.

Once I was very excited to play because of the programme. Unfortunately, I quickly became disappointed by the conductor and I began to feel down. But in one rehearsal, I realised that I was here for the music not for the conductor and I decided to take things in hand, expecting nothing from the conductor, trying to do my best despite that. I think I had no choice, I had to be very secure in my playing because I could not count on him. I also remembered what I read the week before about the power of imagination and the feelings I found when I was completely into the music. So each time I started to feel down, I told myself "I will manage to do it" and, even if it was difficult to believe it, I continued. And then Wednesday night, before sleeping, I imagined that I managed to play very well in the concert. I was enjoying the music very much, people were very happy with my playing. The day after, I felt so much better, it was incredible! I thought "Woo, it works!?!". So I continued like this and during the concert, I felt very good, I was enjoying the music totally. I managed to play one famous excerpt for the flute very calm and serene. Actually I was even surprised that I could play one quite important first flute part so relaxed.

With distance, I realise that I was missing so much self-confidence that for the lower

external event or even before, I placed myself as the guilty one or the most inferior. I always needed other people to reassure me. Sophrology made me understand that I have to find assurance in myself otherwise it will always lack. I could observe that if I arrived at the rehearsals with self-confidence, I was able to play better. My mind was free to focus on the essentials and to find the resources that I needed at the moment.

3.4.3 Collective Classes

During the collective classes, the flute students get together and each plays one piece with the pianist in front of the other students and the teacher. This was the worst moment for me. My feelings were always bad. I could not avoid thinking that the others were better than me and that I played the worse even if I knew that I should not think of that. In the first ones, before becoming aware of all that the sophrology provided to me, I could not deal with my stage fright and my feelings were awful by playing.

I did some visualisations for these classes but I did not prepare them as well as I did for an audition. However, when I started my visualisations nearly one week before a collective class, I finally felt better. It was not perfect because I still found it very difficult to play one concerto or a sonata with the pianist without rehearsing at all before but I did not have so much of those bad and dark thoughts. I also realised that I had to put myself more and more in the music in order to not think about stupid things. I always want to perform well, I have a lot of good will but expecting too much makes it impossible for me to live what I am doing.

In these classes I never succeed in feeling totally at ease. I managed to feel a bit better before playing, I almost avoided thinking “She/he is playing so well, I don't play so well... She/he is much better than me...” But when I arrived at the music stand, my heart suddenly raced and I had to make a lot of efforts to control myself and not to be disturbed by the natural thoughts that arrived at that moment.

Conclusion and Discussion

Practicing Sophrology during this one-year-period made me aware of a lot of things. Sometimes I realised obvious things but one needs to live it and realise it by oneself to measure the importance and the impact it has in order to change. For instance, one day I became aware of the huge importance of sleeping and being well-rested. I think we do not care too much when we are studying or working a lot. That week, I had been tired and I realised how I was less patient, how it was so complicate to concentrate myself to think and to do things efficiently and I was becoming aware that it had an influence on my morale too. Soon after I became tired, I felt down. The day after, I decided to sleep all the morning. It was difficult to take this decision because I felt guilty but I did it anyway. In the afternoon, it was easy for me to have a great and wide sound, it was really amazing! Again, that shows the importance of caring for our bodies and if one wants to use one's mind well, one's body has to be ok. As Eckhart Tolle says it in his book *Mettre en pratique le pouvoir du moment présent*: “do not only think with your head, think with all your body” (2002, p.46).

One other day, I had a lot of unexpected things and I lost my patience, I worried, I felt oppressed and bad. I did not want to play the flute and, at the same time, I was realising that it was ridiculous to react this way. A little later, I decided to do my sophrology session. The results came as soon as I did the first exercise. I began to yawn and at the end of it, I felt so much better that I could start to play serenely.

Thanks to the sophrology I had new ideas during my practice sessions as well. I realised, for example, that I had to do an exercise to be able to contract the diaphragm in order to play the flute properly and to feel relaxed in the other parts of my body at the same time. So I contracted my diaphragm by exhaling and I tried to move my arms and the rest of my body by loosening it. I also became aware that if I imagine that I was playing in a big room like a concert hall, my posture improved and my sound enhanced automatically.

Little-by-little, I was able to feel that my shoulders were tense during the day even if I was not playing. So I could think of relaxing them. For me, it was a real progress. It was during this period that I decided to add the sentence “I trust in the life that is in myself”, in my new sophrology model session. Also, when I read one passage from Dürckeim's book about the Hara (see part 1.2.1 p.7), I tried to think of it. I observed that it helped me a lot to

be more relaxed in my daily life and in my playing, it enabled me to be more focused.

After one sophrology exercise, I realised that actually there is nothing new in all that. We just exploit, explore and develop the resources that we possess in ourselves but we ignore most of the time. Nevertheless, Sophrology really helped and still helps me. As a new tool and as a new activity, one has to practice it to receive its effects. I have not acquired all of them yet. I have to do my exercises regularly and not stop, otherwise the bad symptoms and habits will come back easily and I know that it takes a very long time to feel better and fully-concentrated. My self-confidence improved but still has to enhance. When I am preparing myself for an audition, I still have this deep doubt in myself, which says “are you sure that you are able to get the job?”

However, I am conscious of how different and better I feel now in comparison with before my experiment with sophrology. I can enjoy the orchestra weeks even if there are difficulties. I can focus on what I have to because I do not imagine negative things in advance anymore. If something creates a worry or a feeling of insecurity, I can think of my breath or of one relaxation exercise to help me. I am not wondering all the time if what I am doing is good or bad anymore. I assess myself quite well and I know if I am doing well or poorly. In this last case, I am not so anxious because most of the time I know what to do in order to improve. In any case, if a worry persists, I do not blame myself anymore. Regarding the mock or real auditions, I know just after playing if I will pass or not. What I feel corresponds quite often with the results or the jury's comments.

Thanks to the class of Stage Presence I could understand what my sophrologist explained to me about lowering our lowest level of acceptance. At that time, I listened to her but I could not really understand the concept because we did not have so much time together. Now I have accepted that I am a human being, not a machine, that failure can occur and I will learn from it. I will certainly feel more relaxed and it will be easier not to judge myself all the time. I have realised how it is complicated but necessary to have a non-judgmental assessment about myself. As a musician, my task is to express the music to the audience and to do that, I have to accept myself as a human being that is able to express feelings and not only playing techniques. This acceptance will also surely improve the technical playing as well. Through this acceptance, I can release the pressure in my mind, which will release tensions in my body. Again, being relaxed enables me to play easily even the technically difficult excerpts.

The main reason why I chose to experiment with sophrology was music, the flute,

and the fact that I wanted to succeed in auditions. When I called the sophrologist, I did not expect that it would change my general outlook on life as well.

I have learnt to be more serene to envisage and perceive life in a positive way, to see that we can always find a solution before being worried and paralysed by anxiety. I have understood that life is not so difficult but it is the way that one perceives it that makes it more or less difficult, “what you call your life should be called more correctly your conditions of life” (Tolle, 2002, p.21).

I have also discovered that I could be more autonomous, that one has a lot of capacities to trust and develop. This has also improved my relationships with the other people. I have felt much more open and curious to meet and learn from them. Actually, I think it is an important enrichment for my future profession. Indeed, playing in a professional orchestra does not only require a good performer but a pleasant colleague, a person who can be a resource for the group as well.

That is my own experiment and I hope that the readers of this thesis can find some ideas to make their own experiment.

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