

## The laboratory theater and the man-actor ideal

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**Abstract:** *The European theatrical life in the early 20th century is marked by the will of radical renewal of both the theatrical performance and the institution of the theater itself, an aspiration shared by all the founders of Art Theaters - Stanislavski, Brahm, Reinhardt, Copeau, Jouvet, etc. Rethinking language and theatrical space, as well as the formation and training of the actor will be the main axes that will mark the concerns of the theater reformers. The protagonists of the theatrical renewal process will be the director - the guarantor of the unity of all the stage elements - and the actor, whose condition and function needed to be fundamentally rethought. Very soon, it will become obvious that theatrical renewal could not have taken place without the existence of a space for research and training. It also became very clear that the existence of a new actor was conditioned by the existence of a new man. Thus, the theatrical laboratory will become both a place to experiment with new principles and techniques, and a crucible in which the new man-actor could be formed.*

**Keywords:** *laboratory theatre; new man; theatrical community; experiment; theatrical practises;*

**Introduction.** In the twentieth century, the history of theatrical practice is driven by the desire for a profound renewal of the theatrical institution and the theatrical performance. As early as the end of the 19th century, existing theatrical theories and practices are being called into question. The two important elements that will favor the mutations that occurred in the theatrical thinking and practice are:

- intellectual reflection (ascertaining the decadence of theatrical art and advancing concrete proposals for a different kind of theater, this “different” aiming at both the institutional organization and the stage conception, as well as training of the actor)
- technical progress (introduction of electric light in theaters; lighting becomes one of the revolutionary stage instruments)

In addition to these two directions, Anca Măniuțiu<sup>2</sup> highlights the sociological reasons for the director's emancipation, evoking the analyzes undertaken by Bernard Dort<sup>3</sup>. In *Condition sociologique de la mise en scène théâtrale*<sup>4</sup>, the French critic analyzes each factor separately, concluding that the social factor has been, in the end, the strongest driver for the crystallization of the modern director's new status. The structural change of the audience, in terms of quantity, quality and attitude towards the theatrical performance (for example, a decrease in the numbers of the aristocratic audience), would lead to a change in the balance between stage and hall. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the relationship between the stage and the audience was regulated by a code, the differences from one show to another consisting only of rather insignificant ornamental variations. The stage, much like a mirror, projected its own image towards the audience hall. With the change in the audience's composition, the mirroring relationship gradually disintegrated, with a reality in itself being

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<sup>2</sup> Măniuțiu Anca. 2015. *Poetici regizorale*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință Publishing House.

<sup>3</sup> Dort Bernard (1929-1994), French professor, theorist, translator, theatrical practitioner, writer.

<sup>4</sup> Dort Bernard. 1967. *Condition sociologique de la mise en scène théâtrale* in: ”Littérature et Société: problèmes de méthodologie en sociologie de la littérature”, Bruxelles, Institut de Sociologie, pp. 167-182.

built on the stage. By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, this code / balance had to be defined / established with every new performance. Each performance had its own universe. As early as 1884, Louis Becq de Fouquières found that the lower classes, devoid of aesthetic culture, were interested not so much in the way the characters reasoned (as expressed in long tirades or monologues), but in their way of acting. The new audience, due to lack of culture, related everything to their personal experience, the only standard of these spectators becoming their own reality and experience.

On the other hand, Bernard Dort also shows that the technical facilities certainly did bring about a simplification of the performance's staging in the 19th century, but they also produced a constant change of the stage space. An important consequence of this state of affairs was the crystallization of a new principle according to which: the stage space changes with each show. In other words, each performance raised the issue of the stage space's specificity. However, the polymorphism of the scenic and theatrical space would only acquire its meaning through the innovative vision and action of the modern director.

Therefore, we can conclude that the evolution of the staging is the result of the gradual change of dramatic aesthetics, which resonates with the social changes (those changes within the structure of the audience) and with those of a technical nature. The director's intervention became necessary, in these conditions, due to the increasingly varied audience, to which he had to "translate" the meaning of a theatrical play, by means of the performance. The idea of open opera would apply, starting with the twentieth century, to the theater. Thus, the director's takeover of power coincides with the development of a conception according to which the performance must be inscribed in a historical and social reality.

Naturally, a new kind of playwriting, which resonated with the mentality and taste of a new audience, would stimulate a new theatrical thinking, and this new vision of the performance required the emergence of a new type of actor. And this "new actor" was always put in the relationship with the "new man" who concentrated the human ideal of a certain era.

In the first half of the twentieth century - a period of intense theatrical practice, but also of theorizing - the Antoine-Stanislawski line tells the story of an endless exploration of the means necessary for a living interpretation and expression of stage truth. In fact, one of the meanings of the term "pereživanie"<sup>5</sup> (so difficult to translate!), which lies at the heart of the Stanislavskian system, is that of "living with intensity" or "re-living a situation." The Appia-Craig-Artaud line, on the other hand, blends into the discourse that elaborates the utopia of the perfect stage representation. The directors of the two lines of thought would each claim the need for a certain actor, able to cope with their own aesthetic vision. It was becoming very clear that theatrical renewal had to go hand in hand with the formation of a new generation of actors and that the new theater artist - the director - needed, for his new art, a space for experimentation and testing. Thus, the studios attached to the big theaters were born, but also a series of

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<sup>5</sup> The meanings of the term *переживание* (*pereživanie*), indicated in the Russian-Romanian dictionary are those of "living impression", "emotion", "disorder", "trial", "suffering". The prefix "nepe" (*pere*) induces, in any case, the idea of activation or reactivation, highlighting a process of reconstitution of an experience. Consequently, pereživanie does not mean the simple imitation of an everyday experience or behavior that an actor performs on stage, but it is a very complex process of recollection, reconstruction, body and verbal expression. In this context, it is appropriate to recall the fact that two inaccuracies are linked to that famous phrase – "tranche de vie" -, attributed to the naturalistic representation of real life. First of all, although attributed to the director André Antoine (1858-1943), the phrase actually belongs to the French playwright Jean Jullien (1854–1919). On the other hand, taken over by André Antoine, it is often reproduced incompletely. This is because André Antoine is not only saying that "theater is a slice of life", but that "theater is a slice of life staged with art". This second part of the definition – "staged with art" - is particularly important, because it contains the essence of the process of stage interpretation. Similarly to Stanislavski's formula, it indicates that the interpretation is not limited to mere imitation. The interpretation involves filtering and elaborating the contents of a play through the psycho-emotional processes of the actor and with the help of the acting techniques used by them. On the other hand, this "staging with art" helps us to understand that naturalistic aesthetics, often viewed as very critical and reductive, did not reduce the stage representation to the mere photographic imitation of reality.

workshops organized by actors or animators of the theatrical life, who possessed a trailblazer's calling. Thus began the great adventure of the theatrical communities, concentrated around key figures, who would deeply mark, through their research and experiments, the history of the theater.

**1. Purpose.** Theatrical laboratories are not an isolated, closed phenomenon, which is to be regarded only from a historical perspective. Studying the activity of laboratories that were born into theatrical communities reveals the fact that they are a "work in progress". Their existence and necessity have been inscribed in the consciousness of theater people, and the research space is, at the same time, the possibility of capitalizing on a tradition, but also the guarantee of a permanent renewal of theatrical thinking and practices.

**2. Research methods.** On the one hand, reading a bibliography related to theatrical communities and laboratory theaters, along with the writings of the most important directors of the twentieth century, helped me to form a baggage of directing tools that I have applied in working with actors and students. On the other hand, working with actors and students made me understand even better the need for a community or, at least, a constant group, whose members share the same ideals, are open to experiment and research, have the courage to re-enter human and professional matter and, of course, are willing to agree to a schedule and way of working which is not always very pleasant or comfortable.

In this article, I retrace - of course in a succinct form - a path that I followed, stopping at the experiences of some theater creators who marked me and who were, for me, sources of inspiration in the theatrical reflection and practice: Konstantin Stanslavski and The First Studio inside the Moskow Artistical Theatre; Gordon Craig and the "Arena Goldoni" School from Florence.

### 3. Contents

**3.1 A space and time dedicated to experimentation.** The need for theatrical renewal gave rise to the desire and need to experiment, and experimentation necessitated the existence of a space suitable for research. These spaces were, as we showed before, workshops, studios, laboratories, which were born from an individual initiative or from the dynamics of a theatrical community whose tendencies and aspirations were expressed and materialized by the action of a leader. The activity of these stage professionals - or, in some cases, amateurs who have become professionals - under the guidance of a master, is characterized, first of all, by the fact that it takes place independently of the need or pressure to produce a show that is presented to an audience. Carrying out his work on the edge of official theatrical institutions, refusing production that leads to commercial purposes, drawing inspiration from the latest scientific theories, but also from the practices of the great epochs of theater history, cultivating interdisciplinarity but also an ethics of life and work, these theatrical laboratory communities have made a substantial contribution to the renewal of the performing arts. It can even be said that they constituted a "different history of theater", subtle and underground - as Jean-Manuel Warnet<sup>6</sup> states - but which has influenced and continues to exert a major influence on contemporary theatrical activity.

The activity of the laboratory communities was oriented towards the creation process and not towards the results materialized in the show; towards the implementation and verification of some principles, techniques and exercises, meant to lead to the coagulation of the language and the atmosphere expected for a certain type of theatrical performance. But the aim of these techniques and exercises as well as their natural consequence, was the human and professional transformation of the actor.

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<sup>6</sup> Warnet Jean-Manuel. 2014. *Les laboratoires. Une autre histoire du théâtre*, Montpellier, Éditions L'Entretemps Éditions.

The new avatars of the mythical couple Pygmalion and Galatea - the director and the actor – required a time and space for work and research, just as the painter and sculptor had their workshop, the singer had his studio, and the scientist had his laboratory. The exhibition, the public show or the patenting of an invention represent only the visible part, the finalization of a process, the work and the research, sometimes long-lasting, requiring a protected and even isolated space. In the theater, this time and space of experimentation would be represented by the rehearsals and studios, born in the heart of communities coagulated around the same aesthetic ideals.

**3.2. The actor in the focus of attention.** The actor as person, personality and character/persona has always fascinated, still remaining an enigma, as any person, in particular, in spite of all research, studies and theories that have been elaborated. In an outstanding study dedicated to the actor's philosophy, the researcher Sabine Chaouche points out that "the actor works with impalpable materials as time, his own existence and contingencies. His destiny is to transform oneself into a piece of work. His role, while playing his part during the performance is that of becoming a masterpiece of the immediacy, the presence and creativity. (...). The actor is a contradiction in itself. A double when it plays. A multiple when it ends his theatrical career. We admire in him the mysterious prestidigitation through which he gives birth to this mythical being that is the Character"<sup>7</sup>.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the fervent discussions about the author are doubled by those related to the actor. The actor becomes the focus of the theatrical preoccupations. A genuine theatromania that characterized the age of Enlightenment-when everybody wanted to play and stage theatrical actions of various genres-, reveals the necessity of elaborating some principles on the art of acting. Therefore, starting with 1738<sup>8</sup> various articles, letters, poems, memoirs and documents dedicated to this preoccupation have been issued. They will become ever more numerous after 1750<sup>9</sup>, once with the development of a philosophy of the actor, that will have, especially in France, important and beneficial consequences upon the status of the actor, previously labeled as 'infamous' and 'outcast', only to become after a respectable person and a 'professional' in the art of theater. The 18<sup>th</sup> century stands for an incommensurable richness in what the reflection upon the theater is concerned and, especially upon the art of acting and the study of the theories, dramaturgy and theatrical practices of this period which reveals the fact that the true century of theatrical modernity can be justly considered the 18<sup>th</sup> century. People in the theatrical branch at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had intuitions and formulated principles and theories that prolonged or repeated-more than often-unwarily-the theatrical reflection elaborated during the Enlightenment.

The discovery and the study of the theatrical works of the 18<sup>th</sup> century resembled the one in the field of music, where the interest for old music, especially for that of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Chaouche Sabine. 2007. *La philosophie de l'acteur. La dialectique de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur dans les écrits sur l'art théâtral français* (1738-1801), Paris Honoré Champion Éditeur, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> In 1738, Luigi Riccoboni's treatise (1676-1753) appeared, *Pensée sur la déclamation*, a pioneering essay that paves the way for reflection on the actor's play. Luigi Riccoboni was an actor, known as Lelio (a character in the *commedia dell'arte*) and the director of a traveling theater troupe. In 1716, he was called to Paris by Regent Philippe d'Orléans to help rebuild the Royal Italian Theater Troupe, disbanded by Louis XIV in 1697. Luigi Riccoboni would move with his troupe to the old theater in Paris. Hôtel de Bourgogne, where he will play, at first, pieces after the Italian fashion of the *commedia dell'arte*, only to later approach a French repertoire, in which the typology of the characters and the relations between them favored the dramatic play. Marivaux (1688-1763) was one of the authors who wrote plays for Luigi Riccoboni, thus contributing to the renewal of the Italian band and the actor's play on the Parisian stage.

<sup>9</sup> I mention, here, only some of the most important treatises, which have already gained notoriety in theatrical research: *Le Comédien* (1747) by Saint Albine, *L'Art du Théâtre* by François Riccoboni, the son of Luigi Riccoboni, *Les observations sur l'art du comédien* (1764-1774) by D'Hannelaire, *L'Art du comédien vu dans ses principes* (1782), by Tournon, *Réflexions sur la déclamation* (1798) by Melle Clairon, *Réflexions sur l'art théâtral* (1801) by Larive, *Les Éléments de l'art du comédien* (1798-1801) by Dorfeuille etc.

century, was welcome with interest and revival starting from 1945. Maybe an early and a better knowledge of these works would have made the actors and directors from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century eager to rediscover the old theatrical practices and to conceptualize their intuitions as to enter in a very prolific dialogue with their predecessors, thus exempting them, rebuilding a similar path to discover already known principles and boosting them, more quickly, towards new or deeper research directions. This fact, proves, once again, the need for a good knowledge of the history of theater, possible not only by going through the chronology of its great stages, but also by the systematic return to the testimonies, documents and treatises of the previous epochs whose thorough study proves to be edifying. Therefore, the actor's problem, as a support and master of his art, does not cease worrying, and the efficiency of his craft, which he had to adapt, every time, to the new visions about theater, is always discussed in correlation with his human attributes, moral and ethical.

**3.3. *The new man.*** The figure of the actor, as well as of the artist, has always been regarded as the emblematic figure of the "new man", as he was conceived in a certain epoch and, especially, at the turn of the century, when the future and profound political, social and cultural changes took place. The new man has always been a project, an ideal to which human society aspired, which those who modeled the new ideologies, values and beliefs tended to shape, they wanted to promote in the name of progress what they considered to be the collective good. In this context, the role of arts and culture has always been to represent, to embody through the various creations the new man, to contribute to his formation or to the "re-education" of the old man, as was the case in totalitarian societies. And perhaps it would be appropriate to delineate the origins of the concept of the "new man", which will make us understand the nuances that it has acquired at various times in history. Thus, the two main sources in which this concept originated are a spiritual (religious) and an ideological one. Consequently, the "new man", understood as the "plenary man", able to activate his potential and overcome the limitations imposed by his material condition, will find the resources to achieve and fulfill either spiritually or in a progressive ideology, of Promethean nuance, with Nietzschean echoes, which conceives man as a perfected machine ("superman"), capable of self-governing and mastering the nature. In turn, theatrical communities and laboratories will define their profile and the means of experimentation and training of the new actor-man, according to one or the other of these two sources of inspiration.

In Latin antiquity, the concept of *homo novus* meant a citizen whose ancestors had never held any public office and who held, for the first time in his family history, such dignity. In other words, *homo novus*, in addition to his physical and psycho-moral qualities, was different from his predecessors, becoming a founder and a pioneer. One of the oldest references to the new man is, of course, in the Holy Scriptures, where St. Paul speaks to the Ephesians about the ideal man, the goal for which it is necessary, he tells them : "Get rid of the old man. of your former way of life, which is corrupted by the lusts of deception, to renew yourselves in the spirit of your mind, and to clothe yourselves with the new man, the one built after God, in righteousness and the holiness of truth"<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, an ideal of profound metamorphosis and transfiguration of the human being, the achievement of which was pursued, in certain theatrical communities, by adopting exercises inspired by the practices of the Orthodox Church (hesychastic tradition), the Catholic Church (the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola) and /or from spiritual techniques inspired by Eastern philosophies.

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<sup>10</sup> Holy Scripture. 2001. "Epistle to the Ephesians", chapter 4, 22-32, Jubilee Edition of the Holy Synod, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, diortosite version after the Septuagint, edited and annotated by Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania, Archbishop of Cluj, p. 1697.

In the Renaissance, there is a renewal of the vision of man, appearing a new ideal - that of the multiple and learned man, who must be aware of all the important topics discussed at the time; virtuous and endowed with a solid general culture, he must be a man who loves beauty, knows good manners, and is free from ecclesiastical taboos. It is the portrait of the perfect courtier we find depicted in Baldasare Castiglione's famous treatise (1478-1529), *Il cortegiano* (1528), which became a true "bestseller" of those times. The Renaissance man is convinced that everything can be explained by reason and science, respectively. It is an attitude that we will find, in fact, in the first half of the eighteenth century. As researcher Cécile Vaissié points out, the ideas about man, formulated by eighteenth-century French philosophers, will inspire both Catherine II of Russia, who will launch an education program aimed at forming "a new human species (*novaia paroda liudei*)", as well as the Marxists from the end of the 19th century, who will see, in the proletarian, "the new type of man"<sup>11</sup>. This type of "new man" of Bolshevik inspiration, whose cult was inculcated in us during the years of the communist regime is, theoretically and at first sight, quite similar to the "new man" preached by the Holy Scriptures - brave, altruistic, heartfelt, enthusiastic, cultured and hardworking. In practice, however, he is at the opposite pole, for he is widowed by his spiritual dimension, anchored in materiality, and presented as a fairytale hero or a titan - capable of subduing nature, healthy and full of strength, happy to live on earth and interested in all that is new. The physical typology of the new man - the robust worker with broad shoulders or the kolkhoz with rounded bristles - who dominated the visual representations of the 1930s and 1940s was, in fact, related to the contemporary one in Nazi Germany or Mussolini's Italy. After the Revolution of 1917, the "creation of the new man" had been necessary for the realization of the Bolshevik project, which aimed obstinately and violently at replacing the "Russian of the past" - that is, the values, beliefs, Russian culture of the Tsarist Empire - with "the Soviet man, belonging to an ideal society", based on completely different human, social, political and economic values and relationships. The concept of "new man", replaced in the 1930s with that of "Soviet man" and then with that of "true Soviet man" would be found in literature and in the artistic and theatrical manifestations of that era. Once again, art was called to re-educate, to form, and to proclaim this new human identity, artists, and especially writers, becoming true "engineers of souls", as Stalin called them.<sup>12</sup> But beyond the ideological coloration, the ideal of the "new man" translated the aspiration of an important part of society towards a better life, which could only be manifested through education, courage, emancipation and a profound change of mentality.

In January 1922, Yevgeni Vakhtangov (1883-1922) presented one of his memorable performances, *Dibbuk* by An-ski,<sup>13</sup> inspired by an old Jewish legend about the creation of a New Man, at the Habima Studio. The show staged with a team of passionate amateurs was, at that time, a new success of the Stanislavskian system, well understood and used, in which Vakhtangov also developed his own directorial theories, based on the expressiveness of

<sup>11</sup>Vaissié Cécile. 2016. *Introduction. Construire-déconstruire l'Homme nouveau in La fabrique de l'homme nouveau après Staline. Les arts et la culture dans le projet soviétique*, Presses universitaires de Rennes, Publication sur OpenEdition Books : 28 août 2018, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Vaissié Cécile, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Semen Akimovici An-ski is the pseudonym of Șloimo Zainwill Rapoport (1863-1920), prose writer, publicist, playwright of Russian expression and Yiddish. According to notes by Hélène Henry, in the volume of E. Vahtangov's plays on theater, we find out that An-ski emigrated, in 1891, to Paris where he became the secretary of the revolutionary Piotr Lavrov. Lavrov, who participated in the Commune of Paris, in 1871, later became, during his stay in London, a close friend and collaborator of the philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Returning to Russia after 1905, An-ski became a party activist, and in 1911-1914 he traveled through Galicia, Volnia, and Podolia, collecting a large number of documents relating to Jewish folklore (legends, songs, customs, etc.). His play, *Between Two Worlds* or *Dibbuk*, written in 1911, was based on ancient Hasidic legends and customs. It was first staged in Warsaw in 1920 by the band Vilnius. L'Âge d'Homme Édition, pp. 319).

gestures, capitalization of the sounds of language, the principle of the contrast and the grotesque.<sup>14</sup>

The universalizing reinterpretation of the subject, the rendering of the festive revolutionary atmosphere, lacking, however, ideological nuances, contributed to the triumphant success that this show enjoyed, at its premiere. Valery Bryusov (1873-1924), one of the founders of Symbolism and the Russian Avant-Garde, literary adviser to the First Moscow Studio, 'comes to the same conclusions as Stanislavski : "No matter how brilliant the director, he will never be able to infuse actors' souls with that does not exist (...). The new theater will be created only when it will be able to bring together actors with new people's souls"<sup>15</sup>. Enthusiastic about revolutionary ideas, Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940) was also one of those who, through the method of biomechanics and constructivist aesthetics, aspired to represent this 'new man' on stage and to recreate, in his performances, the effervescent atmosphere of construction of a new society. Although initially supported by Soviet power in the 1930s, his art was heavily criticized, accused of formalism, and considered incompatible with "socialist realism". Thus began the decline of this director of a great creative force, which can be considered a 'pioneer' of several directions of theatrical experimentation that he initiated and whose activity is linked both to the community of the Moscow Artistic Theater and by the establishment of the First Studio, next to the famous theater, whose direction was entrusted to him, in 1905, by Konstantin Stanislavski.

**3.4. Models that inspired the creation of theatrical laboratories.** The theatrical laboratories had, as we showed before, several sources of inspiration (spiritual, political, scientific), and the models that inspired them were diverse. The term *Laboratory* is derived from the Latin *labor* whose first meaning is "to work", "to toil", "to strive", "to care"<sup>16</sup>. The term was established both by alchemical practice and by the triumph of the experimental method, in the nineteenth century. Although inspired by the latest scientific theories, the theatrical approach of the theater communities at the beginning of the twentieth century proves to be more related to the practice and processes of alchemy rather than to science itself. This is because alchemy is not a pre-chemistry, as it has long been considered, but a way of mystical experimentation, a spiritual technique, which is based on the very etymology of the word "laboratory", consisting of "*labor*" and "*orare*", i.e. "work" and "prayer" - in other words, labor on matter and concern for spiritual elevation. Similarly, the work with and on the actor is akin to the Alchemists' work, aimed at accomplishing their *Magnum Opus*, the Great Work. Thus, the alchemist seeks the unity between darkness and light, that is, he seeks the unity of the body with the spirit, which the actor also seeks; the path followed by the alchemist - *Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem* (V.I.T.R.I.O.L.) - is the one followed by the actor who works inwardly to find the "philosopher's stone" which is merely a "window" towards the light, i.e. towards the spiritual dimension, in which he will find the source of his creativity. The actor's work is, therefore, primarily spiritual, inner, purifying and transmutational. The term "transmutation" seems to me more appropriate to refer to the process and changes - physical, mental, spiritual - that the actor undergoes, than the term "transformation", although the latter is most often used. This is because if "transformation" means taking one form / matter to transform it into another, "transmutation" refers to a more subtle process, which involves taking a form / matter and making it disappear. As such, the

<sup>14</sup> Bogdan Lew. 1999. *Stanislavski. Le roman théâtral du siècle*, Saussan, L'Entretiens Éditions, pp. 256-257.

<sup>15</sup> Bogdan Lew, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> Guțu Gheorghe. 1969. *Dicționar latin-român* (Latin-romanian Dictionary), second edition, improved and extended, Bucharest, Editura Științifică Publishing House.

work of the actor consists exactly of that inner work, which will help him to find himself and, at the same time, to disappear, every time he embodies a character.

Jean-Manuel Warnet points out that one of the models often evoked by theater people is that of the painter's workshop, especially that of the Renaissance workshop. The reference to the Renaissance becomes, once again, significant, taking into account the revival and flourishing that alchemy experienced during this period. The Renaissance artistic workshop brought together, on the one hand, the dimension of research, artistic creation and learning, and on the other hand it combined the uniqueness of a vision (that of the master) with collective work (collaboration with disciples). Over this model of the Renaissance workshop, another model was superimposed, namely "that of the workshop of pictorial modernity in which the solitary artist tests his original language"<sup>17</sup>. The appearance of laboratories in the early twentieth century is by no means accidental. It is a spontaneous initiative, an almost reflexive and compensatory gesture in the face of the crisis that the theater is going through at the end of the 19th century, as well as many other areas of social and artistic life. Jean-Manuel Warnet further points out that at this time when "the mode of creation and transmission shifts from craftsmanship to art, the workshop of Renaissance and modernity provides the idealized model of a collision-free coexistence (...) The workshop creates a school, i.e. it invents its own aesthetics, born out of a long process in which each work is a milestone and in which the master teaches what he seeks, while the disciples learn by participating in the work (...) Therefore, Meyerhold envies the "master craftsman (...) obliged to train the disciples himself, who must help him, live with him, eat with him, like the disciples of the masters in the Renaissance or like the actors of the Japanese theater ». The artist's workshop suggests a singular form of collective, which resembles neither the troupe nor the theater school, but rather this educational, research space that is the laboratory"<sup>18</sup>.

That fellowship of the disciples with the master, which Meyerhold describes, also brings to mind the religious communities or those of Asian martial practices. In fact, there are a number of common elements that theater communities share with those of martial arts practitioners, such as a unified conception of being (body-spirit), a commitment, an ideal, and a common enterprise. Researcher, actress and director Carole Drouelle identifies four structuring principles of communities based on the use of psycho-corporal practices<sup>19</sup>:

- the identity character of the group, visible through identifiable landmarks (belonging to a place, physical / clothing appearance, conviviality)
- the central place awarded to the leader / teacher (the one who awakens the hidden resources available to the disciple; possesses a vision based on an expertise derived from his experience; generates a school)
- the shared ethical rules and ideal
- the reference to a tradition (borrowing past practices and beliefs; the refinding of lost practices and rituals to form something new)<sup>20</sup>.

It is known that many theater troupes / theater communities have introduced martial arts practices into the training of actors, as well as a series of exercises inspired by spiritual techniques promoted by Eastern philosophies. Their use was aimed at controlling the circulation

<sup>17</sup> Warnet Jean-Manuel, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>18</sup> Warnet Jean-Manuel, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> These are the communities of martial arts practitioners, as well as the theatrical communities, where initiation goes through bodily experience, the body being both the means by which the spiritual field is opened, where the "reservoir of creativity", as Stanislavski called it, lies, as well as the instrument through which this creativity is manifested..

<sup>20</sup> Drouelle Carole. 2020. "Un corps qui croit, une communauté qui crée", *L'ethnographie*, 3-4 | 2020, mis en ligne le 26 octobre 2020, accessed on 03 May 2022. URL : <https://revues.mshparisnord.fr/ethnographie/index.php?id=768>.

and densifying the energy in the body, training the breath, improving the control of mental forces and concentration. Stanislavski, Sulerzhitsky, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov introduced yoga in the training of their actors. Grotowsky (1933-1999) places the actor's psycho-corporal work at the center of his research, and in his training, which will evolve over time, he explores numerous techniques, from yoga to voodoo. The actors of the band from Odin Teatret, led by Eugenio Barba (b. 1936) use in their training a complex corpus of oriental-inspired corporal techniques. Carole Drouelle refers, in this sense, to the director Anatoly Vassilyev (b. 1942), whose work is based on Russian theatrical and religious culture and who integrated martial arts, particularly various practices of wu shu, in the daily training of his students, but also in the performances he made since 1995. C. Drouelle mentions, in the same vein, the Taiwanese theater community U-Theater, led by Liu Ruo-Yu (b. 1956) - deeply inspired by Grotowsky's work - which integrated taiji quan, meditation, percussion, songs and ritual dances in the practice of daily training.

Examples of the use of martial arts as cross-cultural tools for man-actor training could go on and on. But the goals are always the same: to create a “new actor” for a “new theater” or even an “ideal actor” for an “ideal theater” - this is possible only through a process of metamorphosing the person and welding the group.

**3.5. *The First Studio of the Moscow Artistic Theatre*** was the first laboratory in the history of the theatre. It officially opened on May 5, 1905, but its history is older. We could consider as a first form of theatrical community even the “Society of Art and Literature” that Stanislavski founded in Moscow at the end of 1888. This society was organised under the strong impetus of the theatre production by Alexandr Filipovici Fedotov (1841 -1895) - a well-known director at the time and the husband of the actress Glycheria Fedotova (1846-1925) - a performance in which Stanislavski himself was cast. The experience triggered in the young Konstantin Serghevici, passionate about theatre, the desire to coagulate in a defined setting the efforts and experiences of himself and his actor friends. This setting became the dramatic section of that society<sup>21</sup>. A second important stage was the establishment of the Moscow Art Theatre, which opened its first season in the autumn of 1898. But the metamorphosis of the troupe into a real theatrical community took place in the summer of the same year, in Pushkinovo, where the rehearsals for A. Chekhov's *The Seagull* and the preparations for the first season had begun. Pushkinovo, about 35 km from Moscow and not far from Lyubimovka, where Stanislavski had his summer residence, was owned by a family friend. Stanislavski had decided to set up the troupe in this place to give its members the opportunity to get to know each other better and to put into practice the ethical, professional and common life principles established by the founders of the Artistic Theatre: Stanislavski and Vladimir Nemirovich-Dancenko. It was a way to find a common denominator between the actors from the Art and Literature Society, led by Stanislavski, and those from the Nemirovich-Dancenko Philharmonic Society, all of whom were very different in terms of age, training, experience, conceptions, and so on. Lew Bogdan would remark that “Pushkin is, without a doubt, the first countryside community laboratory in the history of modern theatre. A dream of theatrical happiness and also a symbol. There would be much talk about the “Pushkin spirit”. Other experiences have taken over and perpetuated this model, from Richard Boleslawski 's American Theatre Laboratory (1889-1937) to Group Theatre in Maine, America, not to mention Copiaux<sup>22</sup> leaving Paris to settle in Burgundy and others from other continents”<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> See Stanislavski Konstantin., 1958. *Viața mea în artă*. București, Cartea Rusă, p. 123.

<sup>22</sup> Copiaux, members of the theatre Vieux Colombier, founded in Paris, in 1913, and led by the French critic and director Jacques Copeau (1879-1949).

<sup>23</sup> Bogdan Lew, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

In 1905, Stanislavski was at a crossroads in his life and career. Russia was going through a period of instability, being marked by dramatic events, such as the loss of the war with Japan, the bloody Sunday of January 22, in St. Petersburg, the assassination of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich (1857-1905). Stanislavski was looking for a way out of the artistic stalemate, which had been hampered by the failure to stage Maeterlinck's plays, growing misunderstandings and tensions with his collaborator V. Nemirovich-Dancenko, but also the death of A. P. Chekhov and the exile of M. Gorky, two very close collaborators of the Art Theatre. Stanislavski felt that he no longer had inspiration as a director and that he was stagnant as an actor, which is why he was increasingly looking to surround himself with young collaborators whose bold ideas could have inspired him. One of the ideas that recurred in Stanislavski's mind was to reform the Russian theatre by multiplying the branches in the province that would be run by him. But he realized that this concept of theatre branches was not enough, but that he had to go back to the forms and contents that he had to adapt to the new ones, according to the trend of the times. The idea of a school becoming a nursery for trained actors and talent was another haunting idea. The new became an end in itself for Stanislavski, in this crisis he was going through and which determined him to seek inspiration in other artistic fields as well.

The first revelation he would have was the meeting with the young American Isadora Duncan (1877 / 78-1927), who made a sensation, in Moscow as well, with the free dance she practiced and whose source of inspiration was the phenomena of nature and the theories of François Delsarte (1811-1871). The discussions with this inspired dancer would confirm to Stanislavski the correctness of his intuitions and reveal to him an area where their search met and which was: finding an artistic way capable of revealing a profound truth, elaborating an art imbued with spirituality. One of Isadora's statements that the secret of natural expressiveness, close to the elements of the cosmos, did not come to her from a technique, but from an inner motor in her soul, would give Stanislavski a lot to think about. What exactly could such a "motor in the soul" be for an actor? - was the question that triggered the research that Stanislavski embarked on in the following years<sup>24</sup>.

A second revelation for Stanislavski was the reunion with Vsevolod Meyerhold, who, after being expelled from the V. Nemirovich-Dancenko Art Theatre, had self-exiled to the province, in Kherson and Tbilisi, with his own troupe, which he called the New Drama Company, with which he tried to discover new artistic directions. Evoking this meeting, Stanislavski said that "the difference between us lay in the fact that I only strained toward the new, without knowing any of the ways for reaching and realising it, while Meyerhold (...) had already found his own methods and ways, but had not had the opportunity to experience them. (...) I had thus found the man I needed in this age of hesitant searches. I decided to help Meyerhold in his new labours, which, it seemed to me then, agreed with many of my dreams at the time. But how and where could I lay the foundations of a collaboration that needed, beforehand, a laboratory work? In a theatre with daily performances (...) this was not possible. There was a need for a special institution, which V.E. Meyerhold called it an inspired 'theatre studio.' It was not a fully formed theatre nor a school for beginners, but an experience laboratory for actors."<sup>25</sup> This is how the Povarskaia Street Studio would be established, in a space rented by Stanislavski and which brought together a series of literary and artistic personalities of the time such as Valery Bryusov, Sergey Diaghilev, Sava Mamontov, Oskar Shechtel, Ilya Satz, and the young painters Sapunov, Sudeikin, Denisov, Ulyanov and Egorov. Meyerhold's

<sup>24</sup> See Bogdan Lew, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>25</sup> Stanislavski Konstantin, *op.cit.*, p. 334.

aesthetic programme proclaimed the death of realism and the need to promote an art that appealed to the subconscious and the imagination of the audience.

The first reason Stanislavski wanted this studio was to question once again his method, decomposing and analysing the practices of theatre playing and imparting the actor's art as a teacher. Starting from the experiments of the symbolist theatre, Stanislavski began to redefine his main pole of interest: the creativity of the actor as the centre of the complex theatrical event. During these years he began his intense work on the training of the actor, of a possible new dimension of the actor's work.

However, the collaboration between Meyerhold and Stanislavski would be short-lived this time as well. Meyerhold was working on a performance based on Maeterlinck's play, *The Death of Tintagiles*, the staging of which sparked heated discussions between the two directors and, finally, led to Meyerhold's departure, to the delight of Nemirovich-Dancenko. However, this failure revealed to Meyerhold that he must assume his own path and autonomy and, above all, that his new vision of the performance had to be supported by a different kind of practice and training of the actors.

After years of touring, searching, rethinking the system, and removing Nemirovich-Dancenko from leading the Artistic Theatre, Stanislavski resumed his work in this First Studio, to whose leadership he associated Leopold Sulerzhitsky (1872-1916), who had become his assistant since 1902.<sup>26</sup> The space, also rented with Stanislavski's money, was located on the first floor of a cinema, the future "Cinema Lux." A new page was turned in the history of this studio whose motto was: education, experiment and research.

At the first meeting of the troupe, Sulerzhitsky noted in the big notebook that would become the "Studio Bible" the objectives set by Stanislavski: "The studio exists thanks to the Artistic Theatre and to save the Artistic Theatre. To help it. Its objective is to deal with the issues of the actor's creative process (the System), the pedagogical training of the artist, offering him a set of practices, supported by a daily training and, perhaps, later, through performances. It is an opportunity to experiment with new creative processes common to authors, actors and directors (...) to experiment with setting, lighting and stage possibilities; to experiment with mimodrama applied to large productions; of experimentation in the field of theatrical organization."<sup>27</sup> The first Studio became again a place of permanent exchanges, experiences and work, a space where people who came from different cultures and backgrounds and who had different demands met.

The affinities between Stanislavski and Sulerzhitsky came from a series of ideas shared by the two, regarding man and actor, such as:

- recognizing that the actor is a "whole": man-actor
- the need for the new actor to be born of a "new man"

<sup>26</sup> In 1900, in Yalta, visiting A.P. Chekhov, Stanislavski met there two very important future collaborators: Leopold Sulerzhitsky and Alexei Maximovich Peshkov, known as Maxim Gorky. Sulerzhitsky was in Yalta, recovering from a yellow fever in the South Seas, as he had sailed between China and Singapore. Sulerzhitsky had been an apprentice to the painter Viktor Vasnetsov (1848-1926), who was making frescoes at Vladimir's Cathedral in Kyiv at the time, and then entered one of Moscow's Fine Arts schools, where he was expelled in the last year of study, for political reasons. Becoming a disciple of Lew Tolstoy, he was sentenced to exile for his religious refusal to take the military oath. Tolstoy said he was the purest man he had ever met. Stanislavski appreciated his original personality, passionate employment, complete availability, and the fact that he was a brilliant and inventive craftsman. To Nemirovich-Dancenko's despair, Stanislavsky appointed Sulerzhitsky as his assistant. Thus, Sulerzhitsky began his theatrical apprenticeship by participating in the staging of *The Blue Bird* by Maeterlinck, *The Drama of Life* by Knut Hamsun and *Hamlet*. During the preparation *Hamlet*, Sulerzhitsky served as an interpreter and intermediary between Stanislavsky and Craig. A new stage in the life of Stanislavski and the Artistic Theatre began with this providential meeting.

<sup>27</sup> Sulerzhitsky L., *Note despre Studio*, September 1912, *apud* Bogdan Lew, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

- the belief that the Theatre of the Future has to be an organic activity, necessary for an evolved, educated, more humane society
- the conception regarding the psychosocial individuality of the attendee.

The main ideal of the two directors was to achieve human and professional unity, assumed with full dignity. Sulerzhitsky was fully convinced of the usefulness of theatre in society, its educational virtues and its spiritual elevation. Sulerzhitsky's ultimate goal was to build a theatrical community that foreshadowed a microcosm - a model of an ideal society; to create a community theatre with a collective leadership, placed on a plot of land (also bought by Stanislavski!) in Evpatoria, Crimea, which was to have the objectives and function of a "temple-theatre:"

- a fraternal life, in communion of the members of the community
- sharing equally the profit obtained from working together
- full rest during the summer
- a 'prayer' theatre whose actors are 'acting officers.'<sup>28</sup>

The experiments conducted by Stanislavski and Sulerzhitsky had as concrete objectives the search for the actor's sources of creativity, the definition of an original work ethic and the will to think and create a theatre in relation to the demands of the group, and not the commercial ones of the market.

Thus, the history of the First Studio of Artistic Theatre<sup>29</sup> illustrates the four main directions in which the research carried out by Stanislavski and Sulerzhitsky took place: the desire to establish a theatrical community, the development of new working methods (especially the use of various ways of improvisation), the development of new techniques ("a new technique for a new actor"), the development of collective life and creative practices. This founding experience strengthened the pioneering status of the Russian theatre and also boosted the establishment of numerous studios where research focused on the training and the art of the actor, as well as the status of the director. Such studios-laboratories were run by Stanislavski's closest disciples such as Yevgeni Vakhtangov, Mikhail Chekhov, Richard Boleslawski and Vsevolod Meyerhold.

**3.6. Goldoni Arena School.** At the same time, Otto Brahm and later Max Reinhardt in Germany, Louise and Édouard Lara and Jacques Copeau in France, experimented with "theatrical" creative ways and methods of working with the actor, in which pedagogy intertwined with research. A great experimenter, in turn, Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966) is a special figure in the theatrical landscape of the early twentieth century. On the one hand, due to his original personality and the multitude of artistic fields in which he excelled, and on the

<sup>28</sup> This model is inspired by Sulerzhitsky by the community of the so-called "Doukhobor" ("spirit wrestlers"), a pacifist religious group in the Caucasus, persecuted by the tsarist repression. Considering themselves "chosen of God" they recognized neither the authority of the tsar nor the laws, and refused to perform military service, as Sulerzhitsky had in fact done just before meeting these Doukhobors. And this refusal had cost him eighteen months in prison in Kucea, a hot locality on the border with Afghanistan. At the request of Lew Tolstoy, whose disciple he was, Leopold Sulerzhitsky accompanied the members of this community on their way to Canada where he helped them settle in the winter of 1898. This adventure is recounted in an admirable book by Lew Bogdan, *Fenia, ou l'Acteur Errant dans un siècle égaré*, published in 2018. From the Doukhobors, Sulerzhitsky learnt a series of relaxation and concentration exercises that Duhoborii did for greater efficiency. The exercises were inspired by Hindu philosophy and aimed at mastering the circulation of Prana - the invisible life force, which is found in all beings and which is the source of the "creative state". The Doukhobors called these exercises Yoga, and Sulerzhitsky would recommend them to Stanislavsky, who would enthusiastically consider them an unexpected source of inspiration. Indeed, they helped him to put his ideas, concepts, and techniques into practice. It was Sulerzhitsky who encouraged Stanislavski to persevere in the study of Symbolist theatre, which could reveal a path to his style of internalized play. Over the next nine years, Sulerzhitsky would become his assistant, road and research partner in the development of the System, and his confidant. Stanislavski considered Sulerzhitsky the most important presence in his theatrical itinerary, his death in 1916 leaving him in a deep state of sadness and loneliness.

<sup>29</sup> After its reopening, the First Studio of the Artistic Theatre was run between 1912-1924, by Stanislavski together with Sulerzhitsky. After 1924 this studio became the Artistic Theatre 2, which functioned until 1936.

other hand, due to his status as a pilgrim, in search of the ideal theater, in fact, a laboratory, and the ideal place where it could have come into being. This place was very close to being in Romania, if World War II hadn't started, and if Haig Acterian - whom Craig had especially cherished and corresponded with for several years - had not perished on the front<sup>30</sup>.

In 1908, Craig published the magazine *The Mask*, designed and written entirely by himself. Researcher Marc Duvillier points out that Gordon Craig felt invested with a mission - to restore the theater's dignity as an art, by refounding it - and that, in this sense, "the very title of the magazine he publishes is significant: the mask is not just one of the symbols of the theater, but the emblem of its struggle. Craig confronts his opponents in a disguised fashion, with the help of his ninety pseudonyms<sup>31</sup>. His fight is one for "life and death", and the enemy would not be able to know either the number or the caliber of the attackers. Craig whips the whole of the international theater, diagnosing its shortcomings. Craig's contempt for others and his refusal to compromise will prevent him from working with other artists. His assistants must constitute a "machine" in his service. The only relationships Craig had with others were of dominance".<sup>32</sup> Marc Duvillier's remarks help us to better understand why Craig's collaborations with other theater creators were conflicting and often failed. One such tense collaboration would be the staging of Shakespeare's famous *Hamlet* in Moscow in 1911 - a veritable theatrical laboratory and experience that Lew Bogdan calls a "clash of the titans"<sup>33</sup>. All these tensions, doubled by his desire for perfection, strengthen his belief that only the establishment of a very serious school of theater and stage crafts could lead to the fulfillment of his ideal.

Thus, in 1913, the school at the Goldoni Arena in Florence was born, which Craig inaugurated on February 27, the date of his mother's birth - hence, a symbolic date. Craig had completed his apprenticeship as an actor with his mother, from whom he had left, in order to rethink the theater and lay it upon new foundations. He was convinced that the Theater of the Future had to use the sap of old theatrical crafts and practices, which, however, needed to be reorganized according to a new totalizing perspective of the show and a new consciousness of the actor. In other words, the school should no longer be conceived as an accumulation of techniques necessary to master a craft, but as an essential link in the elaboration of an Art of Theater, provided with an autonomous grammar and language<sup>34</sup>. What was very clear to Craig was that the reform of the theater had to undergo a reform of the theatrical education.

Starting from the four indispensable conditions for experimentation - time, space, ideas and material conditions - Craig never ceases to conceive on paper the ideal model of the laboratory- school in which he could carry out his ideas. Biographical sources indicate that Gordon Craig had discovered in 1910 a biography of Leonardo da Vinci, written by Dmitri Merejkovski (1865-1941). This work will exert a considerable influence on the way Craig will conceive the structure of the school and, especially, the presence and role of students in this school, in which the two models of the workshops - the Renaissance model and the model of the artist who works alone, even in secret, to test his ideas - perfectly overlap.

<sup>30</sup> Haig Acterian meets Edward Gordon Craig at the "Volta Congress" - The 1934 International Theater Reunion in Rome, where he had gone to study film directing. Here he will come into contact with great personalities of the theater and dramaturgy of that time: Copeau, Pirandello, Marinetti, Romagnoli, Hauptmann, Gregor, Unruh, Gropius Tairov, Meyerhold. Among them was Gordon Craig, whom Haig Acterian befriended, and with whom, for years, through correspondence, they made plans to find a solution to a theater that would have allowed them to work together.

<sup>31</sup> A "collection" of pseudonyms worthy of a Fernando Pessoa, which however, also mirror the shapeshifting nature of Gordon Craig!

<sup>32</sup> Duvillier Marc, *The Mask (1908-1929) by Edward Gordon Craig : de la mise en scène de l'espace scénique à celle de la politique*, in *Revue modernistes, revues engagées (1900-1939)*, Publication sur OpenEdition Books : 23 septembre 2016, <https://books.openedition.org/pur/38383> .

<sup>33</sup> Bogdan Lew, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>34</sup> Warnet Jean-Manuel. 2005. *L'école de l'Arena Goldoni, ou la difficile invention d'un laboratoire. L'Annuaire théâtral*, (37), 45-64 4. <https://doi.org/10.7202/0415>, p. 49.

Jean-Manuel Warnet points out that, in Craig's view, four models of school can be distinguished, which could be regarded as four stages of a theatrical education, which are not structured according to a precise periodization, but constitute the testimony of his probing. Thus, as early as 1903, following the staging of operas and plays by amateur teams, Craig conceived a school of craftsmen, designed to provide them with a more systematic and complex training. In fact, the curriculum he designs provides for the study of the art of theater in its entirety, respectively the study of an impressive number of disciplines, especially during the first term, with the second semester being reserved for specialization. In 1909, when the question of an English National Theater would arise, he would resume work on this school-workshop model. His idea would have been to provide the National Theater with stage professionals trained in a school, which should have been subsidized by the State. Craig's school was to provide both the English National Theater and other interested theaters with consultancy and qualified staff - from solutions and a method of running a theater institution to actors, directors and craftsmen (machinists, painters, electricians, etc.).

A second school, whose project had existed since 1903, is that of the director. That is because Craig was convinced that "the Renaissance of the art is based on the belief in the Renaissance of the stage director"<sup>35</sup>; and because that director of the Theater of the Future that Craig dreamed of and understood to form, was, first and foremost, himself. Craig was possessed by the idea that theater can only be an art, insofar as it is the fruit of a unique creator's labor, capable of mastering all its components. Craig would say that the director must be a "Master of Scene Science", a man "capable of doing everything with mastery". Craig's conception of the director is that of an artist-demiurge, but it would be this very conception that would isolate him more and more in the solitude of his research, more and more daring but, most of the time, utopian, at least for those times.

The third model is that of the experimental school, which Craig conceives not so much for the students, but for a collective, a kind of "guild" made up of fifteen to twenty collaborators, who would not have to pay, but would have been paid themselves. It is clear that such a school would have served more for experimentation than education, and the contents of the subjects would have been restricted around the three elements that Craig considers to be the "essence of theater": space, movement / action and voice. What is very interesting is the way Craig designs the plan and how this school functions. From the first glance, the plan of this laboratory, resembles the layout of a church. A study space is assigned to each of these elements of theatrical art, which surround the stage like three apses placed around the choir of a church. This workshop would have two stages - one open, outdoor stage and one covered stage, each being, in fact, an extension of the experimental laboratory and the place where the various discoveries would be tested. The connection between theater and temple / church, highlighting the sacred / metaphysical origin of these two areas is more than obvious.

If this third model of school is closest to the renaissance model, the fourth, of the totalizing school, obviously reflects the form and principle of the phalanster. It is probably the most utopian of the plans, in which Craig tries to bring together all the paths explored. Another axis is added to the axes of space-movement-voice: the axis of the past-present-and-future of the theater, with the three periods to be studied at the appropriate times of the day - in the evening, in the afternoon and at dawn, respectively. Craig believed that this conjugation of the two axes could be the formula for a total renovation of the theatrical art.

Regarding the concept related to the master-disciples relationship, the regulation he conceives oscillates between absolute obedience and student autonomy, insisting on discipline, but also

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<sup>35</sup> Craig Edward Gordon. 2009. *On the Art of the Theatre*, General Books Publication, p. 78.

discretion, because the work carried out inside this secret laboratory is not to be disclosed outside, before the appropriate time<sup>36</sup>.

Although Craig considers the director to be the engine of this laborious enterprise, as in a real Coppelius workshop, a very important place is reserved for the actor. The actor's play will not, however, aim to embody a character, but to be a perfect instrument - an Über-marionette - in the hands of the director-creator. Therefore, the training of the actor will have to be part of the global learning and mastery of stage language, i.e. rhythm, dance, gesture, facial expression, music, singing and speaking. All this is reminiscent of the concerns formulated by the Camerata Bardi - the crucible of the birth of the new genre, the Opera, as a result of the effort to revive, in fact... Greek tragedy - from Florence in the years 1570-1600... It is a strange coincidence that, almost 350 years later, also in Florence, it would be Craig to have the brilliant inspiration and the crazy courage to gather, in his person, the efforts of the famous circle of poets, musicians and humanists gathered around the writer, composer and art critic Giovanni Bardi conte di Vernio (1534-1612).

Unfortunately, this school at the Goldoni Arena was very short-lived, its closure being imposed by the outbreak of the First World War. As Haig Acterian remarked, Craig was “art from head to toe (...) dreaming and seeing life so beautifully (...) that the equality between art and paradise seemed a reality”<sup>37</sup>. However, his totalizing ambition, his obsession with the perfect, work-of-art performance, as well as Craig's inability to actually work in a team would sooner or later have led to the same result. All his sketches, projects, ideas and achievements have, however, had over time the effect of a profound upheaval in theatrical thinking and practice.

If the Stanislavskian laboratory aimed at shaping the new man-actor, able to cope with the new theater and the new times, the Craigian laboratory may have looked even further, toward an ideal (super)man-actor, through whom the performance could become an autonomous and perfect art.

In the 1960's we will see the emergence of a new formula of laboratory theater, initiated by Jerzy Grotowski, whose activity will also boost that of Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, Lev Dodin, Anatoli Vassiliev, Ariane Mnouchkine. The concern for these laboratories of theatrical alchemy and the modernity of this approach is also reflected in the theatrical proses<sup>38</sup> of Mircea Eliade, in which the central character, Ieronim Thanase - an avatar of the Director of the Theater of the Future - coagulates around him the “Camp”, a community where the actor's training is based on the two essential directions - body training and spiritual techniques.

Workshops and traveling academies organized by Andrei Șerban in Cluj (2005)<sup>39</sup>, Plopi (2007), Ipotești (2011), Mogoșoaia (2012)<sup>40</sup>, in which the participants felt themselves grow “in a week as much as in ten”, also follow the same line as the laboratories for training man-actors, molded for an art of theater and for an artistic theater.

<sup>36</sup> see Warnet Jean-Manuel, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>37</sup> Acterian Haig. 1994. *Dragoste și viață în lumea teatrului*, Bucharest, Arta grafică Publishing House, pp. 120, 127.

<sup>38</sup> *Uniforme de general (Two Generals' Uniforms), Incognito la Buchenwald (Incognito at Buchenwald), Nouăsprezece trandafiri (Nineteen Roses)*.

<sup>39</sup> Șerban Andrei. 2013. *Mereu spre un nou început. Atelier teatral ținut la Teatrul Național din Cluj*, work designed and drawn up by Eugenia Sarvari, with a *laudatio* by Ion Vartic and a postface by Doina Modola, Bucharest, Tracus Arte Publishing House.

<sup>40</sup> Șerban Andrei. 2013. *Cartea Ateliereilor*, volume coordinated by Monica Andronescu and Cristina Gavrilă, Bucharest, Nemira Publishing House.

## Conclusions

Concluding and continuing the idea of Jean-Manuel Warnet, we could say that laboratories are the unseen, but perhaps the most significant and rich, part of the process of evolution and renewal of theatrical art. Through the interdisciplinarity which characterizes the research and creation approach in these laboratories, the boundaries of the interacting fields are pushed, thus stimulating new approaches.

Continuing the old medieval *puy*, the Renaissance cenacles, chambers and workshops, as well as the academies of the seventeenth century, laboratories always appear in new forms of organization, perpetuating the passion for research, discovery and creation, and thus allowing , the continuous adjustment of the vision of the world and art and of the ways of artistic expression.

Beyond the significant (and sometimes daunting) technological advances, the specificity of the theater continues to lie in the strength and expressiveness of the human being. Therefore, the actor will continue to be a symbol of the “new man” of all “new eras” - past, present and future - the quality of the man rooting that of the actor, and the aura of the actor haloing the existence of the man who chose this profession of faith. For instance, Lev Dodin is accustomed to saying that what interests him more than learning a trade is the spiritual, intellectual, and cultural development of the man who lives within the actor<sup>41</sup>.

Along with sketches, mock-ups, reading notes and directing and scenography notebooks, rehearsals have been and continue to be the favorite way to experiment and create. Therefore, it may be appropriate to keep in mind that, in addition to the material conditions and “circumstances” (costumes, scenery, props, music / sound effects, lighting, etc.) set by the dramaturgical context, rehearsals – with their number, duration, dedication and efficiency - remain a decisive factor in terms of the training of the actors, the cohesion of the team, as well as the artistic level and the maturity of a performance. The laboratory-rehearsal remains an infallible method of “testing the theater”<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> see Șevțova Maria. 2008. *Calea spre performanță. Dodin și Teatrul Malâi*, Bucharest, „Camil Petrescu” Cultural Foundation, *Teatrul Azi* magazine (supplement), p. 67.

<sup>42</sup> Autant-Mathieu Marie-Christine. 2009. *Stanislavki repeats: "Let nature act, the immense and inexhaustible nature"* in *Repetițiile și teatrul reînnoit. Secolul regiei*, volume designed and drawn up by George Banu, Bucharest, Nemira Publishing House, p. 41.

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