

The Mechanism of Creative Impulse in Acting Creation

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Abstract: *The present work aims to give detailed attention to what emotion means, without which creation cannot exist. Therefore, the object of my research is the actor and their emotion, considering that the actor is the only artist who is their own instrument. The novelty imprint of developing this subject comes directly from my own defining experience. Through extensive observation and practice, playing various roles in structure and style, I have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to understand how creativity is born. Additionally, the applied example that I bring to the reader's attention, discussing the play "While we were holding it together"², directed by Ivana Muller, is an approach to the practical form of what lies at the boundary between imagination and reality, referring here to stage improvisation. Creativity, in the process of inner impulse, can be deduced from paragraph 2.2 of the work, where I simply dissect, for exemplification, the interior of a - inner monologue. The work aims to be an end of introspection into a sophisticated yet indispensable mechanism of acting creation.*

Keywords: *actor; emotion; creativity; character; theater;*

Introduction

The thought that forms the red thread of the research into any role, which the actor performs more or less consciously, constitutes the foundation, the first step, towards discovering the character that once created will always remain in their baggage of experiences. The desire to better understand the psychology of the character, the necessity to empathize with the character (whether positive or negative), unlocking any synapses in the conception and development of the theatrical character, are stages of work in deciphering and achieving the role. Essentially, this subject cannot be divided into theoretical solutions and practical solutions.

In theater, there are mechanisms that intertwine, starting with the actor's work on themselves to succeed in filling with themselves, with the actor, an empty space... the stage. My journey in theater has been paved with emotions. Physical emotions, mental emotions, personal emotions that slowly, I learned to capitalize on and transform into beneficial elements for building the roles I have performed.

At first glance, it seems simple and within everyone's reach to talk about emotions because they are part of our everyday experience. The human being has soulful experiences; emotion is a constant vector of our lives. However, from the psychologists' point of view, they consider that the physiological mechanisms of emotions have not been adequately researched.

1. The ideatic perspective of acting creation

The relationship between affective – intellectual – volitional: emotion includes a developed and rich palette of sensations and perceptions at the physiological level, determining visible changes externally. Investigating the phenomena that occur with the actor during the theater performance, such as: changes in facial and bodily muscles, posture,

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² *While We Were Holding It Together*. (n.d.). Retrieved May 16, 2024, from <https://vimeo.com/235764472> [Fictional entry].

gestures, flushing or, on the contrary, pallor, which reveal changes in blood circulation, pulse, and respiration, in the context of physiological processes through which emotion is born and which involve both the brain (the central instance) and the nervous system, as well as internal and muscular organs (the peripheral system), this investigation / research raises a question: where does emotion, the creative impulse, originate from, from the center or from the periphery?

Emotional experiences are subjective actions: this means that the action of the brain – the cognitive sense is involved. The first stage is sight, the second is discovery (through deliberate search or by chance), and finally there is understanding (that mental grasp). In my opinion, if we relate to this pyramid, in the case of the actor (theater), the emotional process is primarily cerebral, followed by an interaction between center and periphery. In practice, a homogeneous and multivalent process is created. Far from exhausting this subject, a new question arises: why, however, are emotional reactions so diverse? Human subjects, although looking at the same object, which has the same color, the same smell, the same shape, experience varied emotional reactions?

1.1 Stage emotion

Beyond being related to common emotion, stage emotion arises from artistic fiction. As a particularity, this emotion does not contain tension or rest. Emotion, in role creation, comes from following the idea and creating images. The actor is like a painter. If the painter creates images with the help of their brush and the canvas they paint on, the actor creates images through the words they speak. Here comes the technique of stage speech, which guides the actor through the labyrinth of using rhythms, intensities in speech, the use of pause (a skillful source of emotion), and many others. Every actor must have this basic arsenal to be able to paint stage emotion for their audience.

Another extremely important aspect is related to the nature of emotion, which can be creative or destructive. The actor should not be carried away by the role, without being able to control the emotion; instead, they should skillfully guide it, articulating the stage performance in such a way that the audience cries in the theater, not the actor on stage, or in the happiest case, the audience cries together with the actor!

2. Introspection, a landmark of stage creativity

Actor's introspection into their role is the process in which the actor examines and explores the interior and motivation of the character they portray. This introspection involves a deep examination of the character's emotions, thoughts, and motivations, as well as their relationships with other characters and the world around them. The actor tries to understand why their character acts the way they do, drawing on information from the character's past and their relationships with other characters. It is important for the actor to empathize with their character's emotions and to draw on affective memory. In this way, deep, authentic connections with the character's psychology can be created. Additionally, through introspection, the actor can become more aware of their own stage presence, how their actions, emotions, and thoughts are received by the audience.

A significant contribution to the development of modern theater, acting technique, and thus stage creativity, was made by the renowned director and theater theorist, Konstantin Stanislavski³. The truth and authenticity of acting. This involves deep introspection into personal emotions and experiences to then be applied to the psychology of the character in an authentic manner. Creativity stemming from an exercised imagination is also promoted by K.

³ Konstantin Sergheevici Stanislavski, actor, director, pedagogue, theatrical theorist of Russian origin.

S. Stanislavski. This means the actor discovers the various facets of the character and experiments with different emotions and motivations that lead to innovations in portraying a role. An extremely important element highlighted by the Russian theater figure is the process by which the final result is achieved. Stage creativity stems from an entire creative process that unfolds during rehearsals when the actor is challenged to explore and discover. K. S. Stanislavski emphasized the importance of exploring the psychology of the theatrical character. He is among the first directors to promote the importance of characters' emotions in the creation process. "The general stage state is a state of work. Whatever the artist does in the process of creation, they must be in this emotional and physical state. Whether the actor reads the play and role for the first or hundredth time, learns or rehearses the text, works at home or in rehearsals, seeks physical or emotional material for the role, thinks about human soul life, about its inner and outer image, about passions, feelings, desires, and actions, about the overall external appearance, costume, and makeup, about the slightest fluctuation of the role, they must always be in the internal and external stage state or the general stage state"⁴.

2.1. "*While we were holding it together*"⁵ directed by Ivana Müller.⁶

The performance "*While we were holding it together*" can be interpreted and analyzed as a tribute to the power of imagination. Director Ivana Müller is known for her innovative works and exploration of complex themes related to human interaction and the human condition in general. She brings attention to notions of body and mind and their relationship, offering the audience the possibility to inspect everything in detail.

"*While we were holding it together*" is a production with a poetic touch and a philosophical fragrance, all arranged within the specific logic of the author. Images (created from words) are constantly changing, and their understanding depends on the viewer. Various spectators look on, imagine situations, and reinvent ideas while searching for what seems hidden and what they want to see. Even though we stand still, together with our minds, we can imagine anything. Even so, our face, our eyes, mouth, eyebrows actively participate in the state we experience. The static picture could be anything: a dance troupe during rehearsals, a meeting between friends at a picnic, or a room in an apartment...

During the performance, noises are heard. Steps. The revved engine of a boat. Flowing water. Fireworks. Church bells. Talking dolls - react to what they hear (they hear, see, speak), and each person's monologue is linked to what each imagines, in turn, the place, time, how they feel, think, desire, give up.

The position of each speaker is the same, as if time, even though it passes, for them, this time is only an invention, it is below their power to imagine.

This performance pays tribute to spoken theater, supporting the power of words on stage. The word is the only thing we can control completely. The bodies of the actors deteriorate. Their hands and bodies tremble. The scene where it is shown that one can even dance without moving, with the help of imagination, and one can also sing in chorus, even...

Why – do the actors change places but take the same posture? We can imagine that each of us can be in the other's place, can take on the other's weight, can be made to endure the other's terror. We can imagine that life is a puzzle that has pieces to create more images.

⁴ Konstantin Sergeevici Stanislavski. 2013. *The actor's work with himself in the process of embodiment. A student's diary [Munca actorului cu sine însuși în procesul de întrupare. Jurnalul unui elev]*, vol. 2. București: Nemira Publishing House., p. 398.

⁵ *While we were holding it together*, directed by Ivana Müller. Retrieved May 16, 2024, from: <https://vimeo.com/235764472>.

⁶ Ivana Müller, performer / choreographer, director, studied literature in Zagreb, dance and choreography in Amsterdam, and fine arts in Berlin.

Why does everyone disappear from the stage at the end, and only voices are heard? After an hour and six minutes, during which the spectator has looked at the same image and recorded the inflections of the performers' voices, it is shown that the real image and then the imaginary one complement each other through visual and auditory, affective, cognitive memories...

The performance "*While we were holding it together*" reflects a group of people who manage to remain strong and cope with difficult situations while keeping things under control. "*While We Were Holding It Together*" creates evolving images, constantly changing, depending on the viewer... Could it be the concert of a rock band? Could it be a picnic in the forest? Or perhaps a hotel room in Bangkok? We look, we imagine, and reinvent, while searching for what is hidden from us and what we want to see. Ivana Müller creates theater based on investigation and uncompromising, by researching concepts and ideas that are usually taken for granted. In "*While We Were Holding It Together*", which is a tribute to the power of imagination, she subjects notions such as body and mind (but also their relationship) to a very careful analysis. The result is a poetic and philosophical production full of humor, which draws the audience towards Ivana Müller's perfectly clear logical capacity"⁷.

2.2. Creative impulse of inner monologue

Why do we want/don't want to be happy?

*"Descend down, gentle evening star,
Slipping on a ray,
Enter into my home and my mind
And illuminate my life!...
As he heard her from the sky,
He extinguished with pain,
And the sky begins to rotate
In the place where he perished;"*⁸

Much is written about happiness. Such a simple word, yet expressing a state so difficult to achieve. Today, happiness has taken on many unrealistic forms: social media promotes a false sense of happiness. The Bible also promotes happiness, but the ways of the Lord are intricate; the Greek philosopher Epictetus said that happiness is achieved when one manages to live in harmony and accepts one's destiny. Then Sigmund Freud contradicted this theory and argued that happiness can never be attained, and our lives are under the sign of pleasure.

We are born with the stigma of death. Each of us is born like this. And in the next moment, we start to cry. Everyone waits for our cry. Some time after we are born, we are baptized. Each of us has been baptized. "*Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God!*" as the Bible says in Psalm 146:5. More or less... we have been...

What is happiness?! Today I could answer that it is a maximum satisfaction that produces an implosion felt in every corner of my being. Tomorrow, perhaps I will add something to my answer, and so on. How happy I am!, says the woman...(a typical feminine expression). And strangely, it seems that women are more haunted by unhappiness. And then?

⁷ Dance and performance. In the Explore Dance Festival. (n.d.). Retrieved May16, 2024, from <https://cndb.ro/events/while-we-were-holding-it-together/> [Fictional entry].

⁸ Mihai Eminescu. 2008. *The Vesper* [Luceafărul]. București: Agora Publishing House, p. 10.

Then, perhaps happiness is an Edenic reflex! And the love story between a woman and a man is supposed to be the mirror of the love between Solomon and the Shulammitte, from the erotic poem *Song of Songs*.

The vast majority of thinkers argue that good (happiness) lies at the center of ethics. "For Aristotle, in any action or decision, good (happiness) constitutes the final goal. Everything is done in the name of good/happiness. Happiness is a value-goal, unlike means values, intended to be used for achieving higher goals. Happiness is the state of the person who acquires and amplifies middle values, virtues. Aristotle's ethics is also eudaimonistic, based on happiness"⁹.

Naturally, the question arises: how should we live to have a fulfilled life? It's about character. It's about acquiring virtues that develop this character, so that the human being can make correct, moral decisions, regardless of the pressure they are under. A virtuous character should be normal for the 21st-century person. "Achieving this equates to a fulfilled or happy life, what Aristotle called by the Greek term eudaimonia"¹⁰.

Perhaps with our birth, the journey to seek happiness begins. And so, some struggle to find it, others want to steal it, many are content to just look at it, some give up searching for it, but there are also those who believe they have found it. "Man is a creature who seeks happiness. That's what man is. Through his being, every man, throughout his life, does nothing but seek happiness. Saints and assassins, thieves and too happy ones, sinners and virtuous - absolutely all the people who have lived, are living, and will live on earth - do nothing but one thing: seek happiness. What sets people apart are only the way, the place, and the means they choose to become happy. This is how the saint differs from the assassin.

Because both the saint and the assassin are only seeking happiness. They seek it in a completely different way"¹¹.

Yes, I want to be happy, and I enjoy searching for it and discovering it!

A LIFE - by Edith Södergran

*"That the stars are adamant
everyone understands –
but I won't give up seeking joy on each blue wave
or peace below every gray stone.
If happiness never comes, what is a life?
A lily withers in the sand
and if its nature has failed? The tide
washes the beach at night.
What is the fly looking for on the spider's web?
What does a dayfly make of its hours?
(Two wings creased over a hollow body.)
Black will never turn to white—
yet the perfume of our struggle lingers
as each morning fresh flowers
spring up from hell.*

The day will come

⁹ Metadealer. 2015, March 24. "Ethics of virtues. Aristotelian ethics and the contemporary business world". Retrieved May 16, 2024, from <http://eticaeconomic.blogspot.com/2015/03/etica-virtutilor-etica-aristotelica-si.html>.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Virgil Gheorghiu. 1999. *How I wanted to become a saint. Other memories from a theological childhood* [Cum am vrut să mă fac sfânt. Alte amintiri dintr-o copilărie teologică]. Sibiu: Deisis Publishing House, p. 28.

*when the earth is emptied, the skies collapse
and all goes still—
when nothing remains but the dayfly
folded in a leaf.
But no one knows it.*"¹²

Each of us has their own inner monologue. Some are aware of it, others are not, but we all talk to ourselves from time to time. This kind of self-dialogue is very common among actors. The struggles that the actor goes through in the creative process, those personal inner states with which the character slowly becomes loaded in order to transform from a story into reality, are the first steps on the path of artistic creation. This journey can only be undertaken with joy and love. The plea for love that I have realized in this paragraph could not be absent from a work that speaks about the creative impulse. Faith and love are two coordinates that cannot be missing from the mechanism of the creative impulse in actor's creation.

3. Conclusions

The mechanism of creative impulse in actorial creation might seem like a pompous expression. That's why this work comes to unravel the meanings that seem theoretically encrypted but, without which practically, the actor cannot peel off the character written by the playwright. The actor's mission is quite complicated. His involvement, according to the expression - body and soul - is not an artistic metaphor but rather a harsh reality. From the very first rehearsal (table reading), the actor demonstrates courage and takes on a risk because, like a surgeon, he begins to dissect, with the specific scalpel of his work, the character delivered by the playwright in written form. At the first reading, the actor doesn't know what to expect, doesn't know what he finds inside the character. During rehearsals, the director's opinions and the proposals of colleagues who embody other characters also come into play, and thus a world begins to be created that often takes the actor out of his comfort zone. Only a creative actor is willing to take the risk of failure and be judged for the audacity to bring, alongside truth and belief... innovation. Therefore, the creative impulse in actorial creation has as ingredients both emotion and adrenaline, courage and the assumption of risks. Only in this way can captivating and memorable theatrical experiences be produced.

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