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The Actor and the Training

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D e c l a r a t i o n

I declare that I have prepared my Master's Thesis independently on the following topic:

The Actor and the Training

under the expert guidance of my thesis advisor and with the use of the cited literature and sources.

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ABSTRACT

The Actor and the Training

In this thesis I am going to talk about the experience and knowledge I have gained throughout the years spent in the theatre institutions where I have participated as an actor (Macedonian National Theatre Skopje, National Theatre Bitola, and Turkish Theatre Skopje) and the faculties for theatre arts where I have studied (DAMU and ESRA). Starting from the first trials when I have appeared on the stage as a dilettante till the point of awakening of the theatre matter as a whole and acquiring certain discipline as an answer to the assigned theatre question. Also I will mention phrases, thoughts, theatre problems and solutions seen from the point of view of theatre individuals I have been inspired with and traced my path in this area at the same time. It would be a kind of reflection based on my education that I have gained from my colleagues, pedagogues and books together with my personal experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Seven years of experience in theatre matters, I have come to a conclusion that apart from the methods known to the theatre individuals and the books related to theatre, the people you have met are contributing a lot in the area mentioned. I am happy that I had the opportunity to meet a lot of wonderful people during my Master Studies and use them as a source of inspiration, knowledge and experience.

I would like to say thank you to all my pedagogues and friends at the Academy of Performing arts in Prague (AMU) and The University of Audiovisual Arts, European Film Academy, ESRA Paris - Skopje - New York for their advices, critics and observations in the theatre world.

The actors that I have acted with at the Macedonian National Theatre are the same that have given me advice that the theater is cruel and that apart from all the dedication and hard work you always get less, but it keeps you motivated. I would also like to mention that the specific work of particular individuals from that theater is to be blamed for the love and passion I possess for this profession.

My mentor Hanka Malinková for her understanding, help and tolerance she demonstrated throughout my work.

My parents Zoran and Gordana who are the greatest support in my life.

I thank you all, the theatre is a unity where we create together.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why theatre?

When I was little I remember my first encounters with the theatre, they were the performances I watched during my primary education. It happened for the first time when I was in the first grade. My school was offered tickets by a certain production and I with my parents' permission got the first ticket for the theatre performance. The school bus took us to the location and the school teacher took care that every one of us find his/her own seat that matched the ticket he/she got. The enormous excitement and the moment of hanging out with friends holding hands with each other just before the beginning of the performance, only increased the importance of this moment in my life. I can't recall this event very much but the most important thing that I could single out is the children's collaboration with the actors. We completely interacted with the actors, we would warn the leading actor when the enemy was close. We would cry or we would laugh following the destiny of the leading actor. We were completely overwhelmed by the theatre magic. Isn't the children's belief and interaction with the performers the ideal level of theatre performance towards which we, the theatre performers, strive.

I also remember my first role in my life. I was a robot who together with my colleague the Martian landed on our planet Earth. I remember that I wore a costume made entirely of cardboard boxes in which I barely moved. We were the leading protagonists in the theatre show we were preparing for New Year. As a main thing that I would like to mention is that I felt the audience reaction for the first time. I don't remember the words I uttered but I remember well the laughter of the audience when I went out on the stage. My friends' parents knew me well and it was very funny for them when I got out on the stage being half- man and half- box. I was carried away by the whole atmosphere and for the first time I felt a stage pleasure.

My first preparations started when I repeated the text aloud in my room. I am saying aloud because the sound of my words was supposed to reach the neighboring room where my parents were and they were monitoring my course of study. After that a checking followed where I recited and my parents carefully followed. One thing was

sure my strict directors wouldn't let me appear on stage rehearsals unprepared which happened in the premises of my own school.

The theatre as subject of study was present in my basic education. We had school shows that we used to celebrate important days with, like: the day of the school, the coming of New Year, days which marked certain events in our religion, national holidays and so on.... Those were moments of joy among us, students and our parents.

Of course, the shows were extracurricular activities. But I remember that I accepted all the offers from the production which in those case was the teacher. They were my first choreographies and scene movements as well. The most important thing from that time which I wish to have now, is the freedom of movements which I had and the confidence I was easily able to reach on the stage. The pleasure I had as a performer and the awards I received after the plays from my parents as a token of job well done, somehow awoke in me the knowledge of the fact that I would take up dealing with the theatre later in my life.

1.2 Secondary school days

Because of the big competition of excellent students in my town I didn't manage to enroll gymnasium secondary school in my town. Medical school came as an alternative suggested by my parents since part of them was professionally in that area. As opposed to gymnasium education, the medical school didn't organize theatre club and create performances from the interested individuals. Those four years I was separated from the theatre.

But I would like to mention this period because I would like to stress out that it is the beginning for setting up my foundations in art. Firstly, as love inherited from my father I played the guitar. I played in two bands and I was part of the mandolin orchestra in my town. Some of the professors in my school knew that and would assign me an obligation to organize some of the shows held on the occasion of an important school holiday. Also, I was always in charge for the background music at a literary reading played by my guitar which happened at the celebration of the annual school day.

So there were performers and there was an audience. Our task was to create a whole on certain given topic. As a conclusion I can single out that the most important moments of those events were the ones when the co-operation appeared on both sides. All in one place as if gathered to achieve one purpose. I wanted to initiate those moments because I was aware that you couldn't mechanically organize them. I felt very nice both as an organizer and as a performer.

But, yet I followed orders. The music theme, the choice of the text that we presented and the order of the performing acts in the event were dictated by the professors and the principal of the school himself. But it wasn't accidental. It happened so that certain principles were meant to be fulfilled, to portray metaphors and to express meanings appropriate to the celebrated day. I was frustrated because at the age I was and the department I studied I had a very little contact with literature i.e. general knowledge.

As an art lover, which at the time I understood very little and the need to express myself at a cultured level, I started thinking of enrolling an art academy. In my country there were two options to study theatre, i.e. there was a state and a private faculty. At first I wanted to sit in the theatre and order around to all, in other words I wanted to become a theatre director. But as I have already said my general knowledge was at a low level. And if you don't have enough tricks up your sleeve in the sense to be ahead of the others from the production you won't be the captain who would be obediently obeyed by his sailors.

In my town, we traditionally point out our visions and aims in other words what we want to be in our future lives, ever since our secondary school days. The principle is as follows, we enroll faculty and the toughest guys are the ones who finish on time and when they immediately find a job they are considered to be grownups. And what follows is the mutual race for higher social standing. I knew that the fight that is one sided in other words a fight fought only for the material aspect, and to neglect the intellectual one i.e. the constant upgrading is not the winner in the life we live. Fascinated by the moments and experiences as a performer and the several

participations as film extra, being mesmerized by that kind of lifestyle, I decided to choose acting as way of life.

I grew up in a family which wasn't artistically oriented, yet I had their support when choosing my orientation. My father as a man with many acquaintances, organized a meeting with a professional actress from the local theatre to be my mentor for my work on the entry exam of the Faculty of Performing Arts in Skopje. This was my first professional encounter with acting as a future profession. I chose a piece, a monologue of Peter Trofimov from Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*. We had meetings several times a week. During our meetings, the actress had very profound speeches and without any hesitation, she opened up new horizons; in other words, she guided my work. Judging by the expression on her face, I felt that she is satisfied. I analyzed her comments, advice and thoughts and started understanding some of them after several years. I remember that something happened during our last meeting which surprised me. Instead of correcting and guiding me, she was overwhelmed by my interpretation and totally immersed in it. I remember her words, she said that if you perform this for your entry exam, I would certainly wait for your call confirming that you have been admitted to the university.

That day came, I was very excited and confident in myself that I will pass as expected. My heart was racing. The biggest mistake that I understood after a certain period of time, was that I wanted to achieve the same that I had achieved at our last meeting. In other words, I wanted to reenact the already achieved and again as a music box, to re-play something that was very specific in a certain moment. Because of my personal musical knowledge, I felt that my whole performance sounded out of tune. I did not show anything that I believed I possess, so I was denied the entry at the academy.

The support of my parents and the passion to continue with my choice, brought me at the entry exam at the private faculty of audio, visual-performing arts ESRA. At the faculty, the entry exam was run by the director who I admire the most as a theatre director in my country. Through conversation, appropriate exercises and tasks, he tuned me the way I tune my guitar before a performance, and I said what I had to say.

It was much better than the experience I had at the state faculty. And what followed was, I became a student at the faculty ESRA, majoring in classical acting.

1.3 Skopje and ESRA

When I arrived in Skopje as a student in 2013, the first thing I did was regular watching of theatre performances at Dramic Theater and The Macedonian National Theater. I remember that in about two months I watched almost all the theatre performances, which were on at the repertoire at the time. I was amazed by some, indifferent to others and there are some that I consider major contributors to my love to the theatre which made me watch every time they were on at the repertoire. For the first time in my life, I started feeling that I belonged somewhere. As opposed to my secondary school at the department of dental prosthetics where from the porcelain I was supposed to make teeth, I made shuttles for my guitar and where in the classroom for practical work together with my friends we made a lot of inappropriate things in order to kill time. On the other hand, I followed the theatre going-ons which were totally new in my life, with great interest.

One of the major events in this period was that after a month of my studying, I was involved the theatre performance *The Eternal House* which was meant to be performed on the occasion of the opening of the new building of the Macedonian National Theatre. It was a place where I felt safe, accepted, free to play and create. Surrounded by professionals who were mostly stars of the Macedonian film and theatre scene. At that time, I knew that if I loved the theatre that was exactly the place where I should be found. The process of preparations, which lasted for whole three months was surrounded with experiments, different kinds of techniques in which we always created during improvisations. Where could you possibly learn, if not in the theatre itself? I learned how to stand on the scene, to understand that every rehearsal has different energy and that the relationship with your co-actors on the scene and outside of it, is of utmost importance. I was impressed how led by our imagination people of different ages could find answers and understanding as a response to given theatre situations.

The theatre performance took a great part of my life as a student and a turning point as opposed to previous frustrations in my journey as an artist. At certain moments,

I felt as if I had been separated from the town as a whole just because I came from a town which is about 10 times smaller compared to Skopje, but anyway I thought that I found my place in theatre. Later, it became completely clear to me that the way of work as it was in the professional performance led by two stage rehearsals of 4 hours a day, which corresponded to 4 hours of active, physical and psychological work which was a challenge and immensely creative, was the way I wanted to work in the future.

I will not continue to make comments related to the performance at this point because later on I am going to use it as an example for a specific purpose. It is important that after this process, I came to a conclusion that it was not the hobby that attracted the attention of an 18-year old person, but it was the theatre which became a place, where I wanted to devote my time and way of life. It also made me realize that I should evolve on the topic of theatre. In other words, that I should start to support my past experience with theatre theory background and start learning new forms and ways of creating.

After three years, as a student at the faculty for audio, visual-performing arts and putting myself in a number of different roles of a creative individual and the fulfillment of the administrative obligations, I started thinking of leaving my country and continue my education abroad.

At this moment, the situation was clear. The practical experience I had came down to five projects in the role of an actor in three different theatres, the exam performances at my faculty and I was a participant at five international theatre workshops. I wanted to become better, to learn new techniques, new ways of creating theatre which would later take me to a working place. I was aware that I should look for all of that outside my country.

According to the requirements I expected and according to the individuals who inspired me, my interest ended up with sending the documents to KATaP. While I was reading the information about the department, I was impressed by the idea behind the creation of that kind of department. If you finished a three-year education as a classic actor, the next step to choose this department was the ideal thing where you could

write, direct and act your projects inspired by views of people who left their marks in the history of the theatre.

The passion which was awoken in me, guided by the experience and books that I have read made me feel ready to start a new track where I would run better, faster in a direction determined by theatre experts. I had a need to be involved in a new culture, in new individual projects, to be inspired and to create with other artists from different cultures and to discover new methods and ways to express my creativity. Two and a half years after that decision, I am trying to sum up the whole process of that journey. The aim of the thesis will be to reflect knowledge which I have gained before KATaP, during its time and after my studies.

What was my behavior as an actor on the scene before my studies like? What have I learned from my studies in my KATaP and ESRA that I can implement in my future work? And have my way of thinking and work changed after the Master studies? These would be the questions which I am going to research in this thesis.

I, as an actor from the department of Authorial Acting, will reflect on my thesis the Actor and the Training on the basis of personal trajectory through theories of certain individuals.

2. THE ACTOR AND THE TRAINING

2.1 Notion, The Actor and the Training

If a professional singer is to make a series of exercises, such as exercises for the development of his hearing and voice to shape himself up professionally and apart from that before each performance to perform a process of keeping hygiene in sense of using singing to warm up his voice, or the ballerina who since early age starts stretching and performing different exercises necessary for her dance which will be performed every day to develop control over the muscles, the same goes for the instrumentalist if he doesn't practice of the muscle and the sensitivity of his fingers daily, will every one of them be able to express himself/herself to the extend when he successfully through its creating instrument succeeds completely to express his /her feelings which he /she feels at that given moment?

In this thesis I will talk about the training of the instrument which the actor uses in the situation on the stage. And, what would be if that wasn't his body and his voice. The body should be an obedient conductor of its feelings. But, what does that mean? Can we imagine an art field where the artist doesn't express his/her emotions through his/her work of art? I think we can't. I would call that kind of art, dead work of art. The task of the actor is to make his body obey him/her i.e. to respond to his complicated mental and emotional processes in every moment. Primarily our body wants to eat and drink and after that if it is possible enjoys the nap. But is that the body we desire in the stage performance?

Many actors face the painful fight with their body through the process of work and performing on the stage. They may deeply feel their roles, but they can't express their feelings and to interact with the audience. I think that it creates uncomfortability with every actor.¹

The simplest explanation of what the notion The Actor and the Training represent is the building of the friendship between the body and the voice of the actor with the

¹ Chekhov, Michael Aleksandrovich. *On the technique of acting* (New York: Harper, 1991) 1.

complicated and sensitive mental processes. The thing that prevents the friendship is when the body surpasses its limits and wants in advance, forcefully to demonstrate feeling with its simple and rough means. The body can express the impulses of the actor's soul in its all splendor and depth only when the body willingly surrenders and obey itself in front of the sensitive and mental processes.

There are different exercises for the development of our body which can not be only physical. It is clear that the physical exercises are necessary but they don't have to be built on principles other than usual ones encountered in the theatre schools. The body of the actor should be developed under the influence of the mental incentive. The vibrations of the thought, emotions and mood which fulfill the body of the actor, makes the body become alive, sensitive and flexible. If we exaggerate with physical exercise, it could prevent the body to accept the inner sensitive experiences.²

The combination which I determine between the body and the sensitive mental processes, in the theatre is known as Psychophysical.

The preparatory exercises which beat the tiredness and enhance the concentration placing the actor in the situation of excitement or creative condition, is what I call the Training of the Actor. On one hand, they are acting etudes, but on the other hand – development of certain attributes of the body, voice and articulation.

2.2 Psychophysical? Short history.

The work of Russian actor and theater director Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) revolutionized Western approaches to acting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As part of his life-long practical research into the nature and processes of acting, Stanislavski was the first to use the term "psychophysical" (psikhofizicheskii) to describe an approach to Western acting focused equally on the actor's psychology and physicality applied to textually based character acting.³

² Chekhov, Michael Aleksandrovich. On the technique of acting (New York: Harper, 1991) 2.

³ Zarrilli, Phillip B (Phillip Barry). Psychophysical acting: an intercultural approach after Stanislavski (London: Routledge, 2009) 13.

When psychology emerged as a separate discipline from philosophy in the nineteenth century, the sciences of mind and the self were often considered separate from the science of the physical body. The split reflected the long-term Western binary dividing mind from body that so problematically crystallized in the mind-body dualism of the seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650). Scientists and philosophers who wanted mind and body to be considered in relation to one another, rather than separately, began to use the compound term “psycho-physical” to bridge the gap.⁴

Stanislavski’s use of “psychophysical” in relation to acting was therefore an innovative, if historically limited and not always successful, attempt to problem-solve the relationship between the “psycho” and the “physical” elements of acting. Key elements of Stanislavski’s constantly evolving psychophysical approach to acting were drawn from two main sources—the work of psychologist Théodule Armand Ribot (1839-1916) and the limited versions of Indian yoga available to Stanislavski in turn-of-the-century Russia, filtered through the then popular occultism and spiritualism. From his early focus on affective memory to his later method of physical actions, Stanislavski always attempted to overcome what divided “mind from body, knowledge from feeling, analysis from action”. Ribot’s psychophysical theories [...] state that mind and body are a unit, and that emotions cannot be experienced without physical sensation. As Stanislavski writes in *An Actor Works on Himself*, Part 1, “In every physical action there is something of the psychological, and in the psychological, something of the physical.” Stanislavski described how the actor’s “physical score,” once perfected, must go beyond “mechanical execution” to a deeper” level of experience which “is rounded out with new feeling and ... become, one might say, psychophysical in quality”.⁵

In my *Life in Art*, Stanislavski described the actor’s optimal state of awareness of concentration as one in which he “reacts not only on his sight and hearing, but on all

⁴ Zarrilli, Phillip B (Phillip Barry). *Psychophysical acting: an intercultural approach after Stanislavski* (London: Routledge, 2009) 14.

⁵ Zarrilli, Phillip B (Phillip Barry). *Psychophysical acting: an intercultural approach after Stanislavski* (London: Routledge, 2009) 14.

the rest of his senses. It embraces his mind, his will, his emotions, his body, his memory and his imagination". Stanislavski's ideal was that "in every physical action ... there is concealed some inner action, some feelings". What Stanislavski meant by "inner action" and "feelings" were not exclusively informed by Ribot's psychology, but also by Stanislavski's adaptation of yoga exercises, principles, and philosophy. As early as 1906, Stanislavski become interested in yoga. Although his knowledge of yoga was limited and may have been drawn exclusively from books in his library, Stanislavski adapted specific yoga exercises and principles to help attune and heighten the actor's sensory awareness in performance.⁶

Chekhov was convinced that the body of an actor must undergo a special kind of development in accordance with the particular requirements of his profession, which is extreme sensitivity of body to the psychological creative impulses. In his opinion, it could be achieved by psychophysical exercises Quoting Chekhov, "The training of the body is therefore a training in awareness, in learning how to listen to the body, how to be led by it Words are so clever, but movement is simpler. Therefore, we begin our work with movement, with psychological gestures and let words come on the movement The actor's body (shows) the road to emotion." Chekov's actor works from body-awareness into and through psychophysical composition. The actor senses and feels the form of the psychological gesture as he creates and inhabits it. Building from Chekov's evocative statement that "the actor imagines with his body," David Zinder provides an extended discussion of how "the imagination is aroused and activated by physical action". Zinder's discussion is informed by the much more nuanced understanding we have today of how the body and imagination exist in relationship to one another.⁷

⁶ Zarrilli, Phillip B (Phillip Barry). *Psychophysical acting: an intercultural approach after Stanislavski* (London: Routledge, 2009) 15.

⁷ Zarrilli, Phillip B (Phillip Barry). *Psychophysical acting: an intercultural approach after Stanislavski* (London: Routledge, 2009) 20.

2.3 The creative process

Every definition of the notion the Actor and the Training must contain a process which leaves an open question which could be reexamined and changed according to the specific moment he exists in and is appropriate to his use.

I would like to mention that there isn't a specific technique such as achieving the aim entitled the Actor and the Training. There are different methods as there are different performances. Declan Donnellan states that "*The whole artistry of the NO master will be in vain if his elaborate technique doesn't reveal anything else but an elaborate technique*".⁸

A lot of theatre schools use methods of psychophysical training of already approved and proven theatre individuals which corresponded to their tradition, culture and international conventional question. As their followers, the students take their material in their hands and apply, research and develop according to the answers that the present day poses. So, in that way different types and techniques have been developed which are a response of the theatre question.

It is very important the members of the group to talk to each other why they want to participate into the process i.e. what would be their motifs, aims and how they imagine the whole process. It would be nice that from the start the leading idea of the process is discussed, in which course it could completely change and develop. The point is that just from the beginning the actors should start developing mutual relations on such level that they won't build roles but they will build a performance where no matter the length of their text in the roles they will achieve equality.

When the catalyst impulse together with the direction and the way of performance are discovered the period of research work of the group starts. In this period of creative process, the main role plays the improvisation. In the theater the notion improvisation can be found in different forms.

⁸ Donnellan, Declan. *The Actor and the Target*. Revised edition (London: Nick Hern Books, 2006) 2.

Improvisation as a form can be taken, where the actors create a scene navigated by the director's ideas, or it could go into other ways where the actors are on the stage, with or without any concrete theme, tasks, means or using helping stuff (such as music, décor and props) until they find an answer to the situation. The important pieces of this improvisation will be taken into consideration and will be used as entering parts in bigger improvisations later on, or taken directly into scenes and situations which will be used in the performance.

All the things that in the play of the process itself become firm and fixed, detach the actor from the essence of his profession – from the improvisation. The actor improviser uses the theme, text and the character of the drama persona being suggested by the author as a suggestion for free expression of its creativity.⁹

Other parts that are also part of the process are: the rehearsals, writing or choosing of a text, designing, structuring, choreography, correction, getting rid of unnecessary material, correction and comments connected to the characters and so on... To create a show where the spectator interacts with the actor i.e. where he will be a participant in the process, requires longer period than in the classic performances of the European theatre.

When the crew feels that have enough staff for their main idea, it is good to stage a specific version of the text which will be used to perform in the theater performance. The staging of the text should serve the agreed structure which allows the group to have something which will stick to for proper conduct.

There isn't a specific moment in the process where the improvisation of development and research will change to structuring and fixing things. The moment when guided by the director but together with the collective they will decide to start structuring the performance should emerge from all of them. Because there was an appropriate casting where as an answer, appropriate people have found their place and adapted to it as well and it is made to work as a whole.

⁹ Chekhov, Michael Aleksandrovich. On the technique of acting (New York: Harper, 1991) 35.

The fixing of the text or achieving the result can happen in every moment of the creative process. There are theatre directors who are guided by principles where the text is the main initiative and their main aim and they keep strictly to the ideas of the author, but there are directors that adapt the improvisation in a kind of abstract idea directed to the text, whereas others write a script as an answer to the happening of the process.

Each actor who is involved in the process, by his nature wants to put-in everything individually, especially when the actors improvise they are aware that the things should come out of them, i.e. the ability to improvise means individual members should act together and if that doesn't happen nothing will come out of anybody.

The performers of the group are not the only ones that are creating the performance and giving a direction upon the final result, also another major accomplice is their relationship with the audience. The actor should by the help of improvisation re-experience the process and as an answer to that specific moment interact with the spectator.

It should be warned that the improvisation should not turn into willfulness on the stage, i.e. the actor doesn't change the text and previously arranged mizanscenes. Without them the foundation is lost. The freedom of the actor who improvises is rendered in a way he interprets the author's text and how much he respects the previously arranged mizanscenes and with that he gives different nuances to the role. According to the practice the more the actor respects the composition of the performance the freer the improviser feels.¹⁰

Authentic theatres have an active spectator. It is taken as an important part of the performance that creates its navigation, and it is perceived as a participant of the performance that can decide its outcome. The relationship between the actor and the spectator is crucial but it is happening out of the physical or any kind of material touch.

¹⁰ 10 Chekhov, Michael Aleksandrovich. On the technique of acting (New York: Harper, 1991) 35.

It is in the center of attention in the authentic theatre what is happening between the actor and the spectator. It is not as in the conventional surroundings where we watch actors t saying the text and the spectator is passive. If the activity in question is real, the spectator doesn't have another option but to mediate and be an accomplice in the event.

The authentic theatre doesn't let the spectator be passive and to have just entertaining effects. The main thing is that I imagine the authentic theatre to be a place which makes the spectator to think, get him out of the comfort zone and to be uncertain of what is to come. The authentic theatre is a modern contemplation of living people that belong to a certain culture, tradition or society. It expresses different types of texts from present days going back to the period of renaissance and the ancient times filled with experience built from the present time.

2.4 Authentic theatre

It is important in the process itself where the action is authentic for anyone who is a part of the performance to be present at all rehearsals, i.e. to witness the progress as well as the construction even in the non-participating scenes.

The live moments of the play feed our soul and they are coherence and consistency in the role building of the actor. All of these parts become part of our soul as unreal but play a major role in the outcome of the character. The characters are built on the principle of continuity and live logic. We must bear witness to the events that affect the overall outcome of the play.

It is important that when the text is pronounced we always need to have a specific target to which we are speaking. It can be a partner, a subject, a heart, a soul, a god, etc. ... Without a specific target that will result in some kind of dialogue, authentic action is not possible. In my opinion, the text should not be memorized as a visual image in the head, the text needs to be learned by regular reading or repetition in order for the words to pass from the author's words into our own words. Trying to be as much more natural, is something different from authentic action.

We never look for variants already used, the authentic action in every repetition must be reborn in response to the situation-specific of the moment. The Authentic action is born from the live impulses and sparks of emotions in the stage performance. Spontaneity plays a big part in this process. Things like dropping a prop on the ground, a little mizanscene mistake, premature spoken replica etc. unforeseen reactions are things that can connect the imagined character to the life because our bodies and minds begin to trust these things that are analogous to reality.

In my opinion, it is crucial for the actor to adhere strictly to the author's imagination in his character creation. There are actors who either because of laziness, egoism or lack of knowledge create an arbitrary or personalized image in response to the character's request. For them, as an example Shakespeare is not important, Chekhov does not represent much I think they are stuck in themselves, in love if I can say so, "I am talented and whatever my intuition does is never wrong" and the collective work of making a play according to the author's ideas is reduced to a second level. This may seem a bit conservative, but I think that authentic theatre has a task with today's people, today's feelings, today's emotions without modernizing it, to reveal the author's truth.

Another important thing about authentic theatre is the experience of the actor on which everything is based. To achieve a performance where action, for example, takes place in the Middle Ages, it is necessary to establish training or daily routines that the actors will perform, analogous to the culture, tradition, customs, behavior and other characteristics, characteristic of that period. If the director is good, he will initially start from the stage décor to be rich and properly constructed for that time, and create an atmosphere that will adequately portray that period. When the proper training and the right atmosphere are created the actor has no other option but to work properly.

I do not think that the role of the actor in the authentic theatre is not that important compared to the one of the director, meaning, if the director is good he can properly guide the way of every single actor, but on the contrary the actor who has already built a self-discipline and has done great researches connected to the process itself is

something that is vital. The need of the authentic theatre is the actor to be flexible. The right relation to the group requires a great amount of diplomacy by the actor.

At this moment it should be concluded that the authentic theater has a need to build a collective leading idea. When so many different energies meet on stage it is impossible to function without finding an answer or a common goal and interest. Each individual is important and they mustn't eliminate the roles of the individuals in the collective, what is more the functions of the different roles and positions should be respected.

At the very beginning the participants in the authentic theatre should lead collective conversations which will be of practical and essential character for the group for example how to provide financial means if they haven't agreed upon it before, how to find appropriate space for the rehearsals and performance according to the beliefs that the group has and has the need to express it.

Important thing is that a hierarchy based on the greatness of the talent mustn't be made. The talent should be understood as an untouchable foundation in the process of creation. We need to be all equal in process but we are not the same from the inside essence that is a fact, yet the specific moments should fight for that equality.

In the creative work of the authentic process not even a thought mustn't cross the mind of annihilation of any rights of the individuals who create the process. Would it be right to think that without the body and the voice of everyone who is involved in the process would be a possibility of creation? The creation is cooperation of different creators.

3. MY PRACTIAL EXPERIENCE

3.1 Eternal House and my beginnings

When I moved to Skopje to study undergraduate studies department acting play, I found myself in very different social surroundings. After the first month, although led by the euphoria that I am studying acting accompanied by a regular visit of the theatres, I felt alone and I needed a place where I will feel that I really deservingly belong.

My participation in the play Eternal House made me realize that it was a place where I make the most acquaintances and I felt the most comfortable. That is why I started taking things more seriously and to take interest of all kind of theatre institutions and groups in Skopje.

In my original experience in the theatre outside my town I felt disconnected almost discriminated because my dialect could be noticed. There were two options if you wanted to be in the theatre in Skopje: the worse was to talk in the Skopje dialect and the better one was to use the literary language. In my town Bitola people prolong the vowels, whereas in Skopje they shorten them. It is interesting also that the people from Bitola who populated Skopje, stayed there. And because of that the prolonging or shortening found a medium of equality and had the cleanest, i.e. speech that is the closest to the literary language.

The play didn't pose any specific requirement concerning previous experience or studies, so it happened that twenty people enrolled in the first year of acting department at ESRA found ourselves in together with the rest of the ensemble of the Macedonian National Theatre.

We all had different experience in the theatre, we came from different towns and we had different expectations. However, during the process we understood that we had something in common – we were all looking for a place where we would belong in a way and would be accepted. The main thing which I didn't mention that was the director of the show was, in fact, our professor who taught us acting. His idea was not to work with us as already-prepared actors for the process, but he needed people full of desire to create a performance.

When we started the rehearsals which happened each day for four hours and they also happened 6 to 7 days a week, because all of the participants didn't have ready and prepared bodies. The first hour of our rehearsal was devoted to exercises for our body and mind led by the worldwide-known choreographer. It was a very good thing that the ones possessing great experience tried to share everything they knew during the rehearsals.

At the very beginning, the rehearsals started with exercises for energizing the group and ended with improvisation. The improvisations were dual, i.e. the ones where we used the speech were non-verbal as well. As beginners without really knowing what to do, we created our own habits inspired from the other professional actors.

The interesting thing was that the choreographer's favorite idea was to keep everything in order, to make the choreographies to flow like canon (one after another) and the director had a predisposition to create chaos. When we did a combination of these two things I think there was a lot of expressions of the play and great stage pleasure. As a beginner participant it was very interesting to start developing these two things in my artistic intuition.

The show consisted of sixteen scenes. We had some kind of material for almost each scene which consisted of almost fixed parts from our improvisations or choreographies which were led by two choreographers who worked on the performance. We repeated the improvisations and the choreographies every day. What was interesting for me, was that I felt how my inner-self started accepting and sometimes we were supposed to make just initial movements from some point and certain emotions would be awoken in me. But of course, it would happen if I let the body react first without forcing the result. In other words, I created my interior through my exterior.

Although in most of the exercises and improvisations we had freedom, we received our positions and roles according to the flows of the improvisation, yet as the days of the premiere approached the choice of the material was not democratic. Parts of the material that we worked on for months, in only few days before the great finale, new material was created as its replacement. It was stressful for me because I had new

task to carry out and because of insufficient repetition, I was in a stage of fear that I wouldn't be able to perform properly during the performance. Nonetheless, the positive thing in it was that the change itself brought life to the performance itself. As opposed to the cold performing of the long-repeated materials we felt like living in the new.

As there were fewer days to the premiere, we started understanding that the guy who watched the whole process from the auditorium was necessary for us. We were thinking of the look-like of the whole process. If we will be accepted by the audience, what their reactions will be, if we will be noticed on the stage as amateurs in comparison to the other professional actors. As an answer to the whole I remember that the director held a several-hour speech full of comments and criticism, just before the dress rehearsal, filled our hearts with the idea that the main carrier of the performance is in the collective work. He explained that in case somebody isolates themselves, becomes misunderstood and that the energy that we will create as a collective is what matters and then we channel in through the fourth wall, the audience.

The result of our three-month work finally bore fruit and that was a show that lasted for four hours. It was performed in Skopje and the following year we were invited to perform at the festival in Budapest. The experience made us as more friendly connected with each other, and we came out with a result which made us to work harder in the next production.

The most important thing in this kind of collective, held by only one goal, to make a performance, the decisiveness and the strong desire of the performers is essential, especially when it is a case similar to our beginnings when as students the fee is not guaranteed or included. The strength and the power of the group was in the cooperation and combination of knowledge and talent of each individual.

3.2 My first professional role in theatre, The Master and Margarita

Apart from my studies at ESRA I attended workshops throughout Europe to find out new forms of theatre. I was in Italy, Spain, Croatia but something that didn't leave me indifferent was the workshop in Hungary. The workshop was led by professors who came from Hungary and Russia. What was new for me was the intensity the work was

done with. The activities started at 9 o'clock in the morning and lasted till 9 in the evening and it often happened that we stayed longer than that. The exercises that we were doing we based on the concepts of Jerzy Grotowski and Michael Chekhov who I was not very familiar with.

At that time related to the authentic theatre I have read the book "An actor prepares" by Konstantin Stanislavski. My great wish for work, the talent that I believe I possess and the skills related to the theatre which I have gained, in the first few days of the workshop did not make me feel frustrated or incompatible to be there. But I remember the fifth day of the stay, we were invited to watch an exam performance in acting play of students who came from Russia. The main comments were that it lasted for an hour and that all that time the students interacted with the spectators. The whole action was authentic and my reactions were simply uncontrolled, they simply happened. I was a participant in the performance. When the performance ended I had a feeling that I watched a theatre in the ideal sense of the word for the first time. The next day I watched an exam performance of students from Hungary. In the performance they had their own orchestra where each one of them played a different instrument. And also the physical readiness in the performance they created was at very high level. I was amazed, at that moment I was watching students who had better performance than any other professional performance that I have ever watched.

An important thing that I want to point out is that this event was a turning point and I knew that I will have to implement strict reforms in my life. I talked to some of them and I inquired about their way of work and right away I started map out my plan for my home coming.

When I returned to my town, it was summer and I didn't have any obligations in that period related to the university. I remember that each day of the week was filled with physical exercises i.e.: I studied martial arts, kick boxing at the beginning then karate, I attended modern dance classes and Argentinian tango classes, I attended yoga classes and I spend the rest of the day reading books by theatre individuals.

When I came back to Skopje at the beginning of my third and last year of studies, my colleagues informed me that as a group we are summoned at a casting in the

Macedonian National theater. The work that was to be staged was from a Russian author and the ideas of the director were that it should be realism. I couldn't describe how happy I was because it was what I was looking for.

Before each rehearsal which happened around ten in the morning I was already up three hours earlier. I had two hours of physical training and a half an hour performing voice exercises. I knew that without relaxing of the muscles and connecting of the voice to the appropriate resonances, The Inner Creative State was impossible to achieve.¹¹

The process started, I want to point out that what was good about it was that it was very well organized. At the very beginning we were divided in several groups and from the previous day there was always a time schedule i.e. which scenes and when to be done. The winning moment for me in this show was that we started building scenes improvising and the director imposed different exercises and tricks in order authentic action to be achieved. I was involved in four scenes which lasted about forty-five minutes altogether. The key thing since the first rehearsals being told by the director was that we should stop acting. With every exercise he would right away notice the participants who performed something in general or indicated and he would point out and he would start working with them individually until they fulfill the task.

At the very beginning this was something new for the great part of the group. A lot laugh at the idea that it looked like a performance of MXAT in 1945. There were frustrations and misunderstandings. I remember that I spent whole months sitting several rows behind the director and the rest of the time was time spent on the stage. I stole a very important thing from the actors who already knew the area. In my observations the main thing that took part was the feeling of truth and faith.¹²

I noticed that the actors were often made initiated yet spontaneous reactions, in other words movements led by the body which created little moments of stage truth analog to the reality. In other words, little truths reached greater truths and the greater truths became much greater until they reached the absolute. The main thing I noticed

¹¹ Stanislavski, Konstantin Sergeievich. *An actor prepares* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 261.

¹² Stanislavski, Konstantin Sergeievich. *An actor prepares* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 127.

is that the body reacts first and that is the main initiative for the inner state, that is, when the body with its senses believes in the stage world, a situation analogous to reality is created.

I had little experience in this area but I had great desire to work. The process lasted about three months and I remember that I didn't have anything else in my head but the revelation how to achieve stage truths. During the development of the scenes by improvisation I nuanced my role each time. In fact, I gave and took out props, I took different props, I made changes in my costume, I made changes in the mood appropriate to the daily situations and so on...

With regular rehearsals and regular introduction of this kind of performance that was new to us, somehow the group started to accept new things, but I knew about the difficulties that were yet to come. As a super hero who took this project too personally excited about doing an authentic show, I thought I should help, that is, in every stage situation to be the initiator of the authentic action where everyone is involved. But it ended up in a catastrophe.

The chaotic directions which came from within me in order to succeed satisfying everyone, pushed the final result, and without experience in that area in other words how to behave in such a group were part of these difficulties. All those characters I had to reconcile with that were somehow plotting against me.

Each time I was accused of something in that process I tried from that very moment to make a change and to please that particular participant who would emphasize the problem, i.e. actions that would contribute to a greater misunderstanding.

I took responsibility which I imposed by myself. At every rehearsal, I came earlier, I reminded the stage workers concerning the décor, I checked if the costumes are on the right place, I carried the props which were scattered all over the theatre, I reminded the director of certain parts of the performance and everything I wanted to help. But soon I realized that this approach was not from the aspect of a hero that much, it was dangerous for finding balance in the group.

Because of the lack of time and understanding by the others, I started working alone. The only thing that kept me on my feet was the praise of the director that I did my job properly in the particular situations. I knew that I should only follow the alive impulses and that I could keep the inner energy at the right level only if I had contact with the rest of the participants in other words with the situation that was going on at the scene.

At the premiere there was a dispute when I started shouting, in the first scene two colleague actors didn't respect the mizantscene and the prearranged things which we were supposed to perform. They created a situation where I was left out. At that moment the only thing to prevent that from happening was to exercise power. I wanted to show impressions as one of the leading actors was doing and I was a great admirer of his who often knew how to achieve what he wants. I remember that I shouted in and I was out of control, I didn't fulfill the tasks in the first scene in the performance that meant a lot to me in that period. The positive thing was that because of this moment in the next scene before I appear on the stage I was so excited that several seconds before I stepped on the stage I felt some dizziness in my head and I become one with my role. It was the first time when I felt absolute truth on the stage. An invisible director appeared in me, that guided my work, every action came out as a result of the following and I felt as an actor improviser in the true sense of the word. I remember that I had a dispute with one of the participants I didn't want to step away, from the character's point of view, where I didn't pretend but I believed that I was right and that he should step away for me. I was disappointed somehow when I realized that the way I achieved that was not right in other words I knew that neither was that me nor that was the way I wanted to work.

Besides the tensions and problems during the rehearsals, the performance continued forward and the result that was a topic of conversation in many aspects for that period, and astonished the spectators, even us.

This experience taught me a lot about theatre in general. I realize that the conversation with the participants is important and that the actor must listen to the director, it was something that I didn't do very often during the process. I also realized

that the actor is essential for the success of the production in the process. With the position he has, he is responsible for bringing decisions that will affect the other members. The idea to look for authoritarian, irrational but yet that can work, if I may say so, achievement, where power is being exercised, will always have problems to function properly in the group which depend on the collective.

When the participants lack sufficient knowledge and practice they turn to the case they had worked on or had seen in their previous leaderships. This case created a great extent of disorientation in this type of work because the members had a different understanding, different background from what the things should be carried out in this kind of theatre.

This process i.e. this experience taught me many collective lessons.

3.3 Prometheus Bound

The third professional theatre performance I worked on during my stay in Skopje was Prometheus Bound in the Turkish Theatre in Skopje. The performance was directed by our professor who worked on Eternal House as well. For this particular performance, he worked with professional actors from the theatre in a combination with the whole group of students of his class. Initially, before we started doing drafts and plans for the show, we had a deep conversation concerning everything we have been through during our years of studying – what was effective and what was not, what kind of relationships we have built amongst each other in the group as well in the theatre and what we need to do to create the things to go on a right way.

In this process, the professor considered us more grown and more experienced in comparison to the previous theatre performance which was the first time some of us had ever been on stage. We had discussions and arguments regarding particular scenes. He listened to each and every one of us carefully and applied some of our pieces of advice in the performance. He explained to us that this process will involve much more physical activity and that part of the scenography will be a flat surface with sand.

Even though no one said this out loud, I noticed from the beginning that the main thing we were interested in was that each one of us will get approximately similar pieces. And that's what happened in the performance – the main action was played out by five actors and the rest was left to us, the students. We were on the stage from the beginning to the very end. And I believe that everyone got a play equally. Everyone who had a predisposition, such as playing an instrument or physical readiness, got their own part where they could show their talent and the rest was teamwork.

We trained for this performance as well. We did acting etudes, before each rehearsal and afterwards exercises for the development of particular traits of our body, voice and articulation. We even did acrobatics – I remember that I gave up on such an exercise and instead of hanging upside-down like the others, I got an easier task.

The scenography itself, the costumes and the way we acted accompanied with our exposure to sand and water was much more thrill and creative, but simultaneously a bigger task than the projects up until then. We learned a text in another language. The good thing about it was that it turned out as an exercise for the subtext of the words. Nevertheless, the creation made by many people who didn't know the language was is not logically hard, but it can affect the grade of the outcome.

I really wanted to research as I did in the previous performance with the physical exercises, I also wanted to repay myself because of the performance before. I apparently learned a lecture the previous year. That is why, this time, I frequently asked questions and shared my opinion.

After working with the team for a while, i.e. the colleagues whom I spent a longer period of the day with, we develop a kind of a mutual understanding of the power of our talents, our deficiencies and how to complement and hand each other. Though the director is the one being the most responsible for the rehearsals, the quality of the show, organization of meetings and the end result.

The months which followed were filled with productivity and serious work which was arising out of each one of us. That was a process needed by everyone and I believe that every student of acting should be involved in such a professional project where

they would solidify and set their foundations. What I could conclude from the process itself was that the context reminded me of *The Tempest* from Shakespeare as described by Peter Brook in his book "*The shifting point*", and the way of acting looked as if the stories of Grotowski and Stanislavski are intertwining.

The process itself was made analogous to reality with the help of many initiators. The choreographies consisted of throwing bucketsful of water and sand on stage; at the same time, in many of the cases, using the water and sand did not leave much to our bodies but to become part of the situation on scene. The initiators did not exist just as initiators, but they were simultaneously metaphors which marked the harshness of time, and the unmercifulness of destiny etc. The process of action was taken to an extreme by the actors.

As younger students who had little stage experience, to get such a task was of big importance. The people who came to see the performance and who had previously seen our performances and exams in the subject Acting commented that this was not only a footstep ahead, but a jump.

The production which was filled with amateurs turned out really exceptional. What was interesting about this performance was that in comparison to professionals, amateurs could bring more individual stage materials, with which they could contribute to the performance and their desire to prove themselves in their beginner career, i.e. two terms are intertwined and a collective comes out as a result.

We were full of happiness. We had the feeling of having done something. My expectations grew because I thought I could achieve more and become part of a professional group which shook the Skopje theatre scene. I was happy to such an extent that I believed I could make a living from this.

I was led by this thought for a long time. The achievement of 'Prometheus Bound' confuse me with the problems that followed. I stopped doing the acting exercises which I used to do. They consisted of metaphysical and voice exercises which I believe modified body and voice organically, according to my needs for the stage. I thought

that my spirituality absorbed the necessary elements from the exercises and that I have to rehearse only before a performance. I was mistaken.

My job as an actor, of course, wasn't as perfect as it should have been, but by believing in the work of the participants, always being ready for a practice session, coming from home with already-planned topics for discussion and action and having a main idea for an outcome, I started believing in the collective. To be part of a theatre group where the result is achieved through collective work, lessens part of the pressure regarding the extent of work.

Things that made us to think, as a choice which we had to make during the creation of this performance was to answer the issue whether the heaviness we create for ourselves, for the performance to have a better outcome, is worth it or we need to pay attention to our primary morals.

If I disregard all the complications which were happening throughout the event, in the period that followed, I was able to think about on the production of 'Prometheus Bound' and how it gave us a convenience to develop as theatre individuals. When it comes to me, it gave me another possibility of playing in performance and to put everything as an exercise of the misapprehension learned from my previous production.

Group work is fundamental for the establishment of a performance and it also depends on scene workers. The accomplishment of a team is expressed the best, when the assignments are equally divided and the conversation every time is clear, polite and outspoken.

The actor has to have a certain degree of self-confidence, but also have duty to give the greatest outcome. Even when the decisions are part of a compromise, the actor needs to find balance and a big amount of understanding in order to make it clear that the decision made was not individual.

3.4 The last performance in Skopje - Tartuffe

In the last year of my studies, several members gave up on their studies. Part of them left because they moved out of the state and others made a choice that they do not want to work in the field of acting. I think the reasons for their decisions was the political situation in our country.

Nevertheless, because of the time that we spent together, we have stayed friends up until today. Even though we did not correspond with the choice of those who decided to leave, we had to accept it. I think my friends leave because they believe they cannot benefit from the thing they were doing or that the theatre is not their place anymore or they just simply want to live elsewhere.

There was an audition in the Macedonian National Theatre again, which I took a part in. The next day I got a call that I had been chosen for the production and to go there for a costume fitting. The role I got was to be a secret agent in the performance Tartuffe.

I was really excited and I wanted to perform my task as good as possible. The initial idea for the building of the character was taken as an inspiration from the agents in *Matrix*. Their fast and sharp movements show that besides their elegant costumes they are physically prepared. How to make this come true?

In the free time I had during the summer period I had done research. To be more exact, I had regularly performed some of the exercises which were written down in the book dedicated to Grotowski, Jerzy, and the exercises were named Actor's training (1959-1961), also known as pragmatic laws.¹³

Pragmatic laws are the laws which tell us how to behave to achieve certain states, results or specific relations. They do not claim that a certain thing functions in a particular manner. They claim that you have to behave in a particular way. Barba established three pragmatic laws. Something happens in a certain way, if you behave

¹³ Grotowski, Jerzy. Towards a poor theatre. 1st Routledge ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002) 133.

in a certain way. The problem does not lie in the analysis of how that came to be, but in the knowledge of what you need to do to achieve that.¹⁴

The body- mind. It is believed that the mind is something independent of everything else. In action, it is different, at least for actors. Not that the body has a mind, it is a mind itself. What we need to do is to deblock the body acting as a mind. If we order ourselves that we need to slow down the rhythm or to change the order of the details and so on, we do not deblock the body acting as a mind. Namely, we do not do it because we order ourselves to do it. What needs to operate at that moment is the mind. Though, we need to preserve the precision of the details, because if we let our body dictate the different rhythms, constantly change the rhythms, the order and taking out of nowhere another detail, then who does the ordering? It is not the mind. It is not the chance either. It is the connection with life. It is not clear how, yet it is the body acting as a mind. Or is it the body acting as life? Because it crosses the borders of the mind. The body- life or the body- mind dictates what needs to be done regarding the experiment or the cycles of experimentation in life. Is it possible?¹⁵

It is a small step in the direction of the fulfillment of our life with impulses. On the simplest level, for example, some movements of the hand and the fingers – while maintaining the precision of the details – transform into a return to the past, to the already-lived. It reaches some at least when it comes to love, or to some event that happened or is yet to be. That is how we discover the body- mind and the body- life. The detail exists, but it becomes surpassed, it acts on a level of an impulse in the body- life. On a level – to put it better – of motivation (even though “motivation” supposes some type of pre-meditation, some order that is completely unnecessary here, even worthy of a project). Rhythm, change of rhythm, order. Only then does the body- life swallow it and becomes a part of itself – even more essential in the inner precision of the details a kind of “inside” the life impulse. And what have we managed to achieve

¹⁴ Barba, Eugenio. Savarese, Nicola. A Dictionary of theatre Antropology, The Secret Art of the Performer (London & New York: Routledge, 1991) 32

¹⁵ Barba, Eugenio. Savarese, Nicola. A Dictionary of theatre Antropology, The Secret Art of the Performer (London & New York: Routledge, 1991) 170

this way? Now, “the river of our life” flows. Simultaneously, spontaneity and discipline. In the end, that is what determines.¹⁶

Under the term theatre anthropology, Barba originally believes: research that deals with the behavior of the human at the moment of using his physical and mental presence in a certain organized stage performance, based on principles that differ from those used in everyday life.¹⁷

To present a classical work of the 17th century with the present experience and ambient was an interesting idea. In the house of Tartuffe, there were agents who spied on him and took note of the whole action and as a sign of virtue shared the information with the king. At the very end of the performance, the policeman as a man who had all the records of the event was sent by the king to resolve the situation. The idea was to present the situation happening in our country, i.e. the situation of spying affairs in a moderate manner.

The procedure had many similarities with the two previous performances. The concept which was expanded in the organized dramatics was created from the material of the different scenes throughout improvisations. As some of us had previously worked together on the other productions, it looked as if we had built a style which was a reflection of the time period.

Ever since the first performance, we had acquired knowledge from observations that the participants of a group which creates an authentic theatre have to be clear with each other, to build their relations through sincerity, confidence and discussion. It is necessary and of great importance that each participant feels pleasant while enacting intimate moments. This enhances the trust of the actor with the group and enables the actor to realize that the group encourages them.

In my final performance in Skopje, the participants of the group with whom I worked did not create absolutely by following their intuitions only, they also had

¹⁶ Barba, Eugenio. Savarese, Nicola. A Dictionary of theatre Anthropology, The Secret Art of the Performer (London & New York: Routledge, 1991) 170.

¹⁷ Barba, Eugenio. Savarese, Nicola. A Dictionary of theatre Anthropology, The Secret Art of the Performer (London & New York: Routledge, 1991) 6.

knowledge and accomplishments from the previous performances which also brought confidence to the group.

The criticisms for the performance made me critically consider my future in the theatre. I came to a conclusion that my wishes and the way I imagine the theatre could not be found at that time and place anymore. Even though the shows had a great prosperity, I was not satisfied with the position that our country was in, as well as the theatres. I was dissatisfied knowing that I could not move ahead and evolve further in my theatre world.

I was getting aware that it was time for a new start. Even though I felt tired from the faculty and the performances in that period, I was passionate about moving on. I had a need to start learning new forms of creating, to acquire professional means and to meet other artists of different cultures who could influence me.

To study outside of my country was not only an appropriate plan, but it was also an idea for a long time. I researched and according to my interests I submitted my documents. I was accepted at the Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy at DAMU.

The department Authorial Acting would become my new home in the next years and would bring about many developments in my ways of thinking which I had about theatre.

4. KATaP DEPARTMENT

4.1 KATaP Beginnings

The system of Stanislavski means an introduction to a new chapter in the history of theatre. Today, the material left by Stanislavski is not just normalized as a term, but it is used in many countries as the main foundation off of which new concepts and methods for teaching theatre in the branch of acting got developed. But, what does this system mean and how did it appear?

Think of an artist who not only creates, but also analyzes and studies the process of his creation in detail. The result of such a study will be the conclusion that there are two types of elements: the ones that help him with artistic expression, the type to enrich his creative forces – and those that hinder the creative process. By knowing these factors, the creative can explain the reasons for their success or failure at any time.¹⁸

Some people believe that preparation and education are not necessary. In the sense that, if you are talented, then you do not need a method. That is correct; however, Stanislavski himself claimed that the system is for the talented ones. If the talented actor never happened to fail, the system would not exist.

During a night rehearsal, we (the students) were in panic because we had an exam the next day in History of World Drama. Then, I recall my professor saying that getting the best grades would not make us actors; that the best grade would not act on the stage, rather, one can become an actor in a theatre. This was the moment when my suspicions that art is something that cannot be learned through theory began. I initially was suspicious of the theatre schools because according to my experience in the theatres of that period, the knowledge acquired at school was totally different, and I was thinking whether it is worth spending time on master's studies or it is better to start working my craft in a theatre.

Also, I was scared. I was scared because I did not have a complete picture of what I really wanted inside me, meaning that I could not explain my failures. I did not

¹⁸ Chekhov, Michael Aleksandrovich. *On the technique of acting* (New York: Harper, 1991).

know how to learn to stimulate myself to get the best out of me, i.e. I had not developed my own system, a method of working which would always function for me on stage. Up to this day, I feel my heartbeat saying my uncertainty during a casting or at the beginnings of a new process.

After I spent three years in my formal education of theatre, I simply considered myself grown enough to a high degree in that field and I knew I did not have any space to be scared and delay the things. I simply had to take the whole material in my own hands, start to think seriously and analytically and in a professional manner to put an exact sketch in my head of the matter I wanted to study.

I was convinced to go abroad and I made that choice with a clear head, but I somehow was not exactly confident that Authorial Acting was the correct choice. When I read the e-mail that I was accepted for Master's studies, I knew that it was not all about the change of a state, but that if you have specific problems in one place, you will also have others elsewhere. I was happy that I had chosen Prague; however, I was somehow insecure because I was making a decision for something that I had no concrete image of in my head.

After the hard work and the input, I made in the theatre, I felt frustrated at the beginning for the big amount of money that I was needed to pay to the faculty. Honestly, I thought in a kid-like manner. I wanted to call the actor I admired the most to offer the same amount of money, and in return to get taught the skills he possesses and are needed for the theatre. Yet, according to the analysis as the department was explained I, nevertheless, decided what was needed at that moment was for me to find myself in theatre art through the trodden path by acclaimed individuals.

4.2 KATaP throughout the years

My first contact with KATaP was on the website itself and the way I perceived the department was something similar to the way I read the first anthropology for the first time: The Authorial Acting Program at DAMU comes out of the humanist and dialogical traditions. It views performance first and foremost as creative public behavior. We cultivate creativity of body, voice and of mind in real-time by exploring acting

through the lenses of different disciplines – this includes theatre performance. Students are encouraged to go beyond traditional forms of theatre, crossing boundaries and drawing on personal experiences in fields like education, social work and psychology.¹⁹

The thing that attracted me the most of my attention was that the department had a psycho-physical approach which simultaneously consisted of training of creativity and its authorial application in practice. At the very beginning, the term pedagogy was not something I was interested in, but I was interested in some of the classes, such as: training for movement, body in motion, voice training and the theoretical subjects such as: psychology and philosophy.

What's more the department was in the sphere that I was interested in studying the most in that period, i.e. non-classical acting (classical in terms of the aspect of playing of a role which usually is psychological). Also the indications of how to create a performance, which aligned with my then-views of the theater.

When I began my studies at the academy, I was very excited and enthusiastic because I made my idea come true, to study at an academy where acting is learned in a psychopathic manner and from professionals. There were also frustrating moments because I could not find a logical viewpoint for some of the subject at the beginning itself.

I wondered and I could not comprehend some of the professors and students in some of our conversations during the classes in Introduction in Authorial Acting. So much so that I once had an unpleasant experience – because I was very tired, I lost contact with my mind and I said out loud: “I don't know how I will survive Intro to Authorial Acting” which was heard by some of the professors and students. At the beginning I could not understand whether they are things for a theatre school or a wisdom school, out of which come pedagogues. Something that kept me up on my feet was the explanation for Dialogical Acting which was on the website.

¹⁹ December 5th, 2019: < <https://www.damu.cz/en/department-branches/department-of-authorialcreativity-and-pedagogy/> >

Dialogical Acting with the Inner Partner depends on what each person does with it and hopes to get out of it.

For most it can be, and often is, a path of self-discovery, self-understanding and self-acceptance; for many a path of self-realization as well. This depends on predispositions, talents and interests.

It can be, and often is, as has already been stated, about developing psychosomatic fitness for creative communications and, therefore, for a more profound and precise “conductive” empathy; understanding and acceptance of others; for encounter, in the true sense of the word.

It can be, and often is, about experiencing, understanding and studying the principles of dramatic play.

It can be, and often is, about experiencing, understanding and studying Zero-Point Acting (playing, performing).

It can be, and often is, a way of understanding and grasping; “physicalizing” and meeting a specific challenge; answering a particular question; accomplishing a specific task; realizing a certain text.

It can be, and often is, if it is understood and comprehended as such, an open and opening path; a methodology of rehearsing, searching and perceiving, noticing and discovering.

However, it is not a goal-oriented, worked-out, proven approach, nor a “method” that can be accepted and “deployed” as a prefabricated thing. And it is definitely not any kind of technique.

I was in wonder of myself. I finally managed to find myself in a theatre academy outside of my own country, but everything I knew up until then with my experience and everything I tried to do led me to frustrations.²⁰

Even though I studied music, i.e. I took private guitar classes and I learned piano as a subject at my previous faculty, I did not know how to sing. Everything I sang was

²⁰ December 5th, 2019: < <http://www.ivanvyskocil.cz/html/english.html> >

out of tune. The only thing that worked for my case, was to reach correct intonation through the reproduction of the professor's voice. During the classes dedicated to movement, I came to a realization that I am also not moving properly.

I spent four years of my life dedicated to the theatre and I learn a little. I was interested in the extremes of theatre art and I did not know the basics. That is why I was disappointed in many aspects. My tactic was to be honest in the things I do. I was thinking that if the thing comes honestly out of me, then it is original and identical to that specific moment and it must to be accepted. And so, all the time I was thinking about the point of contact between me and the new world of department I was studying.

During the first year of my studies, I had a belief that all the time I have to give the best of me. I started using a diary and I regularly recorded the feedback of the professors. I was not tolerant if I did something wrong and I always worked on the unsatisfying aspects I was getting as comments from the participants and the professors.

In comparison to other students that somehow felt stuck, I had energy and material in abundance. At the beginning I had a realization that everything I do needs to come full circle as a theatre performance, i.e. I believed that we don't have a right to be on stage without knowing why we are going there. Though the opposite turned out after some period. What I want to emphasize is that from the beginning of the semester until the first Klauzury (exams week), I was in a type of a chaos which looked like hitting my head against a wall.

The interesting thing I understood afterwards was that the professors understood me and gave me correct instructions. However, I was the one who could not understand them. Ever since those early moments, I was happy with the situations where I discovered many stage things which I was aware I could use in my future work.

I had routines and perceptions from my previous experience. The main thing I thought I knew was that to reach a certain level of stage performance you need to behave in a certain way. Namely, in order to be free on stage, you first need to train.

The disappointment I had at the beginning according to the professors were that they were basically trying to let me know that no one is forcing me to do anything. In fact, their goal was to lead me to perfecting what I already know and to open new horizons of thinking, which according to them would be useful to me or how some things could be done differently.

It was different after the first year. I somehow took in the whole material and I realized that most importantly, the pressure and the hard work I imposed was useless in this case. Until the second year I had enough time to consider on the whole material, to relax and start approaching the problems of the department precisely anew.

I realized that students go to college to study and to better themselves, and not to display their knowledge. I finished believing in success because I came to a conclusion that it is specific for a particular time period and what is left is only regular studying which comes from going forward and not giving up.

Sadly, but when the end was near I get started getting accustomed to the subjects. I already had chosen my materials with which I wanted to experiment. The main thing I realized was that my initial idea, which was to expand my perception for the theatre, now was not directed only towards the theatre, but I also discovered new outlooks in life, and I started seeing myself differently as a person.

Something important I learned from the department was that from all the practical classes, we create inner spiritual forms as a mechanical approach for our body to absorb phrases and idioms, in order to find an expression in a situation during a performance. The creative situation cannot be controlled by us. We can only discover specific ways for its stimulation and enrich it with this material.

I was becoming addicted to the things around me and I strived to a greater extent. To go to a degree of extremes in an environment where you are confident and secured were the moments when I had to try things out and find myself as an artist.

4.3 KATaP in conclusion

The concept to continue my theatre experience in foreign country was present from my studying at ESRA. I knew that Prague would be my next destination. To work in a theatre is very important to know the language of medium very well. That is why the option to choose studied in English played a big role in my making of this decision.

The Czech Republic was the decision. I had previously visited it several times as a tourist. In the European city Prague, known for its rich cultural life and a crowded network of theatres, DAMU was a school very famous in the area I lived. Among the cities in Europe, Prague was among the first with lowest unemployment.

When I arrived here, we were together in a group of 6 students, out of which 3 were post-graduate students, 2 were undergraduate students and 1 was a student of short studies and all of us participated in the final projects of the semester. The department I chose, i.e. KATaP teach its students psychosomatic approach to acting, but also teach them to find the appropriate place in the society according to their need, predispositions, talents, interest...etc.

What was beautiful at the beginning was that I felt really free to choose subjects which I was interested in. After thinking it through, I choose classes which took place at DAMU, FAMU and HAMU and I put them in the list. That was a part of the faculty that I loved the most, you were able to choose subjects from other faculties.

Not only did the ability to choose subjects from different faculties expand my horizons of theatre, but it also gave me an option to make a friendship with different artists. I believe that I gained much more than I would have got with the suggested classes only. I was the most satisfied with the option to have a different activates on different faculties.

It was also very fascinating to understand how the knowledge gained during the classes differs, for the students of different departments and faculties respectively and the group that it is sent to. Most frequently, the students of the acting department were the most relaxed, correct and obedient to the professor's decisions.

I am aware that I would not have the same understanding for KATaP, if I had not acquired the knowledge during my 4-year education at ESRA and the theatres throughout my country. Coming to DAMU with a lot of practical knowledge gained in Skopje allowed me to feel comfortable on the classes and with the rest of the group.

Over the years of studies, I had the freedom to work in several projects at the school with a different function and position. In the projects, I was making a test of what I had learned at the academies. At the same time, it was a great opportunity to reflect the way in which I had observed about how things work in the theatre.

Two and a half years after my last performance at the Macedonian National Theatre, I can finally see what was successful or unsuccessful, and create an analysis of all the things that were supporting my work, and the ones that were blocking it.

5. MY LAST PERFORMANCE

I wanted a theater different than the one I pointed out in time, an honest theatre. But I knew very little of such theatre. It was losing advantage or initiation of the inner strength of cognition?

5.1 The Initial Point

The moment came and that was the end of my Master studies as well. I had only the last exam, i.e. a performance and the state exam. It was the time to put all my knowledge and experience to practice and show it on the stage. Even though it was an unpaid process and I had other activities in this period, I dedicated a big amount of discipline and time to do the best I can.

The thing I was the most interested in was for the action to be genuine and authentic. At the time my body and voice were not trained as they were in the years before and I also had not acted in a theatre for two and a half years. I want to say that I had not had the position of continuous acting on stage in front of an audience. This means that as a man of art, I had to put myself in a position of a self-observer and to think about my everyday routines and problems and tell a story through them which would be analogous to reality.

This means that I had to organize myself according to the available time, led by the capacity of the strength and will I possessed in this period, to come to a situation where I would create this product completely aware.

And so it happened, inspired by my everyday problems and ways of thinking, like viewpoints and directions of life I develop throughout the years, I created a text for a character which was mainly inspired by me. To make it clear, I did not want to bring my private life to the stage. I know that the stage is not a suitable place for it and that I could only create situations with it which could distract the viewer. Thus, the goal was to portray myself through the imaginary character in a situation analogous to truth.

The first idea was to find contrasts in the text itself. Namely, opposites. When the audience believes that they understand the result of the moment, the opposite

would happen. I thought those moments would create expression to the performance and also make it less monotonous and self-centered.

On this part of the process, I counted the most on my knowledge resources. I had notebooks where I wrote down things that can help me as an actor, author-creator. I began improvising with words and I made combinations of those notebooks. All this happened as a sort of an exercise and turned out as a piece I wanted to work on.

I was not interested in copying somebody else's work, piece or style. I began this writing as a possibility to create a performance that would reflect my personal interests and way of working.

In the first moments of creating, I made it clear to myself. I had to accept that my mind is not sure what will be the idea or how it is going to look like. I had, some pictures in my head and too much space for making combinations. The problem was that I did not have anyone to watch me and lead me along the way. I was left on my own, led by my imagination and intuition.

The text was written. What came next was an everyday psycho-physical training and improvisation. I knew that not all the ideas would be a part of the structure of the performance. The goal, nonetheless, was to improvise every day and fix the good moments.

During the process, I was also afraid of imposing on myself false expectations. In other words, expectations that I am not confident in what I expect of myself and whether I understood my role in the performance correctly. That was whether I should make combinations of the knowledge I had gained in Skopje or stick strictly to the principles which our department KATaP is based on.

The place for rehearsals was of great importance as well. When the house I live in was empty, I rehearsed in the hallway or my room. However, when there were people in it, my rehearsals took place in my dad's work warehouse. What was amusing was that the place of performance affected my role. Each place stimulated different experiences within myself. Many of the situations lost their initial sense and had shades of a different experience. I knew that if you want the action to be authentic, you must

not force your feelings in any way. It turns out that you somehow need to become part of the environment and the objects around you, and with it, the feeling of truth and belief arises which is when the real stage creation happens, i.e. the authentic action.

After every rehearsal I did a recapitulation of the actions. I wrote down in my notebook what worked and what did not and then I visualized the end result according to the things I had up until then. I want to say that I was not looking for a concrete result to move towards it, but I was looking for possible variations which would guide my work.

After each session of physical exercises, I did exercises for relaxation around 10 minutes. The goal was to help clear my head and bring myself to the imaginary stage. I was the creative and the man that organizes everything, and I also knew that I am not an expert.

When I would warm up my body and voice, the process for improvisational exercises began. I mostly focused on the dynamics of the then-performance which was guiding me along the way, feeding my imagination with the themes I wanted to work.

I would usually create an atmosphere with the help of a costume, music or requisites and would start to communicate with myself and with the imagined audience guiding myself with little directions. And of course, I wrote down all the interesting results or those that agreed with the first possible goal.

While thinking after each session, I analyzed the interesting moments and thought of opening space to other possible solutions I wanted to discover. I was really pleasant when I stuck to the topics, but I was also open to new research. The situation and the atmosphere I had created worked right and the whole time I reminded myself that I should not give the best of me throughout the rehearsals, but that I am doing it to discover and to take pleasure in.

Slowly, but in a stable way, I started making connections of the different pieces. The idea that I made, for the contemporary individual being captured in the clamp of faith, turned out to be a man fighting to survive in the capitalist system.

5.2 The End Product

And after two and a half months of practicing I presented my first outcome of my work in front of my professor who was my mentor, as well. According to the that time content it lasted for over more than thirty minutes. In the first presentation I used several props such as: a broom, an onion, a bowl of water, a bottle, glasses, knife and I had a fixed myzantscene. But the mood I had during the creation of the performance came to be a problem, it changed only after certain time period has passed and simply by the change of the location and the stage. The stage space in the KATAP 312 cabinet raised calmness in me and I lost the spark I had when I tried at home.

When you are working alone could be of use and take action in the process up to a certain period. The problem was that I performed my process in front of an imagined audience, but never in front of a real human being. I realized that the audience is necessary and needed to investigate out the material and after that give the necessary comments and critique through a discussion.

I was content with the result and motivated from the encouraging by my professor for a better performance. We decided to work on the material and I also accepted all the suggestions and thoughts. We made changes in order to keep the basic principles of the department. I decided not to use the requisites, I was to show up on stage alone accompanied by a chair. By doing so, the main idea of what I was doing became clearer. And after two and a half months, my performance came to life.

My interest from the very beginning was for the performance to be interaction and even the most practiced parts to be spontaneous. I used different means, such as dark humor as a way to reflect the issues and complications of now days. When I was practicing, there always was a possibility to explore new things and the same was to happen with every performance. Even though I had acted it out once, I planned out to explore every time, leaded by the interaction with the spectator.

The main thing I would like to mention in this process was that besides my live performance, I regularly acted out the process in my head imaginarily. I always acted it out with a different nuance of performance. This means that I had more answers for

each situation and I also imagined different kinds of audience. According to the imaginary performance, the body and the voice get accustomed to the given role. Besides that, you already start to hear the voice of your character from the inside, their gestures and psychology. After the process of this action, the material comes to life and the performer begins to feel it as a whole.

The goal of these imaginary exercises is to charge our sub consciousness. Namely, when we start performing, we need to previously have a complete picture of the meaning of the text and what the actions and tasks are in the performance. Of course, I am not referring to a mathematical equation. Somehow, all this organized work should happen spontaneously guided by sub consciousness.

The last important thing I would like to mention that I discovered in this performance is that whenever I felt blocked out, I asked myself what is my authentic action in which I would like to intermedate with the viewer and fulfill the moment. It first happens in the imagination. The imaginary character acts out that action and then you step into action yourself. Several such real moments would cause much bigger, real moments and when the body and mind start believing in those situations, then in that situation the authentic action analogous to reality appears, and as a main conductor performs our sub consciousness.

My last performance is something that I am really satisfied of, and I want to say that everyone from the audience was, not only the outcome, but also as a process. After 7 years of theatre experience, out of which 5 were formal, I can say that I created my own training based on psycho-physical actions which became my own method, personal hygiene of an actor, and from them as an answer are to be born stage performances.

I believe that this performance will be a start of many others.

6. EPILOGUE

I have decided to write this thesis with entitled The actor and The Training because I thought that it is a key riddle in our profession in other words if I may call it invisible work as Declan Donnellan explains in his book The Actor and the Target which determines the outcome of our performance i.e. the visible work. In connection to the topic I believe that I had enough material and knowledge which evolved during the time since I have decided to become an actor at ESRA and I thought that my personal trajectory will give the reader a more specifically picture in this area.

How do you see the theatre from today's perspective? It is a vital question that I have been asked by many friends and some professors at the university. I see the theatre of today as a place where the people will go to contemplate. And is that kind of theater possible if the action in it is not authentic? Then it would present a place where the people will go for fun and entertainment, doing something different than usual. But I think that because of technical possibilities the film will totally replace the theatre. Till today I have visited a lot of theaters which have stages with great technical possibilities and rich lighting equipment but even if so, I think the viewers will still opt for the cinema. Then the theatre is left with nothing else but live action, the thing that makes us witness and participate in something that is specific for certain moment and happens here and now and every time offers different experience.

What is the theatre? The theatre, the way I see it is a place where we create an illusion of the reality. Each of us who deals with theatre through his role, wishes to tell a story which can be retold from a different aspect, the way he sees it and experiences it. I see it as a place where the fiction and imagination get its chance to become possible and real, as my professor at ESRA university said the theater is a place built by the same substance the dreams are made of.

For me, personally, in the years spent in the theatres in my country, it was of great importance that I realized that when I do something good in the theater I create something good as a human being. So when the things in the theatre went well I felt that I belong to this world and I could consider myself functioning well as a human.

Someone that reads this thesis may ask why an Authorial Acting student will choose a topic like The Actor and the Training. The answer is that I was all stiff and blocked in my beginnings on the stage. Starting overcoming that problem was the beginning of my research which gave me different perspectives of the theatre. In my opinion and according to my experience it is not enough to know only the theory. One should have skills and abilities. For this purpose, it is necessary to explore your nature, constant training in order to find out ourselves and to reveal our obstacles which block our creative process and after that to make habit out of it, in order to remove them and if we have a talent we will be guided to become actors.

The years spent in the Macedonian National Theatre taught me that the theatre is a lot of hard work that always pays back less, but keeps you motivated and it is a place where separate individuals should act together. In that place not only that you should grow as an actor but you should be a good colleague.

The final thing that I would like to mention in this thesis is that it is obvious that I have made a great journey, from my first role on the stage where as a robot I felt stage pleasure for the first time and the last performance where I heard the applause meant only for me, for the first time.

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8. PHOTOS OF PERFORMANCES

Photos from the performance “Eternal House” (Вечната Куќа), Macedonian National Theatre, Premiere Skopje December 9th, 2013.



Photos from the performance “The Master and Margarita” (Мајсторот и Маргарита), Macedonian National Theatre, Premiere Skopje December 1st, 2015.



Photos from the performance “Prometheus Bound” (Окованиот Прометеј), Turkish Theatre Skopje, Premiere Skopje April 26th. 2015.



Photos from my last performance at the Academy of Performing arts in Prague,
Theatre Faculty (DAMU), Prague September 27th 2019

