

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARTS FROM TÂRGU MUREŞ
DOCTORAL SCHOOL

ABSTRACT OF DOCTORAL THESIS

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Doctoral candidate:

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Târgu Mureş
2023

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Abstract of Scientific Doctorate in Theatre and the Arts of the
Performance

THE ACTOR – THE PERFORMER AT THE LIMIT
BETWEEN FICTION AND REALITY IN THE XXI

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PUBLICATION LIST

A. Books and chapters in books published in the last 10 years

- Fredrik Brattberg, *Eterna Reîntoarcere*, translation by Ioan Ardelean, preface translated by Carmen Ghiurco, proofreading by Carmen Ghiurco, Editura Eikon, București, 2022

B. Indexed works ISI/BDI published in the last 10 years

- Carmen Ghiurco in Cercetări Teatrale Publication, *Krzysztof Warlikowski. „Rana” ca sursă de energie creatoare*, Editura UArtPress, Târgu-Mureș, Nr. 1, Vol 2, 2668-9952, 2021.

C. Works published in the last 10 years in publications and conference volumes with referents (non-indexed)

1. Publications

- Carmen Ghiurco in Cercetări Teatrale Publication, *Întâlniri teatrale în afara zonei de confort*, Editura UartPress, Târgu-Mureș, Nr.2, Vol.1, 2020.
- Carmen Ghiurco in Cercetări Teatrale Publication, *Frica – busolă în vremuri de restriște*, Editura UartPress, Târgu-Mureș, Nr.2, Vol. 1, 2020.

2. Online article

- Carmen Ghiurco, *Olga Tudorache*, Multimedia Romanian Theatre Dictionary, digital object identifier: <https://www.doi.org/10.47383/DMTR.03.11>

D. Artistic creations with copyright / copyright related right

- Interviews and public appearances in specialized publications and radio/TV broadcasts.

- Răzvan Rocaș, *De vorbă cu... (XXXIII) – Carmen Ghiurco – Gala Hop*, interview, Agenda LiterNet, 2019, digital object identifier: <https://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/23775/Razvan-Rocas-Carmen-Ghiurco/De-vorba-cu-XXXIII-Carmen-Ghiurco-Gala-HOP-2019.html>
- Online Debate, *Despre un (alt) teatru al prezentului – The Walks*, by Rimini Protokoll, event organised by Creart/Teatrelli, București, 2022.

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- Bogdan Burileanu, *Arta de a sublima faptul divers – Coming of StAge și Van Dan – 10 ani de sânge murdar la Festivalul Internațional de Teatru și Arte Performative Dialog*, Brăila, 2021, Agenda LiterNet, digital object identifier: <https://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/25789/Bogdan-Burileanu/Arta-de-a-sublima-faptul-divers-COMING-OF-stAGE-si-Van-Dan-10-ani-de-sange-murdar-la-Festivalul-International-de-Teatru-si-Arte-Performative-Dialog-Braila-2021.html>
- Mihai Brezeanu, *Lungul drum al școlii către scenă – Coming of StAge*, București, 2019, Agenda LiterNet, digital object identifier: <https://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/23851/Mihai-Brezeanu/Lungul-drum-al-scolii-catre-scena-Coming-of-stAge.html>
- Attila Stracula, *Debut pe sfânta-scândură-sfântă – Coming of StAge*, Târgu-Mureș, 2018, Agenda LiterNet, digital object identifier: <https://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/22804/Attila-Stracula/Debut-pe-sfanta-scandura-sfanta-COMING-OF-stAGE.html>
- Edina Soos, *Mameloschn – departe de ce? – Limba Maternă – Mameloschn (note de spectacol)*, Târgu-Mureș, 2017, Agenda LiterNet, digital object identifier: <https://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/21789/Edina-Soos/Mameloschn-departee-de-ce-Limba-materna-Mameloschn-note-de-spectacol.html>

Roles (selection)

- 3rd person, *Notă de trecere* de Agata M. Skrzypek, directed by Vlaicu Golcea, Teatrul Postnațional Interfonic, in coproduction with The Polish Institute from Bucharest with the support of Goethe-Institute Bucharest, Bucharest, 2022.
- Actress, *The Actresses, Or Sorry for Touching You*, de Michal Telega, directed by Mihai Păcurar, Teatrul Postnațional Interfonic, in coproduction with The Polish Institutul from Bucharest with the support of Goethe-Institut Bucharest, Bucharest, 2022.
- Voice Performer, *ERA_TA* by Carmen Ghiurco, directed by Vlaicu Golcea, Teatrul Postnațional Interfonic, 2022.
- Voice Performer, *Folclorul copiilor_003*, directed by Vlaicu Golcea, Teatrul Postnațional Interfonic, 2022.

- Voice Performer, *Preludiu la după-amiaza unui cyborg*, by Monica Stoica, directed by Vlaicu Golcea, 2021.
- Voice Performer, *The Walks*, by Rimini Protokoll, Creart/TEATRELLI, artistic coordinator for the Romanian version Vlaicu Golcea, 2021.
- Performer, *The sense of an ending* –collective creation after the homonym novel by Julian Barnes, directed by Adi Iclenzan, Teatrul Studio, 2019.
- Carmen/Dakota, *Coming of StAge* by Peca Ștefan, directed by Radu Apostol, Teatrul Studio, 2018.
- Performer, *Termen de garanție* de Alina Nelega, directed by Gabi Cadariu, Teatrul Studio, 2018.
- Performer, *Gen.Eu*, directed by Olga Macrinici și Andi Gherghe, Teatrul Național Târgu-Mureș, 2018.
- Carmen, *Protejat-Neprotejat*, directed by Olga Macrinici, Teatrul Ariel, Asociația Animact Târgu-Mureș, 2018.
- Performer, *Când lipsește iubirea* adaptation after A Report for an Academy by Franz Kafka, directed by Ioan Ardelean, Teatrul Studio, 2017.
- Medeea, *Mede/ea sau Despre fericirea conjugală* by Roxana Marian, directed by Monica Ristea și Elena Pirea, Teatrul Studio, 2017.
- Rahel, *Limba Maternă – Mameloschn*, directed by Olga Macrinic, Teatrul Național Târgu-Mureș, 2017.

Movie

- Carmen, *Diva Divina Assoluta*, directed by Adonis Tanța, independent movie, Reactor de Creație și Experiment, Arrogant Films, Cluj-Napoca, 2022.

Dramaturgy (selection)

- Flowers of Children. Act 1. The Grandmother, by Carmen Ghiurco, Teatrul Postnațional Interfonic, 2023.
- mDAhh, by Carmen Ghiurco, directed by Vlaicu Golcea, Teatrul Postnațional Interfonic, 2023.
- ERA_TA, by Carmen Ghiurco, directed by Vlaicu Golcea, Teatrul Postnațional Interfonic, 2022.

- Da, by Carmen Ghiurco, directed by Vlaicu Golcea, Teatrul Postnațional Interfonic, 2022.
- Călătoria lui Kalo Dant în cele șapte lumi, dramatisation by Carmen Ghiurco after the gipsy folk tale with the same name, directed by Toni Nica, part of the project Teatrul în fața blocului, Asociația Facem, Târgu-Mureș, 2022.
- Carte de identitate_001, by Carmen Ghiurco, directed by Vlaicu Golcea, Teatrul Postnațional Interfonic, 2021.
- Bohemian Rap, by Carmen Ghiurco, directed by Cristian Bojan, collective creation presented at the Awake Festival, Târgu-Mureș, 2022.

Workshops

- 2015 – Improscott, The University of Arts Târgu-Mureș
- 2016 – Improscott, The University of Arts Târgu-Mureș
- 2022 – Ecole des Ecoles, Teachers Workshop, The University of Arts Târgu-Mureș
- 2022 - Green Vibes Only, Velenje Slovenia, Erasmus Plus

Awards

- July 2017 –1st Prize at START Festival in Arad with the performance *Mede/ea sau Despre fericirea conjugală*

Festivals, tours, national and international departures

- 2022 – Selection within NTF – National Theatre Festival with the performing productions Notă de trecere and The Actresses, Or Sorry for Touching You
- 2021 – Participation in International Festival of Theatre and Performing Arts Dialog, Brăila, with the performance Coming of StAge
- 2019 – Participation in Întâlnirea Școlilor de Teatru in Galați with the performances Sentimentul unui sfârșit and Termen de garanție
- 2019 – Participation in International Festival of Theatre in Sibiu with the performance Termen de garanție

- 2019 – Participation in International Festival of Theatre in Turda with the performance Termen de garanție
- 2019 – Participation in The Meeting of the Theatre Schools with the performance Coming of StAge Decembrie
- 2019 – Participation in the event Un român la Paris, Paris 2019 with the performance Mede/ea sau Despre fericirea conjugală
- 2018 – National Tour in seven cities with the performance Mede/ea sau Despre fericirea conjugală
- 2018 – Participation in Classfest Festival Chișinău 2018 with the performance Mede/ea sau Despre fericirea conjugală
- 2018 – Participation in Festivalul de Teatru Studentesc Zlomvaz Praga 2018 with the performance Mede/ea sau Despre fericirea conjugală
- 2018 – National Tour with the performance Protejat – Nepritejat
- 2017 – National Tour with the performance Mede/ea sau Despre fericirea conjugală
- 2017 – Participation in Festivalul Internațional de Teatru de la Sibiu with the performance Mede/ea sau Despre fericirea conjugală

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Keywords, concepts: the actor-performer, the theatre of the 21st century, conscious presence, postdramatic theater, acting training, Meisner, Viewpoints, Suzuki, stage authenticity, Performance, body-presence, postdramatic aesthetics, shift of directorial authority, postmodern theater, performance phenomenon, assumed actor, epic theater, bilateral presence, postdramatic experiences.

PRESENTATION OF THE PAPER

The present work, entitled “The actor-performer at the limit between fiction and reality in the 21st century theatre” is an extensive and profound research in which the emphasis is on exploring the evolution of the theatrical phenomenon and theatrical practices taking in consideration the major contribution regarding the emergence of the actor-performer in the theatrical context of the 21st century. The main objective of the present research is to define and contextualize the concept of actor-performer in the context of the 21st century theatre, an approach that involves an exploration of the theatrical phenomenon, of distinctive techniques and motivations that differentiate the actor-performer from the actor-interpreter. To this end, in this research, the hypothesis that the actor-performer is defined as body-presence at the limit between fiction and reality will be given.

Thesis structure

The thesis is structured in four chapters to which are added the argument and conclusions, and each chapter contributes through its content to the research of the subject in question, as follows:

Chapter I. The actor of the 20th century. From technique to commitment - In this initial chapter, we lay the foundations of our research, exploring the evolution of the actor throughout the 20th century, I relate to the work of reference personalities whose contribution I consider being unquestionable in the context of this research. Starting from Stanislavski and continuing with the vision of Meyerhold, Brecht and Grotowski, I investigate the actor's path and the way he/she makes the transition from actor-interpreter status to actor-creator status. At the same time, in this chapter, I also analyze the major theatrical currents and aesthetics that defined the theatre of the 20th century, thus preparing the ground for an understanding of the direction that is emerging on the horizon in the context of the 21st century.

Chapter II. The 21st century. A theatre of the present – In the second chapter of this paper I launch into the analysis of the current theatrical phenomenon. I also examine the

phenomenon of performance, the phenomenon of the movement of the directorial authority, the appearance of the devised practice and I present, by comparison, the evolution of the devised movement both in the British context and in the Romanian theatrical space. Through detailed case studies and my own professional practice over the last three years, I present how these phenomena and events directly influence the role, the status and the creative process of the actor and I highlight the need to update the vision both theoretically and practically in order to meet the new requirements of 21st century theatre.

Chapter III. The actor of the 21st century. Body-presence at the boundary between fiction and reality – The third chapter of the thesis focuses on shaping the portrait of the actor-performer in the context of the 21st century according to the perspective approached in the present research. This chapter will present the concept of the actor-performer, body-presence at the boundary between fiction and reality, not only as an instrument, but also as a free-standing method of communication and practice. The chapter begins with the broad definition of the key terms and the emphasis is on investigating the psychological and biological mechanisms that are involved in the work of an actor. Therefore, during this chapter we will follow and elaborate the concept of cultivating the state of conscious presence as a holistic approach within the theatrical context of the 21st century at the expense of approaching some techniques based exclusively on development technical skills.

Chapter IV. Meisner, Viewpoints and Suzuki – Behavior, point of view, body-present. A perspective on a possible practice. A perspective on a possible workout - In this final chapter, we propose a training approach that combines the existing methods, such as: Meisner, Viewpoints and Suzuki. In this chapter I pursue to analyze how these methods can be integrated in order to contribute to the actor-performer's additional formation or training as presented in the specific approach of this works. The main objective of this chapter is to analyze these methods by emphasizing how they can contribute *to cultivating the performer's conscious presence*. Thus, we will examine the basic principles of each method, the way they are applied and their relevance in the theatrical context of the 21st century. This triple perspective highlights the importance of *authenticity* (Meisner), of *spatial and temporal consciousness* (Viewpoints) and of *physical presence* (Suzuki) in the formation of *the actor-performer, body-presence at the boundary between fiction and reality* in the 21st century theatre.

Finally, in the conclusions I summarize the discoveries and arguments presented throughout the paper, emphasizing the importance of authenticity, conscious presence and the ability of actors-performers to navigate through the complexity of contemporary theatre. I believe that this research demonstrates that the 21st century performer requires the ability to

be versatile, connected to himself and to the public, able to adapt to the new requirements of 21st century creators and practitioners. Lucrarea include o bibliografie care cuprinde 45 de surse utilizate în cercetare, oferind cititorilor o resursă utilă pentru explorarea ulterioară a subiectelor abordate în acest demers.

This work represents a comprehensive research effort in the field of theatre and performing arts, providing a comprehensive perspective on the evolution of the actor following its path from the 20th century to the 21st century, mainly aiming at the necessary adaptations and significant changes over time.

The research area

The research area includes the following aspects:

Methods of training the actors

The research focuses on the methods of training and development of the actors, with special attention paid to the Meisner method, the Viewpoints technique and the Suzuki method. These methods are analyzed in detail in order to understand the applicability and principles underlying each of them in relation to the topic of this paper.

Presence and authenticity

The purpose of the research is to explore how these methods can contribute to the *cultivation of conscious presence* and of *authenticity* in the work and creative process of the *actor-performer* as well as to his extra formation or training. In researching of these methods, is examined the way in which each specific training addresses issues related to the *authentic reaction*, *connection* with the public and emotional expression in an *authentic* way, strongly anchored *hic et nunc*.

The 21st century theatre

The research focuses on how *actors-performers* have to meet contemporary cultural requirements and trends, constantly adapting to each individual aesthetic. It is therefore analysed how contemporary practices influence both the training and the performance and creative process of the *actors*.

Combining the methods

An important aspect of the research is to identify the ways in which Meisner, Viewpoints and Suzuki methods can be integrated or combined into a unique training, seen as a help for the *actors*. There are also explored the benefits of this approach, and how it can contribute to the development of the *actor-performer*, *body-presence*, to the *boundary* between *fiction* and *reality* in the 21st century theatre.

The need of adapted training

Research emphasizes the need to develop a training that specifically meets the requirements of the 21st century theatre *actors*. It is suggested that this workout should not be based solely on the development of technical skills, but also on the development of a *mentality* that contributes to *the cultivation of the state of conscious presence*, which creates a favourable context within which the actor's ability to adapt to the requirements of each step is much higher.

Thus, the thesis offers a theoretical reconfiguration and a new conceptualization of the *actor's* role and his attributions. It also presents a triple perspective on the possibility of developing a training based on pre-existing methods, but only as a compromise measure, while raising the issue of designing a training that meets the needs of *the actor-performer* as it defined in this research.

The purpose of the research

The purpose of the research is to explore and analyze the evolution of the actor during the 20th century until the emergence of the *actor-performer*, which, in the context of the 21st century, is increasingly required to operate at the *boundary* between *fiction* and *reality*. Thus, the main objective of the present thesis is to try to define the concept of *actor-performer*.

The secondary objective of this research is to follow the evolution of the actor along the 20th century, identifying key moments, significant innovations and changes in his art in order to analyze how they contributed or not to *the actor-performer's* occurrence. Another major objective of this thesis was to define the specific concepts with which this thesis operates, as well as the relationship between *fiction* and *reality* in order to be able to analyze later how *the actor-performer* approaches, represents and interrogates this border.

The methodology used in this specific context consisted of case studies, field research, analysis of reference shows and personal professional experience, but it is essential to mention that any research methodology comes with its own limitations. Thus, the methodology adopted for the elaboration of this thesis combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to outline a holistic and detailed image of the role of *the actor-performer* in the context of the theater of the 21st century. By using a variety of tools and techniques, the research aims to make a significant contribution to existing literature and to provide a new perspective on the chosen topic.

Research methods used

- Literature analysis: We conducted a thoroughly research of specific literature, studying and synthesizing relevant works about the actor of the 20th century, the *postdramatic* theatre, the *performance* phenomenon, the *devised* movement, etc. This being a common method in theoretical research.

- Case study: In chapter 2.4.1 we analysed in detail the show *Speak Bitterness*, presenting it as a case study relevant to the *devised* movement. This is a specific method for illustrating and analysing practical aspects.
- Defining the terms: In chapter 3.1 we defined the key terms, a common method for establishing the theoretical foundations of the research.
- Comparison and critical analysis: In Chapter IV, we made a critical comparison and analysis of Meisner, Viewpoints and Suzuki methods, an analysis by which we highlighted the similarities, the differences and potential synergy between them.

ARGUMENT

Over the centuries, theatrical art has been considered one of the main forms of artistic manifestation, which is why it has evolved continuously over time, constantly adapting to social, technological and cultural changes. With each stage consumed in part in this process of evolution, the purpose and role of theater changes and this is one of the reasons why this art succeeds, century after century, to reflect and respond constantly to the changes of its time, while preserving its relevance as a means of deeply human expression. In the context of the 21st century, however, the theatrical phenomenon faces both challenges and unique opportunities given the major influence that the evolution of technology has on this form of artistic manifestation. In the digital age, a context in which the boundaries between *real* and *virtual* are constantly redefining, the theater seeks to maintain its current state of affairs and to meet the new needs and expectations of the public in relation to current trends.

Theatrical art has often been defined as the intersection between *reality* and *fiction*, and in the current context the *boundaries* of this intersection seem to become more and more imperceptible. Against the background of these accumulations and in the context of this continuous evolution, at the same time, the need to reform and redefine *the actor* and his contribution in the artistic activity arises. The emergence of *the actor-performer* who navigates at the *boundary* between *fiction* and *reality*, can be considered the result of the evolution of theatrical art in relation to current trends, context in which the role of the actor no longer necessarily coincides with that of a *interpreter*, and his duties go beyond the needs of the artistic manifestation based on *representation*. In this sense, *the actor-performer* explores in his approach the increasingly fluid space, between *reality* and *fiction*, thus transforming from actor-*interpreter* to actor-*creator*, a complete artist who consciously uses all the tools at his

disposal to extend the *limits* of his expression and create and generate *live experiences* in connection directly with the *spectator*.

We could say that this evolution is the direct result of the radical changes that took place in the contemporary society. The unlimited access to technology and information directly contributes to changing the ways of expression, therefore, in order to maintain its relevance, the 21st century theater and, in particular, the 21st century *actor-performer*, have a duty to reinvent themselves in order to address the context we are experiencing. Therefore *the actor-performer* is not only a product of evolution but also a response to it, reflecting the human desire to seek truth and meaning in a constantly changing world. In addition, in an age dominated by technology, the notion of *reality* itself has become increasingly fluid, and the *boundary* between *reality* and *fiction* is becoming increasingly blurred. By exploring one's own identity and *the boundaries* between *himself* and *the character*, *the actor-performer* invites the public to engage in a similar process of introspection. Instead of being a simple observer, the public is challenged to reflect on their own *reality*, to confront their own beliefs and to engage in a dialogue with the *actor* and *himself*.

Therefore, *the actor-performer* will not be limited to *interpreting* a role, but will become a channel of direct communication through which the multiple *realities* of contemporary life are expressed, explored and even challenged. In essence, it is no longer just a vehicle through which *the story* is told, but becomes *living material* that is offered *consciously* to the public for *hic et nunc* contemplation. Such an approach requires a new set of skills and a new mentality that is not only based on technical mastery, but on the ability to be *present here and now*, to react *authentically* and *spontaneously* and to navigate confidently in the space between *the self* and *the character/role*. This risk area, where *the actor* is constantly on a cutting edge, is also a huge opportunity, that of generating a unique *experience* at the *boundary* between *fiction* and *reality*.

In this context, I consider the approach of this research topic to be relevant and essential to the evolution of the theatrical phenomenon, taking into consideration the responsibility to explore and reflect directly on these changes. As theater constantly adapts and reinvents, it is as essential as actors, directors and professionals in the theatrical field to be equipped with the tools and knowledge needed to navigate through these areas, probably unexplored yet. Thus, in the context of the current research, the emphasis is on trying to define and place in the parameters as clearly as possible the figure of the *actor-performer* at the *boundary* between *fiction* and *reality* in relation to the present theatrical context on which we will also turn our attention in attempt to develop this research.

I consider this approach to be not only relevant but also vital to understand and navigate the complexity and ambiguity of our digital age. In this sense, the present research will follow the evolution of the theatrical phenomenon and of the acting practices taking into account the major contribution regarding the emergence of *the actor-performer* in the theatrical context of the 21st century. The perspective presented in this research includes an overview from a theoretical point of view and also launches a hypothesis of a theoretical nature regarding the processes with which *the actor-performer* operates in his activity, a perspective that meets tangentially and with the practical one considering the nature of my profession. After a careful exploration of the phenomenon of the evolution of the theater and its specificity, I consider that the present argument presents a clear vision on the direction that this research will follow. Theatre, in its continuous evolution, represented not only the mirror of society, but also a factor that influenced and shaped the way people perceive the world and *reality*, and in the context of the 21st century this dynamic became even more pronounced.

Thus, this research approach which aims to investigate the appearance of *the actor-performer* and the relationship between it and the fluctuating frontier between *fiction* and *reality* is not only relevant but also necessary. By analyzing the methods adopted, the objectives set and the scope of the research, the introduction outlined a solid framework for the further discussion and the analysis that will be presented in the main body of the paper. As we venture into a detailed analysis of this complex and fascinating theme, this thesis aims not only to enlighten but also to inspire, to provoke and fuel the ongoing discussion about the role of arts and, in particular, theater in the context of the 21st century. This research, like the 21st century theater, aims not only to provide answers, but also to raise questions, to stimulate critical thinking and to contribute to the continuous dialogue about the evolution of the theatrical phenomenon in a constantly changing world.

Chapter I. The actor of the 20th century. From technique to commitment

At the beginning of the 20th century, the actor's art was still greatly marked by the tradition according to which actors embodied emotions through exaggerated movements, flamboyant gestures, altered voices and emphasised facial expressions. In this context, the creators of the time launch into a subjective process of analysis and examination of the personal creative process. The actor was considered a central pawn in the spectacular event. This chapter aims to make an x-ray of the actor's path since the 20th century, gradually approaching the present, given the fact that, as the century was moving forward, a new understanding of what

it means to be an actor began to emerge on the horizon. The 20th century may be seen as the century of theatrical innovation given that by consolidating his work Konstantin Stanislavski will open the way to research and innovation of the theatrical phenomenon. It becomes obvious that the artistic performance is not just about the physical technique or the summation of tricks and techniques focused on how, but also about understanding and expressing the emotion and motivation of fiction, that is, the character.

Throughout the 20th century, the actor was influenced also by social and political changes, which forced him to adapt to the context of the time, such as world wars and the feminist movement. At the same time, technological development, such as the appearance of cinema, television and the Internet, called on to the actor to adjust his practice in order to match to new environments and their requirements. The actor will thus travel a long way from declamation and inherited beliefs about the actor's art to the status of *actor-creator* needed for 21st century theatre. The innovations of the 20th century regarding the actor and his art facilitated the process of demystifying the actor and his transformation from *executor* to *creator*.

In Stanislavski's view, the actor had to reach the harmony of all the circumstances involved in the creative process in his work. The mind, the body and the emotion must be disciplined in such a way as to directly serve the character's construction, given that its existence depends directly on that of the actor. In this sense, the System represents an active search for how this can be done by developing exercises that aim to train the imagination, to stimulate creativity and discipline the body. The relevance of this approach at the beginning of the 20th century is indisputable, Stanislavski thus managing to create through his work the actor's first manual of work within which he draws as clearly as possible for that moment the status, the actor's tasks, and launches himself in theorizing of his working process. So, at the beginning of the 20th century, the actor makes the transition from the superficial illustration of some emotions, thoughts, external behaviors and appearances to the assumption and experience in the most authentic way the inner and outer world of the character, discovered through the process of analysis and introspection. Questions such as: who, what, where, why ?, serve the process of psychologizing the character, who outside this process remains at the rank of literature, and later by the method of physical actions, the actor comes to understand how his character manifests himself from a behavioral point of view.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Meyerhold senses the need for a theatrical reconstruction, discontented with the path of the Russian contemporary theatre. Naturalism has taken over completely over the theatre of the time, and it desperately tried to reproduce life on

stage in its complexity and – in Meyerhold's vision – failed miserably in doing so. Through his work, he will propose a reconfiguration of the route and will explore theatricality masterfully against the unnecessary effort to mask it, thus clearly detaching from the beliefs of naturalists but also from the realism promoted by his mentor Konstantin Stanislavski. In Meyerhold's opinion, the idea that the theatre has a duty to try to reproduce life on stage in its complexity is not only absurd but also a utopia. The spectator has not only the right to use his imagination, but the duty to do so in the context in which theater is a living art, and the theatrical event is happening here and now between the public and actors. The two entities must meet not to look at each other remotely with detachment and indifference. Theatre in the absence of this meeting. It can only be made by the active engagement of the spectators is a dead theatre, a theatre that only gives you answers and not a valuable experience that challenges you to another level.

Meyerhold certifies the need for a technique to serve the actor in the creative process and through his innovative vision, thus creating a training and not a method, a training that lays the foundations of the modern actor, a present actor, who assumes his status in a theatre. An actor that wants liberate the stage of unnecessary scenography and who does not care about the most faithful prefabrication of reality but rather opts for its experimentation in a here and now to the detriment of a then and there.

The development of the actor in the circumstances of the 20th century is strongly influenced by the appearance of the revolutionary vision of the German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht, the initiator of the epic theater. He promotes a new theory and theatrical practice based on the dissolution of the illusion in favor of facilitating the intellectual process in which the spectator engages with participation in the artistic act. In Brecht's view, theatre was not to be limited to simply representing the world as it is without adopting a critical position in relation to it. He also considered that theatre possesses the ability to produce a change in society.

The Brechtian construction process consists of three stages: familiarization with the role, deep identification with the character and objective distance. Actors must go through these stages to allow spectators to form their own critical perspectives. Brecht stressed the importance of freeing spectators from the influence of *illusion* and actors under the pressure to *turn* completely into their characters. In this sense, Brecht considers that the director's duty is to guide both the approach and the process of turning the actor into the character but also the consolidation of the distance between the two courts.

Thus, in this endeavor, the German director proposes to the actors to juggle with the self-expressing by recounting the action to the third person and sometimes even to the past. At the same time, he dedicated a certain number of rehearsals to the process of reversing the roles, a process in which the actors changed roles between them and had the task of parodying each other's interpretation. The rhythm alternations, deriving from dilated to very fast, but also the changes of perspective such as the interpretation of a dramatic monologue in a comic or ironic manner, facilitated the process of detaching the actor both by his own role and by his own person. The last, absorbed by the illusion of the inner world of a fiction, was achieving distance. Brecht wanted actors to become active creators in the creative process and *to value* their presence and critical spirit *hic et nunc*. This approach redefined the role of the actor in the theater of the 20th century and contributed to the consolidation of an interactive relationship between *the actor* and *the spectator*, within which both *presences* are involved in shaping the *theatrical experience*.

In this fertile ground for theatrical development and innovation, the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski will make his presence felt. He will also detach himself from the vision of his mentor, Konstantin Stanislavski, in trying to develop his own theory. In 1959, he founded his own theatre experiment company in a city in southern Poland. The lab theatre led by the Polish director had the stated purpose of betting on a poor theatre, one free from any coercion or artificiality in order to reach the essence. So, in Grotowski's theatre, light, costume, makeup, sound effects and any technical element that increased the maintenance of the illusion will not find its place.

In Grotowski's view, theatre has become *an authentic* meeting space between *the actor* and *the spectator*. He developed a method of training that focused on *the actor's* inner survey, so that he could reveal his *spiritual* essence entirely within the artistic act. Grotowski anticipates the need for a method or mechanism that works as a disinhibitory catalyst, being aware that many skills acquired in the acting school will become useless at the moment in which the actor experiences blockages in the creative process. Moreover, he observed that the assumption of certain techniques as ineffable and absolutely inhibits the creative freedom of the actor. Thus, the training method of the Polish director aims to respond first to this need, of complete and profound revelation of the self and creative spirit of the actor.

Grotowski's method focused not only on the development of technical skills, but also on the deep *self-awareness* in the creative process. The actors were trained to discipline their body and mind to achieve an *authentic stage presence*. Actors were encouraged to remove any

obstacles that could limit their expressiveness and reveal their deeply human and *authentic hic et nunc* side.

At the heart of the Grotowski training method is the body of the actor as the main source generating creative energy given that this is the main tool through which he carries out his activity, thus facilitating the living connection between the actor and the spectator, specific to theatre. This is why the actor's task and duty is to discipline his instrument in such a way that it directly serves the creative process. Lack of control over the body can be the main and primary blockage that the actor can face in his work on the role. It is essential to understand that when Grotowski referred to the body he referred to the whole ensemble with all that it entails both physical and mental processes as well. Therefore, the Grotowski actor can be considered sacred given that he does not focus on training, his training and training on acquiring skills to facilitate the process of maintaining an illusion. Instead, he is launched in a process whose purpose is to reveal the Self, but not out of a desire to achieve an act of exhibitionism, but an act of absolute devotion.

In the context of the transition from technique to commitment, the personal training of the actor involves the development of skills beyond the technical acquisition of skills in order to create the illusion of the presence effect here and now. It also proposes to take up a much more complex process to develop the actor's ability to anchor himself in the present moment in a real way during an artistic event by consciously mastering and cultivating his own presence both from the physical the point of view, but also from a mental and intellectual one. In the context of this research, it is essential to familiarize ourselves with the evolution of the theatrical phenomenon from the dramatic theatre to the emergence of postdramatic theatre, given that in order to address the present time it is necessary first to look into the past.

Over the centuries, the European cultural scene has been dominated by artistic manifestations based on the stage representation of a dramatic material through mimesis. This approach that did not require the spectator to have very complex intellectual processes but supported and provoked the process of emotional identification with the world and the characters represented on stage, thus facilitating the appearance of *catharsis* through emotional manifestations *hic et nunc* that have the purpose of producing that process of purifying the spectator's spirit. So the first and one of the most important principles of dramatic theatre is that of representation. Dramatic theatre involves creating a fictional world and embodying the characters of this world by appealing to theatricality, that is, everything that is specific to theatre. Regardless of the approach, the purpose of dramatic theatre is to provide the public

with a captivating experience using the entire arsenal at their disposal to create the illusion of a reality in a way as authentic as possible.

The coherence of the structure of the dramatic theater cannot be disturbed as this type of approach is based on it, given that the main purpose is to represent a play, namely a story that is a creation of an author who directed his efforts to develop a logical, comprehensible and neat narrative. Thus, theatre cannot exist outside of a story, and the moment when artistic productions no longer focuses on the classical representation of a narrative and on the preservation of the coherence of the artistic act, the dramatic theatre ceases to exist in this form of expression and new forms of artistic manifestation take place. They will directly contribute to the evolution of theatrical art, to the formation of new currents and to the realization of the need for innovation in the cultural sphere, given the fact that the theater has always addressed the present time, and the present is influenced a lot by the evolution of technology and its integration into our daily routine.

One of the crucial moments of the 20th century that redirected the course of theatre and marked the beginning of an era, in which dramatic theatre in its existing forms monopolized the scenes in Europe, is the birth of Bertolt Brecht's theory of the epic theatre. It manages to perturb the already established norms of the theatrical artistic act and brings into the attention of the spectators the elements of theatricality that the dramatic theatre, through its pro illusion approach, denies them, trying to always keep them as far away from the spectators' perception as possible. Thus, the scene does not represent the place of action and does not turn into another space, being shown to the spectator in all its materiality and specificity. The German director launches the idea that the theatre has the duty to generate a social movement, so he investigates new forms of expression that support this approach. Epic theatre aims to address the spectators in a much more direct and assumed way and more than that, it has a duty to trigger in the spectator an introspective process from a rational side, not just an emotional one.

The new principles will spread rapidly and Brechtian theory will thus mark the beginning of a period of transition within which the theatre creators of the time will direct their efforts in their work on developing the theatrical phenomenon, always researching new forms of artistic expression. The age of modern theatre will try through its productions to create innovative performances but theatre creators will continue to focus on text representation. The innovation efforts will be directed to the way in which the stage representation is performed. It can be noticed the evolution made, talking from the point of view of the originality of the director's vision and of the execution of the stage assembling.

Starting with the second half of the 20th century, with the influence of the appearance of the epic theatre, on the European stage will appear more and more experimental productions, fact that not only questions the order established by the representation structure, specific to dramatic theatre, but submits it to a deconstruction process. In this context, we can integrate the productions of this period as part of the postmodern current, a current that arises in response to the current of modern theatre and the practice of dramatic theatre. While modernist theatre sought to impose an order and structure in the seemingly chaotic world, postmodern theatre adopted chaos and uncertainty, and instead of providing answers and setting rules, postmodern theatre generated uncomfortable questions and undermined the preconceived ideas. This current mainly asserted between the 1970s and 1990s.

The theatrical productions focused on deconstruction are included in the category of postmodern current, also on the distance decrease between the public and the actors and on the development of new forms of artistic expression. Postmodern theatre will take advantage of the use of the pastiche technique or that of the collage to combine and bring together in one play different styles, genres or texts, thus becoming a different mirror of contemporary society, a society characterized by diversity. Postmodern theatre has challenged the public to reflect on the world as it is, in a way that has focused on raising questions, not providing answers. This current abandoned the focus on text and put in the spotlight on the stage process and the active involvement of the spectator. The goal was no longer to build *fiction* into *reality*, but to question and explore this *reality*.

The discourse of the postmodern theatre does not depend exclusively on the text, practically being created here and now, during the meeting between spectator and actor, and by assuming the context and the theatre as a process. Thus, in the context of the postmodern current, the discourse represents more than the narrative of the action of the text and the assumption and transmission of a manifest message through the process of deconstruction. In this context, takes place a fundamental rupture from the traditional structures and norms of dramatic or modern theater. The idea of narrative coherence and thematic unity is abandoned in favor of a fragmented discourse organized in several layers, which can combine different styles, genres, voices and perspectives.

Another defining aspect of postmodern theatre is the approach and presentation of several points of view and perspectives on the topic dissected in front of the public. Therefore, there is no single authorial or omniscient point of view. Instead, there are multiple perspectives that intersect, contradict or complement each other. This means that in one play, different voices can be expressed and different realities can be explored. In this regard, postmodern

theatre undermines the idea of absolute and universal truth and instead of claiming to represent reality as it is, postmodern theatre invites us to recognize that any representation is only an interpretation, a construction or an invention. Postmodern theatre embraces the complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty of the contemporary world and launches the invitation to perceive theatre as a space for reflection, exploration and transformation.

Postmodern theatre represents an extremely important transition period. We can see in this context, favourable for development, innovation and experiment, that the evolution of the theatrical phenomenon throughout the 20th century and until now, takes place in a progressive way. Therefore, the foundations of the postmodern current facilitates and encourages through the braver and braver approaches the appearance of a new current at the end of the 20th century. However, the transition from postmodern theatre to *postdramatic* theatre is a major change both in terms of theatre perception, but also in its practice. While postmodern theatre has undermined and deconstructed traditional theatrical conventions, *postdramatic* theatre has taken this process to a new level, by giving up the idea of *drama* itself.

The forms of experimental theatre that appear on the European stages following this transition will be later classified by theorists as belonging to the current of *postdramatic* theatre. The term chosen for the name of this current, namely *postdramatic*, is by no means a coincidence or a circumstantial option given that *postdramatic* theatre is defined as the theatre whose approach does not depend essentially on drama. The German critic Hans-Thies Lehmann introduced the term in the 1990s, and it does not refer to a specific period, but to a type of theatre, that distances itself from the classical dramatic format. It is necessary to specify that *postdramatic* theatre does not deny the established idea that theatre is a story but rather actively questions how the story telling is realised in theatrical productions considered already conservative.

The *postdramatic* approaches often start with an idea or topic of interest, explored through an existing text or by creating a new dramaturgical material in a *devised* work type process. The emphasis therefore falls on the message, on a declared and assumed artistic approach, based on an idea explored in depth in the show to provoke a deep *experience*. Through experience, we refer to an often introspective process that starts at the beginning of the show. This process requires and needs the the spectator`s intellectual and emotional activity throughout the event and it often does not offer a finality in the form of a conclusion at the end of the show. The conclusions belong to the individual as well as to the process of introspection that they carry out, which means that the experience is deeply subjective and any transformation that takes place depends on the individual. *Postdramatic* performances, often

considered nonconformist, have a unique character in terms of form, structure and manifestation, often with an unrepeatable nature.

Postdramatic theatre is not a theatre of illusion. In the theatrical productions of the 21st century the illusion seems to gradually dissolve from the artists's actions. The legacy left behind by the great reference artists of the 20th century such as Meyerhold makes its presence felt. The spectator is not being presented a reality as accurate as possible by using certain tricks in order to create an illusion, on the contrary. The spectator acquires a new quality, we could say, that of conscious participant in an artistic act. Actors do not pretend to be in another time and space other than the common time and space that is here and now.

Therefore, in the context of the *postdramatic* theatre, creating the real effect is no longer a priority. The shows become hybrid and rely on a multitude of forms of expression. The *postdramatic* theatre focuses on highlighting the ephemeral and unrepeatable character of the artistic act, emphasizing a unique and instantaneous event. It assumes both the *fiction* and the *reality* status so that it proposes the spectator an *experience* that has undergone a repetition process in advance, but which did not focus on prefabbing an image of the world, claiming it to be perceived as true. It presents the image, declares and assumes this action thus revealing the fictional character of the theatre and simultaneously outlining the *reality* constituted by the presence of them all in the same *experience*.

In this specific context, the notion of *character* is redefined and deconstructed. If in the classical or modern theatre, *the character* was usually an individual with a well-defined personality, with a history and an evolution within the story; in the *postdramatic* theatre, this notion becomes much more fluid and ambiguous. The need for such clarifications derives precisely from the confusion created over time. *The character* is a *fictional* construction, and in the absence of *the physical, mental and intellectual presence* of the actor, the character is nothing but literature. In this respect, the actor no longer embodies *the character* in the traditional sense, but uses his own *presence* to communicate messages or to explore themes and ideas. It is also questioned the process of *character incarnation* in the context of *postdramatic* theatre so that being under construction, the actor's approach focuses on the process of disinhibition of the creative instances that allow him to build, to connect to *here* and *now* in order to react as honestly as possible to the impulse of external stimuli.

The actor does not *become his character*; the actor presents his *character* to the public being *aware* of his fictional character, of his immateriality in the absence of his *presence* and does not identify himself as a *character* but a *creative presence*, who has the purpose *to confess* to the public a part of his existence. Instead of being a form of passive entertainment,

postdramatic theatre becomes an active and participatory experience, requiring the intellectual, emotional and sometimes physical commitment of the spectators. This aspect reflects a broader trend in contemporary art, in which the boundaries between artist and audience, between creator and receiver, are becoming more and more fluid and permeable.

Chapter II. The 21st century. A theatre of the present

The reformation process that begins with the settlement of the *postdramatic* current through which the theatre instances are directly questioned, and the way of using the means of theatrical expression undergoes considerable changes, and contributes to reducing the border between theatre and other arts that have the stated purpose of generating *real experiences*. The development of the artistic event entitled *performance* at the end of the 20th century directly contributed to this phenomenon. *Performance* crystallizes as a cultural phenomenon and aesthetic category around the avant-garde movement. Artists such as Alan Kaprow, John Cage and Merce Cunningham from different environments, namely painting, music and dance, gradually laid the foundations of a new *current* by opting in their work for *live experience*, thus generating new genres of expression such as *happening*, *action-art* and *performance art*.

The term performance soon comes to encompass a multitude of meanings and accumulates more and more notoriety. In a process of reformatting, the 21st century theatre will assimilate certain principles of the new artistic movement. We thus see a recalibration of the notion of play that is specific to the theatrical act. The actor-spectator relationship seems to be increasingly becoming an integral part of the play, and this relationship seems to be getting more and more alive, here and now. The functional and universally accepted rules that have been accepted so far are also undergoing substantial changes. At the core, we will find the same principles and the same constitutive elements. We could say that innovation takes place at the level of execution.

Over the past century, this artistic direction has experienced a significant evolution, with artists and companies in the US and Europe such as *The Living Theatre*, *Open Theatre*, *The Wooster Group*, *Jan Fabre*, *Jan Lauwers*, *Troubleyn*, *Needcompany* and *Forced Entertainment* which have challenged the traditional theatrical conventions through innovative creations. These leading artists will perform having at the core of their work the doctrine of the *performance* phenomenon, aiming to create visceral innovative productions outside any of the classical conventions with which performance-based theatre operates. Thus, in the digital age, as a result of these accumulations, the theatre of the present is a performative theatre that

combines elements of dance, visual art, digital art, sound design, light design and dramaturgy in its productions. Through these productions, it encourages experimentation and the exploration of new forms of storytelling. This can mean playing with the traditional structure of a play, using technology in innovative ways, or exploring genres and art forms in surprising ways. Creativity knows no limits, given the interdisciplinary nature of theatre performance that combines elements from different artistic fields and backgrounds.

The direct and in real-time experience is an essential feature of the *performative theatre*, and each *performance-event* is unique, highlighting the ephemeral and unique nature of live art. In terms of space, *performative theatre* encourages the use of spaces in unconventional or innovative ways, and is essentially an art form that aims to push and redefine the boundaries of what theatre can be and how it can be *experienced*. By importing the principles of *the performance* sphere into the context of *postdramatic* theatre and the emergence of this type of *performative theatre* that probes and investigates different ways in which theatrical phenomenon can become an *experience of the real* rather than the construction of an *effect of the real*, a subcategory, vaguely defined as *conceptual* theatre, has appeared. In this respect, the process begins with the elaboration of a concept that directly serves to materialize *the idea* that the creative team wishes to explore within their artistic approach. Space plays a crucial role in the *conceptual* theatre, contributing directly to the quality of the *experience*.

One of the main goals of the *conceptual* theatre is to cultivate *liveness*, with an emphasis on *direct*, not mediated experience. Some performances may have an extended duration, involving time passage as part of the performance, or may explore fragmentation and rhythm in an innovative way. In this context, spectators are challenged to become an active part of the *experience*, transforming it according to their own involvement and interpretation.

This shift in paradigm at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century has significantly influenced the director's role and duties in the theatre creation. Initially, the director was an authority in the creative team, translating the artistic vision and coordinating the production. His role has become more complex, involving the choice of text and the detailed organisation of the performance. The director has become a central figure in the creation of the show, coordinating the artistic team, which is why the relationship with the actors is crucial, guiding them in the development of the creative process. The director's authority may be questioned in *postdramatic* productions, but his presence remains essential in organising the cooperation and maintaining the integrity of the performance.

This phenomenon will contribute directly to the emergence of new theatrical practices and will influence in certain contexts the director's conduct and status in other productions of the *postdramatic* movement. The hierarchy established over the years is overturned as well in the *postdramatic* movement, with productions increasingly opting for the direct involvement of the entire team in the creative process. Actors become active co-creators, bringing their own ideas and personal experiences into the process. Collective creation encourages actors' creativity and the resulting performances are characterised by authenticity and energy. The process starts with improvisation and exploration, without a fixed text, and is based on collective creativity. *The fictionalisation* of personal experiences is an essential stage, but it does not have a character or a therapeutic purpose, but to contribute directly to the dramatic material and to the process of artistic creation. Self-referentiality is explored, but maintaining balance.

The *Forced Entertainment* Company has played a significant role in the development of *devised* practice. Through their productions, they aim to deconstruct the theatre that abounds with set, costume, makeup and other external expressive crutches, in order to get at what they consider the essence of theatre. They exploit the *here and now connection* that emerges between spectator and actor, as the two entities have the courage to confess together by acknowledging each other's presence and questioning within the respective event the themes proposed for contemplation. *Forced Entertainment's* artistic action consists in promoting a *living theatre* that nourishes its existence by shaping a space of *confrontation*, within which both the artistic team and the spectators are invited to question their own existence by directly facing the specific theme proposed in a certain production and always relating to it through their own cognitive, emotional and intellectual filters.

The performance-event Speak Bitterness by *Forced Entertainment* Company is a profound and provocative exploration of the confession of human error. Premiered in 1994, the form and structure of the event undergoes numerous writing changes over the years by inserting additions to the texts developed by Tim Etchells for other company productions. The aim of the approach is to launch itself before an audience and with them into a bitter process of confession of humanity's own sins. With a minimalist scenography, the show brings the actors and the confessional text to the spotlight. The performers of *Forced Entertainment* Company can be seen as a model version of the actor in the theatrical context of the 21st century. A context in which we increasingly identify the need to refresh the training process or a reformation of the personal vision in order to be able to easily integrate the demands that have appeared with the onset of the *postdramatic* movement.

In the context of the 21st century, in the Romanian space, this practice is beginning to gain more and more ground through the new stream of performance creators, who, with the passing of time, are slowly engaging in research and theatrical experiments, some of them even adopting and joining this way of constructing the performance. Directors such as Gianina Cărbunariu, Bogdan Georgescu and Catinca Drăgănescu use this method of creation and construction. The mentality behind the concept of *collective creation* is not entirely accepted by the artistic community in Romania, but there are exceptions. *Devised* practice seems to be embraced more confidently by the independent artistic sector, which apparently has more creative freedom than the state theatre institutions. An example of this is Reactor Theatre for Creation and Experiment in Cluj-Napoca, an increasingly visible presence in the Romanian theatrical field, with an artistic approach based on artistic exploration and experimentation.

The emergence of these new practices in theatre and beyond contributes directly to the appearance of new forms of expression that require changes in the actor's approach in his personal creative process. Used to the process of *masking* his own *presence* behind a *fiction* made up of *the script of his role*, the actor is challenged, in the present context, *to reveal Himself/Herself* in a *conscious* manner. The necessary acceptance in this specific case therefore involves more than just *assuming a story* that does not belong to oneself, by triggering that process of identification using *techniques* that facilitate this process. The commitment required by 21st century theatre challenges the actor from all points of view and sometimes, on the contrary, requires him/her to abandon the application of a specific *techniques assumed* either in training or through the accumulation that comes from the various experiences lived throughout his/her professional life.

In this sense, Rimini Protokoll should need no introduction in the European theatre of the 21st century thanks to its unique vision and innovative approach that contributes to the evolution of the theatre phenomenon in Europe. In 2000, the young graduates of the Giessen Theatre Institute Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi and Daniel Wetzl set up a new *theatre* company. The artistic discourse of the company proves to be provocative right from the start, centred on experimenting and exploring theatrical instances in order to exploit them outside the *laws of the stage*. When referring to the work of the three artists we use in particular terms such as *experience, event and project*. Through the productions developed over the years, the group has intended, and I would venture to say that it has succeeded each time, *to reconfigure* the specific elements of theatre through the games created in order to expand and offer new perspectives on reality. This is why we cannot label Rimini Protokoll's projects as *shows* but rather we can generically call them *performances*.

The Walks production is one of the German collective's hybrid productions conceived as an app whose content consists of a collection of ten guided audio walks. *The project* was born in the context of the pandemic, which in the collective's opinion emphasized the importance of an action considered to be mundane, or routinary, given that in the context of the pandemic *a walk* suddenly turned overnight from a normality into a privilege. In each *audio performance*, the dramaturgy is the result of the process of gathering information generated by *the experts* co-opted in *the project*. The Romanian version was introduced into the offer in the Romanian cultural space by the alternative interdisciplinary cultural space dedicated to the performing arts Teatrelli, a project supported by the institution Creart - Centre for Creation, Art and Tradition of the Municipality of Bucharest. Currently under the direction of artistic director Roxana Lăpădat, the cultural space Teatrelli undertakes an approach focused on experiment, research and theatrical innovation.

In the context of the 21st century troubled by recent events, on 15th October 2021, in the Romanian cultural space, a new *independent theatre* with *online* location named *Postnational Interphonic Theatre* will make its debut. It contained the first five productions of the four *artistic companies* it incorporates: *the Vlaicu Golcea Company*, *the Alex Halka Company*, *the Mihai Păcurar Company* and *the Kinga Otvos Company*. In its two years of activity the Postnational Interphonic Theatre produces almost 60 *online* and *offline* theatrical art works with a profound *experimental* character aiming to facilitate the access of the public to new forms of expression with a perspective and a vision that is at least interesting on the contemporary world and on new ways of artistic expression. At the time of writing this research, more than 50 artists from all over the country, of different nationalities, ages, identities and vocational interests have joined this *theatre*. Through the physical productions and through the presence in specific festivals in which the collective has presented its work, they want to promote a new approach and an innovative type of relationship to contemporary theatre art and to means of expression that are not often used in the context of the commercial Romanian theatre.

In the next lines we will focus on one of the *offline* productions entitled *Actrițe. Adică, scuze că te ating* (*The Actresses, Or Sorry for Touching You*) by Michal Telega, directed by Mihai Păcurar, translated by Marina Palii, with the *actors-performers*: Mădălina Mușat, Paula Dunker, Oana Hodade, Oana Pușcate, Kinga Otvos and Carmen Giurco; Sound design: Vlaicu Golcea, technical supervisor :Alexandru Andrei and producer Laura Trocan. The production is part of the collective's approach to address, through contemporary art, the physical and emotional abuse within artistic institutions and communities. The text is written by the Polish-

born playwright Michał Telega and can be classified as a documentary theatre as it was conceived following five interviews with five students from the Faculty of Acting at the Academy of Theatre Arts in Krakow.

Chapter III. The actor of the 21st century. Body-presence at the boundary between fiction and reality

The present chapter aims to explore in further detail the figure of *the actor* in the context of the 21st century theatre, a context in which this figure undergoes significant changes, becoming more and more complex and multidimensional both in terms of the creative process it develops and the actual work within a *performance-event*. In the 21st century theatre, the *actor-performer* is more than just a performer of a character created by a playwright or director. Instead, he or she is an active co-creator of the performance, involved in all aspects of artistic creation, from the generation of the initial materials to the final presentation. This requires an ability to be flexible and to collaborate with other artists, incorporate feedback and experiment in new methods of expression. In this context, the skills of *the actor-performer* include not only vocal technique and body movement, but also knowledge and understanding of choreography, directing, dramatic writing, psychology and biology, and even sound or lighting design.

Moreover, *cultivating a state of conscious presence* requires long-term commitment, discipline, curiosity and an openness to continuous exploration and learning, which will also directly facilitate the continuous navigation needed by the actor to adapt to an ever-changing art. However, the benefits can be significant. This approach can help to create more authentic *live performance-events*, and can also directly help to manage stress and possible blockages that may arise later.

In the context of the present research, it is reasoned that fiction includes everything that does not correspond to the actor's personal *reality*, including the features and experiences attributed to *the character* and the assumption of autobiographical data in the service of art. *Fiction* becomes an integral part of the actor's creative process, explored and experienced during the *performance-event*. It is emphasised the importance of *presence* in the 21st century theatre, actors must be *aware of the present* moment and to have a trained and assumed *conscious attention* and *intention*. *Presence* is described as a deep *awareness of the self* and the environment, and actors are often required to have a *presence* similar to that of the *performance-art* artists. At the same time, the importance of the relationship between *body* and

presence is presented, and actors are instructed to train their senses and body in order to contain this state of *conscious presence*, which stimulates *spontaneity*, *receptivity* and *adaptability* to the challenges of the artistic process.

Following the appearance of new forms of artistic manifestation, the tension between the two hypostases, that of the body in its own existence and that of the body as a theatrical sign whose task is to portray a fiction, has taken more and more proportions. The body as in its own self-existence refers to the actor's body as it really is in the present moment, with all its physical sensations, emotions, moods and personal experiences. This tension has been questioned over the years by many prominent personalities, so it can be said that the research of this phenomenon deserves and demands our attention in the present context in which we try to balance this dissension to some extent by developing the *body-presence* syntagm.

The expression *here and now* takes on a new meaning in the current theatrical context. This theatre of the *present moment* requires the spectator to assume his/her own presence in the artistic *event* and to participate *actively* and *consciously*. The artistic act takes place between one self and another, each party actively contributing to its own *experience*. The responsibility for the quality of the artistic act is no longer attributed entirely to the creative team, but also to the spectator who, by deciding to participate, takes responsibility for his/ her own *presence* and thus accepts to renounce his/her former passive status. *Here and now* we find ourselves at the theatre, the actor recognises that *the presence* and contribution of the spectator is necessary to his/her questioning and witnessing in an artistic context, and the spectator accepts this reality from which the illusion seems to be removed in favour of a different experience.

The theatre embraces its own *reality*, that of simply being theatre, any *trick* of catapulting into another *time* and *space* being eliminated, *the presence* of the spectator being thus constantly challenged. Exploiting the unique vision and perspective of each spectator which is based on their own experiences, knowledge, beliefs, identities brings a complex, diverse dimension and contributes directly to the cultivation of the *live* character of the *performance-event*. Beyond this, the speculation of the spectator's physical presence - not only their attention but also their body and energy - creates a unique atmosphere, influences the dynamics of the group that will be, at each performance, different and creates a personalized and unrepeatable *experience*.

The brain structure and functions play an essential role in the development of *conscious presence*. The human brain is complex and influences the way we experience and perceive the world. The prefrontal cortex and the cortex in general are crucial in higher cognitive processes, and their development can improve our ability to be consciously present. The link between the

prefrontal cortex and social interactions is important because they influence self-awareness and social relationships. Understanding these cognitive and emotional processes helps us develop skills for living in the *present*, managing stress and improving the quality of our life experience. Cultivating *the conscious presence* involves *becoming aware* of this relationship and developing skills to be more aware of our own thoughts and emotions. Avoiding the *autopilot state* helps us to live more *authentically* and to make better-informed decisions in life.

Considering the context in which the 21st century theatre presents new challenges and opportunities, this reformation proposal implies a total immersion, both emotionally and physically, in the *present* moment, which is necessary to produce an authentic testimony. This training can be seen as a multi-dimensional process based also on the development of specific skills. But what is proposed through this approach is not only about accumulating and mastering various acting techniques, but rather involves a deeper understanding of the *Self* and how the mind, brain and body work together to create and generate a valuable artistic *experience at the boundary* between *fiction* and *reality*. Constant practice and *assumed* commitment are the foundation of any endeavor, and a holistic approach regarding *the actor's* formation and reformation in the context of the 21st century can bring significant improvements to the creative process.

From a theoretical point of view, the junction between psychological concepts and the present actor can be developed outside the ideas discussed in this chapter. For the present approach, I consider the concepts discussed to be sufficient. The applicability of the practical concepts, and the way in which a training based on the development and cultivation of the *actor's state of conscious presence* could be organized, as well as the content of such a training, requires a research in itself. That is why, in the present approach, we will not dedicate ourselves to this process, but within the following chapter, we will propose three existing methods that operate with these concepts and that could constitute an essential point in the process of developing a training that addresses the specific needs of *the actor-performer* and that develops the necessary skills.

Chapter IV. Meisner, Viewpoints and Suzuki – Behavior, point of view, body-present. A perspective on a possible practice

In the context of the chapter studied, we propose the exploration of three significant and relevant theatre training methods: the Meisner Method developed by Sanford Meisner, the Viewpoints Method and the Suzuki Method, created by Tadashi Suzuki. The main aim of the chapter is to analyse these methods, highlighting their contribution to the development of the *actor-performer's* state of *conscious presence* in the context of the 21st century. The basic principles of each method are discussed, also their application and relevance to contemporary theatre. Through the innovative approach of these methods and the unique visions of their creators, with the intention to outline a possible training that adapts to the *actor-performer's* current needs.

The Meisner method, by its instinctive and responsive nature, can reach a high level of *authenticity* and *presence*, essential attributes in the 21st century theatrical context. This level of *reality* and *immediacy* can provide an intense *experience*, because the actors' training allows them to access those kinds of visceral reactions. Given the fact that this training emphasises *the reality* of behaviour rather than character building techniques based on memory and imagination. At the heart of his pedagogical philosophy is the principle that the actor should discover the inner resources needed to act and react honestly in imaginary circumstances. Meisner encouraged his students to respond instinctively and spontaneously to situations and other actors, promoting *authenticity* and *conscious and assumed presence*. The basic principles of the Meisner method include *the instinctive response*, *repetition* and *independent activity*. Instinctive response encourages actors to respond naturally and authentically to scene partners, while rehearsal helps to develop a spontaneous and conscious response.

If we refer to the fundamental principles of the Meisner method, namely: *authenticity*, *conscious presence* and the actor's body as an instrument of expression, we can conclude that this method could contribute in an effective way to the training of the *actor-performer*, *body-presence* at the *boundary* between *fiction* and *reality* in the 21st century theatre. In this specific context, *authenticity* is not only a matter of proper sincerity, but of *reacting hic et nunc* in the most visceral way possible to external stimuli, and *the actor-performer's* ability to *cultivate a state of conscious presence* in today's theatrical context is vital. Moreover, Meisner's method recognizes the importance of the body as a tool for the expression and communication of the stage, and the physical training proposed can contribute directly to the awareness of one's own

presence and how it can be used in the most effective and productive way. Although conceived in the context of the 20th century, the Meisner Method offers, in today's context, a set of tools and principles that can directly contribute to the training of the *actor-performer*, who operates with the fluid and undefined boundaries between *fiction* and *reality*, in order to generate and produce *live material* and *valuable artistic experiences*.

The *Viewpoints* method is an actor training technique that focuses on improvisation and movement in space and within this method, the artistic performance is perceived as a movement-based language, where each action on stage contributes to the overall composition of the performance. This approach goes beyond traditional conventions. At the basis of the *Viewpoints* method there are, as I said, six fundamental principles, *six points of view*: space, form, time, emotion, movement and story. They are considered the basic elements that were later extended and expanded by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau into a system structured in two categories, *viewpoints* of a physical nature and viewpoints of a vocal nature, comprising fifteen principles.

These elements are designed as a set of tools for actors to use to explore and construct the performance in an unconventional way. Each *point of view* represents a particular dimension or aspect that needs to be considered during the performance and the creative process and can be explored and manipulated independently or in combination with the others. This toolkit comes as a support for the creators, as a *foothold* that they can use concretely in the production of an artistic approach beyond traditional theatrical conventions. In the context of the present research, which operates with specific concepts, we can conclude that the *Viewpoints* method and its principles prove and confirm its relevance as a tool that can contribute to the training and development of *the actor-performer* in the theatrical context of the 21st century.

This type of approach equips the actors with an extensive vocabulary of movement and interaction, given that this methodology requires and stimulates a deep *awareness* of the body and space, as well as the relationship between them. In an age when *authenticity* and *immediateness* become essential to the artistic endeavor, the actor's ability to be *present* and *connected* with the environment, with the stage partners, and with the audience becomes essential. Thus, the *Viewpoints* method, by its exploratory nature and through an approach based on improvisation, stimulates the *actor-performer's* creativity, encouraging him to get out of his comfort zone in order to discover new ways of expression. In a theatrical landscape that emphasizes *innovation* and *experiment*, this readiness and curiosity towards new possibilities become essential. This training is not just a set of exercises or techniques, but it becomes a way

of thinking and approach ideally aligned with the needs and challenges of the theatre of the 21st century. It also contributes to the formation and consolidation of a solid foundation in what involves the development of the *actor-performer, body-presence* at the *border* between *fiction* and *reality*.

The development of the Suzuki method in the second half of the 20th century represents a point of reference in terms of the evolution of the global theatrical phenomenon, taking into consideration that this method would become one of the most influential and debated training techniques in the world. One of the fundamental ideas on which is based the Suzuki method—an idea that we will develop more onward—is that the actor must have a strong *physical presence* and be able to communicate beyond words. To this end, Suzuki introduced a rigorous set of physical exercises that stimulate the actor's inner energy and amplify his *stage presence*. Since the beginning of his work, he has recognized that at the heart of the success of the creative process and a successful artistic endeavor is the *body of the actor*. That is why the training pays special attention to the legs and the center of weight of the body, partly inspired by the traditional Japanese martial arts and the Noh theatre, where stability and anchoring are essential. This rigorous training is the result of a complex blend of study of Japanese tradition, artistic *experimentation*, and personal confrontation with the problems of cultural identity. Suzuki thus created not just a technique but a whole system of thinking about what it means to be an actor in the modern world. Integrating traditional Japanese elements into a modern and international context, Tadashi Suzuki has provided theatrical worlds with a powerful tool for exploring and expressing the human condition.

In the context of the evolution of the theatrical phenomenon the Suzuki method can provide a solid framework for the *actor-performer, body-presence* at the *border* between *fiction* and *reality* in which *to experiment* and *explore* new ways and forms of expression generating *live material hic et nunc*. We can consider that in these complex new dynamics, the Suzuki method can play a crucial role in the formation of the *actor-performer, body-presence* at the *boundary* between *fiction* and *reality* in the theatre of the 21th century. It equips them with the necessary skills to navigate with the complex and often fluid border between reality and fiction, giving them the necessary tools *to cultivate the state of conscious presence hic et nunc*.

Combining these methods not only gives *the actor* a vast set of instruments, but also the ability to navigate in emotional depth, in spatial dynamics and in his/her *physical presence* with high precision and sensitivity. This triple perspective highlights the importance of *authenticity (Meisner)*, *spatial and temporal consciousness (Viewpoints)* and *physical presence (Suzuki)* in the formation of *actor-performer, body-presence at the border* between *fiction* and

reality in the theatre of the 21st century. In the era of *postdramatic theatre*, of *performance*, of *immersive theater*, the *actor-performer* must be versatile, receptive and deeply connected to the *self*, to the environment and *to the others*. In conclusion, concentrating the three methods or their basic principles in a single training could directly contribute to the formation of the *actor-performer* by developing the ability to navigate with elegance and refinement in the broad spectrum of human emotions. It also represents the vision of a training that not only equips *the actor* with specific techniques, but transforms him/her into a complete artist, *conscious* and connected to the trends of his/her time. Despite all these benefits, it is essential to emphasise that this approach is only a compromise solution. It is also crucial to highlight once again in this research the need for the emergence of *a training* that facilitates the formation of *the actor-performer*, *body-presence at the border* between *fiction* and *reality*, a training that addresses the specific needs of the actors of the 21st century theatre.

CONCLUSIONS

In the dynamic and complex context of the 21st century, the intersection between *fiction* and *reality* is felt intensely, thus provoking the need for a profound re-evaluation of the *actor's* role and responsibility in the current theatrical context, which is why the issue of this research focused on the emergence of the figure of the *actor-performer*, which as a pivot of the theatrical experience, becomes *actor-creator*, *body-presence at the boundary* between *fiction* and *reality*. This phenomenon should not be perceived as only the result of a stylistic evolution or a passing tendency but should rather be perceived as a significant change of paradigm, a reflection on our contemporary society, in the context of which notions such as *authenticity*, *identity*, *representation*, *presentation* are constantly questioned but not devalued. In the digital era, of augmented and virtual *realities*, an era in which the perceptions of the individual are frequently mediated and reshaped by the almost excessive use of technology, *the actor-performer* faces unique challenges. How can he preserve the *authentic* character in a world where *the real* is more and more often filtered and distorted?

In this context, it is necessary for *the actor* to become an *actor-interpreter*, *actor-creator*, a point of *anchoring* the public, a guide that navigates through the labyrinth of meanings, emotions and *realities* so that it *takes on* the role of defining and redefining, unmasking, building and deconstructing, to be *consciously* exposed by cultivating what we have defined as *the state of conscious presence* generating *experience* and *living material hic*

et nunc. In this sense, *the actor-performer* becomes the central point in the dialectic between *presentation* and *representation*, *subjectivity* and *objectivity*, *truth* and *illusion*.

Therefore, this thesis aims to answer some essential questions: How is the role of the *actor-performer* redefined in the context of the 21st century? What are the methods and techniques by which he navigates to *the border* between *fiction* and *reality*? What is the current state of the theatrical phenomenon in the context this redefinition takes place? What does this specific approach involve from a cognitive, emotional, behavioral and intellectual point of view? How does this dynamic influence the public experience and how does it contribute to the evolution and transformation of contemporary artistic approaches?

In antithesis to the traditional and conventional conceptions, *the actor-performer* is not limited to the status of transmitter of a text and its *representation* by performing directorial indications but becomes a *co-creator* of theatrical *experience* which is generated *hic et nunc*. To that end, *the actor-performer* will care constantly and *assumed* about *cultivating the state of conscious presence* in order to produce *authentic experiences* beyond the comfort zone but in a *conscious* and *assumed* way. More than that, fading *the boundaries* between *fiction* and *reality* contributes to generating a much more immersive and challenging *theatrical experience* in which the role and status of the public is questioned and directly challenged, so that in this context the spectator is directly called to the disadvantage of the passive attitude with which he/she has been accustomed to up to this moment.

Following the deepening of this subject, it becomes obvious that we are witnessing a radical evolution in terms of the creative process of *the actor* in the context of the 21st century. This change is firmly anchored in the way *the actor's body* is situated in a defective balance between *reality* and *fiction*, thus becoming a *living interface* that engages and challenges the public in new and unpredictable ways *hic et nunc*. Given that the theater of the 21st century, as we have shown, is considered to be *a theater of bilateral presence*, it is obvious that at the center of these artistic approaches is *the body* – no only as a physical instrument, but as a *presence* that communicates beyond words and in this sense I underlined, by analyzing certain techniques and methods, the importance of this corporality that gives the actor the necessary skills to navigate in the complexity of contemporary *postdramatic* productions. Thus, the *actor's body-presence* becomes an exploration playground and *anchor point hic et nunc*.

Cultivating the state of conscious presence, in this specific context in which the *boundaries* between *real* and *fictional* become more and more fluid and *the actor-performer* is constantly challenged to reveal his own vulnerability, *to cultivate authentic connections* with the public and to engage in a constant dialogue with them, can be considered absolutely

essential both for the good development of the artistic approach and for the preservation of *the actor's* integrity. As demonstrated in this paper, this *state of conscious presence* does not only imply being physically *present*, but also implies a deep *self-awareness* of the stage partners, of space and the public and it requires a high level of *authenticity* and *vulnerability* that allows *the actor* to respond *spontaneously hic et nunc* to stimuli and situations thus generating material with a deep *live* character. At the same time, this *state of conscious presence* will directly contribute to the anchoring of *the actor* in the operation with *the boundary* between *fiction* and *reality*, allowing him to navigate confidently between these two instances, thus facilitating deeply personal and immersive *theatrical experiences*.

In the era in which the public is assaulted with a multitude of digital stimuli and *passive experiences*, *the actor's conscious presence* offers an oasis of *authenticity* and *interconnection*. The public thus becomes from a simple observer, an active participant, emotionally and intellectually involved in what is carried out within the artistic approach. In this sense, *cultivating the conscious presence of the actor-performer* is not only an artistic option but also a necessity, directly cultivating the relevance of theatrical art towards the rapid changes of contemporary society. *The actor* thus becomes a true guide facilitating *the spectator's experience* and leading him on a journey to *the boundary* between *fiction* and *reality* in which he/she will experience *hic et nunc* and reflect on his/her own existence. Thus, the thesis offers a theoretical reconfiguration and a new conceptualization of *the actor's* role and his/her assignments and also presents a triple perspective on the possibility of developing a training based on pre-existing methods but only as a compromise measure, while raising the issue of designing a training that meets the needs of *the actor-performer* as defined in this research.

At the same time, the thesis also highlights the deepening of the dialogue with the public considering the capacity of the current theatrical phenomenon to challenge and engage the public in sensitive and topical issues, transforming the artistic act into a space where dialogue and introspection are encouraged. Encouraging the continuous research and exploration of the ways in which theatre can respond and reflect the social and cultural dynamics of our times, this approach also contributes to perpetuate the dialogue regarding the role of art in the society of the 21st century. Concerning the training of *the actor-performer*, the elaboration of a specific training that meets the current needs is more than necessary, and in this sense it is recommended first of all to adapt and update the curriculum to include, firstly, and foremost specific methods and techniques that directly contribute to the training and development of *the actor-performer* to the detriment of the unilateral approach to techniques that further promote exclusively the aesthetic principles of theatre based on *representation*.

In this case, it would be necessary to include both theoretically and practically in-depth studies on the relationship between *fiction* and *reality* and to facilitate the exploration of the *body as a presence* through specific exercises that facilitate the process of *cultivating the state of conscious presence*. I believe that the implementation of practical workshops focusing on developing the skills needed to meet the specific challenges of *the actor-performer* in which he/she can experiment with different forms of artistic expression and even with interactivity in relation to technology can be an essential first step. As technology is constantly evolving, it would be recommended for theatrical training institutions to provide the context of continuous training for actors and technical crews and in this regard in order to keep up with innovations in this field in order to could subsequently integrate them into productions as efficiently as possible. In this sense, establishing partnerships with experts in fields such as IT, *virtual reality*, *sound design* or *video-mapping* in order to familiarize yourself with these technologies can be extremely useful.

At the same time, within productions that directly explore the *boundary* between *fiction* and *reality* and especially in the context of those involving personal or sensitive elements, it is recommended to establish strict protocols to ensure the smooth running of the process and respect between all participants, including the public. Both theatrical and training institutions should allocate resources and spaces for experimentation, allowing creators to try new approaches and develop new forms of expression given that a dynamic approach is needed in the context of the evolution of the theatrical phenomenon. In this sense, the above recommendations aim to build a framework in which the theatre not only reflects but also shapes and responds directly to the complex *reality* of the contemporary world. Further research should also be developed on the development of a specific training program in this regard.

In conclusion, in the era of *postdramatic theatre* and in the context of the 21st century *the actor-performer*, *body-presence at the boundary* between *fiction* and *reality* has a revolutionary role and manages to contribute directly to creating a deep and meaningful dialogue in direct connection with the public, generating *living experience* thus encouraging spectators to reflect and introspect *hic et nunc*. Moreover, this thesis emphasizes the importance of adaptation and innovation in the performing arts and especially in terms of the formation of *the actor-performer*. In the context of this approach, it has been demonstrated that *the actor-performer* is not just an extension resulting from a process of evolution, but an independent *figure* who requires the attention and analysis of specialists in the field. In a world where the distinction between *real* and *fictional* becomes increasingly blurred, the role of *the actor-*

performer is essential taking into consideration that, in the context of contemporary theatrical productions, it does not only reflect the tensions and ambiguities of our time, but it is attempted to create a space in which they can be analyzed, discussed and questioned. In this sense, *the actor-performer, body-presence on the boundary between fiction and reality* reiterates the famous definition of film director Cristi Puiu about talent ,according to which it represents nothing but the courage to confess.

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