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Connecting universities-industry through smart
entrepreneurial cooperation and competitive intelligence of
students in Moldova, Georgia and Armenia

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TRAINING MODULE ON ART SKILLS / ACTING





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The module: A training Module on Art/Acting education, for trainers, early stage and incorporated startups and teachers to use in non-formal education settings.

Contributors and Editors: Professor Bogdana Crețu, PhD

Project: CONNECT - Connecting universities-industry through smart entrepreneurial cooperation and competitive intelligence of students in Moldova, Georgia and Armenia

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Team Building

1. Introduction

If we wish to discover the starting point of using games in theatre, one must go a long way further from the modern age and transpose oneself in a historical time.

Ancient times are when not only the fundamental laws of theatre were established, but also the principles according to which they would have to be applied. This is how two great philosophers emerged who, through their thinking, traced two fundamental directions in theatre. We mean Aristotle and Plato, those who saw art as an imitation: in a superior sense of the real world (the former), or in the sense of imperfect copying of an ideal world (the latter). Aristotle (a professor of Alexander the Great), the Greek philosopher believed to be “The Father of Modern Philosophy” and a founder of the peripatetic school (Lykeion - Lyceum), would write a work of immense value for universal theatre: *Poetics*. From the very first lines of this work, the Stagyrite (he is named like this as he was born in the city of Stagira, in the north-eastern Halkidiki, in the North of the Aegean Sea) made a clear distinction between the species of the dramatic genre: comedy and tragedy, but also a parallel with the epopee. Aristotle said: “Comedy is the imitation of coarse people; but not an imitation of the totality of aspects offered by an inferior nature, but of those that turn the ridiculous into a part of the ugly. (...) The epopee comes close to tragedy so much that it is, just like it, an imitation with the help of the words of chosen people”¹; the philosopher completed this idea by saying: “tragedy is an imitation imagined by people in action, rather than told”. This is why beyond the main directions that dramatic texts were supposed to be built on and then staged, Aristotle also stated the way in which the actor’s process of artistic creation would take place. That was, therefore, the first director’s note: imitation of people. It is true that two distinct directions began to take place here: imitation of superious people, heroes, god-like through their special behaviour (for tragedy) and imitation of simple people, with habits that were not in accordance with living in society, with frivolous “habits” and ridiculous manifestations (in comedy). Two distinct itineraries in the actor’s art would therefore be born: the tragedy actor:

¹Apud, Tonitza-IordacheMihaela, George Banu – *Arta Teatrului*, Ed.Nemira, Buc.2004, pag.87



sobre, with a well trained voice and speaking technique, with a particular power of conveying touching experiences to the audience, but also the comedy actor, that is, the actor who can capture behavioural details out of the life of their peers, which they can then replay to the delight of the spectators, in order to trigger laughter and “heal” society of various “diseases” of the behaviour. But what was the way in which the actor could come close to their character?

Firstly by accepting the proposition, the story, and the vision of the playwright. They were the one that, thanks to their superior science, would manage to understand the facts of life, decodify the signals come from the superiour world of the spirits, or penetrate the great mysteries of the world: this was governed by an unmovable principle: “When portraying characters, as well as in the unravelling of the plot, that which the poet must pursue is verosimilarity or necessity”². And as this norm would also apply to character work as well as dramatic structure and determining time and space, it had to be used, as a natural consequence, in the actor’s creation. Therefore, the first necessary principle in the actor’s art, highlighted ever since ancient times is a veridic and necessary approach.

This is when we understand that the action of “imitating” good or worse people that served as models to actors had to also be subject to the same principle. But what was the concrete way that one had to take? It is Aristotle again who answers: in the construction and rendition of characters one must keep in mind four points of interest. These are: what the hero says and does mirrors the attitude of the normal character and that is when the attitude is chosen; the second quality concerns the match, as in there are men and women, but neither manhood nor cruelty match the female nature; the third is the similarity with events, facts, and human characters; and the fourth is consistency. The philosopher considered this last aspect to be crucial, as, he says: “even though the object of imitation could be inconsistent and portray this sort of nature, they must be portrayed with consistency in their inconsistency”³. It can appear, on first sight, as a paradox that we consider Aristotle, with his thinking that always passed through the sphere of imitation, as a first and valuable forebear of modern theatre. In today’s world, in which we firmly claim that the Actor’s Art is “a game of reality” rather than “imitation”, one can raise a big question mark. Nonetheless, if we understand the essence of what the Stagyrte said, we realise that he in fact outlined the path that is followed still today in the art of theatre. And that is because imitation does not mean

²Apud, Tonitza-IordacheMihaela, George Banu – *Arta Teatrului*, Ed.Nemira, Buc.2004, pag. 90

³ Idem



copying models without truth, but rather an approach which bordered on study and research of people and their actions, which could serve as examples of their peers.

More precisely, the philosopher invited the ones who wrote plays, as well as those who interpreted texts and gave life to heroes, to choose the first snippets of life, meaningful stories, major and disturbing events, complex and spectacular beings, that they would present to people in order to “heal” them of flawed thinking, evil tendencies and reprimandable attitudes. That is what he was looking for: a cleansing of the human being through theatre, which he called “catharsis”.

Except this aim could only be achieved if all stage actions were under the sign of the veridical and necessary. We understand, therefore, that nothing of what would appear on stage could be a false representation of life, unnatural, untrue, hard to believe by the spectator; more precisely, in the stories and characters that they saw on stage, spectators had to recognise themselves. And they had to recognise themselves by empathizing strongly with the life that they saw on stage. But the question remains: what would the actor do in order to fulfil this ideal?

The answer will come, however, not from the experience of the tragedy actor, for this one was dominated by the vision of the dramatic poet, considered by the very Aristotle as being the essence of the art of theatre. The answer comes from a “younger brother” of his: the actor of ancient comedy.

In the beginning, comedy did not have the support of a well contoured dramatic text; it was considered inferior to tragedy, because the people that served as “models” had no noble character and features. They were peasants, slaves, workers, simple folk; what’s more, they also had different “vices”: they lied, they stole, they drank, they used coarse language and did deeds... of little nobility. They were the ideal target for those that wished to educate the human being by emphasizing people’s ridiculous habits. And as nobody could risk putting forward real human figures, in order to not completely jeopardize their image, the creators of comedy chose to endow animals, insects, flowers, plants, and other creatures with human character. This is how, during the Feasts of Dionysus, when comedy was born, the most remarkable characters were: cowardly and stupid lions, donkeys that laughed and spoke loudly, evis, quick, and gossiping wasps, etc. That is, the spectators were invited to see: the personification and hyperbolization of human beings with shady characters.

And while the purpose was clear: to trigger laughter of the community upon seeing the ridiculousness of a peer, who would thus be made to feel ashamed and motivated to



become better (a method used ever since the times of primary social units), the question still remained: what was the exact method that the actors used? The answer is at hand: playing.

For what else could we think when we know that, by choosing their models from life, they would transform their exterior aspect, but kept their essence, for that was exactly what had to be aimed for. Cicero said: “comedy is a copy of life, a mirror of mores, a reflection of truth”⁴. That is, in fact, what actors of ancient comedy used to do: they would analyse real life and mirror mores. They would, however, make the effort of transforming events into comical situations and the figures into ridiculous images in order to give a positive spin on the little scenes that they constructed.

In the first part of the *Actor's Art Course. Improvisation*⁵ I spoke about the games of childhood and presented in detail the games of creation, so appreciated by children from very young ages. I said that there were games in which the topics are taken from everyday life, from fairy tales or stories, in which children are given parts of the most varied and... spectacular kind. Does that not uncannily resemble the type of approach to the actor's reaction that we were talking about in the context of ancient comedy? And to make things clearer, we will take a (not very big) leap in time and space and will focus our research on another moment in the history of theatre: the appearance of mimes and roman historians.

Also of Greek origin, mime is a very appreciated farce in the Roman Empire. Usually, the interpreter was an actor wearing a mask (a sometimes grotesque one), they would make gestures that could be easily recognised and, underscored by a flute, they would manage to build true human archetypes: misers, cowards, liars, thieves, braggers. It is interesting to note that this is when female actors first appeared who were previously not allowed in tragedy shows. It is certain that as time passed, mimes opted for a character that they developed and turned into... a personal brand. But the question remains: what path did the mime use in their creation? The answer becomes, in this context, easy: playing. For having but a few “fixed” points in the approach process, namely the character of the person that would serve them as model and a few gestures that could be easily decoded by the spectators, the rest was just imagination, spontaneity and freedom of creation; the occurrences that the mime would imagine were sometimes offered as a theme by the very spectators. And in order to achieve their objectives, the actor would do nothing else but apply a few simple rules of childhood games.

⁴Apud, Tonitza-IordacheMihaela, George Banu – *Arta Teatrului*, Ed.Nemira, Buc.2004, pag. 96

⁵Darie, Bogdana – *Curs de Arta Actorului. Improvizatia*; UNATC Press, Buc.2015, pag.21



The time has come to talk about an essential fact: this whole journey that the present work has taken follows, in fact, step by step, the path of improvisation theatre. Namely that form of theatre in which the actor is invited to create their work without the aid of a dramatic text, of a structure of ideas required by another creator, or of strict norms and rules. This is a different trajectory, a distinct one, called dramatic theatre, and its journey, which started with ancient Greek tragedy, would see centuries of existence. There is a detailed analysis of it in a separate chapter of the Actor's Art Course, titled Two Distinct Direction in the Actor's Art.

For the time being we are under the sign of improvisation theatre and we understand how tight the relation between playing, improvising, and creating is for an actor. And in order for that research trajectory to be even clearer we must mention an extremely interesting phenomenon in the history of theatre.

In Middle Age Italy, Commedia dell'Arte was to emerge. "Improvisation - as a form of expression in Commedia dell'Arte - undoubtedly originates in classical mime, that is in the unmediated imitation of all things and beings in nature. The popular farces in Sparta belong to it, the ones of the fallofors in Siciona or of the phaeacians in Magna Grecia"⁶. Commedia dell'Arte was a show which, even though it had short scripts named canovaccio (canvas), with simple topics and not very complicated situations, managed to become in time the favourite of the audience in many European countries. Were we to read the remaining texts⁷ we would discover that from a dramatic point of view they are hardly on a high level; we then wonder: how did they impress the audience? The answer is simple: through acting.

As successors of mimes, dell'Arte actors specialized in rendering a certain character. They wore costumes, distinct masks, they made defining gestures and had reactions in accordance with the character's structure. Even if they only had an itinerary of ideas rather than a dramatic text, they managed to weave new stories and intrigues, novel, spectacular, some even during the very show. There were cases when spectators would ask for a specific ending, or they demanded that the story be complicated. The actors, with abundant spontaneity and imagination, mastering the means of expression up to the smallest detail, benefitting from a well trained body, would manage every time to offer spectators true artistic events. "Actors always knew how to improvise, how to address everyone, and not only the intellect, but the sight and hearing as well, that is, the immediate perception as entertainment. Extraordinary jugglers and mimes, accomplished singers and instrument players, exceptional

⁶Mărculescu, Olga – *Commedia dell'Arte*, Ed.Univers, Buc.1984, Pag.7

⁷Idem



dancers and acrobats, the actors had full control over their soul and body, voice, face, revealing the wonders in the show; their masks, along with movement, music, voice and costume would make up the eloquent symbols of their art”⁸. Having so many strong points, the lack of a written text was no handicap, but rather an advantage. Freedom of reaction that the dell’Arte actor displayed secured them a place in the History of Theatre as the complete actor.

There is an accredited idea that, in the improvisation show, the actor’s art acquires a particular impetus. This is where highlights: the complete use of senses and resorting to these in creating valuable stage situations, the focus of attention, relaxation, imagination, freedom of creation which supports the actor’s stage existence, but also a beneficial collaboration between the members of the artistic group. The Commedia dell’Arte companies, even though they allowed the “launching” of true stars, were, at their core, well gelled teams that adhered with conviction to common artistic and aesthetic ideals. And as theatre is undoubtedly a group art⁹, one can only assume that the fame and force that these troubadours have maintained over centuries are a natural consequence of their undeniable value.

In the tight connection between playing and the Actor’s Art there is, however, another very important nuance. If we stop and think that the only thing an actor needs to do in their work is to play... we are terribly wrong. Plato warned: “Something that contains no utility, no truth, no parabolic value, not even anything harmful, can be judged best by the quantity of delight (charis) that it contains and by the pleasure that it gives. Such pleasure, which contains neither evil nor anything useful or worthy of being named, is playing (paidia)”¹⁰

Playing in theatre is like a game, but one of a far superior structure. Professor Ion Cojar (1931 - 2009), a true master of the Romanian school of theatre, emphasized an idea accredited by sociological thinking: “Theatre and authentic dramatic art are games, just like, following the same trail of ideas, seen from the same angle, all professions and functions considered honourable are also games with specific rules and purposes”¹¹; the observation is fully correct. For the whole existence of the human being in society is a game, in which each of us takes or receives a part, according to the space and responsibilities that they have. This assertion is strengthened by William Shakespeare himself who, in his play *As You Like It*, spoke through the words of Jacques: “All the world's a stage,/ And all the men and women merely players;/ They have their exits and their entrances,/ And one man in his time plays

⁸Idem. Pag.11

⁹Apud, Darie, Bogdana – *Personajul extins*, Ed.EstFalia, Buc. 2011, pag. 13-35

¹⁰Platon – *Opere*, vol.V;VI, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, Buc.1986

¹¹Cojar, Ion – *O poetică a artei actorului*, Ed.Paidia, Buc.1996, pag.74



many parts,/ His acts being seven ages.”¹² A person can therefore have several parts in life: at home one can be a husband and a parent, as well as a son or a brother; at work one can be a boss, an employee, a colleague, a supervisor, etc; in a shop one can be an assistant, a buyer, or a mere visitor; at the doctor’s office one can be a doctor, or a patient etc. In all of these places, the human being acts, talks, lives, according to the part that they have. Correct... but that does not make them an artist.

The question arises: what must one do in order to turn this everyday game into a work of art? The answer is simple: theatre has gone hand in hand, throughout its existence, with Life. Theatre and Life cannot be separated because, ever since the very beginning they set off on an endless journey. As a natural necessity, this connection united an art to its creators. History books of theatre cannot pinpoint a date of the birth of the theatre phenomenon, but they can safely say that it was born at the same time as the religious ritual, that is at the same time as... the genesis of the world. “The Gods, out of great pity for the humanity born for suffering, created, as a way of forgetting worries, the feasts of gratitude, and gave them to people as companions of celebration, the Muses, as well as Apollo, leader of the Muses, and Dionysus, so that, thanks to this divine festive community, the order of things may be permanently restored amongst people”¹³ Plato said.

And if theater is indissolubly linked to human existence, it means that the human being, the one who needed to "invent it", asks it to carry on forever with its purpose: to educate, develop, and help humankind evolve. Therefore, in order to fulfill this ideal, the theater creator has to present important, significant, essential moments that people can understand and accept as true parables. And these moments chosen from life, loaded with meaning, need something specific to become an artistic act. Professor Cojar tells us: "The energy that animates all these processes depends on the stake in the game, the quality and value of the motivation, the WHY of the game and to the same extent on the WHAT: what kind of game is being played?"¹⁴ At the theatre they are playing the game of... life. But a concentrated, essential life, "raised to a power" (the expression belongs to Professor Cojar).

The actor must have the strength and training necessary to support this ample process. In the complexity of their biopsychosocial being they are invited to act, every evening, with the belief that it is ... the most important evening of their life. From the point of view of the actors on stage, at the moment of creation nothing of what surrounds the stage is of any

¹²Shakespeare, William – *Cum vă place*, în *Opere complete*, E.S.P.L.A., Buc.1959, pag.416

¹³ Shakespeare, William – *Cum vă place*, în *Opere complete*, E.S.P.L.A., Buc.1959, pag.416

¹⁴ Cojar, Ion – *O poetică a artei actorului*, Ed.Paidia, Buc.1996, pag.76



importance; only what happens on stage is vital. Theater is a matter of life and death, truth is told with the whole being, ultimate suffering and absolute love.

Theater attains universal dimensions and plunges into abysmal spaces. For an actor, theater is ... Everything.

2. How to create a productive team - personal purpose vs. group purpose

(the workshop is designed to use theatre games in order to establish the main pillars that are required in obtaining a diverse but compact work group, as in a theatre company) – video teamwork through theatre

Concession and collaboration video (exploring personal limits and methods of negotiating in a group, how to overcome boundaries and explore everyone's fears and preconceived ideas using creative scene moments)

Theatre, a social and cultural phenomenon of great aesthetic and moral scope, is currently crossing, as it has been for centuries, an ample process of evolution which is closely linked to the complex educational system of the enrichment of the human being. There have been times in the history of humankind when theatre, just like other forms of culture, suffered because of the much too harsh social realities; but there were also times when state leaders or enlightened monarchs felt the need for art development; and amongst these, theatre enjoyed ample and diverse investments. This led to a fulminant development which reverberated over centuries in the cultural evolution of humanity. If one thinks of Pericles's Century in Athens, of the time during which Octavian Augustus was the leader of Rome, or of Paris during the time of the Sun King, it is impossible not to notice that the changes that occurred in the life of theatre were not only about the building of generous spaces, but also about the layering and development of the arts that make up the theatrical show (playwriting, aesthetics, the actor's art, the art of costume and set, music, directing, choreography etc). This is what gave birth to the unanimously accepted idea that theatre is a group art and not individual art. Technically, all the artistic levels involved in the theatrical phenomenon help shape it.

It is very easy to imagine, from the point of view of the actor, that is, of the one who "appears" by themselves in front of the spectator, that they are the main character in this convention called "show". Nothing could be further from the truth. Without a well structured dramatic text, rich in messages which are aimed at participating in educating and developing the human being, without well chosen costumes and sets, which must serve and complete the



idea of the show, without the music that renders the experience of the spectators more powerful, without the choreography that knows how to harmonize the movements of the actors according to the theme of the piece, and without the support of the director, whose goal is to organize this "orchestra" of great amplitude, the actor would become a mere draft, as opposed to being part of a complex cultural ensemble, which is what the theatre show is meant to be.

And the analysis does not stop here. Even within the group of actors involved in creating a show, if the one who has... more words, believes themselves to be... the most important, and expects to be served by the colleagues, they are wrong. Hamlet cannot "solve his problems" without the help of other characters. Technically, were we to make a simple exercise of imagination in which...just like that, once back in his town, Hamlet notices that in the palace... there is nobody left, one would wonder: what is the point of putting on the play? All that we would have left would be a few monologues (brilliant nonetheless) lacking context and meaning, prompted only by thoughts, and not at all by concrete and real actions that both he and we could see... live; and he, the hero, would immediately turn laughable.

This way, the first lesson that the acting tutor teaches the young actor who aspires to the glory of the stage is: theatre is a group art; the art of a group that adheres to noble artistic and creative principles.

From a sociological perspective, the group, as a psychosocial reality, has long been the object of study for theoreticians in the field of social life, and their theories seem to be very diverse.¹⁵

What these theories have in common is, so to speak, the fact that each of them accentuates one of the main coordinates, viewing them as defining. Thus, Gabriel Tarde emphasizes the psychological side: "That which cannot be argued against is that in anything that we say, do, or think, as soon as we've set off on the journey of social life, we constantly imitate our peers"¹⁶; Herbert Spencer¹⁷ emphasizes the biological side, talking about a superorganic existence and arguing that society is not just a collective name given to a sum of individuals, but a specific living entity that, although it can be quite obvious within the animal kingdom as well, can be found in its most perfect form in people. With animals, social life is restricted almost entirely to ties between adults and their young, whereas with human beings it is much more complex. The social life of the human, sprung from living in common,

¹⁵Apud, Darie, Bogdana – *The Extended Character*, EstFalia, Buc.2011, p13-40

¹⁶ Tarde, Gabriel – *Social Laws*, Ed. Națională, Buc.1924, p 53

¹⁷Andrei, Petre – *Sociologia cunoașterii și a valorii The Sociology of Knowledge and Values*, Ed. Virtual, Buc. 2010, p 6-13



within common environmental conditions, generates representations, emotional states, and common attitudes: this explains the emergence and organization of new and typically human functions (political, ecclesiastical, for instance) since all members of the group are called upon to adopt them.

Society is a typically human entity and it presents analogies to biological life, analogies that can be summarised to differentiation, cooperation, solidarity. Under the influence of certain intrinsic factors (biological and psychological), as well as external factors (climate, flora, fauna) and secondary factors which derive from them (cultural, professional, religious activity), social life has evolved constantly, from the primitive human with their elementary domestic institution, dominated by the unknown around them, to current society; from the fear of the dead to the fear of the living, etc.

Referring to the very wide notion of "human groups", Didier Anzieu and J.Y. Martin¹⁸ distinguish between the following realities: the crowd (which denotes the voluntary reunion of individuals and is conditioned by dominant preoccupations); the group (meaning a gathering of individualities; its purposes broadly correspond to all members); the primary group (meaning a collection of purposes, affective relationships, and group solidarity); the secondary group (meaning the formal organisation, a hierarchy which gets its norms dictated from the interior etc.). It must be noted that between the above mentioned social realities there is a series of characteristics which make them either similar or distinct (such as structure, duration, the relationships between individuals, purposes, common actions, etc.). Attempting a definition, G. Gurvitch states that: "A group is a real, but partial, collective unit, directly observable and founded on collective attitudes, continuous and active in front of a common work which is to be created; it expresses a unity in attitude, in achievements and behaviour, which forms a structural social frame, heading towards a relative cohesion of the forms of sociability"¹⁹. As far as restricted groups are concerned, G. Gurvitch states that they correspond to certain typically human dimensions (the need for a relation, for self-knowledge, for self-appreciation) and are maintained in distinct and numerous forms along the changes in society. It is within such groups that the notion of peer is best explained, the notion of solidarity, of cognitive and affective balance.

Also referring to restricted groups (the small group), C.N. Cooley, after making the distinction between the primary group (direct relations between the group members) and the secondary group (indirect, mediated relations), states that primary groups are "face to face"

¹⁸Apud, *La dynamique des groupes restreints*, Paris, PUF 1969

¹⁹ Gurvitch, G. - *La vocation actuelle de la sociologie*, PUF, Paris 1957, p 506



associations, with a limited number of members and with relative intimacy, while G.C. Homans believes that such a group is formed of a small number of people in which "each of them can communicate with the others, face to face rather than through a middle person"²⁰. Mutual knowledge, communication, the intimacy between individuals holds within itself a certain state of interaction in between the group members; that is why Kurt Lewin stated that: "the essence of a group is not the similarity or lack thereof between its members, but rather their interdependency"²¹. A group can be viewed as a dynamic whole; this means that a change within the state of a certain subdivision changes the state of another subdivision. Jean Maisonneuve shows that "groups constitute the foyers of social control, the concrete media in which the learning or the creation of models occurs; the generated fields where statuses and roles are articulated and where individuals that take them on interact with one another."²². Carrying on with his idea, the French sociologist states that the interaction of the members of a group is not carried out without an objective, without a specific task; the axis motivation – purpose, on a trajectory marked by means, techniques, inter-individual behaviours etc is vital for small groups. Amplifying his idea, Jean Maisonneuve states that what is crucial for a group is "the existence of an internal structure that directs the game of interactions. This structure consists of a rudimentary or complex, latent or explicit system of statuses and roles articulated amongst themselves, systems which render the group consistent and allow it to function"²³. The emphasis falls, therefore, on the system of interactions, a system which encompasses the existence and functionality of statuses and roles of the group members.

The factors that act upon a group can have one of either two: external or internal. External factors can consist of the will and power of people within the group, who act upon it. The other factors, of internal nature, refer to the structure of the group, its leadership, as well as the interpersonal relations which are established within it. The ones that truly dynamize the activity of the group, thereby influencing the behaviour of the whole group, are the internal factors, or in short, the group factors. They can act spontaneously or in a controlled manner. The structure of the group is influenced by the differences in position of the members of the group, that is, the status and role of each of the group members at a given time.

²⁰Apud, *The human group*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1950

²¹ Lewin, Kurt – *Resolving social conflicts*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1948

²² Maisonneuve, Jean – *La psychologie sociale*, PUF, Paris 1969, pag.55

²³ Idem., p 56



The relations between one person and another (interpersonal relations) represents one of the fields most frequently tackled in studies of social psychology. But the opinions of those who researched them have been as diverse as the number of times they have been tackled; thus, we encounter quite different opinions on their definition: they are called intrapsychic relationships (but these are also to be found in animal psychology), intermental relationships (a way of emphasizing the rational aspect of interhuman relationships while almost avoiding the affective aspect), interaffective relationships (accepting such a concept restricts the sphere of interpersonal relationships to mere affection, emotion and feelings, the social and rational aspect being avoided), human relations (but all relations in a society are "human" because they are...between people; but sadly, it is also between people that inhumane or even anti-human actions can occur).

Admitting that interpersonal relations have encompassed the act of consciousness, certain particularities can be highlighted: they are unmediated and involve a great affective –emotional load; they involve knowledge and communication, the defining of one's position to others, of everyone to the group and of the whole group to the individual; they also involve (under different aspects) the subordination of the private, personal life of individuals to the tasks of the group.

It is believed that psychic interpersonal relations do not have an independent existence, they only appear between people, namely between beings that social are by their very existential structure. It is because of this that interpersonal relations are, at the same time, both psychic and social, that is, psycho-social, not only through being influenced by society, but in the deeper, more organic meaning, that they are even psychic means of social life, integral aspects of it through which the psychic takes part in social life, and social life is psychologically achieved in and through individuals.

Therefore, human relations appear as a specific type of psychosocial, living, unmediated connections between people; they reflect, most often in predominantly affective –emotional forms, the particular aspects of social life. The searches for a more true definition of what can be called interpersonal relations had one of their start points in their classification; thus, taking their nature as criterion, interpersonal rapports have been named inter-affective rapports (by Jacob Levy Moreno), with three main types being distinguished between: relations of amity, relations of enmity, relations of indifference; they have also been named interindividual rapports (formal or informal rapports according to Kurt Lewin); they are also considered rapports with another (by G. Gurwitch), in which case they can be relations of closeness, relations of distance, mixed relations; and finally, they are also called



elective rapports (of affinity through selection); rapports of ascendant – dependence and contractual rapports (Jean Maisonneuve). In a classification according to meaning, interpersonal relations can be classified into: horizontal (on the same level of social life) and vertical (on a hierarchical scale); and in a classification according to the field in which they act, we can distinguish between relations of co-sanguinity (family), work relations and relations of coexistence within the social structure.

We mention that within institutions of cultural creation (theatres, filarmonicas, artistic ensembles with diverse profiles, artistic groups etc) the density, the variety, and the dimension of interpersonal relations are conditioned by the direct and unmediated belonging to a certain professional – occupational group within the institution.

Within the Theatre Institute so-called Workshops are organized. These are, in fact, small groups within which, as sociology has shown, complex interhuman relations are established. The way in which a workshop is built obviously depends on each leader, on their experience and their type of approach to the educational phenomenon. Despite all the inherent differences, however, the Actor's Art workshops are places where young aspiring actors are invited to learn a trade that cannot be approached in the... usual manner. The Actor's Art is "a specific way of living and thinking" (as professor Ion Cojar used to say), it is a way of learning through the technique of knowledge and self-knowledge, which can only be achieved in a climate where each of the members will feel protected, encouraged, supported, accepted, aided, and above all, appreciated. In the Actor's Art Workshop, inter-mental relations are also established as well as inter-affective relations. From the very start, the relations must be on the same level, and if tendencies of verticalization should arise, namely on a hierarchical scale, it is the duty of the professor to temper them from the very beginning; and that is because within an artistic group equal opportunities must not be a utopia.

In the sociological analysis we show how a great psychoanalyst, J.L. Moreno, claimed that the relations within a group can be of amity, enmity, or indifference. Within the acting class it would be indicated that amity become the dominant word; and even if it is difficult to achieve by all, the thought that, for a certain period of time, members randomly chosen (through an audition that helped "detect" specific aptitudes) must work to maximum capacity of their creativity, the way of "befriending" one's partner and their actions can lead to collective success. Of course, it is by no means suggested that one should lie, meaning to pretend and not have the courage to say that they don't like something. No. Nobody should lie! They should, however, correct without reproaching, with intelligence and from a desire to "do good", that is, to transform for the better a wrong state of action or thought.



Sociology also draws our attention to an influential aspect: within the group, group factors are the ones that determine its dynamization, and they stem from within and not outside the group. And in order for the trajectory to be an ascending one, it is essential that within such a group the mutual knowledge and communication between its members become a priority as they lead to what is called interdependency of its members. And since in an Actor's Art Workshop members are dependent on one another because of the very fact that we have phrased from the very beginning that theatre is a group art, we can safely say that theatre is at the same time an art of communication.

It is also essential to mention that when we talk about theatre we are referring to two aspects of communication: between the members of an artistic work group, as well as between the sender and the receiver, or more precisely: the creator and the spectator. As far as the first aspect is concerned, in terms of sociological analysis, it is clear that one cannot establish an efficient and beneficent communication if it is not preceded by the process of knowing; this is why all members of the Workshop are invited to learn and discover as many aspects as possible of the personal characteristics of their colleagues. At the same time, the way in which each of them presents themselves to the group, without "hiding", without lies, without misrepresenting reality because of a desire to "seem"... prettier, cleverer, different to others, would be a way towards correct and "parasite"-free communication.

As far as the second aspect is concerned, raised by aesthetics, namely communication between the two poles of the theatrical phenomenon: creation and reception, theoreticians and practitioners have known since the earliest times that their work was destined to be appreciated by the audience. It is absurd to imagine that one can have a show... without spectators. There have been some creators who even attempted "the conscious manipulation of the spectators"²⁴, reaching the conclusion that their reactions fit into two categories: affective-emotional and cerebral.

The most important aspect, however, is that, within the Actor's Art workshop one must completely exclude the matter of reception. Interhuman relations that will be developed, as well as the fulfilment of the need for communication will be done exclusively within the artistic work group. The actor will refer to the specific theme of their art, working together with their colleagues, discovering the beauty and fascination of our art.

For that matter, theatre games are a consistent tool when they are included in the educational process dedicated to children and young people. Used as an alternative teaching

²⁴Apud, Grotowski, Jerzy - *The Uninterrupted Dialogue of Twentieth Century Theatre*, Vol. II, Minerva, Bucharest 1973, p 332



method, through drama children become more confident, learn to work in a team and to develop balanced interactions with their teachers and peers. All together applied drama in the educational system facilitates the development of strong personalities adapted to nowadays social, political, cultural and economic realities.

3. Emotions and control

(using every emotion in order to develop a creative background and an inclusive environment where nobody is wrong or right but everyone is ok and part of the group) - **managing emotions through theatre**

Memory and affective memory. Feeling, emotion and passion

In psychology, memory is considered to be the ability to acquire, retain and retrieve information. Interestingly, all living things, even single-celled ones, have memory. A classic example, given by the dictionary of psychology, is that of the worms on the beaches of Brittany which, having been moved to another environment, retain for many days the movements of burrowing in and out of the sand that had been imposed by the tides. “Memory fixes the experiences lived, the information received and restores them”²⁵. In all animal kingdoms, it is memory that transmits, from generation to generation, all the accumulated data necessary for the survival and perpetuation of the species. Memory is the one that “actively fights” in the complex process of avoiding the dangers that can lead to the loss of life of individuals and the extinction of certain species.

As far as the human being is concerned, due to the fact that it lives in the present and makes use of sensory processes of knowledge that act “here” and “now” on the sense organs, all the accumulated information is not lost, but is stored with the help of this complex psychic process. Impressions, images, thoughts and emotions become a kind of database that humans use in their later years of life. Although it may seem that most of the knowledge we acquire is lost in the depths of our being, the reality is that it settles, crystallises and is then “brought to light”, thus contributing to the normal and efficient conduct of human activity. Memory is therefore a mental process made up of three essential components: imprinting, storing and reusing. In addition to these, however, there are other important components. Psychological research has shown that, in certain situations, if subjects are presented with disparate and meaningless syllables, they will, with the help of memory, recombine and group the

²⁵ Sillamy, Norbert – *Dictionar de psihologie*, Ed.Univers Enciclopedic, Buc.2000, pag.192



syllables; if they are given unrelated words, people tested will try to group them according to several criteria that they discover and determine for themselves. It can therefore be argued that memory is not only a simple mechanism for storing information but also the body's ability to use it creatively.

One thing is absolutely clear: it is not possible to live without memory, because otherwise one would be under the sign of an endless present, behaving spontaneously, chaotically, without finality and stability and without durability in time. The cognitive process would only become a source of permanent surprises, in which the use of acquired results could not be achieved. Therefore, the existence of this psychological process is absolutely necessary for humanity. This is because it ensures the continuity of the individual's mental life, connects the previous elements to the next, and, by using the data acquired through cognition, carries this process forward.

If we analyse memory, we must also look at another process that is just as important for humans: associative memory. Constantin Rădulescu-Motru classifies it into two categories, *associative* and *intelligent*, stating: “Associative memory is conditioned, in addition to the functions of the nervous system, by the existence of an individual consciousness or subjectivity. It is called associative because association is the fundamental law of its formation. When understanding plays a significant role in association, associative memory can also be called intelligent. In associative memory the main fact is reproduction; in intelligent memory it is cognition.”²⁶

When referring to associative memory, the Romanian psychologist first analyzes the term, association. Illustrative examples are quite simplistic: if someone tells us “A,B,C,D...” we casually say “E,F,G,H...”. And things don't stop there: if someone who has witnessed a house burning down hears the word “fire”, he cannot help but instantly recall scenes that happened at the time, certain colours, sounds, and even emotional states; fear for example. Therefore, in our minds there is a strong connection between words learned and kept from past lectures, but also between words and events we have experienced in our lives. This link is called *association*.

Delving deeper into the research of the term, we must mention that there are studies (by the Russian researcher Pavlov, for example) that have shown that when animals associate a sound with an action of theirs, reflexes are even created through constant repetition. Upon seeing a piece of meat, Pavlov's dog would salivate; if at the same time a sound was produced

²⁶ Rădulescu-Motru, Constantin – *Curs de psihologie*, Ed.Cultura națională, Buc.1923, pag.160



when the meat was shown, with time and repetition, the animal came to salivate only when the noise was produced. That is, it associated the food with all the happenings and stimuli that occurred at the same time.

In the case of intelligent memory, we must talk about the fact that it begins with good observation, followed by the necessary understanding. And if the effect is not as desired, people resort to tables, charts and mnemonics. Associative memory also plays an important part in the process of memorising information, as it facilitates the process by updating previously acquired knowledge.

Moreover, there also exists a form of memory which is essential in human life, and especially in the actor's creation: *affective memory*. The topic is extremely vast and has preoccupied, to varying degrees, all theatre theorists and practitioners.

A first step towards understanding this notion is also made with the help of psychology: “Research on the fixation and retention of memories is extremely abundant. They have made it possible to clarify certain aspects of this problem: we remember first and foremost what concerns us directly (the circumstances of our first love affair, a bitter failure, etc.); we remember the pleasant rather than the unpleasant; what is in line with our beliefs; what is important. On the contrary, we easily forget what is indifferent, poorly structured, not significant enough. Fixing memories is linked to both the person and the material to be memorised”²⁷. The path of affective memory is: understanding the elements and integrating them into the existing stock of memories, in which representation favours retention. But beware: “memory is never accurate. The memory evoked is always falsified as it corresponds to a reconstruction of intelligence. Memory is not a cerebral automatism, but an act of the psyche, the expression of the entire person”²⁸ psychology warns us. For the creative process of acting, this is a very necessary detail, because the actor has to reach a very high point when approaching his role: genuine emotion, organic feeling and authentic experience which, by possessing, stimulating and triggering them, he can organise into unique and valuable artistic creations. For no matter what actions, gestures, movements, texts and philosophical ideas the actor presents on stage, if they are not coupled with an affective process that springs from his or her own sensitivity, the way to trigger the spectator's empathy is irremediably blocked. The often-heard expressions: “he made no impression on me” or “he didn't cross the ramp” have an undeniable ring of truth. However, it is not only pure emotion that is sufficient on stage,

²⁷ Sillamy, Norbert – *Dictionar de psihologie*, Ed.Univers Enciclopedic, Buc.2000, pag. 194

²⁸ Idem., pag.194



but emotion “organised” and “reconstructed” by the actor's intelligence, within the aesthetic rigours of the dramatic text and the director's vision.

Therefore, in order to move forward in our analysis of the actor's art, we must highlight a truth supported by psychological research: feelings and states cannot be commanded, but they are decisive in the actor's creation. Depending on the playwright's proposal or the director's idea, there are moments when the actor must allow himself to be dominated by genuine and organic affective feelings, emotions, sentiments and passions. And as we know that we cannot generate them on command... What can be done?

“A feeling is a complex affective state, a combination of emotional and imaginative elements, more or less clear, stable, which persists in the absence of any stimulus. The causes of this phenomenon, which is more lasting than emotion and less violent than passion, may be moral, intellectual or emotional: aesthetic and religious feelings, sympathy, admiration, resentment, pride, shame, etc. correspond to this definition. These are conscious mental phenomena that colour our perceptions and influence our behaviour.”²⁹ Feelings spring from the deep inner universe of the human being, are determined by powerful internal impulses and triggers and arise as a result of the individual's satisfied or frustrated desires. While psychology considers feelings to be conscious, psychoanalysis argues that they come from the subconscious, driven by: guilt, aggression as a response to trauma, inferiority complex, etc. All these become unconscious emotional reactions which, when the individual does not allow them to manifest, dominate him (through a substitute mechanism) in the form of depression (instead of anger), or other forms of neurotic and psychosomatic symptoms. Feelings accompany people throughout their lives; all the characters constructed by playwrights throughout universal theatre history are dominated by complex, contradictory, paradoxical, profound... feelings; these feelings are what accompany the actor in every moment of his/her stage existence, because... he/she is human. And if feelings are present in so many different situations and in so many different forms, no one can imagine that the actor's process of creation can be devoid of them. But the question remains: what is the manner in which they can be triggered and controlled within the creative process?

K.S. Stanislavski imagined a fully effective way: the appeal to emotional memory, based on Théodule Ribot's theory that affective states are intertwined with a unique phenomenon: association. The French psychologist classified association into two groups: *the transference of a feeling* and *the reverse of the former case*. In the first instance, “when an

²⁹ Sillamy, Norbert – *Dictionar de psihologie*, Ed.Univers Enciclopedic, Buc.2000, pag. 283



intellectual state has been accompanied by a vivid feeling, a similar or analogous state tends to arouse the same feeling. When intellectual states have coexisted, the feeling related to the initial state, if alive, tends to transfer to the other.”³⁰ Thus, in the case of transference, if one loves someone, all the things that belong to the adored person... will appeal to them. The principle is basically very simple: by association with the being that constitutes the target of the feeling of love, many other points (which might otherwise be considered uninteresting or even unpleasant) also become the target of appreciation.

There is also a second situation in which an emotional mood, permanent or just temporary, determines the association of intellectual states: for example, love, good mood or melancholy can only develop associations that are compatible with them. As a result, joy generates goodwill, sympathy, optimism; sadness generates anxiety, pessimism; fear develops a gloomy mental mood; anger brings with it the desire for revenge.

Ribot continues his study by analysing the common human feelings (love, hate, etc.), demonstrating the logic of their formation, classifying them according to clear and fully justified criteria. The French psychologist also makes a clear distinction between emotion and passion, by saying: “By *emotion* I understand a sudden, often violent, intense shock, accompanied by the amplification or cessation of movement: fear, anger, sudden infatuation, etc. In this respect I conform to the etymology of the word emotion, which means above all movement (*motus*, *Gemütsbewegung*). By *passion*, I understand an emotion that has become fixed and is undergoing a metamorphosis. Its characteristic feature is permanent or intermittent obsession and the accompanying imaginative labour. Timidity is therefore a passion generated by fear; ambition and the avarice of passion are generated by self-love.”³¹ For Stanislavski, the study of Ribot's work led to very interesting developments in the elaboration of his System of work on the actor's creative process.

Due to the fact that, in life, many of our affective experiences (emotions, feelings, passions) are triggered by the association of ideas, by the fact that we have the ability to superimpose images, events, people and phenomena, stored in the depths of our memory, not forgetting that memories correspond to a reconstruction made by intelligence, it can be argued that, in the creative process of the actor, associative memory plays a determining role: that of updating past depictions, memorised images, phenomena and events once experienced, and all this accompanied by the corresponding emotional baggage. Stanislavski

³⁰ Ribot, Théodule – *Logica sentimentelor*, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, Buc.1988, pag.39

³¹ Idem, pag. 82



tells us: “Just as a long-forgotten event, a landscape or the figure of a person returns to your visual memory at an inner glance, so too do previously experienced feelings return to your emotional memory. It would seem that they are completely forgotten, but suddenly, from a certain illusion, a thought, a familiar figure, those feelings come back, sometimes as strong or even stronger than the first time, sometimes a little weaker, the same or somewhat modified. If you are able to blush or blush only at the memory of what you have felt, if you are afraid to think of a happiness experienced long ago, it means that you have the memory of feeling or emotional memory.”³² On stage, the memory that the Russian teacher speaks of is intertwined with sensory memory. It is not only our images and representations that are preserved but also our sensoriality that stores very powerful and valuable impressions. So it is that certain tastes awaken memories, certain smells bring back people, facts, happenings, situations or feelings that seemed forgotten; also various sounds, or songs that we hear by chance have the power to suddenly transpose us into another time and space where something has happened to us.

However, it must also be said that (and experience has shown this to be true), during all exercises of this type, students always tend to link memorized sensations, which through the stimulus that acts in the present time of the exercise, triggers... affective memory. A simple example: during the *spice tasting* exercise in which young students have to discover (after having been blindfolded) what they have tasted, a boy started to cry saying: “It's cinnamon. That's what my mother used to put in my oatmeal... excuse me!”; or another: “I don't know what it is, but it's like I'm at my grandparents' house in the country and it's summer and warm and it's full of flowers... It is so beautiful!” exclaimed the excited student, as we, for a few moments, could also see a country house surrounded by a field of flowers, in the hot summer heat. Naturally, each of us had our own representation, but our mirror neurons... had also triggered our empathy. And all this, thanks to a simple spice...

Affective memory was an important theme in the method of another great professor of the Actor's Art: Lee Strasberg. The American paid particular attention to this issue, considering that: “Sometimes, a fact that happened fifteen years ago which then seemed unimportant may still affect the actor today. The occurrence has created in him patterns of behavior or reactions, of which, most of the time, he is not aware. For the actor, the logical knowledge of a role often has little in common with his experimental knowledge of the role. We know that the actor's strong, deep inner reactions occur in different ways, foreign or

³² Stanislavski, K.S.– *Munca actorului cu sine însuși*, Ed. Nemira, Buc. 2013, pag.368



conventional. That's why our process is to try to lead the actor to solve each problem according to the nature of the individual material. Only in this way is it possible for the actor to become a fully functioning instrument.”³³ And within this complex process, affective memory has its share of importance. From the very first courses of The Actor's Art there must be concern for revealing one's “innermost feelings”, as Lee Strasberg called them; therefore, in our theatre school, from the very first courses, when students are invited to build the workshop together, to accept and adhere to its principles, among which trusting your stage partners plays a decisive role, *the exercise of sincerity* is done. In various forms (students are either appointed by the teacher, choose their time to speak or draw a number), this exercise is a kind of confession of each person's truth, an acceptance of diversity, of life history, of current or future concerns, but also the story of each person's most beautiful dream, or nightmare. There are reservations... there is sincerity... there are many surprises. There Is Life! What is truly beautiful is that, generation after generation, future actors accept (in their vast majority) to speak, under an unwritten oath of secrecy, practically with an extreme desire for liberation, about their inner world. And from that moment on, the common belief is that a relationship has been welded that will last over time; a relationship that introduces the actor into a caste, raising him or her from the common level of “civilian”. And this is because, revealing the fiery core of each individual is a step towards the sincere and unconcealed approach to the entire creative process in the art of the actor.

Following the same steps will make it easy for young actors to fully engage their affective memory and use their sensory memory without hindrance. Therefore, when it will be necessary to use life experience through the technique of association, the actor will find no inner obstacles. Lee Strasberg would invite all his student actors to employ this method in all attempts to discover organic triggers that generate concrete action and authentic experience. An example is at hand: “after several unsuccessful rehearsals (n. n. Luther Adler – brother of the famous American teacher Stella Adler) in which his character needed a moment of exteriorization of anger, generated by social frustration, Strasberg asked the actor: “what infuriates you the most in your personal life?” He replied: “when someone upsets a friend of mine, or harms them for no reason. Then I get very angry!”, “Apply!!!” Strasberg pointed to him and so the actor was put in the situation of a substitute reality that allowed him to produce the necessary energy for the reaction of anger desired for the character.”³⁴ Undoubtedly, viewers will never know the ways in which actors reach these organic

³³ Hethmon, Robert H - *Lee Strasberg la Actors Studio*, Mat. dactilografiat bibl. UNATC, pag.12

³⁴ Filip, Tania – *Școli americane de teatru*, Revista Atelier UNATC, nr 1-2/2001, pag.107



externalizations; they will only see real life situations, charged with emotion that will be transmitted to them with the richness of an original moment of life.

The technique of creating life on stage unquestionably includes the appeal to emotional memory.

Also from this desire to succeed in recomposing reality under the empire of affection springing from the inner universe of the actor, the American director and professor gave the example of another great director, this time Russian: Yevgeny Vahtangov³⁵; he made a clear difference between life experience and stage experience, considering that affective memory should be the basis of the actor's creative process. "A common understanding of reality would lead to scenic situations such as: <<Hit me! Come on, hit me, so I can feel the anger coming from you! Do something real to me so that my response will be real!>> But this is not acting!"³⁶, would state Lee Strasberg while quoting Vakhtangov. Indeed, anyone can hit someone and this gesture can provoke a lot of actions and temperaments, but this does not mean that it is done in theatre. Realism in theatre (even naturalism) does not literally mean "living". The actor is an artist who, starting from organic experiences, transforms them into a work of art. An actor does not prepare for a single performance of a single role in which to literally apply the instructions in the text, since, in this case, he would either end up in the neuropsychiatry hospital or imprisoned among those who commit antisocial acts. The actor who plays Othello will never kill his stage partner, the actress who plays Desdemona. Never. Artistic creation involves transforming natural, organic behaviours into essentialized gestures, actions and experiences; transformed, i.e., into theatrical signs. Although loaded with truth, the actor's deed doesn't go... all the way, even if the spectator must believe, every montage and every evening, that poor Desdemona died, without feeling any guilt.

Given these circumstances, two questions may be posed. One: if I've never killed anyone, or done something as serious, what can I do to be credible? And second: what technique is applicable in order for my gesture to be identical to the real one, but without harming my partner?

³⁵ **Evgheeni Vakhtangov** (1883-1922), Russian actor and director, mentor and friend of Mikhail Chekhov, student of K.S. Stanislavski. In 1918 he inaugurated the Habima Theatre. He taught Actor's Art at the Student Drama Studio; four years after his death, the studio received its name. The theatre still exists today in Moscow, on the famous Arbat Street. In his productions he used abstract costumes, masks, circus elements; he was considered an avant-garde director. He was the director who, according to Stanislavski, influenced Lee Strasberg. "Vahtangov was concerned with making a synthesis between the authenticity of the Stanislavskian play and the recognition of the theatrical convention in Meyerhold's productions" (Michaela Tonitza-Iordache, George Banu – *Arta Teatrului*, Ed.Nemira, Buc.2004, pag.258)

³⁶ Hethmon, Robert H - *Lee Strasberg at the Actors Studio*, Viking Press, New York 1996, pag. 112



Answering the first question is simple: with the help of affective memory. The actor searches, in the dramatic situation, for the trigger motive, the clear, punctual justifications that led the character to react in a certain manner; in this way, general human experiences, which reach paroxysm by the gravity of the situation, are highlighted. Therefore, the point is that the actor who plays Othello (for example) has to find the motive for the murder, the reason that leads him to this action. In this case: jealousy. And jealousy... can be easily instilled because it is felt (to varying degrees) in the life of every person. Afterwards, with the help of imagination and by studying similar cases that happened in reality, one can come to accurately understand the situation, identify with it, and apply it to the role.

4. How to lead and be leaded

(leadership as a key concept in achieving a goal; learning how to exchange power within partners, how to gain trust and how to confide in someone - using theatre games in order to discover each others abilities and creative power) – **developing leadership skills by theatre methods**

Conflict – an essential component of stage existence

Conflict is considered to be a “contest of tendencies, of interests; a situation in which an individual is subject to vectorially opposed forces of almost equal power”³⁷ by the Dictionary of Psychology. Conflict has various facets in the existence of the universe. It should be remembered that, in the scientific field, a famous experiment was carried out in 1827, by the English botanist Robert Brown, who blended a solution of pollen in water to study the structure of a single pollen particle under a microscope; but before he could begin his research, he found that the pollen in the suspension showed a completely disordered and chaotic movement. Thinking it was due to the agitation of the liquid, the botanist waited a long time for the particles to settle down. Only to be surprised that even after a few months, this movement did not cease. At first it was thought to be a manifestation of life, but then it was discovered that this phenomenon actually accelerates with temperature and decreases with increasing particle mass in the suspension. This is why at a temperature of zero degrees

³⁷ Sillamy, Norbert – *Dicționar de psihologie*, Ed.Univers Enciclopedic, Buc.2000, pag.77



absolute (0 Kelvin), the movement stops; moreover, if the particles in the suspension are larger and the liquid is more viscous, the speed of movement slows down considerably. It was Albert Einstein who shed light on this phenomenon and published an article in 1905 entitled: “On the Movement of Small Particles Suspended in Stationary Liquids Required by the Molecular-Kinetic Theory of Heat”, in which the physicist demonstrates that particles in a suspension of liquid or gas are hit from all sides by the molecules of the fluid in which they reside. The solid particles will move at all times in the direction of the resultant of the forces arising from the collisions. With this discovery, Einstein explained his theory of the nature of thermal phenomena. And since all the physical processes taking place in the universe around us have clear reverberations in the inner structure of the human being... the answer is within us. Of course, a thoroughly analysed and rigorously justified explanation from the point of view of physical phenomena, we cannot provide in the present work, as this is not our scope. What we do intend is to understand, by common consent, that the world around us has a decisive influence on us, even if we do not understand this at the moment. The question may be asked: why do all the exercises in the Actor's Art workshop begin with the indication: Brownian motion? Considering that this movement is determined by the heat of the environment which activates the collisions of particles, producing energy, we can affirm that the random movement of the individual within the group can lay the foundations for future “collisions” which “produce” energy, i.e., stage action. When we say collisions, we do not mean harmful physical impact, but interactions within the inter-human relationships established in the artistic process. That is to say, “confrontations” of forces (physical, ideational, aesthetic, etc.) that bring with them a necessary resolution of problems. This is why it is rightly argued that on stage, the main core that generates action is: *conflict*. It is the one which has the power to determine the setting of *themes* to be studied, *problems* to be solved according to the chosen theme, *situations* to be understood and concrete *tasks* which derive from this, in order to achieve the *goal* contained in the very theme raised by the initial conflict. In this way, scenic existence will work correctly and purposefully, guided by the five coordinates of theatre (see also the explanation in the introduction of chapter 1.2).

As a starting point in understanding stage conflict, we have three exercises that can be carried out in sequence, according to the pedagogical principle: from simple to complex: Mirror; I want – I don't want; Blitz. Let's look at each one individually, highlighting the structural links between them.



Mirror

The principle of the mirror has accompanied cultural history since ancient times. Thus, a very interesting approach appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where we learn about the story of Narcissus; he was a young man of rare beauty who was punished by the gods to fall in love with his own reflection because he rejected the love of the beautiful nymph Echo. Narcissus admired himself so much in the mirror of the lake that he eventually drowned. On the spot where he died, a beautifully scented flower called a daffodil then appeared. Interestingly, in Ovid's vision, the mirror becomes a gateway to the world of shadows. But it is not only the myth of Narcissus that is linked to the symbol of the mirror. Terence, for example, advises a friend to look into the faces of his fellow men as in a mirror, and Don Quixote de la Mancha meets the Knight of Mirrors, sent specifically to show him the real face, thus shattering the imaginary figure he had constructed for himself. But perhaps the most powerful image of the mirror will be painted by Shakespeare who, in *Hamlet*, in his speech to the actors, says: "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."³⁸ The symbol of the mirror acquires here the value of a bearer of the true representation of the world on the theatre stage. Based on the same idea, Adriana Popovici, professor in the Art of Acting, notes: "In the comparison between life and art, art – in its gratuitousness – is perfect. It is the model for our experiences, for the way we express our feelings, and this is the role of actors, their purpose: to offer the true face of humanity, after which humans can model their being (...) it helps us to analyse ourselves, to know ourselves, to clarify our desires, to see our weaknesses, it makes us able to take decisions, to develop strategies. It is the mirror in which we see ourselves, this is the only way the universal mirror that Hamlet tells the actors about can be."³⁹

When the spectator observes the reality constructed by creators, he simultaneously sees a space for his own possibilities of existence; or in other words, the art of great actors is to make as many spectators as possible recognise themselves in the characters they create, looking at themselves on stage, as in a mirror. But to achieve this performance, the actor must know the people and the world around him with the finesse of a scientific researcher. In

³⁸ Shakespeare, William – *Opere; Hamlet*, ESPLA, Buc.1959

³⁹ Popovici, Adriana-Marina – *Lungul drum al teatrului către sine*, Ed.Anima, Buc.2000



drama school there is a great emphasis on the study of people, with many exercises that fall into the category of the mirror. For it is not only the human beings who populate the large circle of awareness that are the focus of study for actors (see the exercises in the chapter on *Observation*), but also those who work in the middle circle (i.e., on stage) and act as stage partners.

Viola Spolin has a whole suite of exercises called *the Mirror Series*⁴⁰, which constitutes the starting point for the present analysis.

Our proposal for the students who study Acting is to work in teams of two; sitting opposite each other, the two partners will work in alternation. The given assignment is for each to study their partner, only through eye contact (which will never be lost during the exercise). The first student will initiate a large movement, at a fairly slow speed, followed by another, and another, etc. The partner follows, maintaining eye contact and trying to do exactly the same movements, i.e... as in a mirror. Afterwards, in the second stage, the initiator of the movement is changed. After several such changes, the teacher invites the student to predict the movements their partner will make, working together with them. The result will be (and experience shows that this energy exchange is entirely possible) that it will become virtually impossible to determine who is initiating the movement between the two people; this is because the mirror neurons will also start working, practically alternating with the partner's mirror neurons.

We then move on to the following phase, in which, just as in the object study exercise, when the student was required to find the detail that makes an action possible, one of the partners (still maintaining eye contact) has to find a simple item, owned by their peer, that invites them to take concrete action to correct, straighten, adjust, etc. For example: a stray strand of hair on the forehead, the collar of a blouse that is twisted, an open button, or just touching a cheek that has a particular smoothness or colour. The idea is that if one student initiates a surprising movement, the other will have a reaction (of acceptance or rejection). Even if the one being acted upon does not move, when analysing the exercise, the following question should be asked: did you see the hand moving towards you? What did you feel at the time? There will be different answers: “I was afraid”, “I wanted to withdraw” or, on the contrary, “I was curious to see what he wanted to do to me and I let him”. Each of the answers is correct. This is because the aim of this exercise is for the student to discover that the person they are looking at and who they have met, like their own mirror image, can

⁴⁰ Spolin, Viola – *Improvizație pentru teatru*, UNATC Press, Buc.2008, pag.110-112



always surprise them. That is to say, they can spontaneously raise a problem with which they can agree or disagree, or more precisely, they can get into a *conflict*, i.e., a clear difference of opinion. One thing must be made clear: each student will follow his/her first, instinctive reaction and not a preconceived plan such as: I will let him/her act at first, and then I will reject his/her action; because in this way, the sought-after spontaneity and the desired organicity of interaction on stage will not be able to manifest, and the exercise will turn into a mere mortified performance.

From this point to the situation: *I want – I don't want*, there is only one step. By then, however, the future actor has discovered how important the stage partner is, the only one able to bring about real, organic change. On stage, the *partner is the actor's only support*, for he alone is a living being, permanently connected to objective reality. Only together with the truth of the partner can the imagined reality of a theatrical performance be constructed, which can consequently become a mirror of our current times.

I want – I don't want

In theatre, as in life, before two people can come into conflict, two people must communicate. *Communication* is, from a psychological point of view, “any process by which information is transmitted from one element or another, these elements being biological, technological or social in nature.”⁴¹ In attempting to differentiate communication from other forms of behavioural interaction, psychology has drawn two basic criteria: the social status of the interaction and the degree of specificity of the triggering behaviour. “In humans, the ability of species is realised in various conventional codes of a socio-historical character, which are moreover subject to individual representations: communication being henceforth generated simultaneously by the group and by individuals”⁴². The bottom line is that depending on the object of communication, social status, or the customs of a particular historical time, people have always communicated by various means: language, sign communication, nonverbal language, etc.; that is, they have sought to transmit, willingly or unwillingly, information intended to enlighten or influence an individual or group of individuals. The importance of this process also derives from the fact that no signal from one person to another goes unanswered (affirmative, negative, clear, evasive, etc.). It is in this way that human beings can be an effective part of society.

⁴¹ Doron, Roland; Francois Parot – *Dicționar de psihologie*, Ed.Humanitas, Buc.1999, pag.158

⁴² Op.cit.



The process of communication is based, in fact, on perception; at this point we are also talking about the existence of a non-rational language, in the sense that communication is achieved more through perception than through clear expression. Sigmund Freud even spoke of communication from unconscious to unconscious, pointing out that individuals are able to understand subtle unconscious cues more than verbal expressions. This is also of great interest to us in the process of artistic creation. The reason for this is that the work of art is essentially a form of communication between the creator and the receiver, a way in which the individual (who possesses specific skills) looks for ways of expressing his spiritual concerns to the world around him, which often does not encourage him in his work. This is why the most important creations in the history of culture can in fact be analysed (beyond well-developed critical systems) only through perception. We admire the statue of Venus which... reveals "something" to us, or we are fascinated by the Mona Lisa, because from whatever point of the exhibition hall we might be looking at her... she smiles at us; just as in music, when we listen with our perception and our representations. And as the work of art, D. Anzieu states⁴³, has its roots in the author's subconscious, we can argue that the relationship between the work and the art consumer is indisputably from subconscious to subconscious. From this point of view, communication in the theatre becomes obvious, if we think about the fact that since the beginning of mankind, performance was born as the fulfilment of the desire for communication between people.

However, it is not just communication between stage and audience that is important, but also communication in the stage setting, i.e., that which is established between partners within the artistic process. Stanislavski notes: "On the stage it is extremely important and necessary to have exactly such mutual and continuous communication, because the author's work, the artists' play consist almost exclusively of dialogues that signify mutual communication between two or more people, the characters of the play"⁴⁴. There are numerous exercises that highlight communication between partners. In fact, all the exercises belonging to the *Improvisation* phase of the curriculum involve working in groups (see in the Introductory chapter, analysis of the theme: Theatre – a group art), and therefore within the generous framework of communication.

As far as communicating with a partner is concerned, Stanislavski believed that this should be done by means of permanent gazing, because "the eyes are the mirror of the soul,

⁴³ Anzieu, Didier – *Psihanaliza travaliului creator*, Ed.Trei, Buc.2004, pag.111

⁴⁴ Stanislavski, K.S. – *Munca actorului cu sine însuși*, Ed.Nemira, Buc.2013, pag.431



and empty eyes are the mirror of an empty soul”⁴⁵. Here the Russian professor was touching on a very important idea concerning the actor's creative process: the gaze of the actor who truly sees, as opposed to the superficial gaze that sees but does not realize what it sees; that is, the blind gaze. And this process can be achieved with the help of observation and the focusing of attention either on something or on the partner (n.n. topics developed at length in chap. *Development of specific skills*). Only this “attentive gaze” can also capture the communication that Freud spoke of, i.e., from the subconscious to the subconscious, through the signals that come from the depths of the complex human being that is the human actor.

Returning to the subject of the present analysis, it must be said that, on stage, conflict can only arise as a result of the modification of opinions, ideas, views shared by partners during the communication process.

The exercise called *I want – I don't want* is very important because it sheds a clear light on the stage conflict. Unfortunately, although it is so simple, so clear and so profitable for the actor involved in the creative process, very often the exercise degenerates into an emotionless form, in which students take refuge, shouting at each other so as to audibly cover their partner. In order to avoid this “malformation”, it would be advisable to start from the series of mirrors. That is, from working in perfect harmony and communication with the partner; in this way, thanks to the existence of the mirror between the two, each manages to find himself in the inner rhythm of the one in front, understanding the movements and, in fact, generating them together. Attention: not imitating them but creating them together, giving them value and grace in the complex process of communication on stage. When we say movements, we mean wide swings of the hands, feet, changes of body position, etc., all the while maintaining eye contact between partners.

With the introduction of the assignment: take action on the partner, discovering the detail that makes an action possible, the two students can also take action by speaking. Note that they only have one line: “I want” respectively “I don't want”.

Of course, the gesture initiated by the first partner may or may not be made, depending on the persuasiveness of the counterpart. Under no circumstances should physical violence be used, as the aim is not to engage in blind combat, but to sustain a stage conflict in a direct relationship with the partner.

⁴⁵ Idem, pag.423



The basic idea is not the search for acoustic nuances, or the support of a musical score, but a genuine dialogue with a genuine partner, an exchange of clear and concrete lines, with the clear aim of convincing the other person to accept the proposed gesture. The question may be asked: why should I not let my colleague do an action that does not even bother me? The answer is simple: because this exercise has its roots in a simple creative game in which... the rule is this: any gesture coming from the partner must be rejected; and as in theatre the rule makes the difference between play and acting... Furthermore, if a student does not accept the simple and clear proposals of the teachers, aimed at highlighting the concrete themes of learning, the conclusion is only one: the young person does not have the necessary qualifications for this profession. But let's go beyond this by examining the stage conflict further.

The suggested exercise can be as diverse as desired. Instead of the formula I want – I don't want, the following can be proposed: *Get out – I'm not getting out*, or *Leave – I'm not leaving*, etc., i.e., many other short lines can be chosen to indicate a definite decision on a particular subject.

Public speaking

5. Spontaneity as a source of developing freedom of speech (voice and breathing exercises, discussing and exploring the 7th aspects of spontaneity in theatre) – **spontaneous discourse**

“The best response of an individual or a group to a new and difficult situation, because it increases creativity and reduces anxiety, is called **spontaneity**”⁴⁶, otherwise, when an individual has the ability to react in a particular situation in an original way, different from any conventional approach, it can be said that he is spontaneous.

When talking about spontaneity, things seem quite simple at first glance; if in a circle of friends, at work, in artistic groups or in any other type of group there is someone who has the “gift” of making inspired comments at various moments or of giving surprising answers, to the delight of the audience, is a common, ordinary fact, in theatre things work a little differently.

⁴⁶ Apud, Doron, Roland, Françoise Parot – *Dicționar de psihologie*, Ed. Humanitas, Buc.1999. pag.739



Spontaneity is regarded by psychology as a natural tendency of the individual's mental contents to organise themselves into forms adapted to both inner requirements and those of reality; in other words, one should have the power to rely on one's own vital energy and, empathising with others, to act together with the environment. However, psychology warns that there are situations in which spontaneity is annihilated in some people because they are not confident in their own strength and are not communicative with others.

If we are referring to spontaneity in theatre we must discuss the fact that, in the past, there was a psychiatrist who developed a true phenomenon known as: Theatre of Spontaneity. This was Jacob Levy Moreno, who was born in 1889 in Bucharest and died in 1974 in New York. In 1895 he moved with his family to Vienna where he was to study. He studied medicine, mathematics and philosophy at the University of Vienna and in 1917 he became a doctor of medicine. Jacob Moreno was a student of Sigmund Freud, who is considered the father of psychoanalysis. The student's famous line to his professor after a lecture in 1912 is now well known: "So, Dr Freud, I begin where you leave off. The method you have is to meet people on an artificial couch in your office; I meet them in the street, in their homes, in their natural environment. You analyse their dreams, I give them the courage to dream again. You analyse them separately, while I let them live their conflicting roles and put the pieces back together."⁴⁷ Following this path, Moreno became the promoter and developer of innovative techniques: psychodrama, sociometry, group psychotherapy, sociodrama and psychoanalytic sociology. Most of his professional work was carried out in the United States, where he lived starting in 1925.

Referring to the Theatre of Spontaneity⁴⁸, the starting point of psychodrama, we have to say that Moreno has drawn the following rules: the elimination of drama and the written play; the active participation of the audience according to the idea that there are no spectators, who in turn become actors; everything is improvised: the play, the action, the themes, the words, the encounters and the conflict resolutions; the stage disappears, giving way to an open space, like any ordinary place in life.

What we are interested in now is not the proposed aesthetic form nor the psychiatric treatment in itself that psychodrama serves, but the "controlled" triggering of the psychological process called *spontaneity*. It should be noted that, in essence, psychodrama is about giving the person involved the tools to help them objectify psychotic experiences by

⁴⁷ Apud, *The Autobiography of J.L. Moreno*, Harvard University, Moreno Archives, 1985

⁴⁸ Moreno, Jacob L. – *Theatre de la spontaneite*, EPI, Paris 1984



creating an imaginary reality. A “performance” of psychodrama would (in general terms) go as follows: a patient with problems in his past that he could not overcome and who was developing behavioural deviations would meet a certain “someone” on stage; together with this person, he would reconstruct the conflict that had existed long ago. The “someone” on stage (an individual from the audience who had become an actor, and who was given a certain role) supported his acting partner, in the sense that he was invited to do so. If necessary, other people could also take part, taking on the roles of various characters from the subject's past. Those present would then create a scene representing a moment in the patient's past when he or she had experienced a trauma, witnessed a dramatic event, or had been exposed to unbearable treatment by someone, etc. The point was that, once the conflict had been created, it would be resolved “here and now”, giving the person to be treated the opportunity to heal the wounds of the past through the living action of the reality constructed on the stage.

In the imagined reality on the psychodramatic stage, the patient finds a real setting, in which hallucinations and illusions, thoughts and feelings take shape; in this way he acquires a “role”, accepted as valid and thanks to which he finds himself face to face with the “roles” played by other people.

Although it does not fall within the rigours of classical convention, psychodrama is still considered to be a form of theatre, because it uses practically the same scenic means as ordinary performance, and because it leads to the ideal of theatre since antiquity, of healing man by producing Catharsis.

The following question may be raised: what role does spontaneity play here? The answer is simple: the moment the individual under treatment became heavily involved on stage in the moments of life constructed as reality, he spoke and acted promptly, solved problems that he could not manage in the past and established interpersonal relationships in the randomly constructed group necessary to achieve his goal. This all happened under the rule of spontaneity; because there was no constructed dramatic path, no text, no lines, only the purpose of catching up on things from the past. Furthermore, as spontaneity organizes the mental contents of the individual, actualizing urges coming from the subconscious, generated also by self-confidence and by security in partners, it was spontaneity that allowed the subject to express his innermost urges, revealing the insecure and troubled areas of his being, which thus, by coming out of hiding, could start the complex process of healing.

In the volume *Who shall survive*, Moreno makes a clear distinction between spontaneity and creativity: “spontaneity is an inner state, variably present and constantly



changing”; this enables individuals to use their own creative gifts. Creativity is a potentiality linked to genetic endowment. This is why not all spontaneous people can become creative. Moreno says: “Spontaneity can be induced, while creativity can only be checked. We focus our interest on the dynamics of spontaneity, because only the state of spontaneity can be consciously stimulated or eased, and it is only through spontaneity that we can achieve creativity.”⁴⁹ And the psychoanalyst does not stop there; he considers the spontaneity-creativity binomial as the force that propels human progress.

However, does the actor's progress also depend on this core trigger? One is inclined to think so, if one considers that theatre is eminently an expression of human creativity that must be “helped” to develop; and spontaneity can do this. Moreno argued that the Theatre of Spontaneity had the power to develop spontaneity and creativity in both actors and spectators; moreover, he said, it was in this setting that the individual spontaneity factor could be measured.

Regarding the connection with the spectator, the psychoanalyst considered that he could generate a spontaneous altruism, also accessible through spontaneity, in the moments when he was watching the scenes unfold. This observation allowed him to develop a whole theory on the dynamization of interpersonal relations, also through the training of spontaneity. As for the application of the “role-play” system, in which people take on different functions, are given tasks to solve and actively participate with their peers in attempts to “heal” the past, Moreno believed that this was the way to develop cognitive functions, as it gives them a special plasticity. Under the impetus of spontaneity, knowledge becomes an attainable goal.

Many of the mental and social disorders that mankind suffers from may be the result of an insufficient manifestation of spontaneity. When spontaneity diminishes, anxiety increases, Moreno believes, and when it reaches its peak, panic sets in. The onset of anxiety leads to repetitive behaviour, in which defensive manifestations are stereotyped; spontaneity alone liberates the spirit, said the psychoanalyst.

Spontaneity is a particularly interesting topic in the theory of learning the art of acting. Viola Spolin asserts: “Through spontaneity our inner self is restructured. Spontaneity creates an explosion that momentarily frees us from outdated reference systems, from memories choked with old facts and information, as well as from theories and techniques discovered by others and not assimilated. Spontaneity is the moment of personal freedom

⁴⁹ Moreno, J.L. – *Who shall survive*, Bacon House Inc., New York, 1953, pag.39



when we are confronted with a reality that we see, explore and act upon. In this reality, the fragments of our ego-self function as one whole. This is the moment of discovery, of experimentation, of creative expression”⁵⁰. The American professor even points out certain aspects of spontaneity. Thus, *games* are considered to have the gift of unleashing ingenuity and inventiveness, through the disappearance of preconceived ideas and previously thought-out solutions. In addition, by constantly pursuing the point of concentration, causing certain organic physical reactions and actions, spontaneity will be provoked. Viola Spolin believes that, in this way, the young actor's entire being can function to the full, both physically, intellectually and intuitively; the natural consequence is that the actor can embark on the great quest for knowledge and self-discovery that is the theatrical phenomenon.

Another aspect on which spontaneity is dependent, as suggested by Viola Spolin, is *approval/disapproval*. Given the fact that in formal education the child is taught (from earliest school years) to depend on the teacher's assessment, in the early stages of the study of acting the tendency remains the same: the student expects the teacher's assessment. If the same principle were applied in the acting workshop, the result would be a clear restriction of the young actor's creative freedom. That is why Viola Spolin believes that the teacher and the student should be equal partners, between whom the search is common, the joy is fully manifested and the approval or disapproval of the work of one or the other should not be manifested. Otherwise, out of a constant desire for appreciation, the young person will lose the need to experiment, adopting the teacher's solutions in order to “get it right”; the ability to react organically will be inhibited, and the work of art can only become dominated by “congenital malformations”. Nor does the gloomy picture stop there; out of a desire to cope with repeated disapproval, the future actor may develop egocentricity, exhibitionism or perhaps indifference to various stimuli, isolation from members of the artistic group, etc., “by trying to be good and avoiding being bad or being bad because we can't be good, we develop a way of life that demands approval/disapproval from authority, and investigation and problem-solving take a back seat”⁵¹. Nevertheless, the solution exists, says Viola Spolin. When we consider that spontaneity occurs when people have the power to trust their own vital energy and, by empathising with others, agree to act together with the group to which they belong, we can conclude that in an Actor's Art workshop the only authority that must govern is the “rule of the game”. It is thus that, by submitting to the issues raised by the game

⁵⁰ Spolin, Viola – *Improvizație pentru teatru*, UNATC Press, Buc.2008, pag.50

⁵¹ Idem, pag.54



itself, by trying to pursue the resolution of the themes and by honestly fulfilling the tasks given, both student and teacher will find that “the demands of the theatre are the true masters”⁵², and not the rules and regulations imposed with authority. This is the only way to trigger spontaneity, that specific aptitude of our art, so necessary for the actor.

Collective expression is considered by Viola Spolin to be another aspect of spontaneity. Starting from the idea that theatre is a group art and not an individual art, that the artistic product is the result of the creative activity of an entire team, the American professor points out that the breakdown of interpersonal relationships within the group can lead to a tendency to introduce exacerbated competitiveness into the creative process. If in the previous paragraph we spoke of approval/disapproval as a “virus” developed in the student-teacher relationship, when we speak of collective expression we mean that among the members of the same team there must be no desire to impose, at any price, a supposedly superior value. If the aim is not the real search for problem-solving, but rather to win success in the eyes of the partners, there is a “danger that the end result – the success – becomes more important than the process.”⁵³ Hence, when competitiveness is removed, there is the best chance that creativity will be unbridled in the group as a whole by supporting and developing spontaneity.

Viola Spolin advocates that another aspect of producing spontaneity is relaxing in front of an *audience*. She argues that even if teacher-student or student-student relationships are of the highest quality, there is another stressor to the young actor's freedom: the audience. If it is seen as a critical and unforgiving jury, then the actor will only hide and censor himself... out of fear. The reality is, she argues, that the audience is made up of distinct individuals who come to the theatre out of a desire to see miraculous facts and worlds brought to life by actors. The trust that the actor must have in his partner, the audience-recipient must be complete, given that they do not come to hunt for mistakes, but to enjoy knowledge, discovery and mystery.

However, there is also the opinion of the Romanian professor Ion Cojar, who firmly stated: “the art of acting has nothing to do with the art of theatre!”⁵⁴, because theatre is governed by the theory of the object, i.e. profit and success, and the actor's art by the cognitive theory, that of knowledge and discovery. Ion Cojar was strict about the influence of

⁵² Spolin, Viola – *Improvizație pentru teatru*, UNATC Press, Buc.2008, pag.56

⁵³ Op.cit.pag.59

⁵⁴ Vișan, Sanda – *Portrete în acvaforte*, preluare TVR2, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GHYIne1Pbg>



the audience in the workshop and demanded that all students behave as creators, moment by moment; the student never becomes a spectator, because he is permanently part of the artistic group. As for the presence of an audience, this was only permissible during the last year of university and only when the process of artistic creation was fully mastered.

The continuation of the learning process in everyday life is considered, by Viola Spolin, to be another essential aspect of spontaneous manifestation. The reference is clear: the knowledge and observation of life to the psycho-sensory connection of the young human-actor to the real world, which can offer him/her varied and endless subjects of research. Only by knowing life, by following the two steps of the cognitive process: sensation and perception, can the third step: representation be achieved; and as only the richness and novelty of our mental representations lead to spontaneous analysis and action, we can conclude that from the real and paradoxical world around us we can reach the real and paradoxical inner world of the human-actor.

When speaking of *physicality*, Viola Spolin touches on a final aspect of spontaneity, true to the idea that only through the means of artistic expression and physical actions determined by the scenic relationships and discoveries can organic life be created in theatre. Since the actor's art consists precisely in creating things and forms... what does not exist, imagination, spontaneity and conscious sensoriality can lead to true stage creations. The freedom of physical expression has the power to carry the message conveyed by the creator to the spectator. Not only that. The actor's physicality is the bearer of scenic signs and symbols only if it is triggered, coordinated and transfigured by an important affective-emotional force. Only this, supported by the power of logical thought, can give rise to original stage creation. And in this complex ensemble, it is spontaneity which, springing from the rich world of the subconscious, can bring about the organic physicality of the actor.

6. Famous playwriting characters as life models

6.1. Emotions and actions in a speech (exploring famous monologues from dramaturgy and also social media - learning how to deliver a information using voice and body expressiveness)



"Imagination is defined as a complex cognitive process of elaborating new images and projects, on the basis of combining and transforming experience"⁵⁵. This psychic process is typical of the human being only and can only be developed if it is preceded by other functions of the psyche, already formed: intelligence, ownership of language, of representations, as well as the acquiring of a certain experience of life. At the same time, there is an idea accredited by psychology, according to which the generating of images which are absent – and combining them (a component specific to imagination) can be achieved even without a correspondent in the field of the acquired experience. This explains how there are people who display ownership of an overflowing imagination at a very early age, or who have no knowledge in the field that they tackle. On the other hand, in psychiatry it is believed that imagination is also a feature of individuals who have weak intellectual control, either through mental illness (many mentally ill people who live in imaginary worlds, considering themselves to be different people, or various historical figures), or as a result of a period of time during which the individual is under the influence of alcohol or other substances; In this way, the emergence of a rich number of "phantasms" can be put down to imagination.

Imagination can also be considered "a form of mental projection of past or future actions, as well as the ability to represent in a live manner objects that have only been described verbally"⁵⁶. That is why we can say that the transformation into live images of objects, events, accounts, is a component of the imagination; at the same time, imagination "prepares the future", that is, it has the power to organize it in accordance with the individual's own purposes and plans. A different function of imagination is that of supporting the game; and that is because, through the transfer of the functions or the features of one object to another, one can easily build a different reality, a different universe, thereby touching (for instance), the purpose of the games of creation. But, perhaps, one of the most important functions of imagination is that of helping the human to identify themselves with another human, in order to better understand them; we can deduce at this moment that imagination is a psychic process within empathy.

Psychology considers empathy to be "a species of affective communication, through which someone identifies with another person, thus measuring feelings; (...) a mental state through which an individual identifies with another person or group, or feels the way they

⁵⁵Popescu-Neveanu, Paul; Zlate, Mielu; Crețu, Tinca – *Psihologie ("Psychology")*, EDP, Buc.1997, pag.92

⁵⁶Negură, Ion – *Psihologia imaginației ("The psychology of Imagination")*, Course notes UPS, Chișinău 2014, pag. 2



feel". Or more precisely: "empathy is that psychic phenomenon, manifested particularly within interhuman relations, through which one person identifies with another one, thus acquiring understanding and direct knowledge of them"⁵⁷. And in order for this process to take place, more factors are necessary. There are numerous researchers who identify as the origin of the phenomenon of empathy, imagination; amongst these, R. F. Dymond, Philippe Malrieu, Curt John Ducasse, feel that "the imaginary, being a process of connecting different fields, achieves the identification of one subject with another thanks to the process of projection"⁵⁸. Behaviour, suffering, the story of another person, are easily perceived when certain stimuli are present and can be imagined when these situations are evoked. Modern research claims that there are certain neurons which cause empathy. Thus, professor Marco Iacoboni, from the Department of Cognitive Neurology UCLA, published a recent study (2005)⁵⁹, in which he maintains that these neurons are the ones that form the base of empathy between people, as they have the power to observe other people's actions and intentions. In practice, these neurons trigger the mimicking of that which happens to the other person. That is why they have been called mirror neurons. This way, the exchange of transport of affectivity from one individual to another individual is a live process; neuronal mobilization, in this case, is possible with the help of this very well-known psychic process: imagination.

The importance of imagination in the process of empathy is also emphasized by Mihai Ralea. He maintained that: "through the immediate imaginative transposing in the situation of those who request moral assistance one can obtain the sharing of emotions"⁶⁰. The process, in its complexity, has in fact a clear structure: empathy is triggered with the help of imagination, and the latter helps with affective identification; in practice, the human imagines: what if that had happened to me? Arthur Koestler⁶¹ observed the fact that in the moment when empathy is activated, two simultaneous emotional processes appear: the first is the moment of identification, when the subject (who is listening to a real story, is seeing something happening, or is watching a film or a theatre show) accepts to participate in the existence of another person, from another space and another time, forgetting their own problems; in other words, it is a disinterested action.

⁵⁷Marcus, Stroe – *Empatia ("The Empathy")*, Ed. Academiei RSR, Buc.1971, p.10

⁵⁸Op.cit., p. 21

⁵⁹Iacoboni, Marco (February 22, 2005). "*Grasping the Intentions of Others with One's Own Mirror Neuron System*" *PLOS Biology*

⁶⁰Ralea, Mihai – *Scieri din trecut în filosofie ("Philosophy writings from the past")*, ESPLA, Buc.1957, pag. 236

⁶¹Apud. Marcus, Stroe – *Empatia ("The empathy")*, Ed. Academiei RSR, Buc.1971, p. 22



A natural question arises: does this affective experience reflect reality or the illusion of reality? The answer cannot be precise, but there are psychologists (for example, Vasile Pavlencu) who believe that the power of affective triggering from within the phenomenon of empathy is, in fact, linked to the imagination of the looker (listener). In practice, empathy is triggered when the subject "brings to life" images, words, events, etc., sees the future of the story ("prepares" it) in accordance with their own inner structure (as opposed to the one of the person truly living the story) and then, through the transfer of "history" towards their own being, they manage to construct another reality, another story, another universe, which has the immense power to move them, to impress them, to affectionately trouble them. The natural consequence is that, in reality, empathy creates another story, with similar (not precise) features as the real event. Therefore: from the "neurons" of the sender, to the "neurons" of the receiver, there is almost a game of reality and the illusion of reality. And since we've come to the game, let us see what the place of empathy is in theatre.⁶²

One thing is certain: on stage, all this process belongs, in fact, to the exchange which happens during a show in which the sender (the actor) sends a story... which is real to the receptor (spectator) who recreates, in their mind, the story... which is real. But, the psychologist would ask, where is the reality and where is the illusion of reality?

For the time being we must underline an undeniable thing: if the story that starts off from the sender is not real, it cannot trigger the mirror neurons of the receiver, empathy does not settle and... in the mind of the spectator no story is created. And the latter... gets bored. This statement makes us see how the old servants of theatre were right in saying: "You can hear a good show from the seats! If they do not screech, it means it's a masterpiece!"

Going back to the main idea of our demonstration, we must say that we have reached, in fact, the core of the process of artistic creation: TRUTH. For, as we were saying, if the sender does not convey a real and credible story... the chairs will screech. But what could a human – actor do to have the power to tell a real story, which... is not theirs. At this point we can say that we have opened the talk about the process of artistic creation in the Actor's Art. We will not yet go into details on that here. On the process of the actor's art we will elaborate in the chapter titled "Two Distinct Directions in the Actor's Art", as it is only then that we will have all the necessary data for a complete analysis. But let us return to Imagination.

⁶² (Translator's note on the connection between the terms "game" and "acting") In Romanian, the term "joc" means "game" as well as "playing" and "acting".



Thus, in the art of performing there are two poles: the creator – sender and the spectator – receiver. From the creator starts the complex structure of a reality, which reaches the spectator in the form of signs. They decipher their meaning, they identify with the hero in front of them, and the mirror-neurons enable empathy to settle, that is, the spectator affectively resonates with the actor. And in this way, the battle is won. But at the point where the actor approaches their part and the world that it belongs to, do they not do it with the help of the mirror-neurons? Obviously so. The actor understands the whole story of the literary character that they take on, they try to identify with them, and, miraculously (we will speak more at length about this aspect in the chapter that deals with the process), they will transform... into themselves, but dominated by another reality. However, in the process of understanding the part that we were mentioning, what can be done if the actor does not have the necessary age or experience of life, if they do not live in the same time and space coordinates as their protagonist? Can they "mobilize" their mirror-neurons? How?

The answer is simple: with the help of imagination. It is only imagination that can transform the recounted images, trace the future and bring things into being that, up until then, had not existed for them, universes that they had never entered, situations that they had never lived. It is well known that a great American actor, Robert de Niro, did unprecedented efforts to create his parts: he worked as a taxi driver in New York (for "Taxi Driver"), put on twenty kilograms and learned to box with professionals (for "Raging Bull"), or learned to play the saxophone (for "New York, New York"). Laudable efforts, since the actor wished to enrich their necessary life experience. But the question arises: if an actor must play a cannibal (and there is an exceptional example in Sir Anthony Hopkins' character in "The Silence of the Lambs"), or a mass murderer, or a death convict, what do we do with the life experience? Is it that necessary?... Another great actor offers a solution: Marcello Mastroianni, who declared in an interview: "An actor must be like a magician who can transform from one part to another. It is ridiculous to work for months as a taxi driver or to box, in order to act in films. (...) I do not understand why American actors feel they have to suffer so much in films. I just turn up on set and I act. It's much more fun, and it's less painful!"⁶³. Of course,... the right is, as always, in the middle. Those are two different opinions, which belong to actors of great calibre. Those are two different techniques, two different approaches. But if we were to wonder (remaining in the sphere of the current topic) what did Marcello Mastroianni do since he did not have any life experience? The answer is simple: he relied on imagination. The

⁶³<http://m.imdb.com/name/nm0000052/quotes>



assertion is completely correct, especially if we consider the fact that the Italian was the favourite actor of the director Federico Fellini, the one who, in his films, managed to construct true works of art, loaded with symbols and cinematographic metaphors, originating in an... imagination and playful spirit that had no equal.

Imagination has an essential function in the Actor's Art, namely that of bringing the note of originality to each and every artist. Imagination helps the actor to build virtual reality, to offer the base of truth to the illusion of the stage. Imagination is what breaks the boundaries between real and illusion in stage art. Imagination is developed, it can be practised and, the most important thing, it frees the creative being from preconceived ideas. Einstein said: "Imagination is more important than knowledge". And we are thinking of agreeing with the one who changed the face of humankind, by proving that the whole structure that it relied upon was... variable. Imagination prevailed!

In the Actor's Art atelier there are numerous exercises for developing imagination. Viola Spolin has a whole set of them, among which the one with the imaginary object being the most notable. But also, numerous exercises of "walking through an invisible substance", or the exercises of building a story; also, "developing scenes from suggestions of the audience" is a way to practise imagination.

Stanislavski said that imagination is what helped the actor to "complete" that which the playwright did not write, by creating pieces on link between scenes, and also looking into the depth of the lives of the protagonists, as well as extending it beyond the time of the play; creating, therefore, the situation before the beginning of the text, but also the continuation of the lives of the characters within the reality built during the show. This is why, in the Actor's Art workshop, we propose numerous exercises in which the student is invited to truly live the stage reality that the text puts forward, in the situation described by the playwright; more precisely, until they get to the first line of the material that they study, the student must build (without words) a complex life in which their part can extend its life in the complexity of the proposed situation.

What's more, because of imagination, the actor would be able to give life to time and space and will be able to transpose themselves into any situation that the script requires, even though they've never lived it. "In the creation process, imagination is a locomotive that pulls the actor with it"⁶⁴. The Russian director and professor also gave a warning: if the actor does not develop their imagination and does not know how to use it on stage, they can come to

⁶⁴Stanislavski, K.S. – *Munca actorului cu sine însuși ("An Actor's Work of Himself")*, vol. I, Ed. Nemira, Buc.2013, pag. 132



receive from the director solutions which come from their own imagination, and the actor... will become a mere puppet. Something which can only lead to... giving up. Stanislavski was drastic: if you do not have imagination, either you develop it (through specific exercises), or you do not do this job.

In the history of theatre there is another director that has paid proper tribute to imagination; furthermore, he founded his theory on it: Peter Brook (n. 1925). He said that: "I can take any empty space and think of it as a stage. A person crosses this empty space, while another looks at them and that is all that it takes for this to be a theatrical act"⁶⁵, referring to the fact that the show means neither set, costume, lights and sound, nor stages fraught with spectacular scenery; theatre is based, in fact, on the relationship of truth, on the exchange of energy, on intention and action, between two people - actors. Theatre is a universe that creators build from their... imagination. "I call it the Sacred Theatre, in short, but it could also be called the Theatre of the Invisible - Made Visible. The idea that the stage is a place where the invisible appears, is deeply ingrained in our minds"⁶⁶, and this is how one can come to the conclusion that the imagination of the creator and that of the spectator meet, giving birth to a whole phenomenon. The English director said he had been quite impressed by the way in which, in Germany, after the Second World War, amongst ruins, theatre would desperately cling to its last chance of survival. Under the clear sky, in ragged costumes, in dusty attics, or on improvised stages among the debris, the actors (who stubbornly did their job) managed to gather many spectators who warmly applauded them. "There was nothing to discuss, to analyse in that winter (n. 1946) in Germany, just like in England a few years before; theatre was the answer to some sort of hunger. What was this hunger? It was the hunger for the invisible, for a deeper reality that eluded the forms of everyday life, or it was one for what was lacking in life, a hunger, in fact, after the dampers in front of reality "⁶⁷.

Theatre is the place where the invisible becomes visible, and the actor is "the one who makes things that are not there" (the assertion belongs to Professor Ion Cojar). Yes, without the actor's stunning art, without the extraordinary power of their imagination, the stage would remain a lifeless place. Only the actor has the power to give the spectator, not the illusion of reality, not the lie as a palliative, but the courage in the face of a life that is too harsh, the impetus to succeed and unlock, the unravelling of the viewer's imagination, who can thus

⁶⁵ Brook, Peter – *Spațiul gol*, ("The Empty Space"), Ed. UNITEXT, Buc.1997, p. 17

⁶⁶Op. cit. p. 44

⁶⁷ Brook, Peter – *Spațiul gol* ("The Empty Space"), Ed. UNITEXT, Buc.1997, p. 46



begin to dream, even to aspire to a brighter future. Theatre is necessary for humans, as freedom is essential. Theatre opens worlds, universes, and certifies hopes.

The idea of the empty space (of Peter Brook) meets the "poor theatre" supported by a great Polish director, an innovator of the art of theatre: Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999). He considered the stage to be a place of miraculous encounters between the director and the playwright: "I, as a director, must face the actor and the self-rewarding of the actor reveals to me my own being. The actors and I are confronted with the text. (...) I love the texts of a very great tradition. For me, they are like my ancestors' voices, or voices coming to us from sources of European culture. These works fascinate me because they offer us the possibility of a sincere confrontation - a sudden and brutal confrontation between the beliefs and experiences of previous generations, on the one hand, and on the other, between our own experiences and prejudices". And, after such a "wealth" of concepts, we can ask honestly: where was the poverty of the theatre? The answer is simple: in the absence of any meaningless things. From the ideal theatre, imagined by the Polish, there could only be searches, experiences, sensations, energy exchanges, organic changes, and not the temporal "riches" of this world. The ritual theatre imagined in Wroclaw (in the city where he set up the Laboratory Theatre) did not need makeup, costumes, decorations, light effects or sound, but needed a close relationship between the actor and the spectator, creating a strong energy exchange. Neither was the director needed, Grotowski said, but a permanent search into the depth of the human being and a profound study of the roots of civilizations. One can ask the question: what role did it have here, the imagination? The answer is: the imagination works on two levels. The first was the level of reception of the spectator, who was invited to "relive" the sensory experience of the actor through... imagination. Imagination only could make them "understand", penetrate, resonate with the new, novel, visceral language that the actor proposed. And the second level was of creation itself, where the only path to the hidden forces of the consciousness, as well as the springs of the subconscious, which could act in the sense of revealing the intimate sensations, could be made on the generous realm of imagination. The actor who managed to experience the very complicated system imagined by Grotowski was called Ryszard Cieślak (1937-1990)¹⁵. Thanks to his creations from the "Gentleman" or "Apocalypsis" he was rightly considered to be the greatest actor of the 1960s.

But the two novice directors, Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, had a predecessor, to whom they dutifully paid tribute in unison. Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1943), Russian director, student of Stanislavski, is the one who revolutionized European theatrical thinking,



who introduced a new form of expression in actor's art: embodiment. In his view, nothing but the actor's art matters on stage (anticipating Grotowski's "poverty"), where the archaeological reconstruction of the time and space of the dramatic text has no place, but it should be aimed at finding new forms of expression, without detracting from the depth and clarity of the message written by the author in the dramatic text. That is how Meyerhold (sentenced to death during the Stalinist regime for his vanguard cultural vision) imagined a body language that made it possible to transmit the symbols to the spectator, in an aesthetic version, but also started by necessity and verisimilar. As for imagination, he notes: "We will work the fragment (the stage of Ophelia's madness) in two halves: in September and in December. In the interval between the two periods, the imagination will continue to envision ways of proceeding. The tension of the feelings (experience, in other words) will set the game of imagination, releasing the stage technique that does not bear any restraints"⁶⁸.

A common idea of these important theatre creators stands out: Imagination is decisive in the process of artistic creation because it has the ability to transform into live images, the thoughts, feelings and intentions of the actor, it has the power to build a whole inner scaffold that generates changes to the actor's body, manages to find new means of expression in the constant struggle for the advent of the theatre; At the same time, the imagination also acts in the process of decoding the signs of creation, which belongs to the spectator, helping them to live within their inner crucible a unique show, of paramount importance to the evolution of the individual.

6.2. Famous characters

But let's try to find some examples of characters from universal drama, characters that can be analysed by an interesting and modern method: psychoanalysis.

As a way of working, we will look for those characters in whom certain psychotic or neurotic behavioural traits are evident.

For this purpose, the play *The Seagull* by A.P. Chekhov is compulsory reading.

First, let's examine the meaning of **psychosis**. It is worth noting that psychological treatises present psychosis as a major mental disorder of an endogenous nature, which causes

⁶⁸Meyerhold, Vsevolod *Prin gaura cheii – în Dialogul neîntrerupt al teatrului în sec.XX ("Through the Keyhole - Uninterrupted Dialogue in the XXth Century")*, vol. I, Ed. Minerva, Buc.1973, p.213



serious disturbances in the individual's mental life in terms of the subject's relationship with themselves and the surrounding world. The subject's personality is profoundly altered, the individual's consciousness, affectivity and intellectual capacity are affected, resulting in a breakdown of the individual's behaviour and social adaptation. Unlike the neurotic, the psychotic individual is not aware of his illness. The concept of psychosis is related to that of alienation. The individual's relationships with himself, with others, with the world become false. It is impossible for the subject to establish appropriate relationships with the environment. The psychotic's universe loses the notion of reality, his perspectives becoming distorted. In a 1963 classification, R. Lafon finds several types of psychosis: hallucinatory, delirious, toxic, organic etc. In addition, the most common psychoses encountered in the clinic are: manic-depressive and paranoid.

A character that can fit into the rather comprehensive framework of psychosis is **Masha from “The Seagull” by A.P. Chekhov**. The beginning of the play, the Masha - Medvedenko scene, reveals the starting point in the analysis of this case:

“Medvedenko: Why do you always wear mourning clothes?

Masha: I dress in black to match my life. I am unhappy.

Medvedenko: Why should you be unhappy? I don't understand it. You are healthy, and though your father is not rich, he has a good competency. My life is far harder than yours. I only have twenty-three roubles a month to live on, but I don't wear mourning.

Masha: Happiness does not depend on riches; poor men are often happy.” [19] Now is the time to consider the meaning of “mourning”.

In psychoanalysis, we speak of the labour of mourning to designate the psychological process that allows the subject to let go of an object that has been lost. During this process, the subject detaches herself from the investment of the lost object, internalizing it. The death of a loved one entails a painful process of internalisation. The term mourning, however, is given a much broader meaning by psychoanalysis than is currently understood. For example, mourning is not just about death; it is about the pain of losing an object, a loss of love, a failure in exams or in one's career. It is what Masha experiences: her unfulfilled love for Konstantin makes her choose mourning as a form of internalisation, even self-punishment. For, let's not forget, we are under the sign of psychosis in which the subject's relationship with herself and the world around her suffers drastically.

Even marrying Medvedenko can be seen as self-punishment. Masha's desire to inflict suffering upon herself goes so far that she begins to drink; although she knows that it is unhealthy for her and, above all, that she does not enjoy it (the discussion with Trigorin is



telling), she does not give up this habit, which she considers unworthy and degrading. The rupture between the subject and herself went even further. The child's appearance is seen as a burden; the desperate father's retort: "Do come home, Masha! The baby must be hungry!" which we, the audience, can hear ringing in our ears, has the gift of leaving her indifferent at first, and then even infuriating her: "You are getting too tiresome. You used sometimes to talk of other things besides home and the baby, home and the baby. That is all I ever hear from you now."⁶⁹

Another important moment is the scene with Trigorin in which Masha asks him to send her his autographed books. Interesting is the self-description she makes and asks to be included in the autograph: "<<To Masha, who, forgetful of her origin, for some unknown reason is living in this world.>>"⁷⁰.

All these oscillations between melancholy and rage, between abandonment and the violence with which she wants to punish herself (not violence necessarily in the literal, physical sense, but more in the sense of the decisions made; let's not forget that, even though she knows he is making her suffer, she spends an extremely long time in Konstantin's house), lead us to place Masha among manic-depressive psychotics.

Equally interesting are the **hysteroid manifestations** exhibited by some characters in modern dramatic literature.

Now let's see how psychoanalysis defines hysteria. Derived from the Greek "hustera" meaning womb, the term hysteria refers to a neurosis characterised by a variety of clinical pictures. Its originality lies in the following fact: unconscious psychic conflicts are expressed in a theatrical way and in the form of symbolisations, by paroxysmal bodily symptoms (seizures or convulsions with an epileptic aspect) or lasting ones (paralysis, contractions, blindness). The two major forms of hysteria theorised by Sigmund Freud are anxiety hysteria, whose central symptom is phobia, and conversion hysteria, in which repressed sexual depictions are expressed through the body. To these are added two other Freudian forms of hysteria: defence hysteria, which is exercised against unpleasant affections, and retention hysteria, in which affections do not come to expression through abreaction. The term abreaction, introduced by S. Freud and J. Breuer in the article "Studies on Hysteria" in 1895, refers to the emotional discharge by which the subject frees him/herself from the affective content of a past painful and traumatic event.

⁶⁹ Cehov, A.P. *Teatru*, Ed.pt. Literatură, Buc.1967

⁷⁰ Idem



A well-known case of hysteria analysed by Freud is the “Dora case study”⁷¹. The eighteen-year-old girl who showed loss of consciousness, dyspnoea, nervous based (psychosomatic) cough, temporary aphonia, depression and migraine, was found by Dr Freud to be suffering from hysterical neurosis. It is certain that repressed sexual tendencies or the impossibility of breaking away from the Oedipus complex by the installation of the castration complex may be determining causes of the pathogenesis. The forms of manifestation of the disease are diverse; often features such as theatricality or the intensity of affective expression with their full spectrum are highlighted. The interpretation of hysteria in France is also well known: Jules de Gaultier created the notion of bovarism to designate a narcissistic neurosis with melancholic connotations and a strong hysterical content.

Since ancient times, dramatic literature has featured numerous characters who can be said to have exhibited hysteroid manifestations.

A particularly interesting character to analyse through a psychoanalytic approach is **Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev from “The Seagull” by A.P. Chekhov**. A complex character, impossible to classify according to the conventional character canon, mysterious, the target of many of life's blows, and essentially extremely human. Treplev's generally humane traits make him one of the most desirable characters for actors to portray.

In terms of his development, Treplev impresses the viewer from the very first scenes. A talented playwright, a restless spirit in search of new artistic forms (some critics consider him an alter ego of the playwright) Konstantin genuinely struggles from many points of view. First of all, he is unhappy with his relationship with his mother, Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina, an actress, who disputes his qualities as a playwright and is exclusively concerned with her artistic career and her love affair with a pseudo-playwright, the younger Trigorin. From another perspective, equally traumatic for Treplev is his failed love affair with Nina Zarechnaya. But perhaps the main reason for his turmoil is professional unfulfillment. The fact that he can't live in a big city, where he would have access to various information: newspapers, magazines, theatre, the artistic world and where he could have the chance to develop his artistic creation, troubles and worries him more and more. The feeling of professional failure haunts him throughout the play. All these negative emotional accumulations lead him to commit suicide at the end of the play.

⁷¹ Freud, Sigmund , *Cazul Dora*, Ed. Jurnalul literar, Buc.1994



It is difficult to pinpoint a specific condition from which Treplev suffers. If we analyse this case carefully, through the prism of psychoanalysis, we could consider that neurosis is the disease that sets in, disturbing the character's mental health. Let's see what could have caused this situation.

A first component is certainly the Oedipal complex, violently interrupted by its mother; we say violently because, normally, the Oedipal complex ends gradually, with the installation of the castration complex, when the child identifies with the father and the mother is removed from her position. But in Konstantin's case, apart from the fact that the father “does not exist” (we find no reference whatsoever to his father), his mother abandons him at a very young age. Consequently, the child Konstantin has been practically an orphan since childhood. Of course, knowing of his mother's existence, he retains a permanent obsessive desire to see her, to be at her side and to know her. Disturbingly, even now in adulthood, when he hurts his head and his mother bandages it, he is particularly emotional: “Your touch is golden. (...) I love you again, these last few days, as tenderly and trustingly as I did as a child. I have no one left now but you.”⁷² The confession that he “loves her again” does not mean that he ever stopped loving her, but signifies the idea that because he was rejected as a child, he formed a kind of defence mechanism that included violently rejecting his mother. “You enjoy saying unpleasant things to me” says Arkadina, which is true, considering the way he behaves towards her in so many situations. The real reason, however, is not that he doesn't love her, but that he doesn't want to see her rejecting him and not accepting him around her anymore. There he is, Trigorin, a worthless playwright, a mean-spirited and untalented artist (confessedly so himself). The fact that he is, unwillingly, in competition with this man becomes another possible psychological trauma for Treplev.

Finally, the loss of Nina, as a symbol of femininity, of whose presence he had been deprived since childhood, constitutes another major trauma that finalises decision to commit suicide.

Let's see what is meant by suicide from a psychoanalytic point of view. A term developed from the Latin *sui* (of oneself) and *caedes* (killing), it means the act of taking one's own life in the sense of an illness or pathology, as opposed to the old formulation of “voluntary death” synonymous with committing a crime against oneself. Against the followers of the hereditary-degenerating theory, Emile Durkheim shows (in an 1897 study) that suicide is a phenomenon that depends neither on race, nor psychology, nor heredity, nor

⁷² Cehov, A.P. *Teatru*, Ed.pt. Literatură, Buc.1967



madness, nor moral degeneration. In this respect, he views suicide in the same way as Sigmund Freud, who bases suicide on sexuality.

Before conceptualizing the notion of death drive and theorizing narcissism, grief and melancholia, Freud studied the problem of suicide. In his 1917 article “Mourning and Melancholia”, Freud presents suicide as a form of self-punishment, a death wish directed against another, which turns against the self. He thus confirms the three suicidal tendencies defined in the discourse of psychopathology: the desire to die, the desire to be killed, the desire to kill. In this perspective, suicide is the act of killing oneself in order not to kill another. Suicide is the consequence neither of a neurosis nor of a psychosis, but of a melancholia or of a serious narcissistic disorder: not an insane act, but the actualization of an urge to die by “acting out”, Freud argued.

From Treplev's point of view, his suicide is a consequence of many psychological traumas accumulated over time. As I was saying, the complexity of the character makes us think that his classification within a particular illness is not the most appropriate. Like most of Chekhov's characters, he retains a hint of mystery, a subtle, discreet, hidden element that leaves the impression that there is always something undiscovered behind. Perhaps this is why Chekhov's characters seem new and original with each performance.

7. How to become a successful story

Keeping in mind the basic theatre premise: *the what-if principle*, we can look for general humane aspects, resembling familiar people and life situations. In this context, we can try to imagine changing the story of the proposed play *The Seagull* by A.P. Chekhov and even turning the analysed characters into *success stories*.

However, first of all, we must examine how a stage play is scripted.

The process of writing is similar to the process of approach and constructing a character on stage as both arts require research, coming back and forth from the starting point and perseveration. When writing a play concept as creative writing and stagecraft are being put together and mixed.

When we talk about the stage situation, about that "other reality" that we have to build in the theatrical convention, we have to take into account the fact that, back in ancient times, Aristotle (in *Poetics*) stated an absolute rule: veracity and necessity; and also the structure on



which a tragedy or epopee had to be constructed was of great interest to the Greek philosopher. Several thinkers followed him in the preoccupation with the creation of the work of art or the actor's presence. Horatius, for example, said: "You do not give a young man / the old man's role, and to the child, the role of a grown man / Always features typical of the age, whether on is born with them or has acquired them"⁷³; a lesser known Italian poet and aesthetic, Lodovico Castelvetro (1505-1571) also wrote on this topic of Poetics: "The tragedy must have as its subject an action that takes place in a specific place and time, that is, in that place and at that time when the actors representing the action are engaged in; in no other place or at any other time (...)". And Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) in the famous *Don Quixote of Mancha*: "What about the way the time unity that happened when I saw a comedy starting with the first act in Europe, followed by the second in Asia and ending with the third in Africa? Still, if it were to have four acts, they would have drawn the curtain in America, so they would go through all the four winds of the world! And if it is true that the imitation of nature is the first thing that must be taken into account in a comedy, how can a mind be satisfied, even a mediocre mind, with the fact that in an action that allegedly takes place back in the days of king Pépin and Charles the Great, the main character can be emperor Heracles, the one who carried the cross into Jerusalem, and is also claimed to have conquered the Holy Sepulchre and done the deed of Godfrey de Bouillon, when there are hundreds of years between one and the other?"⁷⁴

Another author who writes about how one must build a stage work is Pierre Corneille (1606-1684): "This explanation of the action unit does not mean that the tragedy must show only one act at the theater. The one the poet chooses as their subject must have a beginning, a middle and an end; and these three parts are not just separate actions that lead to the main one, but each of them can contain a number of actions that make up the whole. There must be nothing but a complete action that descends quietly into the soul of the audience."⁷⁵

All the quests, numerous and worthy of praise, which belonged to famous names of the universal culture interested in the theatrical phenomenon, would find a valuable fulfillment in the writing of Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux (1636-1711), French poet and critic, nicknamed Parnass the lawmaker. Before Boileau, the rules of building the artwork were slightly murky; he, with a very constructive spirit, would raise "common sense" to the rank of law: "Take common sense as a law, though to it / Slippery is the road and hard to reach the

⁷³ Tonitza- Iordache, Michaela and George Banu – *The Art of Theatre*, Nemira, Buc.2004, p 93

⁷⁴ Ibidem, p 106

⁷⁵ Ibidem, p 116



goal; / Stray but a little and drowning is to follow. / Honest judgement follows but one path"⁷⁶ Heavily influenced by Horatius, who wrote: "The vote of all takes the one who combines the useful with the sweet / Pleasing and teaching the reader at the same time", the French writer will support the combination of beauty - as an artistic goal, with the usefulness of art - the sense of the theater: "A lesson that the muse gives you and is useful to you / Always connect the useful to the good."⁷⁷

But the most important thing to consider is setting the rules of creation. Thus: the rule of veracity, the rule of goodness, the rule of the three units and the purity of the genres have become norms of classical literature. When we talk about the rule of veracity, we must say that, as we have already shown, that also comes from Aristotelian thought; Boileau supports it and transforms it into a sort of essential point of support, according to which artistic creation must not necessarily be true, it may be the embodiment of the author's imagination but must also be subjected to fidelity; that is, "Do not put things on stage that are hard to understand, / Even the truth can be hard to believe. / The absurd miracle does not delight me: / When my spirit believes, nothing troubles it."⁷⁸

When he talked about the rule of common sense, Boileau referred to the way in which the performances were made in terms of reception; more precisely, he handled very carefully violent scenes with bloodshots, with coarse or sometimes licentious language, scenes that could encourage inappropriate deeds would not become an object of interest to creators. In addition, the language used was to be ennobled, cleared of jargon, slang, regional peculiarities or words imported from other languages. Not by accident, the language used by French classics, especially Racine, has become 'pure' French. It is true that since the mid-twentieth century, with the New French criticism, a tough attack on the use of the literary language has been launched, considered to have become, in the meantime, a "dead language". However, for centuries of culture, French was perceived as a bastion of perfect artistic sense.

Boileau also supported the rule of the three units, referring to: the unit of action (for great genres: tragedy, comedy and epopee), time unit and space unit (for the dramatic genre). "But what we submit to the law of reason, / We want the art to correct the course of action too; "One place, one specific day and one full fact / They will eventually keep the whole theater full"⁷⁹ the French poet said, pointing out that a literary work should follow a main action that can be subsumed by a whole series of secondary actions; In addition, keeping the

⁷⁶ Boileau - *Poetic Art*, ESPLA, Buc.1957, p 30

⁷⁷ Ibidem, p 79

⁷⁸ Ibidem, p 55

⁷⁹ Ibidem, p 54



time in which the action takes place, as well as the possible space in which it takes place, are necessary conditions for the work to be considered a true creation.

When talking about gender purity, Boileau considers that tragedy and comedy, idyllic tragedy, etc. must not be mixed up. because each of them has a supreme ideal and must relate to the works of value of that genre. In addition, in classical culture, it was suggested that a creator cannot have more talents, or can not be complete except in one direction. "Often a spirit too drunk with itself / cannot weigh their talent and power properly"⁸⁰, Boileau said.

Of course, with the passage of time and the development of science and the arts in modernity, the model of multiple aesthetic plans approached by artists has become a goal to be pursued. The Romantic age, for instance, would bring us Friedrich Schiller, a poet, playwright and aesthetician, nicknamed the "prince of German poetry," or J. W. Goethe, a poet, playwright, novelist, essayist, scientist, considered to be one of the most important personalities of universal culture.

But even as far as the Actor's Art is concerned genre divisions (comedy, drama, tragedy, vodevil, musical) have been abolished, making way for the pursuit of the "total actor", namely the creator who can approach as many and as different genres of performances as possible.

In this context, the approach of the actor's creative process from the point of view of the structure of the artwork felt the need to meet the young actor-student's expectation at the theater school. Undoubtedly, the actor's work is in full connection with the dramatic text. As we have already pointed out, since the Aristotelian era, the superiority of the word has been linked to the action. Of course, things have changed a lot, with the passage of time; they have changed so much that today, the idea that text is just a pretext for stage creation has long become a real practice. In addition, performances based on body expressiveness, generically called "nonverbal" are, certainly, points of real interest for artists; and that is because they allow the enriching of experiences and the expression of thoughts and ideas in various and surprising forms. And yet, the core hidden in the dramatic text, the message inscribed by the author in the inner scale of the work remain landmarks for aesthetic fulfilment.

⁸⁰ Boileau - *Poetic Art*, ESPLA, Buc.1957, p. 28