

The Method of Utilising...the Method

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Abstract: *This analytical approach looks at how a method of theatrical technique can be used in a personal way, in the direction of optimizing the way of capitalizing one's own potential and available resources alike. One of the qualifications included in the COR and granted through several master's programs (as well as bachelor's) is that of "artistic advisor"; unfortunately, however, the real impact of a person with this qualification, on the "labour market", is (at the moment) a low one, an aspect generated by the personnel schemes specific to artistic institutions, but also by the misunderstanding (by graduates) of the way in which they could capitalize on this opportunity, of the directions in which they could monetize their acquired knowledge/skills. The correlation between the techniques of artistic counselling with those of coaching and technical training takes into account the specific, creative emphasis of theatrical activities. The proposals launched in this study consider revisiting a well-known question: "what if?".*

Keywords: *artistic advisor; time; awareness; coaching; method, theatre;*

Introduction

This analytical approach looks at how a method of theatrical technique can be used in a personal way, in the direction of optimizing the way of capitalizing one's own potential and available resources alike. One of the qualifications included in the COR and granted through several master's programs (as well as bachelor's) is that of "artistic advisor"; unfortunately, however, the real impact of a person with this qualification, on the "labour market", is (at the moment) a low one, an aspect generated by the personnel schemes specific to artistic institutions, but also by the misunderstanding (by graduates) of the way in which they could capitalize on this opportunity, of the directions in which they could monetize their acquired knowledge/skills. The correlation between the techniques of artistic counselling with those of coaching and technical training takes into account the specific, creative emphasis of theatrical activities. The proposals launched in this studio consider revisiting a well-known question: "what if?". In this sense, we approach some concepts, by means of some seemingly distant associations; connecting them is a personal option, so as to allow the formulation of one's own vision of shaping how we can structure a method of using the ... method. The research is based on qualitative techniques, based on documentation and the blending of theories, specific to the area of artistic research.

1. The journey to the method

Modern (or post - post-modern) man seems to have embarked on a winding and risky journey cantered on ... success. Actors, directors, artistic advisers, vocational education teachers (regardless of the form of organization) are no exception. Questions rush in, accompanied by

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conflicting emotions, and things become even more complicated when specialists in the field come and emphasize the importance of associating success with ... joy.

What makes us happy?

What helps us operate at a high-performance level?

What happens when we discover meaning and purpose and have a clear vision of our lives?

Understanding the impact of these questions in real life and in the translation of theatrical fictions can help us discern a possible way to set goals, to ensure that they are relevant and that we are authentically attached to them. In this context, we ask ourselves: what algorithm should our own professional training program have so that it leads us to success?

Theatre research most often appeals to the "poetics" contained in dramatic texts, which describe how a role is interpreted and less to what an actor experiences. In this sense, I propose to return to Nina - the seagull of fundamental dramaturgy. The temptation to associate it with the idea of fragility can be identified in multiple stagings and stage interpretations. However, the symbolism associated with the mythology of the Indians of British Columbia gives us the idea that "the seagull was in the beginning the master of the light of day which he carefully guarded, enclosed in a box, for his personal use."² Freedom and power - these are the frequently assigned meanings, that's why, in the fourth act, Nina gives us the secret: "Now I know, I understand, Kosteia, that in what we do, whether we act on stage or write, the main thing is not the glory, it is not the brilliance, it is not what I dreamed of, but our power to endure. Know how to carry your cross and keep your faith. I believe and suffer less. And when I think about my calling, I no longer fear life."³ Through this character (and not only) we have the chance to approach the lesson of incorporating the profession as an integral part of a way of life; only finding the path can determine the approach to the meaning of the art-life relationship; this perspective facilitates us with two methods of approach – theatrical anthropology and self-coaching. If we combine Chekhov's work with his Letters we have the chance to deepen this relationship, reflected, in fact, in the each of our results. As is known, the invoked piece was not, at first, successful; the author wrote, on November 20, 1896, to Nemirovici-Danchenko: "It's true, my Seagull, at the first performance in Petersburg, it was a fiasco. The theatre was bubbling with malice, the air was filled with hatred, and I too - according to the laws of physics - flew from Petersburg like a bomb."⁴; in the letter to A. S. Suvorin, dated December 14, 1896, he makes a clarification relevant to our study: "On October 17, it was not my play that was not successful, but my person."⁵ The way we interpret the meaning attributed to this statement belongs to us; it can bring us closer to the role of context or self-image; both, however, show us the parallel mirrors between which we place the world of performance art: real - fictional.

No matter how we approach the dramatic text - in a classical or contemporary key -, the theme of resilience emerges and opens a dialogue about the necessary ability of the actor, director, playwright to preserve their creativity in unfavourable conditions, to reformulate themselves and respond to the demands of stylistic visions and/or communication methods,

² Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant. 1995. *Dictionary of Symbols [Dicționar de simboluri]*, volume 3, trans. Micaela Slăvescu, București: Artemis Publishing House, p. 71

³ Anton Pavlovici Cehov. 2016. *The Seagull, Uncle Vanya [Pescărușul. Unchiul Vanea]* trans. Iași: Polirom Publishing House

⁴ Anton Pavlovici Cehov. 2018. *A Life in Letters; Correspondence (1891 – 1904)[O viață în scrisori; Corespondență (1891 – 1904)]*, ediție îngrijită și traducere Sorina Bălănescu, Iași: Polirom Publishing House, p. 140

⁵ Idem, p. 141.

challenging contexts... Only fervent faith can lessen the frustration of failure by assimilating it as part of the professional journey. Turning failure into a lesson versus being stuck in failure represents a choice, an opportunity to manifest creative potential; the theatrical universe encompasses both creativity and fears which lead to a blockage. The subject can be drawn from the tomes and turned into a topic for debate or professional training. Every actor, puppeteer or director can find their landmark in the universal and Romanian dramaturgy.

To develop our arguments in favour of the ways in which an artistic advisor can contribute to optimizing the results of a band or a freelancer, in the field of performing arts, we bring to attention three concepts, which could become pillars of a system of professional training, formulating a personalized method of approaching one's own way of living in (and for) the theatre world: time, awareness and question/interrogation.

1.1 The Time

In the context of staging a performance, the idea of time is correlated (usually) with ways of suggesting its passage; aesthetic and technical principles, word, movement, form or light, each contributes to the design of an imaginary and invisible hourglass. Who does the time belong to, the actors/creators or the characters? Here and now acquire special meanings in the stage space. Stage time is contained, however, by the time experienced by the actors, directors and all other members of the troupe. Thus, fictional timelessness will be absorbed into the everyday; the treatment in a contemporary key can have the role of creating bridges, but it can also be a form of aesthetic manifesto; the artist sends signals to the audience and invites them to annul the differences in form, in favour of the common points that belong to an essential core. And yet... Accepting that we learn through repetition, repeating some activities (documenting, applying, designing, reflecting, etc.) can help us go to a next... level; through it we capitalize on our potential, only if it is focused and carried out consistently, in harmony with the available time resources. George Banu has given us through the volumes *Repetitions and the renewed theatre - the century of directing*⁶ - the possibility to understand, even partially, the multiple faces of the internal laboratory of the journey from the thought to the performance, the metamorphosis of meanings filtered through the time of the journey, of the "rehearsals".

In this sense, we bring to attention the purpose of documentation in the act of creation – regardless of the targeted area; it must lead, alike, to stage time and to dramatic time. The concern for "the relationship between the two temporalities" leads Patrice Pavis to invite us to reflect: "In any case, stage time, that is, the time of the present, is the time that organizes the world starting from it and interrogates it in the reservoir of dramatic time, which spills over into the stage statement."⁷ The proposed relationship melts the borders and places us in a timeless present, defined by the means of elements of scenic language, but also of the proposed acting scheme. Dramatic time belongs to the characters, whose life involves the burning of actors (of drama, puppeteers or dancers), unfolding in the matrix of stage time. A good understanding of temporality and how to create bridges between the characteristic elements of the two types of time, can determine a harmonious integration in the proposed atmosphere. Thus, by means of an

⁶ George Banu. 2009. *Repetitions and the Renewed Theatre - The Century of Directing* [*Repetițiile și teatrul reînnoit – secolul regiei*], trans. Mirella Nedelcu-Patureau, București: Nemira Publishing House, p. 423

⁷ Patrice Pavis. 2011. *Dictionary of the Theatre* [*Dicționar de teatru*], trad. Nicoleta Popa – Blaniariu and Florinela Floria, Iași: Fides Publishing House, p. 423

approach in this direction, the artistic advisor could become a collaborator of the director, a factor of influence and shaping of a certain type of attitude, favourable to both classical stagings and collaborative practices.

The use of time, however, has multiple determinations of an objective and subjective nature; between the contractual terms and the manifestation of free will a funnel is formed through which time flows - many times - past and not through; the difference is given by intentionality, by the ability to subdue time and not to live under its pressure. The road to success can be travelled effectively if we are also careful about how we use the most important wealth, distributed equally to all: TIME. Time management is learned, like any other lesson; "The urgent - important matrix" and "Every 15 minutes ..." are just two examples of exercises that make us pay attention to our decisions and to "time thieves", who wear various, sometimes even attractive masks. Sequencing and ranking the activities allows structuring a clear picture of the time-action-result relationship. Establishing priorities involves establishing objectives, the existence of a goal, a vision; the path has a "target point".

The analysis of the relationship: time – priorities – emotion can be approached both from the perspective of the performers and the characters. Following the path from the experience of the character to that of the actor, via fiction - reality, the artistic advisor can cause a journey in the time - character relationship, which determines a deepening of both the answer to the classic question "when?", and a context for reflection for one's own relationship with time. The concrete way of applying the previous proposals will be different, depending on the project, context and applicants; only verification can provide, however, arguments for or against.

1.2 Awareness

Thus, we enter a process of awareness, the only one that can help us get unstuck and get out of difficult situations or optimize ordinary situations; the important thing is to draw lessons from every situation we experience. The characters - synthetic formulas of real experiences, reverberations of pre-existences - can trigger a process of professional and personal growth, if they are analysed intentionally, with a precise purpose - generated by the theme and poetics of the show. Since this study aims only to draw attention to the role of the method, we will not develop concrete examples. Otherwise, development would not be possible without the involvement of demonstrative elements, practical exercises and specific objectives; the working tools can be different and (always) related to the type of show addressed.

The texts, through the proposed plots and characters, offer options for approaching the themes of interest (and anxiety...); through them, emotional bridges are created, which unite authors, performers and spectators. Emotion influences both the scenic process and the reception; thinking and sensibility merge in artistic expression/communication; the volumes written on this topic offer multiple arguments; we take just one example: "(...) not only is our thinking fundamentally impersonal, moreover, even our sensibility, which seems to constitute us more deeply, ends up becoming to some extent social. We cannot always know, when we feel suffering, whether we owe it to our heart or to the heart of our neighbour. The whole process of perfecting human consciousness therefore does nothing but increase the primitive unconscious

solidarity of the nervous systems."⁸ The awareness of the relationship between the person and the group/society can determine an objectification of the way of relating to the interpreted character, to the social role of the artist and to the proposed actant scheme.

Getting to grips with the theme is also based on the awareness of the common elements of the two types of temporalities at a higher level, which shifts the responsibility from the "other" to the self. If we were to focus on the employee-employer relationship, we could travel in time, for example, to the *Commedia dell'Arte* or Molière; internalizing the reading allows the identification of the ways of passing from the technique of the text as a pretext to that of the text triggering the debate. Bullying, abuse, imposture would reveal their timelessness and (perhaps) bring attention to the role of proactive attitudes, assertiveness. The list could go on. And - again - , fiction offers life lessons; so can begin the selection of the "voices" we listen to, the readings, the viewings, and the people we spend time with, voluntarily. The circles of friends/coterie, closer knit or more extensive, warm or cold, influence directly or indirectly, but subtly, the journey towards the fulfilment of goals, towards professional and - implicitly - personal fulfilment, in fact, inextricably linked. Each choice passed through the filter of compatibility with your own values and owning it will turn into a new stage of the labyrinthine journey to success. The possible blockages (with roots connected to our own fears) stop us only if we abandon the idea of permanent education - long life education - reformulated, today, in sophisticated formulas that generate businesses, but based on the same principle: "while man lives, he learns".

Learning cycles are the subject of numerous studies; but they all have a common denominator: the relationship between awareness and the lack thereof. Are we aware of what we know and what we don't know? Is that the question? Even if there are (despite contractual intersections) multiple polemics between the world of theatrical institutions and higher vocational education, the theme of permanent training (reflection of professionalism and form of resilience, equally) calls for its placement in the sphere of "urgency". Artistic advisers (and not only) can turn formal events into growth thresholds, can initiate professional training projects. International professional associations provide documentation resources; research, including, in the artistic environment, can be monetized. Interdisciplinary approaches are increasingly common; syncretism invites pragmatic extrapolations, for the benefit of reformulating the idea of a multidisciplinary team.

1.3 Possible intersections – about coaching

The application of theatrical techniques in off-stage activities, in the development of professional training techniques, involves inter and (especially) transdisciplinary approaches, generating new contexts included in two significant formulas: "laboratory theatre" and "artistic research". In the university educational space, we can use three forms of re/formulation of a professional path or a personal method: mentoring, counselling and coaching. If the first two are included in the official work strategies, coaching still has an uncertain status, marked by the increase in the number of people willing to attribute this status to themselves, but also by the reservations shown in the direction of the purchase/payment of those who could benefit from

⁸ Jean-Marie Guyau. 1991. *Art From a Sociological Point of View [Arta din punct de vedere sociologic]*, trad. Alexandru Dobrescu, București, Editura Meridiane, p. 14.

such a program. The causes can be multiple; among these, it is worth reflecting on the willingness of institutions and individuals to invest in an approach aimed at improving access to personal potential, through owning your involvement; let's not forget that a coaching program implies the existence of a "contract", which attracts attention not by its value, but by the demand to assume responsibility for the results obtained - the integrity of the partners and trust thus becoming essential components. A coach is responsible "to" his partner and not "for"; its role is to formulate powerful questions that trigger the process of releasing the solutions contained in the creative potential.

Maieutics also inspired access to the "truth" of the character, through questions, or through the ability to formulate questions a part of the "genetic" structure, what points the way to the essence of life, including in the spectacular space? We can go back to Socrates, to Eastern philosophy, or to the history of religions; anyway, the debate could be long and the opinions difficult to inventory, that's why we keep the technique of questions, as a precious tool, transformed into a method of "actor's work with himself". Learning through the acceptance of ignorance essentially includes the path of inquiry. The risk of misappropriating the meanings of dialogue-based methods is not new; we recall the polemics related to the Stanislavskian method.

The method through which you could find your own method can, however, trigger a process of searching for that synthesis formula of identifying the vision, focusing on getting close to its materialization and selecting work techniques by capitalizing on personal potential. In one of the many workshops, Daniela Nica⁹ (coach, trainer, with studies in the fields of "Political Sciences" and "Psychology") suggested the existence of three pillars of success: "beliefs, conditioning and the principles within the model", which causes us to reflect on personal values - negotiable and non-negotiable, immutable. Also, the clarity of the meaning attributed to the concepts, through which success is defined, is a determining aspect in its materialization. The three pillars lead us, like a hyperlink, to defining directions in any area of activity.

Starting from these aspects, but also from the existing controversies surrounding the definition of coaching, in the case of theatre (and not only) we can look at the artistic advisor as a "coach" of the team, in the sense of captaining it in its journey from point to point which is towards the point where it wants to be; The theatre-laboratory represents a special context within which attention is drawn to the importance of "intentionality", the intentional choice of techniques and methods used in setting objectives and obtaining results. The association of techniques from the field of artistic counselling with those from the field of coaching are based on the need to stimulate creativity and the state of travel. The journey is a story: obstacles, challenges, but also opportunities appear along the way. Each stage requires an evaluation based on dialogue, on challenging creative, lateral thinking, but also on maximizing the potential of each new situation. The directors/actors create "encore" scenes through which they develop surprising and relevant acting schemes for the topic addressed, for the intended message. At the same time, the involvement of the actor triggers their approach to the best version of themselves, in that moment, in that context. The International Coaching Federation leads us, through the promoted studies, to accept that this process is creative, inspiring, generating thoughts that we did not think we could access; thus, the relationship with the character becomes a journey of growth driven from within, shaped by the relevance of the questions.

⁹ Daniela Nica. 2017. *Reclaim the Brilliance*, Cluj Napoca, iunie

The answer may vary, if we refer to the traditional way of organizing a stage process; if, however, the priority is the journey, not the (commercial) result, without excluding the standards of an aesthetic nature, then we notice that coaching techniques offer a possible model of relation in the theatrical world because they are based on three powerful joint actions:

- listening,
- formulating strong/relevant questions,
- inspiration/ connecting with inspirational resources.

Training the ability to listen is an essential pillar both in the interpretative technique and in the entire stage creation process. Through it, not only expressiveness is achieved, but also connection – necessary for on- and off-stage communication. Here and now, together with ... or for the viewer, not ignoring the past, but accepting its effects; the interferences between the real and the fictional can be mediated through coaching principles, which determine the focus on the path between the present and desire, a projection of the future. The past blocks us or leaves the area of choice, because it can no longer be modified; the present option is the only determinant. This principle can provide insight into the analysis of the character, whose actions are influenced (as in life) by the desire and ability to decipher the challenges of the present so that they can get what they want, but it can also determine ways of formulating a professional training strategy.

The "statue theatre" technique, for example, proposed by Augusto Boal, offers, through visualization and involvement, a possible source of inspiration. The mentioned actions, however, presuppose the existence of flexibility, the availability to recognize the similarities between the presented situation and the personal mental representation and the connection to the socio-economic and theatrical realities, alike. Experiencing "laboratory" theatrical situations allow avoiding risks and triggering ideas for accessing reality in a different way.

The subject may be controversial, but if we accept that we only support the extraction of principles and the intersection of techniques necessary to define a flexible method of professional development, then we can gain an alternative perspective; training in the direction of formulating relevant questions makes sense both in everyday reality and in the stage process, marked by relationships carried out in a double plane - real and fictional.

2. Conclusions

Three concepts – three open doors to new directions of approach to the role (and status) of the artistic advisor. Success is accompanied by leaving the comfort zone; you begin to have desires that you never had before, to wish to reach thresholds that you have never reached before, to find yourself having thoughts that disturb you. You swim in murky waters and you don't approach the coral barrier, but the "barrier of terror", the zone where you have a choice: overcome fears, limitations or return to the psychological comfort zone, where all formulations begin with "if it was...then I would be..." - projections into the past, which diminish/nullify the decision to act, regardless of the skills or information possessed. What voice do you hear? Where does this voice come from, from limiting beliefs or ablaze ones? Are they outer voices or is it your inner voice? Doubts have their logic; you're heading into an area you've never been before. At this point, a guide is needed, who will give you the chance of the "seeds of recognition" of success - without recipes generated by their personal experience, but on their ability to formulate questions that trigger inspiration, self-confidence and the valorisation of one's own potential. Stepping out of the comfort zone can lead to untapped areas of imagination only if it is

accompanied by awareness and an understanding of the principles on which the model method works.

Who should trigger this state of reflection? The essential condition for unlocking the creativity of those around you is having the ability to trigger your own creativity. We cannot give what we do not have. Any training algorithm must also include an "unblocking" strategy, to change the perspective. "The image seen from above", "getting out of the square", "lateral thinking" are just some of the phrases that define creative thinking solutions, generators of appropriate solutions, both in the spectacular space and in the coaching space; their meeting marks the dynamic world that advertises a proactive attitude of the "artistic advisor"

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