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Conclusions

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Why do we become actors?

During an open lecture, before an audience thirsty for questions and answers, Michael Chekhov stated: “I became an actor because I needed to express my ‘*Self*’-*my own ‘I’*. Not the ‘me’, Michael Chekhov, who marries and has children, but the ‘Me’, Michael Chekhov about whom I shall think before I die, if I am in full consciousness, just before I die.”¹ Based on Michael Chekhov’s confession, we believe that an actor must learn to understand his feelings, emotions, impulses and, not least, to listen to his inner voice.

Today’s art world resorts to all manner of techniques, from psycho-physical exercises, to meditation, Zen practice, and Yoga, that develop both relaxation as well as a path to inner peace, so essential for an artist. However, they forget or are simply unaware that they have Stanislavski’s findings at hand, or, rather, they do not fully grasp the importance of these findings which is that they provide a solid basis not only for understanding the actor’s creativity but, one might say, even for understanding human psychology in general, and of the audience in particular.

We believe that all findings and procedures involved in the development of the actor’s skills can be applied to develop skills in anyone. The actor must be able to distinguish between the reality of the character he plays and the reality of his own behavior and consequently create real characters, based on the principles that govern our lives in general. The actor should not create a character mechanically and externally, but stimulate his own reality to resemble that of the character. In my mind I hear even now the voice of the great Eugene Ionesco: *I expose others and I expose myself*. Certainly when an artist creates a work of art it takes on certain significance because it is meant to express something, a state, a feeling or, why not, a certain baring or exposure of the self.

In 1996 I attended an extraordinary workshop, in *Arcuș*, with the director Radu Penciulescu. Between decoding Shakespeare and the euphoria induced by such a meeting, I remember the master’s references to Sanford Meisner, who, while teaching drama at the *Neighborhood Playhouse* in New York, taught his students that *the purpose of art is to illuminate the human condition* and that artists have to create in such a way as *to express life at its most meaningful because they cannot let themselves be distracted by superficiality*.

Certainly it can be said that in the field of expression and developing the art of acting,

¹ Michael Chekov, *On Theatre and the Art of Acting, The five-hours CD Master Class with the acclaimed Actor-Director-Teacher, A guide to discovery with exercises by Mala Power*, The Working Arts Library, New York, 2004, p. 15.

Konstantin Stanislavski's research has served as the basis for later discoveries. Therefore one of the most important aspects of the *system* is the universal approach of the actor's challenges. Over the years there has been much criticism of the *system* and specifically of Stanislavski's training techniques. Such criticism has revolved around the fact that the *system* might have been the result of Stanislavski's poetic vision which, according to some, is limited only to portraying the character and, as a consequence, is dependent on realistic texts.

In other words, an actor trained by the rules of the *system* could only play in a realistic key. Completely wrong! Such a view seems to ignore the powerful influence exerted first by Vakhtangov and later by Chekhov and Meyerhold over the destiny-one might say-of the *system*. If we read Stanislavski's work only from the point of view of Stanislavski's achievements, we may err by regarding the *system* as limited to the realistic style of interpretation. But an unbiased look at the *system* reveals a different perspective. That is why to understand the *system* we must start with Stanislavski's definition that the *system* suggests to the actor to build his own path to achieving a certain *stage sensitivity*, which is re-creating on stage *the easiest and most normal human behavior*. So if one looks at Vakhtangov's brave and brilliant use of the same procedures of the *system*, one sees two different styles in two different epic productions. The performance of Shlomi Zanol Rappoport (Sholomon Ansky)'s play *The Dybbuk*, which premiered on January 31, 1922 at the *Habima Theatre* was considered grotesque, while the performance of Carlo Gozzi's play *Princess Turandot* at *Studio Three* of the *Moscow Art Theater*, which also premiered in 1922, a month later, was considered to be highly theatrical. So we have two very different styles of interpretation but under the direction of the same man employing the same work method, the *system*.

Many years later, in 1961, B. Singermann wrote about Brecht that "in his theater, as in Prokofiev's music and Mayakovsky's poetry, 'left' [or avant-garde]'art has become classical', and compared the group scenes in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* with Vakhtangov's famous production of *The Dybbuk*."² We believe that there is a similarity between Vakhtangov and Brecht, not only in terms of style, imagination and spirit, but also in their attitude towards Stanislavski. Vakhtangov advocates inventiveness, imagination, composition which is why he says that when he laughs, the actor actually "doesn't laugh, but demonstrates laughter."³

But we will address Brecht and the *alienation effect* a little later. What we wish to

² John Willett, *Brecht on Theatre / The Development Of An Aesthetic*, Hill and Wang / A division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2001, p. 238.

³ John Willett, *Brecht on Theatre / The Development Of An Aesthetic*, p. 238.

emphasize here is that during the twentieth century, specifically in the early '60s and then the '80s, various experimental theories and theaters cropped up, whose spectacular achievements threatened to destroy the naturalism and realism that had inoculated the actors. Artists are like builders, in that both creation and construction involve a certain risk of bringing on not only friends or enemies, but also indifferent people. There are many who embrace the *system*, but at the same time there are many who object to it. Stella Adler said that “Mr. Stanislavsky had *his* Method. Do you understand? It was a method that included the French style of acting, which was based on *Commedia dell'Arte*. It was a method that included the Italian school of operatic acting. For Stanislavsky the greatest actor was Salvini, and Salvini said, ‘What is acting? Voice. Voice. And Voice.’”⁴

Unlike the actors who prefer the *system* or spontaneous emotion, English actor Paul Scofield prefers technique. Along the same line of reasoning, he acknowledges that actors “have to be lucky to hit the bulls-eye without technique. What happens to them on an off-night? How do you fill the void?”⁵

For Laurence Olivier, who has a different opinion on performing, the art of acting requires a lot of discipline and even though he does not use the *system*, he considers Stanislavski useful. As it is widely known, Laurence Olivier had perfect technique and very often many of us, even if we would never acknowledge it out loud, thought it was the only thing that actor Laurence Olivier had going for him.

But, according to Stella Adler, one night, when Laurence Olivier was playing Shakespeare’s Othello, he gave such an *unusual* performance, that at the end of the night the audience would not stop applauding. Actress Maggie Smith, Olivier’s partner, who was playing Desdemona, went to Olivier after the curtain was brought down and asked him: “Larry, how did you do it?”⁶ and Olivier’s answer was honest and simple: “I don’t know. I don’t know.”⁷ What we do know is that after that performance Laurence Olivier entered a period of artistic crisis. After that magnificent evening, the great Laurence Olivier “was convinced that he knew nothing about acting.”⁸ After that night a tortured period started, a period filled with evil thoughts.

What would happen if they had to stop the performance because he could not remember his lines? How could he look the audience in the eye if one evening he would have

⁴ Stella Adler, *The Art Of Acting*, p. 14.

⁵ Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of passion / The development of the Method*, p. 167.

⁶ Stella Adler, *The Art Of Acting*, p. 27.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

to apologize to them because he would not be able to perform, because he is not ready? How...? If...? How...? If...? Fortunately for Laurence Olivier, this did not happen.

After a period of questions and answers, Larry, as his colleagues called him, did try to explain, though without any considerable success, this *period of doubt* that he had experienced. Therefore I must embrace Stella Adler's view when she says that all this torture began after that night when Olivier "*did some of the best acting he ever did in his life and didn't understand how.*"⁹ Laurence Olivier's experience only endorses Stanislavski who said that in order to replicate organic behavior on stage, the actor must "work, study and have technique. That is the system."¹⁰

Of course, technique is what, when on stage, helps us control our every move, helps us drill deeper into the character to reach its natural and organic core, and for that reason the actor must develop his body expressiveness, improve his voice and, last but not least, the actor must use his mind. All this involves technique and style. No art is simply a matter of talent. In terms of my own experience as an actor, I can say that it is true that spontaneous emotion has sometimes led me to magnificent results, but other times my performance has been based largely on technique.

We believe that when Stanislavski speaks of *the simplest and most normal human condition* he is referring to the physical and physiological aspects, that is the actor's *body and mind*. So the actor's mind requires the body to act and react naturally. In Stanislavski's view, *the mind represents the intellect, the will and the feeling*, which are all closely interlinked. In everyday life, all the commands that the mind gives to the body are real, but on stage, the commands that are not real must become real, and that is where what Stanislavski calls „perezhivanie,"¹¹ the return to life, comes in. Through *pereshivanie* the actor's mind learns to give those commands to the body that compel the body to react naturally and organically.

Stanislavski wants the actor, when on stage, to react to what he tastes, hears, touches and sees. It is clear that the actor's main quest is to find a way to access spontaneous emotion through technique. Obviously, a technique which is unrelated to talent is unrelated to art. It is only related to certain skills. And so it never reaches beyond technique and style.

So what are we, actors, to do either in theater or in film, when we are always pressured by the attitude that *time is money*, especially when exerted by directors and producers? Should we follow the beaten path of the *system*, should we choose the path of Artaud's *cruelty*, or try

⁹ Stella Adler, *The Art Of Acting*, p. 27.

¹⁰ Eugenio Barba, Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology / The Secret Art of the Performer*, p. 151.

¹¹ Perezhivanie translates into English as the return to life.

to rediscover Grotowski's *poor theater*, Brecht's *alienation effect*, Anne Bogart's *viewpoints elements*, Suzuki's *physical training* or Del Close's *long-term improvisation*?

It is true that Artaud, Grotowski, Brecht, Anne Bogart, Tadashi Suzuki and even Del Close have tried through their non-realistic work to diminish somewhat Stanislavski's achievements, as well as of those who followed and expressed the intent of *the system*. But it seems that so far, the promises, hopes, and results of the avant-garde approaches have not reached as far as the echoes and achievements of those who followed the *system*. And we think this is because the *system* bears on the training, and the expressive interpretation, but also on the real life problems the actor faces.

As a theorist in the field of theatrical art, Antonin Artaud's influence is undeniable, but "the paradox of Artaud lies in the fact that it is impossible to carry out his proposals. (...) Artaud left no concrete technique behind him. He left visions, metaphors."¹² Nevertheless, in the *Theatre of Cruelty* (First Manifesto) Artaud stressed that "We cannot go on prostituting the idea of theater whose only value is in its excruciating, magical relation with reality and danger. (...) The question, then, for the theater, is to create metaphysics of speech, gesture, and expression, in order to rescue it from its servitude to psychology and human interest. But all this can be of no use unless behind such an effort there is some kind of real metaphysical inclination, an appeal to certain unhabitual ideas, which by their very nature cannot be limited or even formally depicted. (...) Every spectacle will contain a physical and objective element, perceptible to all. Cries, groans, apparitions, surprises, theatricalities of all kinds, magic beauty of costumes taken from certain ritual models; resplendent lighting, incantational beauty of voices, the charms of harmony, rare notes of music, colors of objects, physical rhythm of movements whose crescendo and decrescendo will accord exactly with the pulsation of movements familiar to everyone, concrete appearances of new and surprising objects, masks, effigies yards high, sudden changes of light, the physical action of light which arouses sensations of heat and cold, etc."¹³

We have to share in Artaud's feelings on the influence of color, light and sound on the human being yet we cannot deny Peter Brook's statement that Artaud is a prophet who has never attained his own theater and therefore in his passing from the *deadly theater* to the "Theater of the Invisible-Made Visible,"¹⁴ which is the *holy theater*, he rather revisits and analyzes Craig Gordon's view which he partially appropriates.

¹² Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, p. 53.

¹³ Antonin Artaud, *Theatre and its Double*, pp. 72-75.

¹⁴ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, p. 44.

The ambivalence on stage, namely the combination of realism with theatricality, is achieved through the actor who presents himself simultaneously as a character and as an actor, pleading for a histrionic duality. Thus, these creators of illusion have two essential qualities: firstly, the authenticity of the human body in attitude, gesture and movement and, secondly, the authenticity of the human voice. That is how Craig creates the *Übermarionette*, which represents not only a body of flesh and bones, but a body in a state of ecstasy, not in rivalry with life, but transcending it. He defines the artist as *one who perceives more than his fellows and records more than he has seen*.

Even though many believe that Jerzy Grotowski was influenced by Artaud in developing his theory of *poor theater*, it seems that the Polish theorist has a different vision. Grotowski even denies Artaud's influence and says that when he speaks of *cruelty* many are reminded of Artaud „although his formulations were based on different remises and took a different tack. Artaud was an extraordinary visionary, but his writings have little methodological meaning because they are not the product of long-term practical investigations. They are an astounding prophecy, not a program.”¹⁵ Grotowski was not only a theoretician, he was also successful in putting his theories into practice, and he seems to have used the *system* when he first started to develop his own method. He believes that Stanislavski asked the right questions but that the wrong answers were given, as he states in his article *Towards a Poor Theatre*, published in 1965.

Grotowski studied Stanislavski's *system*, Meyerhold's *biomechanics*, Dullin's rhythm exercise, the *Kathakali* dance and the *Noh* Theater in order to develop his own method “*via negativa*-not a collection of skills, but an eradication of blocks.”¹⁶ “What I mean by *via negativa*”¹⁷ is a long sequence of operations and removal actions, Grotowski says. Grotowski's big problem was related to the *emotional memory* which, he believes, leads the actor to *hypocrisy and hysteria*.

If we refer only to the first stage of developing the *system*, the one that promotes and supports *emotional memory* as not just the actor's most important but also his only step in creating the character, then yes, we can say that the *system* leads the actor to *hypocrisy and hysteria*. But the *system* was based on *emotional memory* around the years 1911-1916 and it continued to develop further over time.

We believe that although different views on the *emotional memory* method have

¹⁵ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, p. 15.

¹⁶ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, p. 10.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

circulated, Stanislavski's technique of recollection is valuable and useful for the actor because of its accuracy, but of course in combination with imagination, concentration, communication, the *magical if* and physical actions and so on.

Grotowski, just like Stanislavski, has methodically and continually searched for the source of the impulse. We know that the impulse is the most important feature of Grotowski's technique and the exercises in this technique are based on a series of acrobatic movements like standing on one's head, hands and shoulders combined with high jumps at a rapid pace, continuously and frantically. Grotowski takes on the impulse-related issues from Stanislavski and asks: What is the impulse? What leads to a certain gesture? What makes an actor cry, speak loudly or quietly, move naturally or run? How can impulses be produced and reproduced? Here are some questions that every training method for actors must address.

During one of the workshops based on Grotowski's method that I attended, it was explained that the body exercise called *the cat* aims to give power and flexibility to the vertebrae. To perform this exercise, one must assume a cat's position that is to stand on all fours and execute movements in various attitudes and positions so that they resemble those of a cat. Cieslak, Grotowski's actor, says that during this exercise we have to imagine "a cat that stretches and relaxes after having slept."¹⁸ It is essential that these exercises be performed barefoot, in order to have intimate contact with the ground, a contact that Tadashi Suzuki also requires in his practice.

"Plastic Exercises"¹⁹ are rapid forwards and backwards movements of the joints of the shoulders, elbows, wrists, hands, and hips but also of the torso and neck, applied in various ways and at different cadences. This type of exercise, in Grotowski's view, not only develops the expressiveness of the actor's instrument, namely the body, but also helps him find his *biological impulse*.

"When I speak about socio-biological objectivity and about subjectivity, I am also speaking about the problem of *logos* and *bios*. There is *logos* and there is *bios*. *Logos* is linked to descriptive, analytical reasoning. In a different way, it also relates to the Oriental performer, rooted in his tradition, uses his body to express words, sentences, speeches ... and is therefore *logos*. But it is if, due to the strength of his tradition, his *logos* has preserved certain principles of *bios*. And this is why the Oriental performer appears to us to be alive. *Logos* and *bios* represent division, and therefore it is very dangerous to talk about the performer's expressivity. Barba rightly talks only about the performer's pre-expressive level.

¹⁸ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, p. 94.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 68.

If the performer expresses, it is because he wants to express. And so, division once again arises. There is a part of the performer which orders, and a part which executes the orders. True expression, one could say, is that of a tree.

There exists a profound relationship between what Barba is doing in ISTA and what I am doing in the Theatre of Sources: we are both concerned with transcultural phenomena. Culture, any specific culture, determines the objective bio-sociological base because every culture is linked to the daily body techniques. It is therefore important to observe what remains constant when this cultures vary, what transcultural elements are discernible.”²⁰

In conclusion we can say that during training, the actor must discover and acknowledge his physical impulse, with its unconscious, archetypal and mystic roots which, according to Grotowski, are the base of genuine creativity.

This type of training helps the actor build a personal language of sounds and gestures, a language that has to be just as expressive as words are for the writer, colors for the painter and notes for the musician.

According to Grotowski, the actor must analyze both the reflexive nature of a hand gesture during a mental process, as well as its voluntary modification by moving the shoulder, elbow, wrist and fingers, so as to be afforded, in the end, to determine how he may express each phase of a mental process, either through one or several movements (gestures), in order to convey a thought, a more complex idea or a whole story. The use of one’s voice is one of the strong points of the Grotowski training and the actors receiving this training manage to emphasize their voice in a way that other actors cannot. In Grotowski’s view, the body is the primary source for the resonance and vibration of the voice. Like many avant-garde artists who went against the realistic methods, Grotowski advises the actors: „Imprint on your memory: the *body* must work first. Afterwards comes the voice.”²¹

The main objection the non-realistic methods bring against the *system* is based on the scientific investigations of psychologists William James and C.G. Lange, who in 1884 stated that “every movement, every muscular reaction of the body becomes emotion.”²² Meyerhold was among the first in 1921 to assess Stanislavski's *system* through an external technique called *biomechanics* which was inspired by the James-Lange theory. But Grotowski is considered, in theater, the main promoter of the *External psychology school*.

²⁰ Eugenio Barba, Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology / The secret art of the performer*, p. 237.

²¹ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, p. 107.

²² William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 / originally published in 1890, Casino, Inc., New York, 2007, p. 146.

As stated, the James-Lange theory connects muscle reaction to emotion, and the credo “we meet a bear, are frightened and run”²³ is not explained only by the fact that the person who sees a bear (perception) becomes frightened (emotion) and runs (action), but it seems that James and Lange believed that the person who sees a bear perceives an emotion in a given situation, reacts and then interprets the psychological behavior as a particular emotion. “We might then see the bear, and judge it best to run. We may perceive the danger and decide to run, but we cannot realize at that very moment that we are scared or frightened.”²⁴ According to this explanation, the person who sees the bear would have to run, observe himself while running and realize that he is frightened.

Both the physical methods and those relating to the influence of external stimuli on the actor’s training program originated in this theory and therefore they deny the presence of an emotional experience, emphasizing that physical action is what leads to the emotional experience. That is why Grotowski said that what should take priority in the actor’s training technique is physical activity followed by vocal expression. It is true that James's effort was against a spiritual emotional concept that he considered vague and inadequate, which is why he emphasized that an emotion is composed of very clear reactions of the body. In his book, *Psychology: the Briefer Course*, James argues that feelings such as anger, fear or fright not only make us react in a certain way, but also cause characteristic damages to our attitude and facial expression, affect our breathing, blood circulation and other functions of our organs.

We believe that, as James says and demonstrates, when it comes to emotion and its physical manifestation, the actor must be able to re-create an emotion regardless what specifically caused it. It is hard to imagine fear without thinking of rapid heartbeat, panting, stiff limbs, eyes wide open or *goose bumps*. It is very hard to imagine anger without images of *bulging eyes*, dilated nostrils, clenched teeth and wired body ready to spring into action.

The actors who are unable to feel something, anything, to blush on command or become pale on stage by a method other than external physical exhaustion, are forced to resort to a sort of tension that suggests the existence of something that is not present. Trying to imitate an emotion in the absence of a cause to produce it is doomed to failure.

Therefore, exercises in *emotional memory* are meant to re-create an emotional state that leads to expressivity. In his work, James suggests that an emotional temperament coupled with a vivid imagination are enough to lead a rich emotional life because no matter how

²³ William James, *Psychology: The Briefer Course*, Dover Publications, Inc., Mineola, NY, 2001, p. 242.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 243.

emotional the temperament might be, if it is linked to poor imagination, the emotions are few and the life of such an individual is cold, dry, linear, and without challenges. And this is where we see similarities to the *system* because James too believed that imagination is meant to free the emotion.

While Artaud's influence may have been exerted over ideas that circulated within a small group of critics and theater people and while Grotowski's ideas were acted out in theatrical productions which, unfortunately, remained unknown to the audience at large, Brecht's contribution is manifested at a different level of perception. Brecht's plays often communicate political ideas at odds with those of the public.

Brecht disliked the Aristotelian theory, that of the actor's complete identification with the character in order to achieve *catharsis*. Thus, his critique of Aristotle's *Poetics* became an artistic belief. He did not want the audience to feel emotion, but to think instead, and so he imagined the theatre to be more like a stage for debate rather than illusion. Through research, Brecht ended up developing a technique called *verfremdungseffek*, *distancing* or *alienation effect*.

We believe that Brecht's point of view on the actor's work was misunderstood and led to the assumption that he was opposed to Stanislavski. Moreover, the misperception that the art of acting through *experimentation* somehow conflicts with the art of acting through *demonstration* also led to the idea that Brecht belittles emotions, that he is too intellectual, distant and cold. The *non-Aristotelian* theory in Brecht's theater is represented in his drama, but Brecht's ideas seem to be dealing with the same questions that Stanislavski's actors did.

It is true that, in the beginning Brecht was adverse to the *system*, but after reading Vasili Toporkov's book, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*, Brecht came to know a different Stanislavski, an artist concerned with action, structure and idea. So Brecht wrote to Toporkov as he considered his book as „the most important source on Stanislavski's work method”²⁵ and confessed that he himself actually had been using the *method of physical actions* since 1953. Although Brecht argues that the identification of the actor with the character should be avoided in acting because by completely identifying with the character the actor loses contact with the other aspects of his actions, he did not completely eliminate scenic realism and truth.

Although Stanislavski never used the term *alienation*, he always suggested that actors should strive for the counterpoint, never be satisfied with the theatrical vision of the character but seek and find aspects and nuances that help to create the reality and naturalness specific to

²⁵ Vasili Toporkov, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*, p. X.

the artistic act. He often said that the actor is split into two when performing. One half of the actor laughs, cries, breathes, loves, has mixed feelings on stage, while the second half has to observe and comment on what the first half does. Only “a balance between these two sides of his existence makes his art.”²⁶

In *Letter to an actor*²⁷, Brecht acknowledges that his theories were misinterpreted by the professional critics, but that it is impossible for him to rewrite all his notes and stage instructions in his plays. Therefore, he states that “The stage is not a hothouse or a zoological museum full of stuffed animals. The actor has to be able to create such people (and if you could attend our production you would see them; and they succeed in being people because of our principles, not in spite of them!). There is however a complete fusion of the actor with his role which leads to his making the character seem so natural, so impossible to conceive any other way, that the audience has simply to accept it as it stands (...)”²⁸

We believe that Brecht wanted the actor to be real and true while playing, but he did not want him to be completely overtaken by how he felt at that moment. He wanted the actor to capture that reality of someone describing a real occurrence. At such moments we only focus on conveying the exact and true events that unfolded, not their emotional intensity. Brecht does not want the actor to reach the point where he wants a different persona. He believes that the actor needs to distance himself somewhat from the character he plays in order to be able to trigger the same effect within the audience so that the audience may observe the events as if they are really taking place. Of course, emotion is not entirely excluded from the process, but it is expressed with a scarcity of means.

In the article *Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting*, Brecht tries to explain how the distancing effect is perceived by Chinese actors who never act as if there were a fourth wall. When performing on stage, an actor is always aware that he is being watched, that the audience is there.

This distancing effect and the absence of the fourth wall is also present in Suzuki’s training, where the actor must be aware of the existence of the audience even when it is not physically there and, as mentioned previously, his training focuses on the legs while the rigor and the discipline of the performance places the actor at the center of the theatrical event. At

²⁶ Constantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*, p. 189.

²⁷ Note: *Letter to an actor* “Written 1951. The actor addressed has not been identified. This is perhaps the most important of Brecht’s modifications of his extreme theoretical position. The doctrines laid down in the ‘Short Organum’ were by all accounts neither discussed nor put into practice in the Berliner Ensemble. Regine Lutz, one of its principal actresses from 1949 on, told me in 1957 that she had never read Brecht’s theoretical works.”, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 236.

²⁸ John Willett, *Brecht on Theatre / The development of an Aesthetic*, p. 235.

my first interaction with the *Suzuki method*, I was a little disappointed, because I could not see beyond the physical effort; but with repetition and an understanding of the role these exercises have, I managed to combine the inner emotion that Stanislavski's actor develops with the animal energy that Suzuki's actor acquires. According to Suzuki, the voice plays an important role and therefore this training aims to give the actor a voice that comes out of a vigorous body, a voice that is an extension of the bodily expression. Unfortunately, during training I was able to detect a contradiction between the actor who achieves a genuine vocal expression and the actor who fakes a powerful and expressive voice. Then I realized that many of the actors using the *Suzuki method* end up screaming or making sounds that they think express their bodily energy.

We think the problem comes from the fact that many of those who teach this method consider that we should not think about what we say, about the meaning of the words, but let the voice be free. But why would we utter words if not to communicate? Because as Stella Adler says, "The words come from God, through Shakespeare, to you"²⁹ and we, the actors must appropriate them. The actors must feel the quality of the text, its message and concept, because otherwise the words would be just words. Hence the discrepancy between the actors with an authentic vocal expression and those who fake it. But if, as many in the theater say, the actor's vocal expression comes from his bodily energy, why should we deflect words from their meaning? We couldn't find an explanation other than that the actors practicing *Suzuki's method* have a fear of engaging in psychological, realistic and naturalistic acting as defined by Stanislavski, while also experiencing a fear of thinking in images.

With *Suzuki's method*, as with other methods, repetition is more important than creativity or originality. Routine is necessary not only to master the form, but also to help the actor understand and exploit the relationship that develops between body and form.

"If Mr. Suzuki taught me courage, Anne taught me innocence. To examine the unseen world you must look very practically at the body. While different, both structures that Mr. Suzuki and Anne offer offer freedom."³⁰ declare Allen Lauren in the article *Seven Points of View*. So two very different methods of approaching acting can produce a "perfect alchemy,"³¹ two methods that applied together lead the actor towards spontaneity, stage presence, concentration etc. The *viewpoints* method is an improvisation technique meant to help the actor build the character using expressive gestures and body movements, and it too

²⁹ Stella Adler, *The Art of Acting*, p. 227.

³⁰ Anne Bogart, *Viewpoints*, p. 65.

³¹ Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares / Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, New York, 2005, p. 17.

contemplates the idea of emotion achieved through movement.

The *viewpoints* method offers the actor the opportunity to *relax*, to realize that there is something more interesting than his ego and his imagination that can captivate audiences, and that something is his relationship with the others and with the natural world around us. The *viewpoints* method helps us to communicate with our partners, to learn to listen, to surprise our audience and to care about it, to tell them a story, to build an ensemble capable of collaboration – but doesn't the *system* teach us the same things? I think that in order for human beings to develop harmoniously, they must be mindful of focusing just on the mental aspect to the expense of the affective, sensorial and emotional areas which will grow like weeds in a garden if not tended to.

We must understand that the theatrical staging with all its components, costumes, scenery, lighting, special effects etc., reflects the society in which we live. "People go to the theater to escape from themselves or, if you will, to find themselves as what they are, not necessarily best, but rarer and riddled. Everything is allowed in the theater, except the lack of sensibility and everydayness."³²

Yes, everything is allowed in the theater, but the theater is no *whore* to whom one can go to spend money in exchange for a little pleasure. Actors must not play a *museum theater*, a *deadly theater*, unaffected by real life. The society in which we live has many unresolved communication issues and more and more gadgets are being developed for communication, but we neglect the fact that in actuality we, as humans, need to be able to interact on a personal level; that is why we, the actors, must absorb and develop this ability.

The communication problem cannot be approached with just an impulse, with a voice, a movement, with a simple repetition or color, but has to be seen as a means to share a part of ourselves. Certainly more than a few artists have achieved precisely that, by using their sensibility and their special talent, and that is why we believe that all human beings need to do this if we want to prevent life from turning into a *game of plays*, if we do not want the stage to be inhabited by the superficial make-believe and *kitsch*.

Everything that is superficial is also insincere and without substance, an attempt to reach a depth that does not exist; everything that is superficial is dissimulation and poor imitation. Everything in theater should be honest and true, as when we are in love. When in love, one cannot imitate or dissimulate, but simply offers oneself up. And love means harmony and mutual support, which should be found among artists as between artists and

³² Antonin Artaud, *Theatre and its Double, Followed by Seraphim's Theatre and Other Texts about Theater*, p. 126.

audience. In other words, it is about Del Close's "Give and Take"³³.

Here we are, at the point where the journey we embarked upon and which took us from Moscow to Milan and then to Paris, Berlin, London, Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles, Toronto etc. returns home, to Moscow. Here we meet Anatoly Efros, the first to create an improvisation method, which „also originates in Stanislavski's *system*."³⁴

The improvisation method created by Anatoly Efros was developed by Viola Spolin and perfected by Del Close and Charna Halpern. In order for the actor to embody a character's feelings, Anatoly Efros suggests that the actor must combine improvisation with the psychological approach, by drawing on his own experiences, memories and associations that are similar to those of the character. During improvisation the actor must have maximum stage presence, originality, courage and, not least, positivity.

Even if in improvisation, as Del Close says, the primary rule is that there are no rules, there are some principles that we, the actors, have to keep in mind. Thus, during improvisation, any words and phrases that start with a *no* should not be used by those who improvise because it brings the action on stage to a stop. On stage we always want to say *yes*, and move our partner's idea forward, because it is the only way to achieve progress and not regress, and the actor must always focus on building relationships on stage because he *is the most important part of the decor*.

If the action on stage becomes predictable for the spectator, the actor has to make a change, to play against the action in order to avoid monotony and boredom. "Follow your fear on stage,"³⁵ as Del Close says, since it is much more interesting for the spectator to follow a character facing fear, who uses that energy for the benefit of his character, than an actor who avoids confrontation.

Enhance and submit to your stage partner's choice even if it may seem stupid. Follow your instinct because it leads to your true emotion. Hesitation is negative and only slows down the action. Both precision and specificity are valuable on stage and everything that is important must be repeated three times. Silent action or purposeful silence not only allows viewers to make up their own image of what they see, but also creates tension on stage.

The actor must pay attention to details, and must see, hear and use everything on stage, as ignoring anything triggers a negative reaction in the viewer. By exposing ourselves to stimuli, by exploring alternatives, we accustom our mind to seeking solutions frequently, to

³³ Anne Libera, *The Second City / Almanac of Improvisation*, published by Northwestern University Press, USA, 2004, p. 117.

³⁴ Jean Benedetti, *Constantin Stanislavski / An actor's work / A student's diary*, pp. 691-692.

³⁵ Anne Libera, *The Second City / Almanac of Improvisation*, p. 114.

finding new connections, to responding more quickly and efficiently to challenges and, not least, to strengthening our self-confidence.

All these actor training methods, whether we call them a *system*, a *method*, a *physical training* or *viewpoints*, have one thing in common-the development of the actor's creativity. The actor must be considered a creative artist who has to translate the author's ideas, intentions and words into a truthful presentation and representation. During the performance, the actor's words contain more than meaning, being imbued with emotion, feeling and attitude.

Having travelled on this journey through all the schools, methods or techniques mentioned in this discussion, we can say that the biggest problem facing actors today and always remains the state of *being* - the state of being equally original, organic and natural any time they are on stage, even daily, and delivering an outstanding performance each time.

Why do we even become actors?

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