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Eugenio Barba and the Stanislavski Legacy: An Ontology of the Actor

by

Seth Baumrin

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City University
of New York**

2000

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Preface

This study is an investigation of Eugenio Barba's claim that he is professionally descended from Konstantin Stanislavski. It was inspired by many visits to Barba's Odin Teatret in Holstebro, Denmark over the period ranging from 1985-97 (see Appendix A). This study draws from, though does not rely on, anecdotes told by Odin actors, interviews with Barba and members of the Odin, and the experience of attending actor training and rehearsal at the Odin. It was also inspired by reading *En Skuespillers Arbejde Med Sig Selv*, Ellen Roving and Egill Rostrup's 1967 Danish translation of Stanislavski's *An Actor's Work on Himself* (known to most as *An Actor Prepares*). Roving and Rostrup's translation of Stanislavski is remarkably different from the Elizabeth Hapgood English translations upon which I previously relied. Roving and Rostrup's translation is richer in the kind of pedagogical repetition and exemplary anecdotes that characterize Stanislavski's struggle to articulate the actor's process.

With regard to Stanislavski scholarship, itself a rapidly changing area, since I am not fluent in Russian, this study relies on those theatre scholars who are, such as Jean Benedetti, Sharon Carnicke, Annelis Kuhlmann, Burnett Hobgood, and Laurence Senelick. Their recent work is useful especially since they base a good many of their findings on what is found in the original manuscripts of Stanislavski's books held in the museum of the Moscow Art Theatre, rather than the Soviet publications of his work. Although the English texts are also used as a resource in this study, this is done with healthy skepticism and knowledge of those aspects deemed faulty in them.

Russian spellings are not kept throughout. To maintain the Polish roots of the name *Stanislavski*—a pseudonym Stanislavski adopted from a then famous Polish ballet dancer to keep his appearances in amateur theatricals secret from his parents—the Polish *i*-ending is retained. However, whenever his name is spelled differently in citations, that author’s spelling is kept. However this is the exception rather than the rule. This study favors *Stanislavski* and *Meyerhold*, but *Stanislavsky* and *Meierhold* will be seen in many citations. Whenever a quotation is taken from a source that favors British spelling, punctuation, or grammar, no effort is made to Americanize it. This is often the case with Barba’s quotations, British English being preferred at the Odin.

To see how Barba’s investigation of the actor’s methodology at the end of the twentieth century emerges from and expands what Stanislavski was doing at its beginning, this study will pursue the following course: the “Introduction,” announces Barba’s claim of professional descent from Stanislavski and discusses why this is problematic for some; Chapter One, “Principles and Terminology in Use at Odin Teatret;” Chapter Two “Stanislavski’s Methodology as a Context For Barba: Infrastructural Links;” Chapter Three “Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, and Grotowski: Genealogical Links with Barba;” Chapter Four: “Barba’s Methodology as Derivative of and Elaboration on Stanislavski.”

I would like to thank my mentors and colleagues Patricia Alves, Eugenio Barba, Kathy Barber, Jim Bush, Harry Carlson, Marvin Carlson, Sharon Carnicke, Roberta Carreri, Jacques Chwat, Mimi D’Aponte, Jill Dolan, Daniel Gerould, Josh Gibson, Marion Holt, Torben Huss, Jonathan Kalb, David Korish, Annelis

Kuhlmann, Tage Larsen, Chris Markle, Lluís Masgrau, Vernice Miller, Mary Payne, Sigrid Post, Anatoly Smelianski, Laurence Senelick, Jennifer Starbuck, Isabel Ubeda, Julia Varley, Ian Watson, Torgeir Wethal, and Beth Wintour. Their support was significant. Special thanks to my students from 1992-99, it is impossible to list you all or name the ways you made my research a reality. I would also like to especially thank the Danish Ministry of Culture for making my 1997 research travel possible. To all the Odin. And to my family without whom.

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Introduction

How did an Italian-born director, Eugenio Barba, end up in the northern reaches of Jutland heading a Danish theatre, Odin Teatret, one of the most influential experimental theatre groups of the late twentieth century? Barba was born in 1936, in Brindisi. His father was an officer in the Italian army. In 1954 Barba dropped out of military school, and began his circuitous journey to the theatre. After hitchhiking around Europe, he ended up in Oslo where he worked as a welder. For a brief period he crewed on Merchant Marine vessels. While in Oslo he attended university and took graduate degrees in the History of Religion, and French and Norwegian literature. Although not yet a student of theatre, his political interests led him to study Bertolt Brecht. In 1960 he won a UNESCO scholarship to study in Poland at the Warsaw Theatre School.

Disillusioned with the disparity between the opulence of the Polish theatre and the war-ravaged state of the country, Barba left school to travel across Poland. While visiting Opole, he walked into a theatre called Teatr 13 Rzedow and saw a performance of the late Jerzy Grotowski's *Forefathers' Eve*. Months later he ran into Grotowski at a bar, and over drinks discussed their mutual interest in Asian religion and philosophy. Ultimately Barba left school and became an "unofficial member" of Grotowski's theatre.¹ He remained for three years, doing little more than watching the work and consulting with Grotowski.² Subsequently, however, Barba was enormously instrumental in exposing the world outside Poland to Grotowski's work. Barba did this not only in his role as editor for the volume, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, but also through his strategic appearance at the 1963 ITI

(International Theatre Institute) Congress in Warsaw, where he suggested the attendees travel to Lodz to see Grotowski's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*.³ This set off a chain of events that ultimately forced the Polish government to allow Grotowski's theatre to travel to the 1966 Theatre of Nations in Paris and, in 1970, to the United States. Barba also traveled to Cheruthurthy, India, during his years with Grotowski. He visited the *kathakali* theatre school where he learned not only their exercises (the ones Grotowski later incorporated into his actors' training), but also discovered the *kathakali*'s "dual ethics. . . of intense discipline and . . . theatre as a vocation rather than merely a profession."⁴ The encounter with *kathakali* marks the beginning of both Grotowski and Barba's activities in what Barba calls *transcultural theatre*.

In 1964 Barba left Grotowski and returned to Oslo, hoping to work professionally as a director. But Norway's professional theatre was not open to all comers. In 1964 Norwegian actors and directors were required to graduate from the state theatre school. Its rigorous entrance exam often prevented young Norwegians from entering the profession. In spite of this stipulation, undaunted, Barba obtained a list of people who had failed the test, and contacted them stating that he was starting his own theatre and would be hiring actors. Of those on the list Barba began with eleven actors and after a couple of months, four remained; two of these, Else Marie Laukvik and Torgeir Wethal, are still with the Odin. With these four Barba began Odin Teatret. Their training and first performances were held in an old air raid shelter in Oslo. In 1966 the Odin was invited to

Holstebro, Denmark to start a theatre institute as part of the town's experiment in cultural development.

Since 1966 the Odin has produced sixteen major theatrical works, some of them taking years to create, and innumerable "Barbers," the Odin's unique form of street theatre in which the actors are in cultural exchange with locals from villages and areas with no institutional theatre. In 1979 Barba, along with his Italian and Asian colleagues, founded ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology), a congress of intellectuals, pedagogues, and actors, whose mission is to discover the practical principles that function for all actors across cultural and national boundaries. The Odin has also supported itself as a theatre pedagogy publishing house, publishing not Barba's books, but those of other influential theatre pedagogues such as Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* as well as treatises by Zeami and Piscator. They have also published many theatre magazines over the years; the most widely read is the *Open Page*, which is devoted to women in theatre. But what is most important about Barba, beyond his work as a man of theatre, is his profound belief in theatre groups as autonomous cultures that stand outside of the mainstream.

The Odin's theatre building is next door to Holstebro's civil defense headquarters and was once a barn. Holstebro and its surrounding villages remain farming communities, but in 1965 Holstebro was declared a *kultur by* (culture town) by its then mayor Kai Nielsen.⁵ At the same time, under Nielsen's administration the town invited the Odin to move from Oslo and open a theatre school, Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium. Subsequently, the city also became home to

a museum exhibiting collections of Picasso, Matisse, and Chagall. Sculptures by the Alberto Giacometti and others were situated in public places. Most significant is Giacometti's "Woman on a Cart." The town's decision to purchase it was the first among numerous decisions taken towards the cultivation of art and ideas from outside the Scandinavian milieu. Modern sculpture, architecture, museums, and schools of various arts and crafts have done much to transform Holstebro from the center of a depressed rural area, not only into a small cosmopolitan center, but also a fertile territory for cultural development. Theatre and Scandinavian Studies scholar, Harry Carlson writes, "The radical cultural invasion that descended on Holstebro is all the more impressive when one realizes that the natives of Jutland are famous for their quiet and conservative habits."⁶ Like Holstebro, the Odin has succeeded over the last thirty plus years in maintaining its commitment to art and culture from its perch on the outskirts of the mainstream.

The whole story of Eugenio Barba, a recent chapter in theatre history, has already been told, and quite ably, by Ian Watson in his *Towards a Third Theatre* (1993), an excellent historical study of Barba and his Odin Teatret from its founding in 1964 up to the moment of Watson's writing in 1993. However the present study is a history of another sort. It is not the story of Barba; rather it examines his methodology for actors from the perspective of artistic lineage. Although Barba emerged from the Polish Laboratory Theatre in 1964, and therefore can be linked directly to his mentor, Grotowski, he claims Stanislavski as his professional ancestor.

Stanislavski speaks to me, because everything he did, everything he created, he did and created for me, because I am his son, because we are all his sons. Western men and women of the theatre did not descend from the apes, they descend from Stanislavski.⁷

This perhaps audacious claim, from 1988 and made continuously throughout Barba's writings, may be difficult for some to accept because it runs counter to the notion that Stanislavski stood for naturalism in the theatre and psychological realism in the actor's work, whereas Barba is more often perceived as connected with non-realistic, physical theatre. He is more likely to be linked with Meyerhold than any other Western practitioner. Watson himself makes this claim.

Barba describes his professional heritage in familial terms, seeing himself as a descendant of Stanislavski, the "father" of modern Western theatre.

With all due respect, Barba's twentieth century theatrical lineage appears to begin with Meyerhold rather than Stanislavski.⁸

An aspect of Watson's approach that I take issue with is that he disputes Barba's claim of descent from Stanislavski without considering Meyerhold's own descent from Stanislavski. Whatever Watson or even Barba may say about Meyerhold's influence, Barba's link to Stanislavski is far more salient in the attempt to describe Barba as part of a genealogy of director/pedagogues in Western theatre.

Although Barba is usually thought of as one who has borrowed from the Asians to invigorate Western Theatre's turn away from naturalism and realism, his methodology is well within the context of twentieth-century Western practice, the function of which is to protect the actor's work and cultivate a methodology for a variety of styles in the theatre. This context can be seen as one initiated by

Stanislavski whose career included not only the reform of the Russian theatre, but the exploration and practice of values whose function is to protect the actor's work and cultivate a methodology for all types of theatre.

By announcing Stanislavski as his progenitor, Barba draws attention to a continuum of director/pedagogues—Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, and Grotowski—all, in one way or another influenced by Stanislavski. Each cultivates and enhances some aspect of Stanislavski's research such that, not only can his work be linked to Barba's through theirs, but a supra-methodology, rather than five distinctly different methodologies, can be proposed. This supra methodology leads through stages beginning with an actor's work on him- or herself and ending with that actor's relationship with an audience.

It is the primary purpose of this study to make clear how that methodology is exhibited by both Stanislavski and Barba not only because Barba carries on Stanislavski's tradition of intelligent discourse on the actor's work, but also because they have similar professional obsessions. For the purpose of this study the two most important areas are, one: the interplay between the actor's internal dimensions (thought, emotion, intention, impulse) and his or her external dimensions (physical action, expression, presence, performance); and two: the ethos of the theatre group.

The intricate relationship of the actor's physical anatomy with the required emotional complexity of acting is broken down more clinically by Barba than they ever were by Stanislavski, but Barba is essentially asking the same questions as Stanislavski, and sometimes arrives at answers of the same kind. Stanislavski

and Barba have both been obsessed with one central question: why is it that in one performance an actor can be full of energy, scintillating, compelling to the audience, but on the following night, that same actor, in the same production, lacks the vibrancy that made him or her so exciting the night before? The question leads each to postulate a methodology that traces the process of creating genuinely powerful performances. Though their approaches cannot produce guaranteed results, they have offered many reliable principles useful to actors if they choose to be inculcated in them. This inculcation, which Barba calls training, is personal and should take actors through a lifetime of work, each person's training differing according to his or her identity.

The most important links to Stanislavski's practice are first, how the Odin's methodology is an elaboration on what is known as Stanislavski's Method of Physical Actions and second, how, for both Odin Teatret and Stanislavski's studios, the rehearsal is a laboratory.

This study will examine Barba's praxis in light of the Stanislavski Legacy with a special emphasis on the history of their respective methodologies. Barba is herein considered as one who not only employs the set of principles established by Stanislavski, but also parallels and expands his predecessor's work, albeit in a different context. Whereas Stanislavski is best known for directing Chekhov's plays, he worked on a wide variety of dramas, not all of them realistic—his point of departure was always the author's words. Barba, on the other hand, has never allowed a play's text to dominate his interpretation. His productions have all been inspired by powerful physical and vocal images that grow out of the Odin Teatret

actors' training and exercises. Subsequently, poetry and dramatic texts are combined with the images and made to work in counterpoint with them.

In spite of aesthetic differences, at the level of methodology Stanislavski and Barba's research focuses on similar questions. Their methodological questions are not focused on how actors effect spectators, but rather are concerned with the actor's technique. Both men's obsession with technique unites them. Stanislavski asked the essential set of questions and Barba explores them in far greater detail. Barba's work, due to his specificity, explores the very basis of Stanislavski's work, that is, making the subconscious conscious, or how to make that which lies at the actor's internal level external and therefore part of the performance.

The central question of this study is whether or not Barba has assumed a pioneering role that continues and builds on Stanislavski's research into performers' techniques and values. Do Barba's principles reflect and then expand upon an historically earlier set of principles? To address this, it is important to consider Stanislavski and Barba in light of the work of three other director/pedagogues, Evgeny Vakhtangov, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and Jerzy Grotowski, who were chronological and methodological transitional figures in a continuum between Stanislavski and Barba. This study proposes that all these directors employed Stanislavski's principles in their respective methodologies.

The term *Stanislavski's Legacy* is often used to designate Stanislavski's centrality to work on the actor's technique. The term is chosen here not only because it connotes a set of ideas, but it also defines how theatre practitioners

transmit their knowledge to other theatre practitioners, orally. Stanislavski is not merely a famous theatre reformer. His name functions as a sign, his career as a model for the actor/pedagogue, a teacher of work principles. The principles do not transmit themselves. For this reason, how Stanislavski's ideas were transmitted is as important as the ideas themselves. Barba has asked,

What is the theatre? A building perhaps – where hundreds of people come in, go out – and see old and new plays? The 'great' theatre, the 'little' theatre, The Alexandrinski Theatre or any other theatre? Is theatre a building or is it something else? The theatre is the men [sic] who are doing it.¹⁹

And it is in the spirit of a continual flow of ideas and work passed (usually orally) from the living to the living that a legacy is conceived. This study holds the oral transmission of Stanislavski and Barba's principles as key to understanding and explaining their pedagogy.

Beyond emphasizing psychological realism, Stanislavski initiated an intelligent investigation by professional actors into the means by which they create performances regardless of nationality or genre. Stanislavski articulated his project in his first speech to the assembled Moscow Art Theatre on June 14, 1898. "The laws of creativeness are immutable, binding on all, and they constitute a bond among artists of all nations. We must study laws together, master them, work out a suitable psycho-technique of acting."¹⁰ Barba articulates similar goals when he explains the mission of ISTA. "Different performers, at different places, times and in spite of stylist forms specific to their traditions have shared common principles."¹¹ Stanislavski and Barba's writings and professional activities bespeak a preoccupation not only with the actor's technique but also

with actors' culture. They are both more committed to the theatre than to any homeland, identifying the theatre as their nationality—Barba has called it “one transnational and transcultural country.”¹² Stanislavski's “laws” or Barba's “common principles,” whether transmitted orally or in writing, become poetics for the actor (general principles for fostering the actor's creativity). From them actors and pedagogues create their professional language, a language to learn by. Stanislavski's lexicon has been foundational to actor training throughout the century. This study examines how Barba's language advances the dialogue between actors and pedagogues as they continue Stanislavski's initiatives.

Barba and Stanislavski share more than a few values. Among these are: the formation of close knit groups working in the solitude of studios or laboratories; an ethics of the theatre; the concept of theatre as a holy place; the power of the physical action to liberate the actor's internal creative powers; the power of an actor's internal reality as an aspect of expression; the interdependence of the mind and body; the importance of actor training and the actor's self study; the concept of the autonomous actor; the development of a lexicon for actors to communicate with each other; the demands made on the actor due to the drastic way behavior on stage differs from behavior in daily life; the distilling of principles of acting that are not bound to a specific dramatic genre or style; and the renunciation of theatre's responsibility to serve any political agenda.

The transitional figures in the Stanislavski—Barba continuum served different purposes. The main link is Grotowski. When Grotowski was a student at the State Institute of Theatre Art (GITIS) in 1955, he wrote his master's thesis on

Stanislavski and was supervised by former Moscow Art Theatre actor Yuri Zavadsky. It was at this time, according to Grotowski, that he became fascinated by Stanislavski's principles, along with those of Vakhtangov and, to a lesser extent, Meyerhold. In the 1950s, when former Moscow Art Theatre actor Vasily Toporkov wrote *Stanislavski in Rehearsal: The Final Years*, Meyerhold was still a non-person as a result of the Stalin purges in the late thirties. He was therefore never mentioned by Toporkov. But in 1955, two years after Stalin's death, Meyerhold's name was just beginning to regain currency. The book's emphasis on the Method of Physical Actions gave expression to the way in which Stanislavski tried to adapt or adjust his System to the Stalinist understanding of dialectical materialism. According to Anatoly Smelianski (Artistic Director of the Moscow Art Theatre in 1998), this was the book used at GITIS when Grotowski was a student in 1955; therefore this was *the* aspect of Stanislavski's System privileged at the time when Grotowski was being exposed to the Stanislavski Legacy.¹³ The Method of Physical Actions is the clearest and perhaps the most significant link connecting Stanislavski to Barba.

It should be noted that the continuum, Stanislavski—Barba is not the only manifestation of the Stanislavski Legacy. The North American version of Stanislavski's System, the Method, is an original and, in many ways, legitimate reworking of his ideas.¹⁴ The Method is certainly well-suited to actors in a theatre of realism in which the playwright's viewpoint is privileged over actors' or directors' desires. However the Stanislavski—Barba continuum is well-suited to

actors in a contemporary theatre that persistently moves away from early twentieth-century realism and text-driven theatre as the century ends.

Many who write about Barba vigorously resist his assertion that actors' physical training and the rigors of membership in a creative collective are the keys to making meaningful theatre. Some question the asocial, apolitical stance of his theatre group. For example, in Phillip Zarrilli's "For Whom is the Invisible Invisible" (1985), Barba is described as an authoritarian who takes pleasure in seeing his principles enacted by the so-called exotic or Asian other. Zarrilli objected to Barba's theories and the inherent Eurocentric humanism he detected in them. Although Zarrilli has more recently come to embrace a great many of Barba's principles, his 1985 polemic captures negative attitudes towards Barba still held in many academic circles, attitudes that often elide the most salient aspect of Barba's career, that is who he is as a man of the theatre. By stressing Barba's stance as a theorist without considering his actual work, his opus, scholars like Zarrilli evoke some rather strange conclusions, even from those otherwise friendly to Barba. Often, through the process of historicization, scholars and critics put Barba into contexts that are not at all consonant with his work. Most distracting are the complaints based on critical and post-colonial theory, like those of Indian theatre scholar and director Rustom Bharucha, for whom Barba is a cultural imperialist, or Erika Munk for whom Barba's theatre is anti-feminist.¹⁵

Establishing the connection between Barba and Stanislavski requires reexamining-generally accepted views taken in theatre textbooks. It also means

reexamining the significance of the three directors who make up the continuum, Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, and Grotowski. Misconceptions about their work have become so deeply inscribed in theatre history that it becomes necessary to disentangle them in order to see Barba's connection to Stanislavski.

What follows are the major misconceptions surrounding the five directors that present potential obstacles to understanding the Stanislavski—Barba continuum.

1. Stanislavski's System is to be used strictly for acting in a theatre of naturalism/realism, especially techniques such as emotional recall or affective/effective memory.
2. At the end of his career Stanislavski suddenly abandoned his System, especially affective memory and emotional recall in favor of the Method of Physical Actions.
3. Vakhtangov bridges the methodological gap between Stanislavski and Meyerhold by combining their salient aspects in his Fantastic Realism.
4. Meyerhold and Stanislavski are opposites.
5. Meyerhold was opposed to the conscious deployment of emotions in the actor.
6. Meyerhold's theatre was a director's theatre whose productions were cobbled together out of exercises he created for the purpose of actor training in which the actors were merely puppets or machines.
7. Grotowski and Barba are only interested in the physical extremes of acting, not in its emotional aspects.
8. Barba picks up where Grotowski left off and does essentially the same thing.
9. Both are products of the sixties-seventies radical movements.

10. Barba's work principles apply only to his theatre and those embracing non-realistic aesthetics but are of no value in other contexts.

This study attempts to clear away these misconceptions at least enough to reveal a shared set of principles that focuses on Stanislavski and Barba's actual working knowledge of actors. By so doing, the context for the discourse of acting can shift from aesthetics to methodology.

Rather than see a theatre in the context of its nation or ethnicity, Barba considers theatres in their own professional context. He resists taxonomies such as theory, anthropology, avant-garde, and post-modern to describe his work. Indeed he warns against taking false intellectual positions when writing about theatre.

In our culture, knowledge of the actor has been blocked by the presumption of knowledge. Critics, theatrologists, theoreticians, and even philosophers such as Hegel and Sartre have interpreted the cultural milieu and aesthetic value of the actor's art by starting from the presumption that they knew what they were talking about . . . This scientific "power of attorney" is based on a mental attitude which is profoundly irrational. It causes one to believe that a theoretical paradigm is a precise instrument even when it is used out of context.¹⁶

Beyond helping to explain Barba's relationship to his critics, these observations inform the methodology of this study with regard to how scholarship from outside the discipline of theatre, especially acting, will be deployed. Theoretical paradigms will be considered but only to the extent that they have direct application to the study of the actor's technique and its history.

One contextualization Barba does not resist is Patrice Pavis's category, "intercultural theatre." This is perhaps more apt than Bharucha's "cultural

imperialism.”¹⁷ Barba prefers the term “transcultural” to describe his work. It speaks of his relationship with his colleagues and contemporaries across national and cultural boundaries rather than casting him as a representative of European culture and its colonial aspirations. But these cultural-isms do not accurately describe Barba’s relationship with the theatrical past. The focus here is more on the traditions of practice from which Barba emerges and how he upholds and expands them.

Although Watson’s *Towards a Third Theatre* should be held up as the definitive study of Barba’s place in theatre history, this dissertation diverges from Watson’s otherwise sound views at the juncture where he objects to Barba’s claim of descent from Stanislavski, claiming instead that his lineage begins with Meyerhold (see Preface). The links to Meyerhold are indeed strong, but Stanislavski’s career cuts to the foundational level of the principles of the actor’s identity and the values of theatre as a culture. These are perhaps Barba’s most profound positions. And although Watson asserts a linkage with Meyerhold, he does not investigate that linkage, a line of thought, which, had Watson pursued it, might have yielded the more deeply inscribed Stanislavski legacy.

Others who write about Barba’s work attempt to use his language but lack the background of practical experience that makes Barba so influential. These writers often capture important truths about Barba, yet their writings sometimes take the form of open letters to Barba or testimonial rather than scholarship designed to engage an uninitiated readership. Clarifying Barba’s role in contemporary theatre, especially for those who will never see his work, is complicated by what

Danish anthropologist, Kirsten Hastrup, calls “hagiographic hermeneutics” which she believes permeate the work of many Barba scholars who are friendly to, indeed often part of, his project.¹⁸ Open admiration of Barba can trivialize his work. Erik Exe Christoffersen’s book, *The Actor’s Way* (1993), or the essays “Laughter at ISTA” by Mirella Schino and Hastrup’s own “In the Raven’s Eye, Reflections on Cross-Cultural Dialogue” both (1996), do tend to praise Barba, Hastrup virtually mythologizes him. It may however be unfair to categorize these works as hagiography, but rather a different kind of scholarship. This genre of scholarship is more like the work of Barba’s Italian ISTA colleagues Franco Ruffini, Fernando Taviani, and the late Fabrizio Cruciani, the value of whose work is not its objectivity but rather the scholars’ intimate knowledge of and involvement with their subject. Christoffersen, Schino, Hastrup, Ruffini, Cruciani, and Taviani have been more a part of the Odin than critics whose scholarship must function as detached analysis.

A handful of theatre scholars do see a link between Stanislavski and Barba, but few outside the Odin/ISTA milieu articulate the connection except for Canadian Per Brask. In his critique of former Odin actor, Richard Fowler’s Primus Theatre in Saskatchewan, Brask says:

A performance tradition is generated along a line which goes from Grotowski to Barba to Fowler to members of Primus and so on. As the performance tradition moves through time, it is modified, and expanded, according to the needs of the particular artists who “*inherit*” it. [italics mine]¹⁹

In a footnote to these sentences, Brask continues:

Indeed one might construct a genealogy of ideas which proceed from Diderot’s discussion of the actor’s paradox, mutating through

Copeau's investigation at the *Vieux Colombier*, the Stanislavski of the physical action, Vakhtangov's "Fantastic Realism" (melding elements from Meyerhold, Tairov, and Stanislavski), and Michael Chekhov's "Psychological Gesture," and Brecht's social *gestus*, to Grotowski's "Holy Actor" and Barba's transcultural actorly presence.²⁰

The argument of this study, that Barba is genealogically linked to Stanislavski, is embedded in these statements. However, Brask's carefree history, which mixes aesthetics with methodology, and connects disparate ideas remarkably as a kind of evolutionary process is troublesome. Actors inherit nothing from Diderot, who was *not* an actor; he merely posed a question—inspiration or technique?—one that perhaps did more to confuse rather than clarify the actor's process. Copeau, certainly an important figure for Barba, really represents a different lineage than the legacy associated with Stanislavski, and connections between the two would have to be made through some other mechanism besides "mutation." The same holds true for Brecht. However, investigation of both of these linkages, Copeau and Brecht, with Barba would indeed be fruitful topics for another study.

Some historians and philosophers, such as Arthur O. Lovejoy and Michel Foucault, have proposed that structural or genealogical study is the best way to examine the history of ideas, rather than chronological study. This approach to historiography allows greater deliberation and perspicacity than that of many theatre historians such as Brask.²¹ This study recognizes a difference between genealogical and evolutionary metaphors. This study resists the view that ideas give birth or function as metaphorically biological or evolutionary processes. The genealogy of an idea must be more carefully constructed than a mere evolutionary metaphor, assuming no analogous relationship between ideas and nature,

otherwise professional heredity arguments risk damaging their own validity. But Brask's review does echo Barba's assertion of Stanislavski heredity without hagiographic hermeneutics. Unlike ISTA founders and scholars Ruffini and Taviani, who also describe Barba as Stanislavski's heir, Brask is not a member of the Odin/ISTA milieu, and therefore his view carries a different kind of weight in the academies, functioning as detached historical thinking because he is an outsider.

Ruffini's essay "Stanislavski's System" in Barba's *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* (1991) expresses the concerns of this study, but Ruffini's propensity to contextualize Barba in the language of ISTA with liberal use of terms like "pre-expressivity" and "organic mind/body" (terms Stanislavski certainly never used) displays his allegiance to Barba.²² What is most troubling is the possibility that some may read equivalency into these claims of lineage and linkage, exchanging identity for genesis. Indeed, this has been the tendency. For example, when Richard Schechner writes, "Barba in his own way, is extending Grotowski's work of developing actor training and *mise en scène*," both Grotowski and Barba are deprived of their unique identities as artists.²³ These identities distinguish their work, not only from each other's, but from a vast assortment of work, done in emulation of them but that rarely approaches Grotowski and Barba's incisive, creative, and intellectual impulses which have had such a powerful effect on the profession. Sometimes these naïve claims of equivalency are historically charming. Grotowski was nicknamed "Stanislavski" by his fellow schoolmates at GITIS.²⁴ The effect of such claims is

paradoxical. They are obviously simplistic and untrue, yet they reveal a latent truth about Barba and his mentor. These claims should not be taken as equivalencies, but should remind the actor in the West of his or her affiliation with the Stanislavski tradition regardless of how uncomfortable some may be about Stanislavski's mythic significance.

In place of evolutionary and heredity metaphors, and to support a more rigorous genealogical linkage between Barba and Stanislavski, this study seeks to uncover what actually connects the two by examining their methodologies along with those of the three directors whose work functions as linkage. Certainly one basis for these connections lies in the mentor/student or master/disciple relationship. In much the same way that Meyerhold and Vakhtangov were Stanislavski's student/disciples, so was Barba, Grotowski's student/disciple. But the infrastructure is more complex than the implied loyalty of these professional and pedagogical relationships. In a colloquium in the seventies, Grotowski was asked whether he thought of Barba as his disciple. The answer came: "Yes he is my true disciple. He betrays me faithfully."²⁵ This statement is worthy of serious investigation because it captures not only Grotowski and Barba's relationship, but also seems to describe that of both Vakhtangov and Meyerhold with Stanislavski. "Faithful betrayal" may best describe the dual aspect of the independence and cohesion that exists among the five directors, and gaining understanding of this duality is central to this study.

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- ¹ Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 14.
- ² See Eugenio Barba, *Land of Ashes and Diamonds; My Apprenticeship in Poland*, trans. Eugenio and Judy Barba. (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain, 1999).
- ³ Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 15.
Although Grotowski traditionally performed in Opole during this moment in his career, the Lodz location made it easier for the ITI representatives to travel to him since Lodz is a mere two-hour drive from Warsaw as opposed to the five hours required to drive from Warsaw to Opole.
- ⁴ *Ibid.* 15.
- ⁵ For a complete account of Kai Nielsen's radical socio-economic program in Holstebro see Ingvar Holm, Viveka Hagnell and Jane Rasch, *A Model for Culture Holstebro: A Study of Cultural Policy and Theatre in a Danish Town*. trans. Karin Harboe. (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiskell, 1985).
- ⁶ Harry Carlson, "The Odin Theater in Holstebro." *The American Scandinavian Review* 59 (December 1971): 383-392.
- ⁷ Eugenio Barba, "The Way of Refusal: the Theatre's Body-in-Life." *New Theatre Quarterly*. Vol. IV. No. 16 (November 1988): 292.
- ⁸ Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 11.
- ⁹ Eugenio Barba, Videotape. *In Search of Theatre*. dir. Ripa di Meana for RAI (Italian Television). Holstebro: Odin Teatret, (1974).
- ¹⁰ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Stanislavski's Legacy*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1958), 2.
- ¹¹ Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1991), 8.
- ¹² Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*, trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch, and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 10.
- ¹³ Anatoly Smelienski in a telephone conversation with the author, July 1997.
- ¹⁴ Sharon Carnicke makes this argument quite well. See for example Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998) and her "Boleslavski in America" in Laurence Senelick, ed, *Wandering Stars: Russian Émigré Theatre, 1905-1940*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992).

¹⁵ See Rustom Bharucha. *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture*. New York: Routledge 1993, and Erika Munk. "The Rites of Women" *Performing Arts Journal*. 29, vol. X, no. 2 (1986).

¹⁶ Eugenio Barba, "Eugenio Barba to Phillip Zarrilli: About the Invisible and the Invisible in the Theatre and About ISTA in Particular." *The Drama Review*, vol. 32, (Fall, 1988): 7.

¹⁷ Patrice Pavis, ed, *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁸ Kirsten Hastrup, ed, *The Performer's Village: Times, Techniques and Theories at ISTA*. (Graagswten: Drama, 1996), 16.

¹⁹ Per Brask, "Dilating the Body, Transporting the Mind: Considering Primus Theatre." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*. (Fall 1994): 212.

²⁰ Ibid. n218.

²¹ According to Arthur Lovejoy in *The Great Chain of Being*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970 (orig. 1937)), 3-4, 332,

Most philosophic systems are original or distinctive in their pattern then in their components. . . . Even if the array of material is simplified somewhat by the aid of conventional—and largely misleading—classifications of philosophers by schools or *-isms*, it still appears extremely various and complicated; each age seems to evolve new species of reasoning and conclusions, even though upon the same old problems. . . . The seeming novelty of many a system is due solely to the novelty of the application or arrangements of the elements that enter into it. When that is realized, the history as a whole should look like a manageable thing.

The world of concrete existence, then is no impartial transcript of the realm of essence; and it is no translation of pure logic into temporal terms – such terms being themselves, indeed, the negation of pure logic. It has the character and the range of content and of diversity which it happens to have. No rational ground predetermined from all eternity of what sort it should be or how much of the world of possibility should be included in it. It *is*, in short, a contingent world; its magnitude, its pattern, its habits, which we call laws, have something arbitrary and idiosyncratic about them. But if this were not the case, it would be a world without character, without power of preference or choice among the infinity of possibles.

The question arises whether Barba's invocation of Stanislavski goes beyond nostalgia for origins. Since Barba's aesthetics (apparent in his productions) bear no likeness to those of the Moscow Art Theatre, then nostalgia for origins seems an unlikely explanation for his heredity metaphor. If so, then what is the purpose of invoking an origin for a methodology? Searching for origins differs from searching for an identity.

See Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, ed. Donald F. Bouchard. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 140:

Genealogy does not oppose itself to history as the lofty and profound gaze of the philosopher might compare to the molelike perspective of the scholar; on the contrary, it rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for origins.

²² Franco Ruffini, "Stanislavski's System" in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese. *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1991).

²³ Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 31.

²⁴ Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*. (London: Routledge, 1995), n110.

²⁵ Jerzy Grotowski in Fernando Taviani, "The Odin Story" in Eugenio Barba. *Beyond the Floating Islands*, trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 239.

Chapter One

Principles and Terminology Practiced at Odin Teatret

Barba's connection with Stanislavski is demonstrated quite well by the daily routine at Odin Teatret. Their day-to-day activities provide a valuable frame for the consideration of Barba's praxis. Although Barba's productions present a challenging crucible for the consideration of contemporary experimental theatre, his unique training and rehearsal methodology along with the dynamics of the management of Odin Teatret, make his work a pinnacle of modern practice that recalls and goes beyond the theatre reforms of early twentieth century.

This chapter will examine four areas of Odin Teatret's activities that make it distinct from other theatre collectives and link it to Stanislavski's work, especially work done in the Art Theatre studios and in his home near the end of his life. The first area concerns the place, Odin Teatret in Holstebro, its daily routine, and terminology. Barba's terminology, which has gradually gained acceptance, exemplified by its adoption by other scholars concerned with acting theory such as Canadian Claire Borody, and Americans, Phillip Zarrilli and Lisa Wolford, delineates the actor's process in words that may be unfamiliar to the theatre student, such as *pre-expressivity*, *oppositions*, *sats*, and *extra daily*. These terms will be explained by describing their deployment in training and rehearsals observed at three different junctures, March 1985, June 1992, and August 1997.

The second area focuses on Barba and the Odin's methodologies in practice—their unique approach to training, improvisation, rehearsal, and *mise en scène* over the same period. Of especial interest is how, first in training and then in rehearsal,

the process involves transforming actors' raw materials into *mise en scène*—an operation Barba calls “a little kitchen.”¹ This acting methodology leads to viscerally evocative performances, but more important for this study is the process that produces those performances.

The third area is a brief discussion of an important value that initially appears to fall outside of acting methodology, but is germane to the consideration of the creative collective. This value is the group's ability to change methodology without changing its membership or losing their incentives to work. In this way the member, the group, and its traditions are protected. Change implies continuity; abrupt endings imply stasis. The strength of the theatre group and its tradition make change and therefore continuity possible.² This value, change/continuity, links Barba to Stanislavski in ways that bear out Barba's notion of theatre culture.

Theatre culture can be described as what Anatoly Smeliansky calls a “common home,” part of Russia's tradition of theatre collectives as a centerpiece of post-revolutionary national culture. A theatre culture was where one went for “communion” (see Appendix F). Theatre culture can be viewed as an ethos encompassing the actor's approach to work: colleagues, work conditions, and technique. This ethos must be flexible enough to accommodate the artists who comprise the creative collective, and it should grow as the artists' work gradually matures. In a biological laboratory, *culture* connotes a living thing, an organism, and organisms are prone to continual change. Stanislavski's propensity to change

methodology throughout his professional career demonstrates how he, too, promoted theatre culture without naming it as such.

The fourth and final area is an examination of Barba's notion of the theatre group (a group of practitioners who constitute their own producing agency rather than artists who work for hire) as an autonomous culture. Barba proposes that values set internally by the creative collective protect the work of actor and the group, and are therefore foundational to an autonomous theatre culture that has severed its roots from mainstream theatre and culture. The notion of theatre culture helps clarify Barba's claim of professional descent from Stanislavski, especially when his protégé Sulerzhitski's project of a utopian, Tolstoyan theatre community is considered as a precursor to Barba's signature concept of the theatre group as a floating island (see Appendix F).

Section I

The Daily Routine and Terminology

The Odin's emphasis on actor training is well known, but exactly what it is, what happens in training, and how it differs from rehearsals, are distinctions that should be reiterated in any study of Barba. Training is work on the actor's self without his or her involvement with a dramatic text. The work is rigorous both physically and vocally. In training, actors work on exercises that function in a variety of ways. Rather than use training as the accumulation of skills, at the Odin the function of training is twofold. One: it inculcates an actor's self-knowledge. Two: Training constitutes the raw material for the construction of

improvisation and *mise en scene*. Training should not be considered strictly as a premise to the profession. It is not a phase through which an actor passes—not merely a professional rite of passage—it is a life long occupation, an integral part of an actor’s identity within the vocation.

The terminology used by Barba and the Odin actors goes a long way towards explaining their training methodology. Rather than recycling the terminology of acting already in use throughout the profession—a terminology that does not really capture what Barba wants to convey—Barba and the Odin actors have invented their own language to describe their (and, as Barba believes, every actor’s) process. Their words capture the actors’ process in a decidedly more clinical way than the familiar terms associated with acting, such as *objective*, *private moment*, *improvisation*, *spontaneity*, *emotion*, *warm-up*, or *stage presence*. Although Barba occasionally uses these terms, he rarely does so in the usual sense.

The most effective way to explain the daily routine and terminology at Odin is to give examples from training and rehearsal that elucidate Barba’s principles. Throughout this chapter a few exemplary rehearsals will be revisited, since they tend to clarify that which exists not only in theory but also in practice.

Training: 1985

In March, 1985 the Odin was in rehearsals for Barba’s *The Gospel According to Oxyrhincus*, Richard Fowler’s *Wait for the Dawn*, and two pieces from Iben Rasmussen’s group, FARFA, *Wounded by the Wind* and *Marriage with God* (See

Appendix B for actors' biographies).³ At 7:00 a.m. each day actors did physical training. Here is an example of what an observer at the theatre would have seen in at a training session in March 1985.

The actors, Julia Varley, Richard Fowler, and Iben Rasmussen begin with some basic stretches, kicks, and leaps—rather fantastic leaps. After a while, Fowler puts on some music and the exercises appear to take on a rhythmic quality. Each actor is working on completely different exercises. Unlike most actor-training situations, they are not working together. This is not the regimented work required by Biomechanics (Meyerhold's seemingly mechanical actor training regimen in which the body moves through formal positions that are boldly theatrical and athletic simultaneously), nor has it anything to do with Grotowski's well known "beehives" (collective training involving large groups of actors moving purposefully in many different directions, resembling a beehive) from his paratheatrical period.⁴ Though working separately, the actors appear to be interacting because they are in such close physical proximity to each other.

Rasmussen kicks her hands at face level. She repeats this, first with fans in her hands, then knives. Varley does leaps and slow motion headrolls. Fowler does a dance of oppositions while superimposing T.S. Eliot's poem "The Hollowmen" using a variety of vocal resonators.⁵ His work with vocal resonators is basic to Grotowski's vocal training program, described in *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Oppositions are exercises in which, as one body part moves in one direction, its opposite moves in an opposite direction. Although there are no absolute rules that prescribe which body part is the opposite of another, the exercise helps the actor

think with his or her whole body. Opposition exercises help the actor discover new, personal forms of movement, and break with symmetrical movements associated with dance and the automatic movements used in everyday situations.

For the outside observer witnessing training at the Odin, the idea of using training as anything more than a means towards greater virtuosity in a specific genre may seem strange. But there is more to Odin training than physical virtuosity. Watching these early morning sessions allows the observer to comprehend the structure of Odin training, the way basic exercises are knit together into personal training. It might not have been clear to the observer in 1985 that these actors were working with their internal faculties (emotion, intention, or memory) because these are not easily seen. The primary reason for this potential confusion is that the actors' work is so physically demanding that the observer may initially view it as skill accumulation and physical virtuosity. However, for such extreme action to have the meaning and impact it has in the theatre, to distinguish it from circus-like acrobatics, training must be motivated by internal processes such as desire, emotion, memory, and thought. At the root of the present investigation of Barba and the Odin is the question of what lies at the core of such extreme physical action. Understanding the core of physical action is ultimately of value to actors in other kinds of theatres.

The work in the March 1985 training sessions—the methodology—differed from what had been reported previously in theatre journals, textbooks, and video documentation. Though an outside observer might have expected regimented, arduous daily training involving the entire group, supervised by Barba, only three

actors were training, and they were not under his supervision. The training was individual, and the actors were autonomous, each working within his or her own personal training. This differed from the Odin's earlier Grotowskian model of a group that trained together under the gaze of a benevolent director.

By 1985 the Odin (then twenty-one years old) had undergone significant changes. Yet in spite of changes in the methodology, certain principles characteristic of the Odin were in use then. They have remained in use and elaborated upon over the years. After years of continued watching, an observer may discern the principles from the surface of the actors' bodies in action and their daily routine.

The Process Changes—Principles Remain Intact

In 1992, when the Odin was at work rehearsing *Kaosmos* (1992-97), the work process was equally rigorous, but the kind of individual training done in 1985 was no longer such a major part of the process of creating a performance. Over the intervening years, the group's approach to training had changed continuously, and, whatever that new methodology, it became a building block for new *mise en scènes*. In the early years, 1964 to the late seventies, Odin actors spent most of their time working as a group, pursuing rigorous daily acrobatic, dance, and vocal training. They slowly transformed their training into etudes or scores (exercises linked together into a longer exercise or an elaborate series of exercises or an improvisation). These scores then became the actions that supported a text, usually introduced later in the process. In general it was Barba who supplied the

texts. In these early years, productions took up to two years to take form, a great deal of that time devoted to daily training. Some remnants of that kind of individual training remained in 1985, but already the original actors (Else Marie Laukvik and Torgeir Wethal) were not involved in it.

One reason that individual training was no longer a major part of the daily work routine was that four new actors had joined the group as apprentices (Kai Bredholdt, Hisako Miura, Tina Nielsen, and Isabel Ubeda). Most veteran members, not only the founders, no longer felt the need for so much acrobatic training, having already spent eighteen to twenty-eight years as acrobatic actors. Although some Odin veterans still trained privately, due to the presence of new actors, group training and individual training had been supplanted by a mentoring situation in which the new members trained one to one, each with a veteran actor. This training was then transformed into aspects of the *mise en scène* of *Kaosmos*. Much of the physical work done in *Kaosmos* rehearsals had been generated by older actors' earlier individual training in advanced movement and vocal exercises refined through years of autodidactic, self-training. These actors' physical and vocal experience and expertise was then passed on to the new members through mentoring. The principles, rather than the appearance, of these exercises were passed on to the initiates as frameworks for their training. They then found personal ways of creating their own physical scores. The actors' scores (or improvisations) were then shown to Barba who interpolated them into the *mise en scène* of *Kaosmos* through a process of adjusting the actors' work,

justifying it with the project's various texts drawn from Kafka, Kipling, and Hans Christian Andersen.

In spite of the varying approaches to training taken over the years, the process of transforming the actors' training scores into *mise en scène* remains a constant dramaturgical approach taken by Barba. How these raw materials, the actors' scores of action, are arrived at, how the actors' training is transformed into performance, and also how the methodology changes sometimes subtly, sometimes drastically, over the years is what makes the Odin's methodology so important to the practice of acting.

Also significant is the important part mentoring plays in maintaining the cohesion of the group—a way of fostering their own tradition. At the Odin the power of the action to stimulate meaningful performance is inherent in their mentoring and apparent in how mentors and new actors work together in rehearsals—rehearsals that function as much as a laboratory for training as they are crucibles for the production yet to come.

Exemplary Rehearsal: 1992 *Kaosmos* Rehearsal

What follows is a description of a *Kaosmos* rehearsal that occurred in June 1992: A great deal of time and care goes into folding, cutting and laying out material (cloth and fur), and determining the exact placement of musical instruments in the playing area. Barba sits silently in the back of the Black Room.⁶ The actors move in front of him to show their costumes. He talks quietly

in each actor's ear. More material is brought in. It is folded and arranged. A song is rehearsed. Kai Bredholdt wraps a chair in a piece of fur.

Hisako Miura moves in an exploratory manner as though finding her way through darkness. Crouching behind her, her mentor, Varley is moving her hands to shadow the movements of Miura's feet. A chant explodes from Isabel Ubeda and her mentor, Roberta Carreri—a fifteenth century Spanish song of the shepherds in the fields based on the *Gospel According to Luke* celebrating the birth of Christ. Bredholdt binds himself with chains as he sings along with Ubeda and Carreri. Seated on the fur-wrapped chair, Bredholdt is posed like Christ on the Cross. Clothes and fur are strewn about the stage while the singing continues. Bredholdt, in chains, now lying on fur, is dragged by the actors, and dropped outside the playing area as a song whose lyrics are taken from Kipling's *The Jungle Book* is sung. "Children of the camp are we, scaring ancient history." Jan Ferslev, with knives up his sleeves, begins an absurd dance with an equally absurd look on his face. He pulls knives from all parts of his costume. While continuing the dance, he drops the knives onto a red cloth upon which he is standing.

Next comes a parade comprised of a rock and roll song in English accompanied by foot stomping, whip cracking, and belt snapping for rhythm. After that Miura holds up a clear plastic tarp coated with white powder, and hides behind it. Ubeda picks up Ferslev's knives, wraps them in the red cloth, and drives points into the powdered sheet, splitting it and revealing Miura. This is followed by a dance in which Miura's movements appear controlled by Ubeda

who shadows her from behind. Ubeda's movements are similar to those of Varley at the beginning, but with a different outcome. As though attached to her with invisible strings, Ubeda gradually pulls Miura to the ground. Then Ubeda tries to get her to stand up again, like one animal trying to nudge a dead animal playfully at first and then desperately. Ubeda then bites the material on the right side of Miura's skirt by her thigh and drags her. Finally Ubeda lifts her, puts her across her back and carries her to the side. (See Appendix C for journals of *Kaosmos* rehearsals.)

In this work situation, as in most of the Odin's work, the text (mostly songs) does not inform the action, rather the action informs the text until the two are united. The actions have been fixed well in advance of the introduction of texts. This approach is also taken with elements like props and scenery, independent elements often without any sign value related to the text. They are introduced late in the process after the physical scores have been perfected.

The "Profession of the Observer"

An enormous amount of energy and physical strength went into gaining the level of precision in these actor dances. Just watching the rehearsals was exhausting.⁷ What follows is an excerpt from a 1997 interview with Odin archivist, Lluís Masgrau having to do with what he calls "profession of the observer."

SB: I know that the rehearsals are very difficult, not just for the actors, but for the observer. . . .

LM: There is a myth about observers, saying that the observer is doing nothing but sitting there; that's a myth. The observer is working very hard and when you [leave] the room you are sometimes completely exhausted.⁸

Observers are people who visit the Odin outside the context of a workshop or a conference. They are not to be confused with spectators. Observers are scholars or professionals from other theatres. They attend training and rehearsal, and play an active role in the theatre's daily routine—clean, proofread, translate, work on scenery, and deploy whatever other skills they may have. Such an observer is Lluís Masgrau. In 1992 Masgrau was an observer intending to visit for a short time. In 1997, five years later, his short visit has become his vocation. As resident intellectual, Masgrau is the theatre's archivist and editor on many of Barba's recent writing projects. Masgrau regularly goes back and forth between Barcelona and Holstebro, interrupting his work in Denmark to resume his work as a theatre instructor in Spain.

Like most visitors to the Odin, Masgrau lives behind the theatre in "the pavilion," in a small, cell-like dormitory room. He cooks in the communal kitchen and takes his meals in the theatre's modest library where he also shares a desk and computer with other staff.

It is through the eyes of such an observer that Barba's process can be witnessed and analyzed with an equal balance of distance and intimacy with the subject—a critical yet familiar eye.

August 1997

In August 1997 the Odin is just beginning its new project, *Mythos. Kaosmos* had recently closed after running from 1993 to 1996. If the observer in 1997 is hoping to see once again the process of actor training and mentoring gradually transformed first into the construction of physical scores, then into improvisation, and finally into *mise en scène*, he or she will be surprised. This preliminary set of steps taken by Barba at the beginning of the Odin's work process has changed again. In fact, the most consistent thing about the Odin is their commitment to continual change. The Odin observer who visits the theatre intermittently over the years tends to discover significant shifts in methodology as time passes.

The Workday

The organization and daily routine of the creative collective exemplifies its ethos. At the Odin the daily routine is distinguished by the lack of any outward appearance of a division of labor.

The workday, in August 1997, is broken down as follows: 8:00 a.m., Red Room, *Ode to Progress* rehearsals. *Ode to Progress* is called a "ballet." It is a kind of street theatre or pageant with songs and Odin dances to be performed in August during Holstebro's annual *Festuge* (Festival Week). This kind of street theatre is an Odin tradition dating back to the period of the "Barbers" in the early 1970s.⁹ At 9:00 a.m., individual vocal work is conducted in private. At 9:30 vocal work is done in pairs. At 10:30 a.m., all actors go to the Music Room for vocal work, setting the poems of Norwegian poet Henrik Nordbrandt to music.

At 11:45 a.m., rehearsal for the Odin's newest production *Mythos*, begins in the White Room. At 2:00 p.m., the actors take a lunch break. Work resumes in the White Room at 3:00 p.m., and continues until 5:00 p.m., sometimes running later. Often, during the lunch break, the actors take care of the theatre's correspondence or administrative work in their dressing rooms, which function more like offices than traditional dressing rooms. The actors also tend to arrive early and stay late to complete their administrative work.

In spite of the rigors of the routine, an observer can lose consciousness of the time of day by the end of the afternoon rehearsal. The actors never watch the time, nor are they ever late. The workday's rhythm is second nature to them. The rhythm of the day is quite different than it was in 1985 and 1992. In 1992 Ubeda spoke of riding her bicycle to the theatre on snowy mornings at 5:00 a.m. to train alone long enough to be ready to train with her mentor, Carreri at 7:00 a.m. and then begin her day of *Kaosmos* rehearsal at 8:00 a.m. Now, in 1997, work starts a little later and more slowly, more gently. What was once an atmosphere of austerity and strict self-discipline has been replaced with vigorous self-assurance. The work will begin on time, without hurry, and will reach a boiling point regardless of quiet beginnings. Now, instead of strenuous individual physical training, music and vocal training begin the day. What has remained the same, however, is that the first part of every day is devoted to learning or training and the second part of the day is devoted to rehearsal.

Although the group's methodology shifts, basic values remain the same. The values at the Odin are group-developed. That day-to-day menial work must be

done is an unspoken ethic. People communicate what is expected through action. Harry Carlson tells a story of his visit to the Odin in the seventies during the first of the Odin's Open Weeks.¹¹ Having arrived at the theatre earlier than the other visitors, Carlson remembers wandering around the lobby hoping to meet Barba or one of the actors. He says he only saw a cleaning woman busy scrubbing the toilets. He introduced himself to her and asked if any of the actors were there. The "cleaning woman" said, "Yes. I am here." She was the actor, Else Marie Laukvik, a founding member from the original group gathered in Oslo in 1964.¹² In spite of the lack of any strict division of labor, the Odin has a regimented daily routine to which they adhere with strict self-discipline. Menial tasks are assigned at the beginning of each week and all group members take responsibility for certain administrative duties. This is not to say that the Odin does not have its administrators, but each member is fully involved in the theatre's management through actually participating in front office work.

Mythos

An observer in 1997 might expect to observe the kind of process in rudimentary rehearsals in which training is transformed into performance like 1985 and 1992, but he or she would actually encounter a rehearsal process in which it seems that technical rehearsals, with large set pieces and lights, have begun before introducing a text or characters, a process in which the external form or shell of a performance precedes its content. The work on *Mythos* has begun altogether differently from anything done at the Odin before. In previous weeks

the work on *Mythos* has been structured into segments in which actors do double duty by performing as stagehands who move unwieldy scenery as they create their roles. In a recent speech given recently in L'Aquila, Italy about the theme of *Mythos*, Barba repeated what he had told the actors at the first rehearsal. He explained that the new project has to do with the *Columna Prestes*, a military insurrection against corrupt generals in Brazil, expressive of a longing for a just society. He is also particularly fascinated by the literal dismemberment (severing the hands and feet) of the Ona tribe of Chile as means to enforce colonial supremacy (See Appendix D for "Severed Hands Rehearsal"). *Mythos* also deals with Barba's desire to "mourn the death of a myth."¹³ He proposed to do this through the fictional confrontation of *Columna Prestes*' hero, Guilhermino Barbosa with a variety of mythic heroes such as Oedipus, Cassandra, and Orpheus.

At this point much of *Mythos* is still unformed. The characters are Larsen: Oedipus; Winther: Lucky; Carreri: Cassandra; Rasmussen: Medea; Bredholdt: A Confederate Soldier; Ferslev: Orpheus; Wethal: Tiraseus (although in the ultimate production he is Odysseus); and Varley: Daedalus. The place is simultaneously a burying ground, a mass grave, a beach, a stone garden, a ceremonial field, or, in Larsen's words, "a theatrical kind of Zen/spiritual space." The action is unclear. Larsen says, "Bredholdt buries the revolution with his accordion."¹⁴

Though the action is unclear, it is clear that the Odin actors have never begun their rehearsal from so concrete a point of departure. It is also clear that Barba

has a definite idea of what kind of story he wants to tell in spite of the lack of a text, as his speech at the conference in L'Aquila indicates.

In the next production I want to mourn the death of a myth.

I have no plot, no characters, no sequence of events. I must invent the story myself, meet it along the way. Therefore I feel the sensation of falling, of having nothing beneath my feet.¹⁵

Without knowing exactly what they are doing, Barba and the Odin have two definite points of departure, the theme of the death of a myth and the actors' years of assiduous training. All the work is carried out with great precision and the assurance that, although "falling," this process will eventually lead to a performance. The technical elements and manual labor inform the way the actors' physical work and the sung Nordbrandt texts are used.

Sats and the Pre-expressive

Gradually, as the observer watches rehearsals, certain of Barba's key concepts can be seen at work. On Wednesday, August 13, 1997 begins rehearsal in the White Room at 11:00 a.m. The tables are set. Barba discusses how to transform the two enormous tables into two towers and then, during the transformation, spread gravel, contained in troughs located in the bases of the two towers, in the shape of a road. To achieve the road's proper width, the gravel is molded and scraped with a board the width of the road with small, lip-like extensions that form the road's edges. The actors are testing costumes. Larsen is practicing "*O Sole Mio*" on his cornet. Ferslev and Winther play a guitar and violin duet while

Carreri dances Flamenco. She momentarily straightens her legs, locking her knees. Barba says, “*Sats* Roberta, *sats*.”

Sats is the Norwegian word Barba uses to describe the physical position of readiness in which the actor’s body literally accumulates energy. *Sats* is a practical application of well-known Barba’s principle of pre-expressivity. While performing an action, the body accumulates the necessary energy by moving in the opposite direction of the action. For example to throw a ball forward, the thrower draws his or her arm back accumulating the energy necessary to propel the ball. The *sats* are accumulated in the moment that the arm is restrained just prior to releasing the ball. If action is the release of energy, *sats* is the position of the body just prior to initiating release. To jump up, a person bends his or her knees pulling the body down to accumulate the energy necessary to leave the ground. The body cannot leave the ground (leap) if its knees are locked and it stands erect. The *sats* can be large and visible or small and virtually invisible, but ultimately all *sats* originate in the torso and spine, the impulse center, where the messages are sent throughout the musculature. Here a continuous chain of restraints and releases continues as long as the body is in movement. In her 1993 New York workshop, Carreri defined *sats* as “energy in the legs and in the spine that can make you jump whenever you want. You are always ready to go. It is ‘latent presence,’ but it is always there.”¹⁶ On the other hand, Carreri explained, when an actor locks his or her knees or fully extends his or her arms, the readiness to go any further disappears, the accumulated energy dissipates, and the actor can only go in one direction—backwards.

While an actor's body accumulates energy, it also radiates energy regardless of whether the energy is released through overt action. Barba and Carreri call this *dynamic immobility*. This is essential to Barba and Stanislavski's central question—what are the keys to creating consistently evocative performance? The *sats* are continuous throughout the acting process. They do not cease once the body is moving because, since the body continues to move, the *sats* continue in tandem with each action, preparing the body for each ensuing action no matter how minute, therefore the *sats* are one of the keys for which Stanislavski searched.

In an interview with Masgrau, the question of the visibility and tangibility of the *sats*, and therefore energy, is addressed:

SB: I see it this way and tell me if I am on the right track. I see the actor working with a series of internal impulses that tell the muscles what to do and, when you have done your work, over a long period of time, there is a chain of impulses, which are invisible for the audience, but very present for the actor. Is this more in keeping with what you are talking about?

LM: Well, first of all, I don't think the chain of impulses is invisible. If the impulse is clear it could be visible. In fact it is subtle so that you have to train your eyes to see them. I remember Eugenio talking about *sats*—what you call impulse. And when I arrived here I read a lot about the *sats*. And I saw Eugenio in the room always telling the actors, "Ah, *sats* here. There. *Sats*. Put these *sats* together with that." And I was not able to see any *sats*. I was asking myself all the time, "what is he talking about?" And I had some conversations with Eugenio and he explained in subtle ways what *sats* was. But I was not able to see any *sats* in the room. And after several months of seeing the Odin Theatre actors work, suddenly I was able to see the *sats* in Roberta's work. It was the first time, because she is very clear with the *sats*. She is very good at working with impulse. So, I remember the day I had been able to see the *sats*. Ah! There is the *sats*—a very clear one. Then, you start to see the not-so-clear ones and then you are able to

read the *sats*. (See Appendix E for more of the Masgrau interview).¹⁷

The difference between expression and the *sats* helps distinguish the difference between the analysis of performance and the analysis of methodology.¹⁸

Understanding methodology in Barba's terms also enables the practitioner to become clearer about what the word *energy* means in his or her own practice.

The notion of *sats* is perhaps the most useful way to clarify what Barba calls *the pre-expressive*. Pre-expressivity is how Barba describes that aspect of an actor's work that makes his or her performance full of energy (what is often known as presence). Pre-expressivity has less to do with the chronology of the acting process than the prefix "pre" suggests. Rather, it is an organizational level in the process that always complements and supports the expressive. The pre-expressive level functions even during expression. The pre-expressive allows the actor's body to simultaneously accumulate and radiate energy.

The purpose of this technical substratum, pre-expressivity, is *not* in and of itself to hold the spectator's attention, because the pre-expressive is invisible, but the pre-expressive is a necessary premise for evocative performance. The pre-expressive is a level in the actor's work at which he or she accumulates the energy that is released at the expressive level. The pre-expressive does not merely precede expression but accompanies it. Pre-expressivity is present before, during, and after an action. The accumulation of energy that is at the same time tangible yet invisible is that principle in Barba's methodology that can be said to be shared. The way actors of various cultures accumulate and then release energy may differ, but neither the actual qualities of energy as an element, nor the

principles that support the various means of accumulation of energy vary, although the mechanics of accumulation themselves *do* differ. So principles are constant but mechanics (methodology and expression) differ.

At the Odin the actors' release of energy is manifested through restraint of action and through precision rather than quick or violent movements of the body. Odin actors do not dissipate energy through extreme action or action thrown about carelessly or taken without purpose. Often more energy radiates from the immobile actor than the one who moves; sometimes it emerges from the restraint and concentration required by precise actions. This is apparent in the dynamic immobility of Carreri's work on Flamenco. This radiation occurs by various practical techniques. For Barba and the Odin there is nothing mysterious about it

In the Odin's rehearsals an observer may see examples of the pre-expressive as a manifestation of performative energy that makes the actors always compelling, echoing Barba and Stanislavski's essential question—what make the performer compelling in one performance and dull in the next?

Exemplary Rehearsal; 1992 *Kaosmos* Rehearsal

The actors make a circle. Barba instructs from the seats. They begin a movement exercise, each with an imaginary stick in hand. The actors assume positions of preparation to throw, throwing, preparation to catch, and catching, as well as specific movements associated with maintaining balance. They take into consideration the weight of the stick, the extension of the arm behind the body prior to throwing it forward, the follow-through motion of the arm after release,

and the various balancing positions of the feet and legs throughout all stages of the throw. An observer may be reminded of Rasmussen's work demonstration at La Mama in 1984, of how an exercise based on throwing a stick led to a leaping dance which was part of the energetic language of movement done by her Katrin the Mute in *Brecht's Ashes*. The movement is done in unison, but there is no particular initiator. While watching for initiation, an observer will see that at one moment, one person appears to initiate, but when the exercise is repeated, the initiation begins with someone else, and never with whom the observer expects. This is not a clockwise or counterclockwise rotation. It is a leaderless exercise done in perfect unison. Barba says "Julia, resist. Slow Motion. Slow Motion! Torgeir! *Slow Motion!*" This slow motion gradually establishes itself. It appears difficult to resist the temptation to do the throwing action at full speed. By resisting an imaginary force, Varley's movements take on a dynamism whereby the energy required to go slowly radiates in such a way as to make every movement theatrically compelling.

Standing upstage, Miura, who is not participating in the exercise, appears to be standing at rest, but her immobility is radiant. She has her feet and toes turned in, her legs slightly bent, and hands behind her back. Even at rest her energy bursts forth. I am reminded of a conversation with Ubeda: "Sometimes, when I am working, I feel as if my whole body is going to explode. Like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon."¹⁹ So, this desire to burst forth provides limitless justification for such a painstaking, precise process, connecting the actor's visible external work to his or her invisible internal work (See Appendix C for more

descriptions of *Kaosmos* rehearsals).

“Stanislavski in the Results:” Elaboration, Subscore, and Internal Reality; Tage

Larsen

Inasmuch as the essential concerns at the Odin would appear to be the physical training and presence of the actor, the internal, psychological connection of the physical to what may simply be called the emotional (although Barba and his actors shun the word *emotion*) is of equal importance. The ultimate aim of Odin actors' work is to create meaningful performances, in which, for the actor, mind and body are unified in one expressive medium, rather than two that mediate each other's possibilities. What concerns one actor at the Odin may not interest another. But what is exciting about Barba's relationship with his actors is that the collective is constructed such that each member may pursue his or her questions and obsessions in training. Their discoveries go towards Barba's ultimate understanding of the actor's process. His knowledge of acting is not so much his own but theirs—the actors and Barba together.

Some Odin actors are reluctant to give formal interviews. Nor do they feel the need to teach outsiders how to understand their work. One such actor is Tage Larsen, who joined the Odin in 1974. Fortunately Larsen spoke about his work when he discovered the nature of this study.

He is frustrated by the lack of dramatic dialogue in recent Odin productions including the current work. He questions what he perceives as the haphazard way the work is being handled on the new production. He wants technical perfection.

His sense of craftsmanship is offended by the way Barba and the others run from one solution to the next when dealing with the tower/gravel problem in *Mythos* rehearsals, dropping one solution in midstream to pursue another, never definitely solving the problem, but rather halted in the same place for days without entering into the work on acting (see Appendix D for more on the tower/gravel problem). He says *Kaosmos* left him cold. Larsen states that he has read very little of Barba's writings. He does claim to be strongly influenced by Stanislavski. "My desire is to find Stanislavski in the result." This is not a renunciation of Odin dramaturgy as much as it is a demonstration that Larsen expects to justify physical action through its connection to inner reality.

He, like most of his colleagues, works through a process the Odin actors call *elaboration*. It entails establishing a score of fixed physical actions, usually harvested from a text, sometimes from an improvisation. The text (or improvisation) serves as a trampoline for the actions. The initial text is then dropped and a new text is superimposed on the actions after they are mastered. The physical actions are adjusted and justified as they meet with the new text even though it is neither informed by nor connected to that set of actions. This changes the meaning of the actions without changing their form. Independent of the text are the inner thoughts it evoked; once evoked, these response have their own essence regardless of their origins. This chain of underlying internal thoughts and impulses that impel an actor's physical actions are called the *subscore*. The subscore is the same regardless of what text is used or the magnitude of the physical actions.²⁰ This approach, or variations on it, is a

common thread in all the Odin actors' work. Larsen's "Stanislavski in the result" refers to the way the new text is justified by the previously conceived physical actions through adjustment and play with both voice and action. The form of the work is comprised of precise actions that may vary in size, rhythm, or intensity, but they must not lose their shape. The text meets, sometimes collides, with this form, and what is expressed takes shape as a product of this meeting. This method by which physical actions acquire meaning through awareness of internal physical impulses is a highly refined approach to Stanislavski's work on justifying physical action with the inner reality or emotion it elicits, the Method of Physical Actions.

Larsen talks about the importance of inner reality, and explains that all acting is realistic because the actor's inner reality connects all the physical actions to powerful thoughts, images, reactions, and impulses (the subscore) regardless of the genre of the work. This has been an ongoing topic of discussion between Larsen and me over the years.

In 1988, when my colleague Vernice Miller and I showed our *Medea; Nine Night* at the Odin, there were many moments when Medea looked offstage to suggest that she was being chased by Jason and his minions. The action of our piece took place during the hours immediately following Medea's murder of the children. We imagined that, had Apollo not rescued her, she would have been pursued through the outskirts of Corinth, and would eventually have to bury the bodies of the dead children. After the performance Larsen asked, "Why did Medea look offstage so much at the people who were chasing her?" I said,

“Because we wanted to justify the action with realistic details. Is it too realistic?” He said, “I don’t object to its realism. In fact it wasn’t realistic enough. What is her internal reality?” His reaction surprised me because I had previously imagined that, at the Odin, the more divorced from reality the action, the more suggestive it would be to the audience—but suggestive of what? Perhaps nothing because our Medea’s actions were so divorced from the internal reality of the character and the actor. This notion of internal reality was new to me, and that showed how poorly I had understood both Barba and Stanislavski in 1988.

Internal reality is a form of experience. It can include the emotions, but it is not limited to them. In his original manuscripts Stanislavski says:

While daydreaming, the actor visualizes the circumstances and conditions of the life of his role in all its most trivial details [...] He feels himself at the center of this created world; in the very thick of the role’s life. It disturbs him, makes him happy, or frightens him. He wants to enjoy it or to run away [. . .]. He is activated. He becomes the main character. This action – even if only in his mind’s eye – is already motion, life. This action, which is analogous to that of the role, is already a little piece of the role’s life, already an experiencing of it. Dreaming – we act; acting – we experience.²¹

Sharon Carnicke writes, “Stanislavsky wants to empower actors and banish ideas that displace them as the nexus of creativity. For him, the subconscious is inner ‘poetry’ that the actor consciously organizes through the ‘grammar’ of technique.”²² This understanding of technique is also Barba’s *modus operandi*. He makes the actor the “nexus of creativity” by focusing on the “grammar of technique.” Through the grammar of technique, Stanislavski’s internal poetry (exemplified by the techniques of affective memory) dovetails with physical action. This “inner ‘poetry’” is also what Larsen means by internal reality.

Larsen also discusses the closing of his own Yorick Teatret and his recent return to the Odin after twelve years away. “Yes I had choices. There were a lot of tempting projects, but no theatre group was willing to make a commitment to me, and I was not interested in these kinds of temporary arrangements.” Larsen’s distinction between two kinds of theatre troupes helps explain what makes Odin unique. The Odin is not merely another production company that manufactures shows by means of some sophisticated production apparatus. Rather, it is a group that cultivates highly professional work. It does this partly through its training and partly its commitment to its members, through an ethos based on the protection of the actor.

Section II

Methodology in Practice; “A Little Kitchen”

Cooking in the theatre is a process of transforming raw material into *mise en scène* in much the same way that ingredients become food. Just as recipes are not used in most kitchens, so directors like Barba create with an intimate knowledge of his own work and the work of his colleagues. Theatre scholar Erika Fisher Lichte establishes a valuable context for this study while referring to Meyerhold’s innovations in her “Theatre and the Civilizing Process.”

The body no longer functioned as a natural sign for human emotions and psychic states but rather as material to be shaped and used in order to signify other things. The actor presented his body not as a natural expression of the mind or soul of a dramatic character but as *raw material* by means of a formed sign that represents whatever he wanted it to express.²³

This study does not necessarily support Fisher Lichte's thesis that the actor's body functions as a sign system, but she does set a precedent for the notion that the body's activities drawn from an actor's training function as raw materials for performance. Although Fisher Lichte tends to mix actors' methodology with spectatorial aesthetics, she is not really concerned with determining methodology as much as how the uses of the body in performance inform social practice and how social practice informs the uses of the body in performance. But it is useful to see the actor's use of his or her body as "raw materials" for a performance because this perspective removes the actor's body from the context of the performance of a fiction or dramatic text, and looks at it in isolation. This is what training does. The process moving towards performance can be considered more clinically without confusing aesthetics with methodology. By viewing the body and an actor's training as raw materials for performance, the meaning of many of Barba's terms, such as *dynamic immobility*, *sats*, *pre-expressivity*, and *extra daily technique* become clearer. They are ways of gaining access to and then making tangible the actor's raw materials.

In *Mythos* rehearsals it is significant that the transformation of raw materials differs from the process in 1985 and 1992. Rather than actors focusing on developing new scores of action during rehearsals, most of the scores used in *Mythos* have been fixed a long time ago in training, work demonstrations, and other performances, *Kaosmos* in particular. Here they are virtually recycled in a new context. The transformation here has more to do with the way the meaning of physical objects, set pieces, and properties, is transformed through their use as

they meet with the actors' scores. It is in these meetings that energy is released at the moments when new meanings are discovered, both energy and meaning become new raw materials. The role of what Barba calls recurring principles: energy, dynamic immobility, and the *sats* is apparent in the work in spite of the different approach.²⁴

Exemplary Rehearsal; 1997 *Mythos* Rehearsal

To get a picture of what Barba does in a work setting, which differs from how one might imagine his work based solely on what has been written—how the process comes together, the importance of the process to the outcome—the following rehearsal transcription is chosen to demonstrate how Barba's work principles are used in a practical context.

On August 7, at 1:30 p.m., rehearsal begins in the White Room. A long strand of black and white goat hooves runs from right to left in a straight line through the gravel on the floor. Rasmussen is gathering the strand in a picturesque snakelike coil. Then she uncoils it, pulling it back into a straight line. Rasmussen coils the hooves again into a figure eight. On top of this double coil she places two tribal masks facing up and out to the audience with the frayed rope ends of the hoof strand poking through the masks' eyes. Carreri removes the masks, pulls apart the figure eight, and stretches the strand from one end of the gravel road to the other. She then rearranges it into a human form. Barba measures the width of the chest of the human form. Carreri puts a mask where faces would be. She pulls

the strands and uncoils the human. Now Rasmussen coils a double figure eight; it looks like a snake.

The actors set up the long wooden tables at left and at right. The coiled hoof strand is at center, lying in the gravel between the two tables. The tables are covered with the bamboo mats and white cloth. The two gravel-spreading troughs are attached underneath the tables. The strings extending from the ends of the hoof strand are buried under the gravel and are invisible. The final position of the long table at center is spiked. The troughs are loaded. The right table—tilted from its table position on a forty-five degree angle and rolled to center from its position in front of the right curtain—covers most of the stage right floor with gravel. The width of the trough is slightly narrower than the table allowing its wheels to roll without being impeded by the spreading gravel. Then the actors lift the left table, roll it to meet the right table at center, while the gravel pours out its trough. The long table is in place. Both troughs are reloaded with gravel. Then the long table is set with place settings. The actors take their seats around the table, ready to begin. Wethal runs out of the room to get a pair of sunglasses for Larsen. Others run off to get other props. When they have returned, all the actors except Larsen go to the right curtain and take a crowd pose. Larsen sits alone at the table in sunglasses. The actors at the curtain are passing around a flask. Then, they take their places at the table. Larsen taps his glass, rises, stands behind his chair, makes a toast, and a little speech. They all rise and sing “*The Internationale*” softly. The song ends. They all sit. Larsen taps his glass. They all rise, and Larsen makes another toast. “*O Sole Mio*” is sung with vigor and

then all exit; half go right, half left. Wethal (Tiraseus) and Winther (Lucky) enter. Wethal speaks. "Think swine. Stool swine." Winther picks up two chairs. On orders from Wethal, Winther positions the chairs for the next scene. Winther separates the two table pieces, pulling the left one further left so more gravel pours out, extending the road to the black curtain. The same is done at right. The tables are now located at left and right leaving a wide gap between them that can be used as a playing space.

Wethal and Winther are at right. Wethal sits in a chair. Ferslev tests a light on him. Winther takes the pose of a conductor and leads the actors in a song. "Stop!" Barba arranges the entrances. He wants to do it alphabetically. He asks the observers, "ABCD. Who comes first?" They are taken by surprise and get the letters out of order—Ferslev, Rasmussen, then Carreri. He takes their suggestion anyway. Ferslev comes in first, crosses to the coil at center, kneels and rattles it with his fingers. The actors chant overtones, a new vocal technique, in the background (see Appendix D for a description of the overtones). Ferslev places his head in the coiled strand of goat hooves, rises slowly, crosses left, and sits beneath the tower. Rasmussen enters from left, crosses to the left corner of the table, touches it and, goes to the corner of the right table, touches it and sits on it. Carreri enters and crosses between the left curtain and table and then goes along the side of the table; she walks slowly along the table's perimeter with one hand outstretched, palm down, and stops at the coiled hooves. Slowly, she drops her outstretched hand to touch it. She then reverses her hand position, palm up, crosses backwards to the table, and lies on its edge. Barba asks that she include

elements of Flamenco in her walk, especially the positioning of the arms and hands above her head. The walk becomes a stylized Flamenco walk including the foot stomps. She whispers her Nordbrandt text in Italian. Barba stops her to ask that she clasp her hands above her head and hold their backs together. He holds both wrists and asks her to push his hands away; she cannot. “Exactly” he says. The energy of her push creates a kind of physical tension—a kind of arrested *sats*. She repeats this segment of the score finishing with the hands clasped above her head, wrists locked together, pushing out with the forearms. This immobile pose becomes action and has even greater energy than the Flamenco walk. Everyone else stops working and watches silently. The White Room fills with Carreri’s physical presence. (See Appendix D for descriptions of 1997 *Mythos* rehearsals.)

The Physical Actions at the Odin

How Odin actors speak about their work during training and rehearsal demonstrates their tacit allegiance to Stanislavski’s teachings. Their everyday vocabulary is laced with expressions like *physical action*, *score*, and *subscore*. An observer will hear these expressions all the time.

On Monday, August 4 at 9:30 a.m., during the *Ode to Progress* rehearsal in the Red Room, Larsen sings “Jump Down Turn around Pick a Bale of Cotton” while others rehearse their dances. Rasmussen begins “Get Along Little Doggies” in an expressionless hypnotic voice that gradually becomes a kind of field holler or an arhoolie (a kind of work song of the enslaved African Americans). Her accompanying score of physical actions have the appearance of outdoor work. She says she is trying to concretize the physical actions to accompany the chant.

Odin actors like Rasmussen generally refer to the movement component of their work as *physical actions*. The Odin's conception of physical actions differs slightly from Stanislavski's usage. Although they function similarly as conduits to and from the inner life of the actor (which includes the emotions), they are not rooted in the drama's action as they were for Stanislavski because, at the Odin, play texts, as Stanislavski knew them, are not done. The physical action at the Odin is often microscopic in comparison to the rather broad physical action employed in other so-called physical theatres.

What is called the physical action at the Odin should not be confused with what might be called movement by any other practitioner. Grotowski made a distinction between movement and physical action by demonstrating that a physical action has intention, movement does not.²⁵ This attitude is essential to the Odin's creative process in which (especially in training) there is initially no text or dramatic situation from which to extract motivation for a physical action. The physical action and the intention for the physical action must therefore come from the actor.

Odin Teatret actors' understanding of action reveals that not only do precise actions lead to viscerally evocative images that stimulate the audience, but precise actions also stimulate meaningful internal images and impulses in the viscera of the actors. Odin actors' commitment to precision in everything they do characterizes their physical and vocal work. Varley writes, "Precision is the only true base on which I can always lean, even knowing that at times the aura that reverberates from it will be full of magic and at times only of professional

results.”²⁶ Commitment to precision is not athleticism or virtuosity rather it is a sensitivity to the evocative power of the physical action.

Exemplary Rehearsal; 1992 *Kaosmos* Rehearsal

The following rehearsal transcription is selected to demonstrate how the focus on precision works.

Ferslev is standing, reading a newspaper. Ubeda runs at him splitting his newspaper in half with a knife wrapped in red cloth. Here again, as in the action with Miura, she pulls him to the ground until he appears dead. Ubeda repeats the same actions, tugging at his pants leg with her teeth and carrying the body off stage. All the time Varley sits watching silently.

After a short break, Barba works with Wethal and Nielsen to refine a minute and a half fragment of her score that begins with the twisting of Nielsen’s torso and ends with Wethal held by Nielsen in a pietà pose. Nielsen shows the difference between the score of actions with and without a doll in her hands and teeth. She is working on a score involving fifteen to twenty distinctly different and specific movements, all emanating from the action of taking the doll in her mouth after an impaling gesture—her body is turned upstage. Then she turns her upper torso out to the audience while the lower body remains oriented upstage. The movement is done again without the doll and is established as precise action before she returns to working with the doll. Finally Nielsen turns her upper torso, and then her head with the doll in her teeth to the audience, in complete opposition to the direction her feet are facing and turns her shoulders another

ninety degrees to the right while her head remains immobile, facing the audience.

Interestingly, this work on precision is not undertaken as cold technical work, done only externally, without meaning or intention, but rather is a mechanism to stimulate visceral action on both the actor and the spectator's parts. Its difficulty alone evokes an emotional reaction on Nielsen's part. (See Appendix C for descriptions of *Kaosmos* rehearsals).

Rehearsal as Research

Why does rehearsal differs from training? At the Odin, training differs from rehearsal. *Mise en scène* at the Odin is constructed from the raw materials generated in training. In rehearsal these raw materials are elaborated into meaningful fragments of the eventual performance.

By the late 1990s, the Odin actors are at such an advanced stage that their training is virtually imperceptible in their performances. The Odin's training is so deeply inculcated that its functions on a microcosmic level. The old processes of moving from training into improvisation and then on to performance is less prominent in *Mythos* rehearsals. Indeed, it no longer seems necessary. It is as if training and rehearsal have become identical in much the same way as they were in Stanislavski's theatre. Stanislavski scholar Jean Benedetti writes:

The kind of research [Stanislavski] wanted to undertake could not be contained within the constraints of a theatre which had to be commercially viable. For . . . thirty years he would work in the periphery of the Art Theatre, in one of its Studios or in opera. The whole pattern of his activities changed. His productions, highly successful as most of them were, were part of his research. The rehearsal process and the discoveries it produced became more important than the actual performance.²⁷

It seems as if rehearsal-as-research has, as a premise, isolation from the mainstream of theatre activities, especially theatre's commercial vicissitudes. Rehearsal-as-research and working in solitude are values Stanislavski and Barba share. Ultimately neither was as concerned with commercial viability as they have been with the actors' methodology. Ironically both spent over thirty years working out methodology on the outskirts of the profession, using rehearsal and training as a launching pad for a much more important kind of discovery.

Section III

Steps Toward a Theatre Culture

Vision, Collaboration, or Collective Envisioning

Why is the notion of theatre culture important? How and why does Barba view his theatre as a culture whose ethos emerges from a value system that promotes extensive actor training?

The Odin's periods of technical preparations should not be overlooked or thought of as dull or unimportant. It is a process of a community envisioning a performance. Stanislavski did as much not only in the spaces he created for experimentation in the studios, in the Opera theatre, in his own home, but also during the Moscow Art Theatre's first season on artifact-gathering journeys with company members to Yaroslavl and down the Volga to Tatar cities. On these early journeys Stanislavski and his colleagues collectively envisioned the performance of *Tsar Fyodor* that was yet to come.²⁸ Envisioning a production like

this is much like the result of Barba's period of what he called "Barter," when the Odin actors traveled in southern Italy and South America to places without theatre traditions and performed their dances in town squares and streets in exchange for locals showing their dances and singing their songs. This activity culminated in the Odin production, *The Million* (1978-84), which was a collage of dances built from what they had learned in their travels. *The Million* had been collectively envisioned during the Barters. Collective envisioning is a constant mode of work at the Odin. It is a useful fulcrum for introducing the idea of theatre culture.

Collective envisioning differs from other directorial approaches such as vision and collaboration. Directors are often asked, "what is your vision?" At this juncture, a director may have so many thoughts that the listener wearies of the reply or the director can be very precise about his or her interpretation of the play, often capturing it in a metaphor, allegory, or the traditional spine statement. This capture however often does greater disservice than service to the ultimate performance because it may become an obstacle to the process through which rehearsal becomes performance. Another route a director can take is that of a more collaborative approach. The term collaboration however connotes directorial vision meeting the designers' visions—a necessary part of the director's work. In neither case is the actor fully engaged in the process. Collaborative or not, the director must make final choices. That authority is better earned than taken, and it can be earned through a process here called here, *collective envisioning*.

Collective envisioning should not be confused with directorial vision. It has more to do with the theatre group as a culture. In 1992, when asked about his directorial vision, Barba said that since he is not a mystic, he was not interested in visions.

What you see here is a process. There is no hierarchy here. What you are seeing is the autonomous actor. I do not say that there is spirituality in this work. But the actor is involved, not only with her 'vision,' as you say, but she is part of a culture, and that is what this theatre is. There is no other theatre like the Odin, and it is the culture of the Odin from which the work stems.²⁹

Interestingly, in July 1929, when Stanislavski had finished seven volumes of the nine that comprise his now canonized writings, he read four aloud to Moscow Art Theatre actor, Leonid Leonidov. Leonidov said, "This is not a system, it is a complete culture."³⁰ The idea of a theatre culture has its own legacy. It is not so much that this "complete culture" differs from the System but rather it includes the System as one among a larger set of values chief among them the cohesion of the creative collective and the ethics that make the collective's work possible. This includes the quality of the work conditions. All of these values are necessary adjuncts to the System Stanislavski proposed. In other words the culture of the creative collective *is* the methodology. It *is* the way to create a performance. It *is* the System.

An observer at the Odin can see the group's values and working conditions—values such as cleanliness; comrades and kindness; ease of communication; a collective approach to the division of labor; the importance placed on pedagogy and mentoring; responsibility to other professionals; the importance of cultivating scholarship and a unique terminology (a professional lexicon) to communicate

their ideas; the actor's role as an intellectual by means of his or her research; and a kind of spiritual devotion to hard work. The visitor may realize that these are not only Barba's but also Stanislavski's values. They appear to stand outside of what is conceived to be Stanislavski's System, but they are actually part of it.

The Odin's Principle of Changing to "Remain Oneself"

As important as collective envisioning is to the notion of theatre culture, so is the collective's ability to change directions. The survival and longevity of theatre groups who are removed from the mainstream may rely as much if not more on their mutability to function autonomously than on their appeal to audiences. It is erroneous to believe that Stanislavski and his System were restricted to the jurisdiction of naturalism. Stanislavski's ability to change over the years, necessitated both by his own changing interests and the rather convoluted interests of the new Soviet State, guaranteed his and his colleagues' survival.

What follows are fragments from a dialogue between Barba and ITSA collaborator I Made Bandem about the necessity and propensity of traditional theatres to change direction:

IMB: In my experience, if we want to make something new, we must have a strong tradition. Then later on it's easy to develop something else.

EB: Tradition, then, must be disrupted from within and not from outside.

IMB: The transformation must come from inside the tradition itself. Then there will be continuation. I know culture has two faces here: change and continuity. We want to have change but within the continuity.³¹

The ability to change direction, not only in one's personal work, but also in the direction taken by the group, is another shared value. Masgrau, in his introduction to Barba's *Solitude, Mystery, Revolt*, explains the longevity of Barba and the Odin as

a singular capacity for mutation. It is a "strange" capacity because in Barba's universe mutation never seems to be associated with the idea of change, but with the will to remain oneself. The constant swerves in his discourse are not changes but a way of having a dialogue with his time, refusing its spirit in order to protect his own identity. It is a strategy for interrogating History while avoiding being stripped of what he regards as essential.³²

This penchant for self preservation through "mutation" is also what Grotowski pointed to when describing the points of contact between himself and Stanislavski. In *The Theatre of Grotowski*, Jennifer Kumiega writes, "For Grotowski . . . Stanislavsky was a man in a state of 'permanent self-reform'. In other words his attitude was one of unceasing research and readiness to question earlier achievements and stages of work."³³ Benedetti makes a similar point.

Stanislavski would have found . . . concerns with doctrinal purity, based on mistaken notions of consistency curious. He was never afraid to change his mind. . . . Account must be taken of Stanislavski's tendency to deny all knowledge of previous practice. Faced with one of his long-abandoned exercises he asked, 'what idiot thought that one up?' . . . All elements of the system were valid and essential but the balance among those elements changed with time and place.³⁴

Like Barba, Stanislavski was more curious about the actor's process than interested in establishing his System as an immutable set of laws. It would appear, that by starting the new work, *Mythos*, with technical elements rather than raw materials such as etudes drawn from training, Barba has radically changed his own process, yet the work on *Mythos* falls within the spirit of the group's

cohesion as a creative collective. Not only are they collaborating on every technical detail, but in this collaboration, they are creating a performance not so much from raw materials harvested from recent training periods, but rather from within the collective's memory of decades of training and performance. What is actually new in *Mythos* is the arduous work on a strange, hypnotic vocal technique called *the overtones* (see Appendix D), and unwieldy towers that spread gravel and turn into tables. They change to protect themselves and their work from narrow definition or doctrinal purity.

Section IV

The Theatre Group and its Methodology Become a Theatre Culture

The theatre group and its methodology become a theatre culture not as an alternative to mainstream culture but as an autonomous culture predicated on the need to carry on the actors' creative process in a protected environment.

The Protection of the Actor

During a 1992 *Kaosmos*, rehearsal Barba's hand can be seen to virtually guide the rehearsal. At one moment, Ubeda clutches many knives wrapped in red cloth and, with their points, splits Ferslev's newspaper into two perfect halves. To do this she rushes at him from downstage, nearest the front row of seats. Maybe this is dangerous, maybe not. At the moment when she picks up the knives, Barba lifts his hand and it holds it poised six inches from her back; it remains in the same spot even after she rushes forward. She cannot see or feel the hand but it is the hand of care. It is a delicate way of tempering the violent nature of her action

with the needed grace and precision of her movement. This protective hand can be seen in Odin's training films.³⁵ It never interferes or physically controls the work, and is rarely visible to the performer, but it moderates between the extremes of the physical work and the precision required to achieve them. His hand appears almost to guide the actors' energy. It is also an emblematic gesture of caring, understanding, and commitment to his work partners.

Oddissi dancer and founding member of ISTA, Sanjukta Panigrahi says:

At the second ISTA . . . I was confused and irritated. Sometimes Eugenio said things that were unacceptable to me. But one day I said to myself: "He doesn't want to change my style, but protect it and understand the different meanings of its form". I began to trust him. And I began to like his way of experimenting.³⁶

In the same way that he protects and understands Azuma's style and forms, Barba's mission is to protect the culture of the theatre and actors' identities. He places this above other loyalties. Outside the culture of the theatre, actors are often forced to play social or cultural roles antithetical to their identities as artists. If they do not play these roles, as history shows, they are often rejected by the culture in which they live. At the Odin and in ISTA, actors' professional identities define them regardless of the social roles they play within their own nationality or social stratum.

The Theatre Group: Culture or Subculture?

Does Barba's notion of the theatre group as a culture have Stanislavski roots?

Why is the theatre group described as a culture and not a subculture? Why is

Barba's Odin not a theatre company in the usual sense? The premises for Barba's idea of theatre culture are contained in his definition of Third Theatre.

[The Third Theatre] seems to constitute the anonymous extreme of the theatres recognized by the world of culture: on the one hand, the institutionalized theatre, protected and subsidized because of the cultural values that it seems to transmit, appearing as living image of a creative confrontation with the texts of the past and the present – or even as a “noble” version of the entertainment business; on the other hand, the avant-garde theatre, experimenting, researching, arduous or iconoclastic, a theatre of changes, in search of a new originality, defended in the name of necessity to transcend tradition, and open to novelty in the artistic field and within society.

The Third Theatre lives on the fringe, often outside or on the outskirts of the centers and capitols of culture. It is a theatre created by people who define themselves as actors, directors, theatre workers, although they have seldom undergone a traditional theatrical education and therefore are not recognized as professionals. . . . But they are not amateurs.³⁷

This is how Barba sees himself, as “outside . . . the capitols of culture.” His self-image is an essential aspect of his work.

When talking about theatre culture Barba is careful with language, avoiding confusing theatre culture with subcultures, in fact vehemently resisting the taxonomy, subculture. He writes, “It is necessary to change oneself from a subculture into a culture.” Barba believes that a subculture is complicit with the society it rejects by virtue of its manner of rejection.³⁸ According to Barba, the subculture's youthful rebellion against having a vested interest in society is subsumed by society's investment in its youth. However, as the subculture matures, the mainstream adapts to it while it adapts to the mainstream. This little victory over mainstream culture betrays a desire on the part of the subculture to belong to that which they have rejected and has rejected them. If the subculture's

youthful rebellion is swallowed up by a desire for inclusion in the rejected culture, the subculture can never become an autonomous culture. Alternatively, Barba proposes that the young group mature into a culture by internally regulating its own conditions without regard to the cultural mainstream. In this way the group may “adapt itself to the outside world without depending on it” thereby establishing a kind of “cultural completeness enabling it to react in appropriate ways to changes of situation, without the group being reduced to dead matter, either so rigid that it breaks or so malleable that it can be moulded like wax.”³⁹ This attitude towards culture certainly helps explain why the Odin’s propensity for change protects the group not only from calcification, but from being absorbed into the mainstream. One danger of the fixity of any acting methodology is that it may easily transform into a dogma and then be absorbed into what Brecht might have called the theatre machinery—the machinery of the institutionalized theatre, the conspiracies of cultural production. Barba’s notion of autonomous theatre culture mitigates against this.

In his “From Culture to Hegemony,” Dick Hebdige echoes many of Barba’s misgivings about the classification, *subculture*. According to Hebdige, the two most important defining characteristics of a subculture are its lack of maturity and ultimate alignment with the hegemonious, mainstream ideology it initially resisted.⁴⁰ Hebdige sees the subculture’s struggle as a discourse among signs in which the subculture’s systems of signification are merely the signs of the new consumer society. However these sign systems do not represent what is of value

to Barba. In Hebdige's terms, Barba's theatre culture amounts to an entirely new system of signification with autonomous meanings and ethos.

The fluid definitions in the Odin's practical language, for example terms like *pre-expressivity*, *theatre anthropology*, and *extra-daily* and the open narrative in their performances are understandable. They are still searching; they neither can nor should have rock hard language saturated with definitions. There is not a discourse among signs. In the Odin's methodology, terms for working processes are either too charged with multiple meanings or too opaque to be assigned fixed definitions. The same certainly holds true for Stanislavski's writings and the language used in firsthand accounts of his rehearsals.⁴¹ Like Barba, the people with whom Stanislavski worked also adapted their work conditions and language in order to continue in their profession. This was true especially in the studios. They adapted their methodological language to political and cultural realities thereby protecting their work from the external demands of the social situation, the revolution, and the onset of Stalinism. Stanislavski's language is often protective, adopting the terminology of historical materialism to smuggle out, as it were, the necessary alchemic and spiritual ingredients of acting which, undisguised, would never have been approved by the Soviet censors. In this sense Stanislavski's theatre was also an autonomous culture that protected its members, regulating the theatre's work internally in their actual rehearsals and methodology while, through their socialist-realist play selection and dramaturgical policy, adapting to and therefore resisting the external mainstream of Soviet culture.

The “Rift Theatre” Matures

Over the years the Odin has changed from a kind of austere, Grotowskian, monastic society to its current condition as a non-traditional theatre culture, a pedagogical institution that creates performances, with its seemingly bourgeois acceptance of its members as vulnerable and not superhuman. This transformation addresses many elements that concerned Stanislavski. How should an actor, whose profession marginalizes him or her, function as a member of a profession that stands outside of mainstream culture without turning the larger society, dominant culture, against the actor? Somewhat naively, perhaps, Stanislavski viewed the actor as a public servant, as an important, integral part of society, yet one who serves the profession first.⁴² How can the actor participate in his or her profession as a recognizably legitimate vocation, rather than the aberration theatre is in the eyes of anti-theatricalists? This was one of Grotowski’s main concerns when he warned against becoming courtesan actors in *Towards a Poor Theatre*.

At the Odin, actors whose relationships with the world at large and each other, especially intimate relationships, which, during the period of Grotowski’s influence, may have been held as profane, are now accepted. Odin actors are no longer at a far remove from society as unwanted citizens—outcasts. The Odin is not a monastery. They consider themselves good Scandinavians. But as professionals they enter into the culture of the theatre through their work. Subsequently, their professional ethos is a by-product of the gradual transformation from their early days of imitating the Grotowski model of exiled,

secluded, “sectarian” theatre towards what is now a refined professional culture.⁴³

They maintain only those Teatr Laboratorium values they find still necessary because of their experiences as a group, and have dropped those values that no longer function. This has occurred because their supposed necessity was discovered to be over-estimated, for example the early injunctions against intimate relations between group members, or excessively long work hours, running from morning until late at night, or the enforced return of the actors’ earnings into the theatre’s coffers have ceased to be necessary.

Recently Masgrau unearthed a forgotten document called “A Rift Theatre,” written in Oslo in 1964 at the moment of the Odin’s inception. “A Rift Theatre” is the closest thing to an autocratic, revolutionary manifesto Barba has ever written. It is instructive especially when trying to establish his exact personal points of departure. The following passage relates primarily to the work principles and economics of the actor and the theatre group.

On a quiet street in Oslo there exists a theatre unknown to all: Odin Teatret. . . . The members have been selected from amongst the applicants who were refused admission to Oslo’s Drama School. They work from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m. . . . The economy of the theatre is assured by weekly contributions which every member of the group pays into a common kitty. None of the actors can take up temporary work in another theatre, nor in films nor on television without the consent of the other members. They must agree to three conditions:

- The work must be useful from a technical point of view.
- The Actor works extra time making up for the hours of lost training.
- Half the earnings go to the actor’s own theatre.

Another method of incrementing the economy of the theatre is to enforce a week’s work outside the theatre, turning the salary over to the common kitty. An attempt is made to avoid such a

method, however, in order not to interrupt the rhythm of the training.⁴⁴

Considering the relatively comfortable, though not affluent, standard of living now enjoyed by Odin members, it becomes apparent that much of their early asceticism has faded, partly because of the group's long life and accumulated financial resources, but also because of the continual re-evaluation and transformation of its own parameters.⁴⁵ Yet certain values remain constant. Chief among them is the value of transformation on an internal level both within the group and each individual. Through transformation they engage the ongoing process of training as self- and group-definition.

Barba insists the Odin is a culture not a subculture. Their openness towards each other's humanness, their differences, their families, their interpersonal relationships, their unspoken ethical code, and the way those elements generate an artistic and intellectual ethos allows them to function as an intimate creative collective with the assiduousness of a research institute. The question remains whether the Odin is a theatre culture, as Barba believes, indeed whether a theatre culture actually exists. The Odin is a substantial institution and unique in its insularity. Certain values like the linkage of professional and human values, of methodology and pedagogy, tradition and experimentation are held in high esteem, shows that the Odin functions like a culture. In its autonomy it is not so much a society within a society as one that stands outside of society. The development of an internal lexicon (its own language), with terms like *sats*, *oppositions*, and *pre-expressivity*, shows that. The ability to travel during the days of the Barbers to places where there was no tradition of professional theatre

without losing their own identity shows it. The striking sense of being removed from time and geography, often arising in a single Odin performance, is dominant both in the workplace and the Odin's social arena (for example see Appendix G for a description of Frans Winther's Fiftieth birthday party).⁴⁶ Something like Stanislavski's retreat to Pushkino and his colleague, Leopold Sulerzhitski's Tolstoyan, "spiritual order of actors" in Crimea is happening in Holstebro.⁴⁷ (A description of the spiritual and paratheatrical project of Leopold Sulerzhitski can be found in Konstantin Stanislavski's *My Life in Art* (See Appendix F)). Sulerzhitski's project is uncannily similar to Stanislavski's initial retreat to his country estate at Pushkino at the moment of the founding of the Moscow Art Theatre, the theatrical journeys into the rural Poland that Grotowski and his colleagues took during the seventies, and to the self-imposed exile of the Odin to the northern reaches of Jutland in Holstebro.

Stanislavski retreated with the Moscow Art Theatre actors to work collectively in a self-sufficient community near his country estate in Pushkino in the early years of the group's formation. Sulerzhitski, in the three years before his death in 1916, dreamed of starting a "spiritual order of actors" who were willing to "sacrifice themselves for Art."⁴⁸ Sulerzhitski imagined that the actors would hire an estate and build a theatre. There they would live and work. Audiences for their theatre would travel the long distance from the city to this rural theatre retreat to spend many days among the actors, seeing performances and escaping the harshness of urban life. This utopian theatre collective would be a self-sufficient farming colony relying on the food they grew in addition to box office

receipts. Although this remained mostly a dream, Stanislavski did buy an estate in the Crimea for Sulerzhitski's experiment where he and a group of actors erected living quarters and farm buildings. Sulerzhitski kept strict discipline and people came from all over the Crimea to see what they called the "wild actors" of the Moscow Art Theatre (see Appendix F).⁵⁰ In many ways Barba's Odin is a realization, not of a modern day Moscow Art Theatre, but of Sulerzhitski and Stanislavski's dream of a theatre collective who work in a laboratory environment removed from the exigencies of the theatre industry. These dreams were connected to the experimental work done in the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre, and were also resident in the Third Studio and in the Art Theatre Jewish satellite, Habimah, when Vakhtangov headed the latter two. The isolation and self sufficiency Barba practices replicates not only Sulerzhitski's project, but in some ways Stanislavski's work in his final years when he worked with a select group of actors in the privacy of his home on Leontiv Lane.

¹ After an exceptionally exciting *Mythos* rehearsal in August 1997, Barba turned to the observers and said, "Of course we react to the beginning with the strongest effect. We're on our way. This is beginning to be a little kitchen, a little wildness, cruelty without light."

² The term *theatre group* throughout this study refers to an independent creative collective that does not change its membership from one production to another.

³ FARFA is the name of Iben Rasmussen's performance group, which is under the umbrella of the Odin and the Canada Project was Richard Fowler's group when he was at the Odin.

⁴ For a cogent summary of Grotowski's paratheatrical, participant-oriented theatre projects of the 1970s and early 1980s such as the "beehives" see Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Jerzy Grotowski*. (London: Methuen, 1985), 178.

⁵ The principle of opposition is discussed in greater detail in Barba and Nicola Savarese's *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* in the chapter "Opposition." But how the principle of oppositions functions in training was best described by Carreri in her work demonstrations. Those who were present at the demonstrations at La Mama E.T.C. in March 1984 may remember her demonstration of these exercises. She also taught them to the New York workshop in January 1993, and demonstrates them on her pedagogical videotape, *Traces in the Snow*.

⁶ There are four work rooms at the Odin: the Red Room (with red walls and wooden floors), the Black Room (with black walls and wooden floors), the White Room (with white walls and wooden floors), and the Blue Room (which is not blue at all).

⁷ See Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 41-72, for a detailed description of the Odin's training and rehearsal process and how they have changed over the years.

⁸ Luis Masgrau, interview with the author, August 1997.

⁹ Barters, which were carried on in southern Italy and South America, were kinds of performances that went beyond the purely economic terms of barter—*quid pro quo*. By exchanging an Odin performance or dance for local song and dance with people in small villages with no institutionalized theatre, the Odin members were able to confront the potential loss of cultural identity in villages where young people did not know their own traditions. It was the old people who played powerful roles in the barters. What is of particularly political interest was when Barba used barter as a means to make material differences such as using performance to receive books in exchange which he then donated to a town without a library, Monteiasi.

¹⁰ Isabel Ubeda, conversation with the author, June 1992.

¹¹ Since the seventies, Odin Teatret has traditionally devoted one week a year, usually in October to training actors from all over the world in some of their basic work principles. Open Week or Odin Week is described on their web site: "Odin Week in Holstebro/Physical and vocal training, work demonstrations/meetings with Eugenio Barba/rehearsals/videos/meetings with the actors. Every evening a performance by Odin Teatret. The program will be conducted in English. The participation fee is DKK 4.200,00 [about \$600.00 at the 1998 exchange rate]. Double room, breakfast, lunch and dinner is included in the price. A written application and a passport photo must be submitted to Odin Teatret by 1st August." See <http://www.odinteatret.dk/>.

¹² Harry Carlson, in a conversation with the author, August 1997.

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- ¹³ These themes are explained in Eugenio Barba, *Homoviator*. Typescript. Unpublished speech given at L'Aquila Conference. (L'Aquila, 1997).
- ¹⁴ Tage Larsen, in a conversation with the author, August 1997.
- ¹⁵ Eugenio Barba, *Homoviator*. Typescript. Unpublished speech given at L'Aquila Conference. (L'Aquila, 1997), 1-3.
- ¹⁶ Seth Baumrin, *Journals of Rehearsals and Workshops Given by Eugenio Barba's Odin Teatret*. Typescript. Unpublished. (New York, 1993).
- ¹⁷ Lluís Masgrau in an interview with the author, 1997.
- ¹⁸ In her "Theatre Historiography and Performance Analysis: Different Fields – Common Approaches" in *Assaph: Studies in the Theatre, No. 10*. ed. Eli Rozek. Tel Aviv, 1994, theatre semiotician and historian, Erika Fisher-Lichte proposes that the theatre historian and the performance analyst both occupy similar territory when each takes an active role in the events they are describing. But the performance analyst is somewhat closer to the event because he or she can participate in it, albeit from the perspective of spectator. This study borrows somewhat from Fischer-Lichte by proposing a third genus of investigation, methodological analysis, which is similar to performance analysis except that methodological analyst looks at the process towards performance rather than the performance itself. Like performance analysis, methodological analysis allows the researcher closer to his or her subject through direct observation rather than book-and-archive-driven research.
- ¹⁹ Isabel Ubeda, conversation with the author, June 1992.
- ²⁰ Julia Varley, "'Subscore': a Word that is Useful – but Wrong." *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. xi, no. 42, (May 1995): 174.
- ²¹ Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), 114.
- ²² *Ibid.* 137.
- ²³ Erika Fisher Lichte. "Theatre and the Civilizing Process" in Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie, eds. *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in Historiography of Performance*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 31.
- ²⁴ The term *recurring principles* is taken from the chapter title "Recurring Principles" in Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995).
- ²⁵ Jerzy Grotowski in Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*. (London: Routledge, 1995), 75-76.

²⁶ Julia Varley, “‘Subscore’: a Word that is Useful – but Wrong.” *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. xi, no. 42, (May 1995): 174.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 175.

²⁸ Collective envisioning is apparent in Stanislavski’s production of *Tsar Fyodor*. The stencil or stereotype of the boyar was to be avoided. In each costume selection there was a conscious effort to avoid what Stanislavski called stencils and thereby create a new approach to national tradition, and in turn a collectively created theatre aesthetic. See Konstantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*, trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), 227-36.

²⁹ Seth Baumrin, *Travelogue and Journals of Rehearsals and Workshops Given by Eugenio Barba’s Odin Teatret*. (Unpaginated Manuscript, Unpublished 1992).

³⁰ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: a Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 318.

³¹ Eugenio Barba and I Made Bandem, “Tradition as Change and Continuity” in Kirsten Hastrup, ed. *The Performer’s Village: Times, Techniques and Theories at ISTA*. Graaswten: Drama, 1996, 105.

EB: In what way does meeting with other traditions give you the possibility of not only reflecting on your own tradition, its knowledge and tradition, its knowledge and conventions, but of also wondering about the innovative pattern in it?

IMB: In my experience, if we want to make something new, we must have a strong tradition. Then later on it’s easy to develop something else. For example, when I went to America I already had a strong technique and experience in Balinese dancing. So when learning Western dance and technique I didn’t have too many problems. I had some difficulties but at least I was able to understand better, thanks to my tradition. You develop your own creativity within a strong tradition.

EB: But isn’t it a problem for a traditional dancer who is learning other techniques to know what he has to be loyal to? Should he continue the tradition or begin mixing and then, in a way, watering down the tradition.

IMB: We never talk about mixing in this case. In working in theatre or dance, I guess the word interpretation is the most important one. We can take methods from the West. For instance, today in Bali the choreography, stage and lighting are changing. We can now use a proscenium stage, as well as other forms of

stage. But when we create our new dances, we still have to use the essence of Balinese dance and a strong tradition.

EB: What do you consider to be the most dangerous element when traditions meet?

IMB: The danger comes if we mix them in an inappropriate way. Imitation is also very difficult. Many Balinese who went to America and saw a performance in New York, then came back to Bali and imitated the movements they had seen over there, but without knowing the essence of Balinese tradition. This has an influence on Balinese performances. Cheap imitation is not the right thing for us in dance making.

EB: Tradition, then, must be disrupted from within and not from outside. One could say that when in the thirties your innovator, I Nyoman Mario, was creating Kebyar, he was shaking the tradition from within, but not imposing something from the outside.

IMB: The transformation must come from inside the tradition itself. Then there will be continuation. I know culture has two faces here: change and continuity. We want to have change but within the continuity.

³² Luis Masgrau in Eugenio Barba, *Theatre: Solitude Craft Revolt*, ed. Luis Masgrau. trans. Judy Barba. (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain, 1999), 6.

³³ These remarks are paraphrased from a discussion with directors held at Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1980. See Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Jerzy Grotowski*. (London: Methuen, 1985), 110.

³⁴ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: a Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 329.

³⁵ See the videotapes *Physical Training at Odin Teatret* and *Vocal Training at Odin Teatret*, dir. Torgeir Wethal, (Holstebro: Odin Teatret, 1972).

³⁶ Sanjukta Panigrahi, "Five Meetings" in Kirsten Hastrup, ed, *The Performer's Village: Times, Techniques and Theories at ISTA*. (Graaswten: Drama, 1996), 89-90.

³⁷ Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 193.

³⁸ See Eugenio Barba, *Theatre: Solitude Craft Revolt*, ed. Luis Masgrau. trans. Judy Barba. (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain, 1999), 120.

The uncomfortable truth is that even if we are only a few, we can succeed in shaping the situation that hangs over us and seems to be conditioning us without means of escape.

It is not enough to be different, to use norms and values that are more just, standing by oneself and one's aspirations, however naïve and utopian. It is necessary to go through and overcome that which usually brands a marginal group: being a subculture. A theatre which is representative of the "new culture" of the young, a "young theatre", is not a value in itself. It is just the theatre of one of the subcultures of our society.

It is necessary to change oneself from a subculture into a culture.

³⁹ Ibid. 120.

⁴⁰ See Dick Hebdige, "From Culture to Hegemony" in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During. (London: Routledge, 1993), 366-67. Borrowing from Gramsci and Lefebvre, Hebdige writes:

We can now return to the meaning of youth subcultures, for the emergence of such groups has signaled in a spectacular fashion the breakdown of consensus in the post-war period. . . . the challenge to hegemony which subcultures represent is not issued directly by them. Rather it is expressed obliquely, in style. The objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed (and 'magically resolved') at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: that is, at the level of signs. For the sign-community of myth-consumers is not a uniform body. . . . The struggle between different discourses, different definitions and meanings within ideology is therefore always, at the same time a struggle within signification: a struggle for possession of the sign which extends to the most mundane areas of everyday life. 'Humble objects' can be magically appropriated; 'stolen' by subordinate groups and made to carry 'secret' meaning: meanings which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued subordination.

⁴¹ The two most influential first hand accounts of Stanislavski's rehearsals are Vasily Osipovich Toporkov, *Stanislavsky in Rehearsal*, trans. Christine Edwards. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1979) and Nikolai M. Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs*, trans. Goldina Miriam. (New York: Limelight, 1991).

⁴² Konstantin Stanislavski, "Towards an Ethics for the Theatre." *Building a Character*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976).

⁴³ Bent Hegested, "A Sectarian Theatre." *The Drama Review*. New York, (1969).

⁴⁴ *Theatre: Solitude Craft Revolt*, ed. Luis Masgrau. trans. Judy Barba. (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain, 1999), 20.

⁴⁵ Odin's financial resources consist of box office receipts, municipal and national subsidy, publishing, and pedagogical activities.

⁴⁶ Dinners and parties among the Odin people and their Holstebro neighbors comprise a fascinating context for the underbelly of artistic creation. Although not appropriate material for this study, any Odin observer stands to learn more over dinner and coffee than can be found in most of Barba's treatises. The actors do not necessarily read Barba but he is certainly drawing much of his knowledge from the experience of working with them. They are not bound by any academic disciplines and may have more to teach in a conversation than can be gleaned from writings. Their celebrations also have a performative aspect not generally considered a necessary or even possible at a usual party (See Appendix G)

⁴⁷ Konstantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*, trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), 410-11.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 410-11.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 410-11.

Chapter Two

Infrastructure: How Stanislavski's Work and Career is Linked to Barba

The purpose of this chapter is to understand Stanislavski as Barba does, to consider the validity of Barba's claim of artistic descent on the basis of Stanislavski's methodology. This requires an understanding of the history of acting methodologies not as chronological and contiguous, but as continuous according to linkage made through infrastructural connections between methodologies. That is not to say that this history defies chronology and contiguity, but that the more salient connections have to do with the flow of ideas rather than the flow of time.

Though Barba's claim of professional descent may be incredible to some, that incredulity may arise because of longstanding misunderstandings surrounding Stanislavski and his opus. Misunderstandings of Stanislavski radiate throughout the field of acting such that they affect the ways in which other acting pedagogies and pedagogues are perceived. This is true not only with Stanislavski but Barba as well. Both men's pedagogical goals are obscured by scholars' desire to restrict their work and careers to narrow definitions. If Barba is to be related to Stanislavski, then it is important to see Stanislavski as Barba sees him, which to a great extent is more through the Soviet context than the Euro-American, but more important, through the oral transmission of the System inherent in Eastern European acting pedagogy. This is because Barba's first exposure to Stanislavski was through Polish texts, which are quite different from Elizabeth Hapgood's English translations, the bases for most Western European translations. Barba's

second exposure to Stanislavski was facilitated by his years with Grotowski, whose training at GITIS included oral transmission from former students of Stanislavski.¹ This oral tradition is even more salient than the Soviet context. The oral tradition has two manifestations. One: Émigré teachers in the United States. Two: What Carnicke calls “the classroom circuit” of former Moscow Art Theatre actors teaching in the former Soviet Union.²

Although most theatre artists are familiar with Stanislavski’s trilogy, *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character*, and *Creating a Role*, along with his autobiography, *My Life in Art*, he actually wrote much more than has been transmitted through English translation. It is now well known that the trilogy and the autobiography were the products of inaccurate and often hasty translation and censorship in the Soviet Union. Not only was this the case with Elizabeth Hapgood’s English translations of the trilogy, but also of J. J. Robbins’s translation of *My Life in Art*.³ Certain confusions inherent in theatre practice and often attributed to Stanislavski are byproducts of the flawed translation and transmission of the System.

It is often said that at the present moment Stanislavski scholarship should be conducted by those who have had the opportunity to read the Russian texts or examine the original manuscripts now on view at MXAT Museum in Moscow. Scholars suggest that those who do not read Russian should patiently await the anticipated new translations, purported to be ready for publication by Routledge at any moment. However, the sad fact is that these new translations may never be published.⁴ Therefore, responsible Stanislavski scholarship by those who do not

read Russian or who cannot travel to Russia must actually be conducted through secondary sources—through those who have had the chance to read and translate the manuscripts.

In this study considerable emphasis is placed on the work of recent Stanislavski scholars like Jean Benedetti, Sharon Carnicke, Annelis Kuhlmann, Burnett Hobgood, Franco Ruffini, Laurence Senelick, and Anatoly Smelianski to name a few. In spite of their research, misconceptions persist. For that reason alone, their findings should not only be reiterated, but used by other theatre scholars in framing, perhaps reframing, a variety of arguments not only about Stanislavski, but about how acting works. Reconsideration of Stanislavski is likely to set off a significant ripple effect in world theatre once these scholars' findings are incorporated into theatre studies in general. Should this happen, the surety is that the old arguments dissolving will cause resulting contrasts between old and new ideas about acting to show both the usefulness of the new but also the value of the old.

Stanislavski's System is so amorphous, composed of so many overlapping, and often contradictory principles, so dense with useful maxims for the actor and useful knowledge for all practitioners, that any effort to give it full delineation does disservice to its magnitude, its mutability, and his importance. Although its apparent lack of fixity does not lend itself to systematic description, the System has its essential concerns. Stanislavski's tradition is one of exercises, daily training, and establishing and working within communities he created for actors' creativity. Grotowski wrote that an essential aspect of Stanislavski's legacy was

the question: “How to touch the intangible? He wanted to find a concrete path toward what are secret, mysterious processes.”⁵ But before considering the mystery of which Grotowski speaks, Stanislavski’s System can be described in simpler terms. Briefly the System is a set of principles designed to address the actor’s technique. The actor’s technique is to embody physically that which he or she believes at a very deep level (emotions, memories, desires, ideas, opinions)—to make the subconscious conscious, and then to transmit that information to the audience through the medium of a theatrical performance of a fiction. To this purpose Stanislavski devoted most of his life as an actor, director, and writer.

Some of the most enduring misunderstandings of Stanislavski’s work can be traced both to the act of transmission/translation of his texts and the socio-political context surrounding that transmission. However important, considering contexts can be misleading. Contexts do not necessarily define methodology, but they do affect its transmission. In his “Historiography and the Theatrical Event: A Primer with Twelve Cruxes,” Thomas Postlewait’s ninth crux affects the historian’s description of an event. It consists of “the codes, discourses, values, and cultural systems of the historian’s own time that shape understanding.”⁶ The conditions surrounding the dissemination of information about both Stanislavski and Barba have had a significant impact on how each is understood often resulting in myths and misconceptions. The two most important myths and misconceptions surrounding Stanislavski are, first, his System is to be used strictly for acting in a naturalistic/realistic style, with particular emphasis on such techniques as emotional recall or affective/effective memory. And second, at the

end of his career, Stanislavski suddenly abandoned his System, especially affective memory and emotional recall, in favor of the Method of Physical Actions. To fully grasp Stanislavski's link to Barba, it is at least essential that the interrelationship between these two aspects of the System (the emotional and the physical) be established.

The myths and misconceptions surrounding Stanislavski complicate matters with regard to those who come after him, seeking either to further his work or dispute it.⁷ Many of those myths are byproducts of the conditions under which Stanislavski wrote. Just as Barba's earliest activities were concurrent with the liberation movements of the late sixties, the anti-war movement, *les evenements de Mai*, and the formation of alternative and group lifestyles, Stanislavski's work was also conducted under similar, in fact more extreme circumstances of social and political upheaval—a time when, in Russia, the democratic movements against the Czar rapidly developed into the Marxist-Leninist Revolution of the Bolsheviks and subsequent Soviet state of Joseph Stalin, a time when social barriers between aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and working class were leveled in an attempt to create a classless society. Both Stanislavski and Barba's careers spanned moments of drastic change, and both have played significant roles in the reformation of theatre. But, whereas throughout his career, Barba has had enough freedom and foresight to write about his work, Stanislavski's work as a writer did not begin until late in his life, and under conditions of severe censorship. He did not have the same freedom to express himself as Barba, nor did he have a strong hand in either the publication or translation of his own work.

The English translations are crucial because they were authorized by Stanislavski over the period of the first American publication of *My Life in Art* (1924) to *An Actor Prepares* (1936). These were the early years of Stalin's restructuring of revolutionary Russia into the modern Soviet Republic. Impoverished by the economic restrictions of the new Soviet state, Stanislavski lost the income from his thread-making business. His family home had also been confiscated. During his period of penury he needed the money his family business would have generated to care for his son, Igor, who was severely ill and was to be cared for in a Swiss sanatorium.⁸ The financial shortfall could not be made up in business so the publication of his writings for popular consumption became the solution to his financial problem. Without a working knowledge of English, Stanislavski had little control over the translation process or negotiations between Hapgood and her publishers, Theatre Arts Books, and therefore over how his ideas were transmitted beyond his homeland. Prior to Hapgood's agreement with Theatre Arts Books to publish her translation of *An Actor Prepares*, Yale University Press refused to publish Stanislavski's book because it was so long. Theatre Arts Books only agreed to publish the work after Stanislavski and Hapgood agreed to make significant excisions in the text. These English translations (copyrighted two years prior to the Russian version in 1938) became the prototypes for the majority of subsequent translations because, interestingly, Stanislavski made the bold move of giving the rights to all future translations of his work to Hapgood. The only instances of translation not beholden to Hapgood's translation are the East German translation upon which scholars like

Eric Bentley and practitioners like Lee Strasberg depended, all Eastern Bloc translations, the Argentinean Spanish edition, the Danish, and the Finnish.⁹ Whether this served Stanislavski well or not is now a central question for practitioners and scholars.

The Trouble with the English Translations and the Soviet Publications

Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood's English translations of Stanislavski played a central role in the shaping of subsequent understanding of his System. They exemplify Postlewait's ninth crux by virtue of how her nationality, American; language, English; and era; the late twenties and thirties become the context. These aspects of Hapgood's identity sometimes obscure Stanislavski and his System to students because of the impact they had on its transmission. They contribute significantly to establishing Stanislavski's author function, the originator of the prevalent discourse of acting, thereby supporting his mythic stature.

By attaching Michel Foucault's theory of "author-function" to Stanislavski, the author of so many influential treatises on acting, his authority can be said to invoke and refer to all discourse on acting. This discourse is automatically his because of the issues he confronts within its disciplinary parameters regardless of poor translation or misinterpretation. Foucault writes:

The author's name is . . . situated in the breach, among the discontinuities, which gives rise to new groups of discourse and their singular mode of existence. . . . [I]t is obvious that within the realm of a discourse a person can be the author of much more than a book—of a theory, for instance, of a tradition or a discipline within which new books and authors can proliferate. For

convenience, we could say that such authors occupy a “transdiscursive” position.¹⁰

Stanislavski is the author of more than a book. Through his search for a technique for mastering the externalization of the inner experience of the actor, Stanislavski, in Foucault’s terms, *authored* a new theory, indeed a new tradition. Because he searched for a lexicon, a method, and an ethical attitude, he ultimately established a discipline through which “new books and authors” proliferate. Stanislavski’s ideas moved beyond their initial context, Russian theatre, and led to the founding of other theatres and methods of acting.

In the spirit of the infrastructural and genealogical nature of this study and to further explain the multivalent, hetero-glossal nature of Stanislavski’s writings, consider what else Foucault writes.

[The historian] will not be too serious to enjoy [history]; on the contrary, he will push the masquerade to its limits and prepare the great carnival of time where masks are constantly reappearing. . . . Genealogy is history in the form of a contested carnival!¹¹

An example of this historical masquerade applied to Stanislavski is Burnet M. Hobgood’s six persona of Stanislavski. One is: the “insecure artist, ineffectual in the governance of the Art Theatre.” Two: “the Stalinist persona,” the “icon of the Soviet theatre.” Three: “the compliant servant of Marxist-Leninist dogma” who disavowed idealism “in favor of . . . a more materialist bent.” Four: the “opinionated arbiter of taste at the Art Theatre” portrayed by Bulgakov. Five: the author of *My Life in Art*, which for Stanislavski was the shaky beginning of his investigations of the actor’s technique, but for all the world was the premature memoirs of a famous man. Six: Torstov, the fictional pedagogue in his trilogy.¹²

Perhaps Stanislavski's author function and these various persona distract from his professional identity. The masquerade is intensified by the way translation obfuscates the already enigmatic author.

The impact of Hapgood's translations on Stanislavski's author function is that they imbue his utterances with her authority, having an almost universal effect on the way he is understood, or misunderstood. Her alleged errors need not be obstacles to understanding Stanislavski. One way to approach Stanislavski is through the examination of those passages and terms in Hapgood that scholars now question, because her misunderstandings point up that which virtually eludes language, the inherent psychophysical, or body/mind, aspect of Stanislavski's poetics. Consideration of Hapgood also points to the System's obverse side—how it was understood by those who experienced it first-hand, orally, in Russian.

For example, Carnicke makes the argument that Hapgood's penchant for translating the Russian word *perizhivanie* (a key word in the Russian text) simply as *living through* rather than Carnicke's preferred translation, *experiencing*, reflects America's love affair with emotion and Freudian-based psychology. This word choice reflects her misunderstanding of the inherent physicality of Stanislavski's System, reflected in his use of the Russian language.¹³ Carnicke points out: "In the U.S., conditioned by Freudian-based psychology, and an ethos oriented towards individualism, actors privileged the psychological techniques of Stanislavsky's System over the physical."¹⁴ Hapgood unquestionably privileges emotion over action in her translations. Carnicke explains why the word *perizhivanie* should be translated as *experiencing*.¹⁵

Despite its centrality, “experiencing” remains the most obscure of all the System’s terms. Although *perizhivanie* is a common Russian word, Stanislavsky uses it so idiosyncratically that *The Dictionary of Contemporary Russian Literary Language* attributes one of its many meanings to him alone: “the genuine penetration of a psychic state in a represented character.”¹⁶

The subtitle to the first volume of *An Actor’s Work on Himself* (the Russian original to Hapgood’s *An Actor Prepares*) is *The Creative Process of Experiencing*. Carnicke claims there is “no consistent equivalent” in Hapgood.¹⁷ Various levels of experience that stimulate different sensations in the actor are virtually unexplored in Hapgood’s translation because she elides certain linguistic peculiarities of the Russian language.

These varieties of experience are not merely so-called life experiences. They are held within the actual living practice of Stanislavski’s exercises by contemporary actors and pedagogues. The practice of exercises in any Western theatre is Stanislavskian practice. His exercises were the first of their kind and differed radically from what came before. They were neither result-oriented, nor theatrical calisthenics, but rather experience-oriented processes conceived as passageways linking the actor to the performance.

Another peculiarity of the American translations is that Hapgood virtually stripped Stanislavski’s writings of any reference to the influence of French psychologist Théodule Ribot, the source of the concept of affective memory.¹⁸ But without understanding Ribot’s relationship to the emerging field of behavioral psychology, a discipline that inspired the Method of Physical Actions, difficulties arise in determining what all the work on the emotions actually has to do with acting, an inherently physical, material activity. Hapgood may have believed it

unnecessary to attribute Stanislavski's work to a less than luminary French psychologist, who was virtually unknown in the West and considered out of line with dominant post-revolutionary ideology in the new Soviet state. But understanding Ribot is important to understanding Stanislavski's work.

What interested Stanislavski most about Ribot was his work on the question of whether humans have the ability to remember an emotion, such as pain, pleasure, smell, and taste. Ribot's work preceded Freud's experimental psychology and, although his interest in the analysis of memory appears to dovetail with Freud's, his research was more foundational to the reflexology of Jamesian/Pavlovian theory (foundational to the Method of Physical Actions), in that Ribot was interested in the physical manifestations of memory (the reflexes). Ribot says, "An emotion which does not vibrate through the whole body is nothing but an intellectual state."¹⁹ The growing importance of reflexology and behaviorism to the art of the actor in the twenties and thirties, makes Ribot's impact on Stanislavski crucial not only to understanding Stanislavski's interest in affective memory but physical actions as well.

Given his struggle with Soviet watchdogs in the thirties and their committees who watched his language, Stanislavski's courage to publish under these conditions is ultimately far more significant in gaining an understanding of his professional identity than that Hapgood mistranslated (and apparently misunderstood) his writings. Recovering Stanislavski now, so many years after the fact, may be impossible, but a scholar or student who wants to get a thorough and accurate working knowledge of him may consider many factors.

It is not entirely Hapgood's fault that English translations confound Stanislavski's written works. In fact without her work, theatres in the West may never have been as fully exposed to Stanislavski as they now are. Hapgood's reading of Stanislavski can also be attributed to a combination of the Stalinist appropriation of the Moscow Art Theatre as an exemplary cultural institution and Stanislavski's own self-censorship in the face of Soviet cultural committees. In the Soviet Union the nature of transmission resulted in virtually the reverse of the Euro-American understanding. The Stalinists, who feared idealism, spirituality, and virtually all schools of psychology (belief systems that ran counter to dialectical materialism), tended to favor behavioral psychology, as an exception, because it fit well within the materialist bent of prevailing Marxist ideology. Given the emphasis on institutionalizing historical materialist ideology in Russia in the thirties, the System was written about and taught with an emphasis on the physicality of the actor's work rather than its psychological content. Carnicke writes that

Stanislavskian lore, developed in Soviet Russia and claiming greater fidelity to the master's teaching, is no less suspect than the Method. In the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the dictates of Marxist philosophical materialism and the collective imperative of post-revolutionary Russia exalted Stanislavsky's physical training of the actor as his most complete scientific technique. Thus the Russian version of the System became identified almost exclusively with yet another aspect of Stanislavsky's approach – the Method of Physical Actions.²⁰

In America, references to physicality were excised to the extent that any premise for behaviorism is absent, whereas in the Soviet Union the more ethereal and spiritual of Stanislavski's ideas were curtailed. Even before Hapgood saw the

drafts, Stanislavski had already pruned the manuscripts for those ideas that would raise censors' concerns, such as the extent to which Ribot's ideas influenced him or his interest in yoga. He made these excisions in order to protect the greater body of the writing which describes a process centered around such abstractions as *the magic if* or *the life of the human spirit*. This is a key to how Russian censorship affected Hapgood's translations, and Stanislavski's writings can and should be read with this in mind.

In Russia, the Stalinists, in response to the ethereal nature of psychoanalysis, which was an anathema to them, attempted to trim Stanislavski's terminology, pruning his manuscripts for language that denoted Ribot's influence, and concepts that tended toward emotion-based psychology and the spiritual dimension of acting. Stanislavski resisted these efforts by writing more about the physical and then surrounding his spiritual and analytic ideas with the protective language of dialectic materialism. This led to the de-emphasizing of Ribot, thus facilitating Hapgood's imposition of Freudian terminology and logic onto the American trilogy. Alternatively, the complete works in Russian, exemplified by *Rabota aktera nad soboi, Chast I* (1938) and *Sobranie sochinenii* (1954-1961), are missing the experimental, spiritual aspect of the actor's work induced from not only Ribot, but also from less scientific influences such as yoga.²¹ "Only the physical half of Stanislavsky's equation was therefore acceptable; the other half was considered dangerously 'idealistic,' a criticism which dogged Stanislavsky during his post-revolutionary career."²² Outside of the manuscripts, on view at Moscow's MXAT Museum and those that Stanislavski handed Hapgood, now

held by the New York Public Library, there are no publications of Stanislavski's work that accurately represent what he was actually doing. Therefore most of the Stanislavski discourse is based on a combination of speculation, censorship, poor translation, first-hand accounts from the Stalin era, subsequent interpretation of faulty texts. But, fortunately, there is also a parallel oral tradition that is virtually independent of the published texts. How Stanislavski and then every subsequent generation of theatre practitioners perceive the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of the System is important to seeing Stanislavski as a context for the consideration of Barba, and also a premise to reading beyond Hapgood's translations of the trilogy.

Stanislavski's troubled relationships with the Revolution, the Bolsheviks, Stalin, propaganda, Socialist Realism, and Soviet aesthetics engender misconceptions and myths that obscure his actual values. Behind these myths stands Stanislavski's inauguration of a tradition of searching for a comprehensive integrated methodology. This methodology grows exponentially over the course of the century and includes Stanislavski's disciples Vakhtangov and Meyerhold, and those who claim professional ancestry, Grotowski and Barba. However, over the years, these myths and misconceptions functioned as though they were historical fact, such that Meyerhold and Stanislavski's disparaging remarks about each other's genres are transformed first into a polemic, and then into two distinct schools of theatrical thought. In one school, the mind is privileged and the other trains the body. In one school the actor reflects nature and in the other the actor reflects the machine. Artificial polemics, such as these, result in misleading

theatre history from which it is very difficult for scholars and students to extricate themselves.

It may seem to those who depend on Hapgood's translations almost as if the application of behavioral psychology to the actor's work is a sudden discovery, that Stanislavski's Method of Physical Actions is some kind of revelation arising at the very end of his career. Likewise, the true nature of Ribot-based, affective memory is virtually lost to both Westerners and Russians because of various linguistic, political, and editorial circumstances.

The recent criticism of Stanislavski translation has yielded valuable analyses of the problems arising from the Hapgood translations especially when Stanislavski's deployment of what he knew about psychology is considered. The difficulties arising from Hapgood's simplification of Russian is compounded by what Carnicke proposes is the Americanization of Boleslavski's émigré English by his students in their own classrooms, transforming the Russian's bad English into an English they knew. The result was that when Boleslavski was teaching the System in New York in the early twenties, the word *bits* (the actor's overall role broken down into smaller units) became *beats*, and, more important, the process-oriented concept, *affective memory*, becomes *effective memory*. These misunderstandings are examples of the confusion of Stanislavski's Ribot-based understanding of psychology with Americanized, pop-Freudian psychology.²³

Carnicke writes:

Russian understanding of "emotional memory" became confused with Freudian psychology, popular in the U.S. but not adopted in Russia. Of course, the very nature of acting classes . . . necessarily filters the System through the individual creativity of teachers and

students alike . . . Eric Bentley . . . consulted the German [translation of Stanislavski] . . . He noticed that all references to Théodule Ribot, the psychologist from whom Stanislavsky took the term “emotional memory,” were deleted from the English language editions. “Mystery is created only when a translator decides to leave out so much that is of interest [. . .].” He felt that such deletions, especially in light of the importance of the emotional memory in the American Method, was dangerous for theatre scholars.²⁴

As far as can be determined, Freud was unknown to Stanislavski. Rather it was Ribot’s work that influenced him in developing certain psychological aspects of his System.

Two of Ribot’s basic ideas confirmed much of what Stanislavski believed. One: a convalescing patient’s will or lack thereof to get better has a direct effect on a patient’s rate of recovery. Two: memories are stored in the nervous system, “and thought not immediately available to the conscious mind, [but] may be evoked by the appropriate stimulus.”²⁵ Although little mention is made of Ribot in Hapgood, his influence is evident in other translations. Bentley also points out that Ribot is named only twice in Hapgood’s translations (see *An Actor Prepares* 156-57), whereas in Alexandra Meyerburg’s German translation these passages are more informative. In *An Actor Prepares*, Hapgood translates:

“As for emotion memory: there was no sign of it today.” When he was asked to explain that term he said: “I can best illustrate it as did Ribot, who was the first person to define this type of memory by telling you a story.”²⁶

Bentley’s translation of Meyerburg’s German translation of the same passage reads:

“As for the memory of feelings, there was no sign of it today.”
The memory of feelings? I tried to make this clear to myself.
“Yes, or, as we wish to call it, the ‘emotional memory.’ Earlier—

following Ribot—we called it the ‘affective memory.’ This term is now rejected without having been replaced. But we have some word for it and so, provisionally, we’re agreeing to call it the memory of feelings: Emotional Memory.”²⁷

Stanislavski is describing something (affective memory) that appears to have been well enough known to be rejected and named something else. It was not his own concept and as such affective memory should not be seen as the unique expression of Stanislavski’s System, its earmark, but rather an aspect of it that Stanislavski learned through his exposure to Ribot.

Confusion as to the psychological basis of Stanislavski’s System is symptomatic of the major difference between the American *An Actor Prepares* and the Russian *Rabota aktera nad soboi Chast’ I*, and attests to the discursive conflict between the result-oriented, American perspective and the Russian, process-driven approach. For example Hapgood’s propensity to translate the word *zadacha*, which means *problem*, as *objective* reveals the goal-orientation of her reading of Stanislavski.²⁸ However, Carnicke’s reading of the Russian manuscripts leads her to conceive of the System differently. She sees it as a process flowing from discovering given circumstances to discerning first the problem and then the action. Emotional life results as a logical by-product of the action taken. However achieving an emotional life or an objective is not the telos of the System. They are simply aspects of it—a larger process of preparing for performance. In Hapgood’s translation, which excises two crucial pages of *Rabkota aktera nad soboi Chast’ I*, she eliminates the important problem/action aspect of the step-by-step process, leaving the impression that constructing a character’s emotional life is the System’s goal and automatically emerges from

the character's objective without the actor ever taking action. This omission of the problem/action step is at the root of many misunderstandings of Stanislavski and why his understanding of action should be reiterated.

A key distinction Stanislavski makes, one crucial not only to his System, but to understanding Grotowski and Barba, is the distinction between action and activity. Hapgood's translation of the word *deistvie* (action) as *inner intensity* is simply wrong.²⁹ *Deistvie* is derived from Russian roots, *delat'* (to do) and *deistovat'* (to behave). Hapgood's translation of *deistvie* as "inner intensity" feeds the resultant myth that emotion is strictly an internal, psychological, mental construct. Unlinking emotion from action sends the false message that an actor who merely moves his or her body is fulfilling the obligation an actor has to take action. Carnicke points out that Stanislavski distinguishes these two, *delat'* (to do) and *deistovat'* (to behave), from the Russian *igrat* (to play). But more important, he makes the distinction between *aktivnost'* (the state of being in action) and *deistvie* (the action).³⁰ Hapgood's translation does not retain these distinctions, yet they are essential to thoroughly understanding the System and the link between Stanislavski and Barba.

This particular understanding of the difference between action and activity, traced to Stanislavski, is inherent in Grotowski's methodology, from which Barba constructed the foundations of his methodology. Grotowski drew a sharp distinction between activity (the state of being in action) and action. Kumiega writes:

Through work with real and imaginary objects an action is magnified into microscopic movements. According to

Stanislavsky this exercise would give precision and expressiveness to an action. But Grotowski contends that in much of Stanislavsky-style training this process has been reduced to an emphasis on the sensations and feeling behind an action, rather than on the reality of the details themselves, and this is an emphasis which robs the actions of precision.³¹

At a conference in Santarcangelo in 1988, Grotowski said:

We must . . . understand that which physical actions are not. For example: they are not activities. . . . to clean the floor, wash the dishes, smoke the pipe. These are not physical actions, they are activities. . . . The directors who work on physical actions often make the actors do a lot of floor-cleaning and dish-washing on stage. But an activity can become a physical action. For example, you ask me a very embarrassing question (as is usually the case), so, you ask me this question and I stall for time. I begin to solidly prepare my pipe. Now my activity becomes a physical action, because it becomes my weapon: 'Yes I am actually very busy, I must prepare my pipe, clean it, light it, afterwards I will respond to you.'³²

This was a distinction Stanislavski made relatively early in the century. Carnicke writes:

Stanislavsky gives several examples of this distinction [between the state of being in action and action]. Merely opening a door is *aktivnost*, while opening a door to see if a madman stands behind it is *deistvie*; Sitting on stage for its own sake is *aktivnost*; sitting on stage in order to await instruction is an action (Russian, pp.80-81).³³

This is especially important when considering Barba and Odin Teatret actors whose work on stage is based on making sure each movement, no matter how microscopic, has the status of a physical action.

Furthermore, Hapgood translates the Russian word *oshchushcenii* as *actions* when the word actually means *sensations*. Carnicke points out that this blurs the distinction between action and emotional life.³⁴ *Oshchushcenii* as *sensations* also carries a different meaning to the notion of feeling whereby feeling or emotion

can be material rather than ethereal. Thus the word *feeling* can be construed as impulse(s) or impulse(s) to action—a concept that lies at the core of the Method of Physical Actions. The materiality of emotion is a useful way to explain Barba’s interest in and methodological reliance on impulses and their activity, both macro-impulses and micro-impulses and how the actor elaborates on them—a pivotal ingredient in Barba’s research, especially since he virtually renounces the words *emotion* and *feelings*.³⁵

Oral Transmission and the Language of the System: the Case of Boleslavski

Since language used in actors’ methodology (and in its transmission) differs from language used in other kinds of theatre studies, special attention should be paid both to the orality of actors’ methodology and its actual usefulness to actors. Danish Stanislavski scholar Annelis Kuhlman considers Stanislavski’s text an artistic document with its “own special language.”³⁶ She writes:

In the text we often come across explicatory styles such as “as it is called in our language”, “as we call it in our language”, “as it is said in our language”, or “as we will name it in our language”. . . . These statements are often followed by comments such as “which signifies”, “which means”, or “which is”. As utterances these statements represent, on their own narrative level, the constant search and re-search for a terminology, or a learner’s special working language.

What is a special language? In terminology research it is common to say that a special language is a language for a special purpose, i.e. for a professional purpose. Terminologists tell us that in contrast to this special language we have our daily life language. So we might conclude that a special language is being something extra-daily, something codified.³⁷

Kuhlman's discourse on Stanislavski's language, along with her adoption of Barba's own "special language" inherent in her use of Barba's term "extra-daily" to talk about Stanislavski, denotes her belief in a connection between Stanislavski and Barba at the level of utterance. *Extra-daily* (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four) is simply a term used to distinguish performance behavior activities, primarily physical behavior, from behavior in daily life. Barba believes that the actor's work is always extra-daily because of the intensity of energy and precision of action required of the actor. What is significant about Stanislavski's "special language" is that not all of it is found in his books, but rather it was and is transmitted in classrooms.

Carnicke makes a significant contribution to the question of the oral transmission of acting methodologies in her particular area of interest, Stanislavski's System. Her interest is not limited merely to what Stanislavski said and did. She also investigates what was and is said about him by those who were taught by him and in turn taught his System to others—the émigré teachers in America and the classroom circuit of former Art Theatre actors who taught the System in Russia. In her "Boleslavsky in America," she asks, "How does the reception of an émigré's ideas on foreign soil alter those ideas?"³⁸ This is of paramount importance because it implies that Carnicke believes that a central set of ideas were altered in the United States even before the translation of the trilogy, and that oral transmission is a legitimate form not only of pedagogy, but also historical inquiry. Boleslavski's transmission of the central set of ideas is instrumental in explaining the transmission and transformation of Stanislavski or

Barba's ideas such that they become useful beyond the Moscow Art Theatre and outside Odin Teatret respectively.

The Barba and Grotowski traditions are carried on more through oral transmission than any other medium. This is because of the enormity of their pedagogical work carried on through small workshops and, in Barba's case, ISTA. The teaching often does not reflect that which is found in their books but rather much more specific understandings of actors' methodology based on the unique experience of group and individual dynamics generated in teaching situations.

The case of Boleslavski is instructive in this consideration of infrastructure and genealogy even though his methodology differs remarkably from Barba's. Prior to the 1933 publication of his *Acting: The First Six Lessons*, Boleslavski had already had a significant impact on American acting methodologies. On January 18, 1923, eight days after the Moscow Art Theatre opened in New York, Boleslavski, with Stanislavski's permission, began to give lectures on the System. In April 1923 he published "The Laboratory Theatre" and "The First Lesson in Acting; A Pseudo-Morality" together, consisting of forty-eight pages in *Theatre Arts Monthly*. From 1923 until 1930, Boleslavski and Maria Ouspenskaia, in Miriam Stockton's American Theatre Laboratory, taught the System to Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, Harold Clurman, and Eunice Stoddard, soon-to-be founders of the Group Theatre. In turn, whole generations of American actors were trained by these people and their students in an American version of the early drafts of the System, albeit rudimentary in comparison to what Stanislavski

ultimately proposed. Most American actors have learned the System indirectly through Boleslavski rather than through Stanislavski's books.

Boleslavski certainly was an authority on early incarnations of the System. He was a founding director of the Moscow Art Theatre's First Studio. Considered a natural leader, he was apparently nicknamed "Stanislavski" by one of the studio members.³⁹ After his emigration to the U.S., he was supported by Stanislavski, who proposed to Nemirovich Danchenko, that, since it was difficult for Art Theatre actors to establish themselves in emigration, they should be allowed to use the Moscow Art Theatre name in connection to their own theatres.⁴⁰ But at the same time, by being out of contact with Stanislavski, Boleslavski lost touch with the "dynamic and ever-changing system."⁴¹ Grotowski points out that the System continuously changed over the years, but Stanislavski's disciples did not change with it.⁴²

Ultimately Boleslavski's importance diminished, and his American students, especially Lee Strasberg, flourished as they practiced the so-called Method. But the Method can be seen as a calcification of the System in its early incarnations. The Method's existence points to three crucial aspects of Stanislavski's methodology: its mutability; its durability; and its resistance to fixity. Ultimately Boleslavski did not believe he had succeeded in conveying his knowledge in the way he wanted.

Carnicke's analysis points to problems Boleslavski had in the transmission of the System:

- (1) the collective ideals of Stanislavsky's theatre found only rocky soil in the individualistic U.S. society; (2) the linguistic barriers of

an adopted language placed obstacles to clear communication in his path; and (3) finally, his students reinterpreted and transformed his best ideas into ones that were culturally familiar to them. In other words, their own cultural background modified what they heard.⁴³

Boleslavski's problem with transmission across cultural boundaries exemplifies Postlewait's ninth crux. At the expense of the identity of the source culture and of the message, cross-cultural transmission had far-reaching effects on the reception of the System in the States. The Method was a rather lopsided, if not distorted version of the System.

However, the far-reaching effects of Boleslavski's transmission of the System points to the durability and mutability of theatre methodologies, especially the resilience of basic principles associated with Stanislavski. Although transformed, a certain set of principles comes to be associated with him even if they function independently of him. The same holds true with Grotowski. A comparison of Grotowski's exercises, found in the back of *Towards a Poor Theatre*, with what is taught in American acting classes demonstrates that teachers who never met or worked with Grotowski use his exercises. But, they have been transmitted indirectly by their own teachers or their teachers' teachers. This is because those who trained with Grotowski or Ryszard Ciésłak moved out of the laboratory context into classrooms without identifying their mentors, so the exercises were passed on without identifying their source.

But, ultimately Boleslavski's work demonstrates a rather unfortunate aspect of the Stanislavski legacy: the omission in oral tradition and subsequent pedagogies of the interconnection of the System's most salient features, affective memory and

physical actions. And because of this the importance of Boleslavski's teachings to actors has diminished over the years.

These connections between action and emotion are made through reflexology. In the realm of actor training, reflexology is a psychological strategy upon which both the Method of Physical Actions and Meyerhold's Biomechanics are based. It positions emotion as the result of action rather than its source. Reflexology is a major point of confluence between Stanislavski and Meyerhold's work that links both in Barba's methodology. According to Joseph Roach, "All manifestations of brain function can be reduced to muscular movement propelled or repressed by reflex. Emotions are merely intensified reflexes."⁴⁴ To support the idea that Barba's physical theatre is connected to Stanislavski's psychological realism while retaining its link to Meyerhold's stylized constructivist theatre, it is important to demonstrate that, as a theatrical device, the principle of reflexology functions in both the Method of Physical Actions and Biomechanics.

In the Method of Physical Actions and Biomechanics, the physical may at first appear to be privileged over the emotions, but the emotions are crucial in both approaches. Emotions may have played a stronger role in Meyerhold's methodology than is generally accepted (this is addressed in Chapter Three). They may not have been as central to Stanislavski's methodology as is commonly believed. This is essential to explaining how the physical and psychological are integrated for Barba and his predecessors. This interrelationship between action and emotion is complicated by Barba's resistance to the connotations surrounding

the word *emotions*. The actual role played by emotions in Stanislavski's System can also be called into question.

How crucial was emotion to Stanislavski's System? Consider what Stanislavski was reported as saying at the end of his career during his work on *Tartuffe* described in Vasily Osipovich Toporkov's *Stanislavski in Rehearsal: The Final Years*.

Once someone asked: / "What is the nature of the 'emotional states' of the actors in this scene?" / Konstantin Sergeyevich looked surprised and said: / "'Emotional states.' What is that? I never heard of it." / That was not true. At one time this expression had been used by Stanislavski himselfWhen one of the actresses told him that she had kept all the notes of the rehearsals in which she had taken part under his direction and now didn't know how to use this treasure, Stanislavski answered: "Burn them all."⁴⁵

How subsequent readers have interpreted these remarks has led to controversy and misunderstanding. The tendency has been for pedagogues to say that at the end of his career Stanislavski abandoned the work on emotions. Some pedagogues, even notable émigré teachers, especially Sonia Moore, insist on this. But their insistence does not make it true.⁴⁶ Stanislavski was not necessarily abandoning his previous work, but rather assuring the importance of physical action. Sometimes his wit and pedagogical cunning are taken too literally. Stanislavski was wily and his teaching style was more Socratic than didactic. When he says, "'Emotional states.' What is that? I never heard of it" or "What idiot thought that up?" it should be assumed he knew that it was he himself who promoted these ideas. With regard to this period late in Stanislavski's career,

Anatoly Smelianski said that too much emphasis has been laid on the Toporkov book, and that what he wrote may not be altogether accurate.⁴⁷

The fact that Stanislavski was forced to conform his work to a socialist realist context, whereas Meyerhold, who was committed to revolutionary ideals, fell out of favor, has an influence on how Stanislavski's work was written about by his students. Meyerhold was murdered in a Soviet Prison and the mere mention of his name was forbidden until after Stalin's death. When Toporkov wrote *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*, Meyerhold was still a non-person and therefore never mentioned in the book. A tacit fear of reprisal becomes the context through which most of the first-hand accounts of Soviet Russian Moscow Art Theatre actors must be read. The book's emphasis on the Method of Physical Actions gives expression to the way Toporkov and other actors from Stanislavski's final years such as Maria Knebel, Mikhail Kedrov, Sonia Moore, and Yuri Zavadsky tried to tailor Stanislavski's System to dialectical materialism.

What is the actual significance of Stanislavski's work in his final years? Toporkov merely puts what happened in Stanislavski's house on Leontiv Lane at the end of his career into the context of dialectical materialism to make it palatable to the Stalinist milieu. But, according to Smelianski, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal: the Final Years* was the book used at GITIS in 1955. This was the period when Grotowski was a student there. Therefore the Method of Physical Actions was *the* aspect of Stanislavski's System being privileged at the time when Grotowski was directly exposed to the Stanislavski legacy. This knowledge, as Grotowski received it, was most assuredly bequeathed to Barba. As influential as

the Method of Physical Actions was and is, other aspects of the System remained in practice regardless of this outward, mostly rhetorical shift. In fact, in order for the Method of Physical Actions to work, emotional memory must be present as well.

Although it is a commonplace of recent reconsideration of the System to believe the Method of Physical Actions was wrongly omitted in the Hapgood translations, that interpretation is believed by some as a product of an already corrupt interpretation of Stanislavski's System. Burnett Hobgood wisely observes:

Nothing came up to suggest that Stanislavski at this point renounced his earlier principles on the emotional and spiritual preparation of an actor. On the contrary, [Hapgood] was fully aware of what she termed the "Marxist trend" to push Stanislavski's ideas into "the official mould of 'socialist realism,'" and observed that: "As for the development of physical actions, that approach was inherent in his system from the very beginning." . . . Why and for what reasons the Soviet theatre critics came to a consensus that the "the method of physical actions" should supplant the entire System as previously described by Stanislavski it is impossible for us to say.⁴⁸

It is important to counteract the idea that the Method of Physical Actions is the final and correct incarnation of the System. When actors and pedagogues attempt to compensate for Boleslavski—Strasberg's dependency on emotion, it maybe tempting to over-privilege that which is not classified as emotional, such as physical actions, but this merely mirrors Soviet contexts imposed on Stanislavski. Neither the Soviets nor the Americans truly present the overall picture of Stanislavski to the profession. It is up to interested actors and pedagogues to reconstruct the System carefully, not only from written sources, but also from the

shards of original oral transmissions buried in actors' utterances when discussing their work.

Boleslavski, the members of the Group Theatre and the Actor's Studio, and Hapgood's English version are not the only bearers of Stanislavski's legacy. Manifestations of Stanislavski's System thrive in groups like the Odin who embrace his principles and ethos in the spirit in which he proposed them and in which he worked. The contrast of Barba's principles against those used by the Group is a useful crucible for examining Stanislavski's principles. Ultimately the Group failed to carry on in the spirit of collectivity embraced by the Studios of the Moscow Art Theatre. The Group's quest for individuality and success, a decidedly American pursuit was instrumental in the Group's ultimate demise.⁴⁹ Any history of the Group will show that their period of genuine collective creation was brief. On the other hand, Barba and Grotowski have succeeded with collectivity over the span of their careers, developing its values into a way of life strongly connected to, indeed modeled after the ethical attitude taken by Stanislavski and the spiritual attitude taken by Sulerzhitski, and their mutual disciple Vakhtangov.⁵⁰

Maybe it was predictable that, though at first Boleslavski would succeed in America, ultimately the Art Theatre's principles would never survive on foreign soil. This was because, not only the members of his American Laboratory Theatre or the Group Theatre, but even Boleslavski himself were not fully committed to the ideal of collectivity. With regard to the notion of the creative collective, Barba has been far more successful than others in embracing the values

proposed by Stanislavski and inherent in the policies of the Moscow Art Theatre's studios.

Boleslavski saw the problem as cultural rather than personal. He said to the leader of the American Laboratory Theatre, Miriam Stockton, "It would be impossible to impose any foreign ideal upon American soil."⁵¹ This same sentiment has been expressed to many who have embraced Barba's work and then wanted to organize groups in the States. Yet, in spite of these warnings, Odin-influenced groups do function in the States. Stacy Klein's Double Edge Theatre in Boston is one example of an active American theatre group that has been deeply influenced by Barba, along with The Bond Street Theatre, Five Moon Theatre, and the North American Cultural Laboratory all in New York. Each has been influenced by the Odin and, although structured differently, has embraced the ethos and values that make Barba's Odin unique. These groups have learned more about Barba by being exposed to the Odin as observers at the theatre who have the opportunity to learn first-hand through watching the work. This is quite different from reading books. It was similar for Strasberg who learned first-hand from Boleslavski. Inasmuch as Strasberg has been criticized for some of his techniques, it may be that, because of the orality of its roots, his version of the System harmonizes more with Stanislavski than it is discordant. Strasberg did get many of Stanislavski's principles right. This view of the value of oral transmission supports the theory of a Stanislavski—Barba continuum whose representative directors all learned their craft through experience rather than books.⁵²

Stages in Publication: Method of Physical Actions Myths

To demonstrate not only the importance of the Method of Physical Actions, but also the influence of an imbalanced view of Stanislavski's System (in which it is seen strictly as a method for the performance of psychological realism), the publication history of Stanislavski's writings may help. This publication history demonstrates that Barba's extremely physical methodology harmonizes with Stanislavski's work principles even though they are usually seen as strictly supportive of an emotion-based acting technique. Barba and Stanislavski's methodologies are founded on the cohesion of the mind and body rather than their separation.

The publication dates of Stanislavski's major writings in English translation, *My Life in Art* (1924), *An Actor Prepares* (1936), *Building a Character* (1949), and *Creating a Role* (1961) are not indicative of significant shifts in his ideas—especially since two of these works were published post-mortem. Perhaps the various emphases in these three books, separated only by their dates of publication, but held together as a cohesive whole in the mind of their author, will explain how (for those dependent on the English translations) differing foci in acting methodologies over the century shifted in accordance with whatever aspect of the System had been most recently published. In 1930, Stanislavski wrote:

It is important that the book begin with an overview of the whole scheme, i.e., all three volumes. Otherwise I think it is impossible for the book to appear in separate parts. The fact is that when the first book appears (*Diary of a Pupil, Work on Oneself, Experience*) it could appear as though experience was of an ultra-naturalistic nature and the book would therefore be reviled. If there is an

overall plan at the beginning of the book and it is made plain that the whole book leads to a superconscious creation, the naturalism of the initial stages is justified.⁵³

To a large extent, Stanislavski's worst fears have come to pass. Because the books were published separately, over a long period of time, *The Actor Prepares* came to be regarded as the Rossetta stone of acting in a theatre of naturalism, and did indeed become reviled. Had all three books been published simultaneously, Stanislavski's impact on the profession might have been more cohesive.

Taken together, they are integrated phases within the System. The actual System becomes complicated unnecessarily because of the way certain connected ideas were separated by the different moments of publication. This is exacerbated by the publication dates of the first-hand accounts of Stanislavski's students. For example, it would seem from reading Toporkov's *Stanislavski in Rehearsal* (1950s) that the Method of Physical Actions was an innovation arrived at during the very final stages of Stanislavski's career.⁵⁴ But judging from numerous scholars' readings of Stanislavski's original manuscripts (notably Benedetti and Carnicke), in particular the drafts for *An Actor's Work on Himself II, Building a Character* and the later *Creating a Role*, (especially two all-important pages excised in the English *Creating a Role*), it becomes clear that some method of physical actions had been developed in tandem with the techniques of emotional recall. Benedetti writes:

Mrs. Hapgood's view of the System was conditioned both by the émigrés she consulted, such as Boleslavski and Ouspenskaia (who had left Russia just after the Revolution, having worked with Stanislavski at a time when much greater emphasis was placed on psychological analysis and emotional memory) and by current versions of the System, such as the much publicized Method. Had

she understood the new approach she would certainly not have cut the two crucial pages of the third section of *Creating a Role*, where Stanislavski clearly indicates the break with an earlier approach with its emphasis on preliminary discussion and research into the sub-text and the transition to an approach where analysis through action comes first: 'the subtext is in the action'.⁵⁵

The break with an earlier approach discussed here is not a break with emotional memory and psychological techniques; it is rather a break with the tedious at-table rehearsals. In their place Stanislavski was proposing a more active analysis of a play found through the discovery and rehearsal of its physical actions. Accurate understanding of the role of physical actions is stressed in this study because action is at the core of the athleticism and movement-orientation of the Odin's work (rather than acrobatic virtuosity, which is how it might appear at first when seeing an Odin performance). To see a physical theatre like the Odin and understand how the dynamism of the actors' extreme movement is meaningful, as something more than a circus-like entertainment, something metaphysically visceral, is to understand not only Barba's productions, but from the actor's point of view, his methodology.

By exploring problems inherent in Stanislavski translation and publication and the dynamics surrounding his professional relationships with colleagues and students, it is possible to separate Stanislavski's teachings from the myth that casts him as the father of naturalism and psychological realism. One question in this investigation is whether the Method of Physical Actions was an innovation stemming from the end of Stanislavski's career or had always been an integral part of the System before the publication of the trilogy. If physical actions were always part of the System then evaluation of the System does not require an

either/or analysis because emotion/action always interlock. This is the System's dual aspect.

Vakhtangov seems to have been aware of the value Stanislavski placed on the physical actions in the early twenties, and exploited that aspect in his own work. In lessons given at the Chaikovsky Studio where Nikolai Gorchakov was a student, Vakhtangov asked Gorchakov to do a simple etude of lighting a fire to burn something. Gorchakov lit the fire so early in the etude that he was left onstage without anything to do. After he had lit the fire, Vakhtangov kept Gorchakov on stage and tricked him into believing that he was ignoring him, telling stories to the other actors about Art Theatre rehearsals with Stanislavski. Meanwhile Gorchakov was desperately pretending to go through his pockets looking for some papers to burn, trying to figure out an action. Finally Vakhtangov sent another student on stage. Gorchakov writes:

Suddenly I heard someone whisper from behind a screen: / "Kolya don't show that you know I'm here or that you can hear me . . ." / To my astonishment it was the voice of Volodya Kantsel. . . . "What d'you want?" I asked him softly, almost without opening my mouth, trying all the while to keep up my interest in the papers I was holding. / "Vakhtangov told me to do something to surprise you, but I just can't think of anything. . . . Let's think of something." / "Why is he looking at me? I haven't started my etude yet." / "He looks this way now and then. He was telling me about his Mozart and Salieri rehearsals with Stanislavsky and he sometimes glanced at you." / "Was it interesting?" / "Very. . . ." / "And here I'm sitting like a fool while Vakhtangov has forgotten all about me and is telling you such wonderful stories . . ." / "That'll do!" I heard Vakhtangov say in a loud voice, apparently to me. / I turned around apprehensively, thinking he was telling Kantsel and me to stop whispering, for we had become engrossed in our conversation and forgotten Vakhtangov's instructions. / "That will do. The etude's been very good," Vakhtangov smiled at my confusion. / "But I didn't do anything. I was waiting for you to tell me when to begin," I said, stupidly trying to defend myself. /

“The most important thing is that you did the etude thinking that you were not doing anything,” Vakhtangov said. . . . “Remember that in an etude the aim is always action, not emotion. Etudes are given only for the sole purpose of enabling emotion to arise from action. These are not my words. They are Stanislavsky’s.”⁵⁶

What is especially compelling about Gorchakov’s Vakhtangov anecdote is that it is a clear application of Stanislavski’s ideas in a practical situation. Vakhtangov quite simply states that emotions arise from actions, a core principle of the Method of Physical Actions. Rather than endeavoring to improve upon Stanislavski’s teachings, which is how Vakhtangov is often portrayed, in the above anecdote he simply clarifies the role physical actions play in stimulating actors’ internal dimensions. This connotes that emotions and physical actions are not results but a means of working toward expression.

Stanislavski’s interest in and deployment of physical actions comes from much earlier in his career than 1937 when he compiled the material in *Creating a Role* (the book most associated with the Method of Physical Actions). Although Hapgood’s translation of *Creating a Role* was not published until 1961, most of Stanislavski’s writing for his trilogy was accomplished between 1928 and 1934. Sharon Carnicke states that the material in the book “brings together unfinished drafts, which Stanislavsky penned between 1914 and 1937.”⁵⁷ But even before 1914, in 1901, while at work with Meyerhold on the latter’s portrayal of Tusenbach in Chekhov’s *The Three Sisters*, Stanislavski used physical actions as a “lure” for the internal aspects of a role and the actor’s sensations. Benedetti writes:

Neither Meierhold as Tusenbach nor Sudbinin as Vershinin were adequate. Knipper had seen the problem earlier. She had written

to Chekhov on January 7 that Meierhold lacked ‘vitality, strength, life – he’s dreary.’ Stanislavski worked hard to bring Meierhold’s performance to life, driving him almost mad in the process. His method was to provide actions that would induce a physical state out of which the words would emerge with the right emotional tone. On one occasion he went up onto stage with a piece of paper and said, ‘Go to the piano, say the first three words, see the paper, pick it up, open it as you are going to your seat and continue talking.’ It worked. On another occasion he had Meierhold uncork a bottle during a long speech. Having to concentrate on the problems created by the cork he stopped ‘saying lines’.⁵⁸

The beginnings of the Method of Physical Action are also apparent in Stanislavski’s own work in preparing the role of Dr. Stockman in *Enemy of the People* as far back as 1900 when he “looks for physical characteristics which would express mental quirks.”⁵⁹

It is erroneous to believe that Stanislavski threw over his earlier ideas about affective memory and emotional recall in favor of the Method of the Physical Actions. The Method of Physical Actions was not meant as a replacement for the work on the emotions, but, rather, it functioned as its cognate. Stanislavski writes:

Scatter them [inner emotions] into space and they disappear. But fill up the physical life of your part with feelings [sensations], and the emotions aroused will become rooted in your physical being, in your deeply felt physical actions. They will seep in, be soaked up, they will gather up feelings [sensations] connected with each instant of physical life of your role and in this way lay hold of ephemeral sensations and creative emotions of an actor. . . . Here is another no less practical reason why I began our work from the physical angle. One of the most irresistible *lures* to our emotions lies in the *truth* and our *faith* in it. . . . An actor need only believe in himself and his soul will open up to receive all the inner objectives and emotions of his role. If, however, he forces his feelings he will never believe in them; and without that faith he will never really feel his part.⁶⁰

Clearly emotion and action are interdependent for Stanislavski.

It is worth noting, whenever reading Hapgood's translations, the word *feelings* should be replaced with *sensations* as demonstrated by the difficulty Hapgood had with the word *oshchushcenii*. Substituting the word *sensations* for *feelings* would make more sense in the above citation. According to Carnicke *oshchushcenii* always connotes the physical, that aspect of the actor's methodology Hapgood rarely acknowledges. Perhaps feelings have as much to do with the physical as they do with the ephemeral emotions. This implies that the two (the physical and the psychological) work in tandem. Not only does Stanislavski propose that physical actions evoke emotions, he is bold enough to propose that they evoke truth. It is important to note how Stanislavski uses the concept of truth and believability. He does not propose universal truths, only that the value of the truth lies in actors' faith in what they believe. Plenty of flexibility exists for those whose truths may differ from those of others.

Father of Naturalism Myths and the Body-Mind

When linking Stanislavski to Barba, their different aesthetic approaches may confound the comparison, especially because Stanislavski's work as a director is usually perceived as grounded primarily in naturalism and realism whereas Barba is often thought to be focused on anti-realistic, physical theatre. But neither is necessarily the truth. Their linkage is certainly not at the level of style or productions. Instead, it lies within their methodologies for actor training, their rehearsal process, and the values of their respective creative collectives.

Stanislavski's view of naturalism was not that of an ardent supporter; indeed he was as skeptical about it as his disciples, Vakhtangov and Meyerhold.

According to Nikolai Gorchakov, when explaining how to fill an audience's imagination with the details a director cannot bring on stage, such as horses and coaches, Stanislavski said, "Naturalism is poisonous to the theatre. Naturalism cheats the audience of its main pleasure and its most important satisfaction, that of creating with the actor."⁶¹

An especially influential Stanislavski myth is that his penchant for the natural and nature metaphors restricts the use of his methods to the Euro-American tradition of naturalism and realism.⁶² Stanislavski's System, according to this myth, is a style of acting most useful for mirroring nature, but not appropriate for contemporary, non-realistic drama, which often distorts or elaborates on nature. An unfortunate misconception portrays Stanislavski as uninterested in the unreal and unwilling to experiment with new forms. Theatre students should be reminded of Stanislavski's role in the early stages of Meyerhold's experimentation when the two established the Studio on Povaskaraya Street in 1904. This was not only the first studio of the Moscow Art Theatre. It was the first studio whose purpose was solely experimentation in the theatre.

Sometimes Stanislavski's dictum, "The time has come to stage the unreal" is incorrectly attributed to Meyerhold. See in particular Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre's web page devoted to Meyerhold on which the epigraph reads, "The time has come to stage the unreal, to render life as perceived in fantasies and visions. - V. E. Meyerhold -"⁶³ But these are not Meyerhold's words. And it is important to

say as much, because the error speaks volumes about how Stanislavski, and his relationship with Meyerhold, is still misconstrued. It was Stanislavski who wrote these words in 1904. They are best understood in the context of his sincere desire to work with the younger generation during Russia's long period of social unrest.

Stanislavski writes:

At a time of social unrest like the present the theater cannot and does not have the right to serve pure art alone—it must respond to social moods, clarify them for the public, become a teacher of society. Mindful of its high obligation, this “young” theater must at the same time strive to carry out its chief task, the renewal of dramatic art by means of new forms and methods of stage representation.⁶⁴

And in 1904 he writes the credo of the new studio:

The depiction of everyday life had outlived its time. The time had come for the unreal on stage . . . One must show not life as it flows in reality, but as we dimly perceive it in our dreams, visions, moments of elevated feeling. This is a spiritual state and it must be conveyed in the theatre, just as painters of the new school show it in their canvases, musicians of the new trend in their music and the new poets in their verse.⁶⁵

Critic Konstantin Rudnitsky rightly points out that Stanislavski's words are often forgotten along with the extent to which he and Meyerhold shared a mission to respond to new social issues, and the changing times with “new forms.”

Historians tend to focus on Stanislavski's later rejection of formalism, evinced at the end of *My Life in Art*.

So long as the physical culture of the body assists the main creative tasks of art, i.e., *to convey human emotions in an artistic form*, I welcome whole-heartedly the new expressive achievements of the contemporary actor. But the moment physical culture becomes an end in itself in art, the moment it begins to slow down the creative process and engenders a split between spiritual desire and conventions of external acting, the moment it suppresses feelings and experiences, I become an ardent opponent of these fine new

achievements.⁶⁶

As Stalinist imperatives against formalism became more pronounced, however, it becomes difficult to determine whether Stanislavski's stance against Meyerhold was entirely based on aesthetics and methodology or was more a means of dodging Socialist Realism's aesthetics then imposed by the Stalinist cultural police.

Interestingly Stanislavski was caught in an ironic double bind. Whereas some people, the critics and censors especially, condemned his System as mystical, bourgeois, or "an-historical," others, like Stalin, mythologized him as the father of Russian theatre.⁶⁷ He was trapped: hated for who he was, and loved for who he was not. The Moscow Art Theatre of 1931 was not, in spirit, what Stanislavski had envisioned with Nemirovich Danchenko in 1897 at their famous eighteen hour meeting at the Slavic Bazaar. Nor was it conducive to Stanislavski's obsessive investigation of the actor's art and technique. He was required, by virtue of his duty as a Soviet citizen and his iconic status as a national treasure, to work in the theatre he had created but over which he had long since lost control. The Moscow Art Theatre had become a cultural institute virtually run by the state, in which Stanislavski exercised little authority and less artistic freedom. He was applauded internationally for his early work on Chekhov, his autobiography *My Life in Art*, and, in the States, for his early pedagogical work, the so-called System, but in actuality he was unable, in his own theatre, to develop his System fully.⁶⁸ Kuhlmann says:

Separating single elements like emotional memory or the physical actions away from the actor's work on himself betrays the legacy

and Stanislavski becomes a toothless old man. This legacy is part of a culture, an ethics of a culture in terms of liberty! People can see it, but they imagine that they can rehearse like this. It is not a rehearsal system; it is a training system. I actually don't think Stanislavski practiced his own System on stage.⁶⁹

Though for him social relevance was anathema, as a national hero, Stanislavski was framed by Stalin's cultural ministers as the leading proponent of Socialist Realism. Thus his rejection of meaningless formalism voiced in *My Life in Art* (cited above) reinforces the notion that Stanislavski was strictly a proponent of realism and naturalism, even though it is probable that what he objected to was not formalism per se, but the banality of art whose form precedes its function.

In his "Stanislavski's System," Italian theatre scholar and ISTA founder, Franco Ruffini describes the standard misconceptions associated with Stanislavski: "Stanislavski's 'system' . . . has only to do with identification of character, it is only useful for naturalistic actors, it is the consequence of a particular poetics, and so on."⁷⁰ Ruffini disagrees. He finds different connotations in Stanislavski's understanding of the naturalness of the human in performance than those who read the tenets of naturalism (the literary theory), into Stanislavski's theories. Ruffini quotes Stanislavski from *Il lavoro dell'attore*, the Italian translation of *An Actor's Work on Himself*.

All that you have learned in these two years now lies confused in your minds. . . . Yet what we have found is nothing more than the simplest, most normal human conditions (. . .) It is disconcerting to realize how something which is usually spontaneously created vanishes without a trace as soon as the actor sets foot on stage, and that to reestablish it, so much work, study and technique is necessary. (. . .) because of the individual elements of which it consists, general scenic sensibility is the *simplest and most natural human condition*.⁷¹

The actor, according to Stanislavski, reproduces daily behavior, but in the extreme circumstance of the performance situation the actor must go to extremes. By drawing attention to the extreme measures an actor must take, Ruffini draws useful conclusions as he works towards finding both the extra-daily and pre-expressive tenets of Barba's Theatre Anthropology in Stanislavski's writings.

Ruffini writes, "The human condition of which Stanislavski speaks, based on 'psycho-physiological procedures which originate in our own natures', can be defined as the 'organic body-mind.'" ⁷² When Ruffini refers to Stanislavski's discussion of "psycho-physiological" procedures in *Creating a Role*, he links these procedures with what he calls the "organic body-mind." He examines how the notion of the body-mind helps to undo the strictures of the psychoanalytic perspective that privilege the mind in most readings of Stanislavski (notably Strasberg's). Ruffini sees Stanislavski in the context of the body-mind, a concept on which American theatre scholar Phillip Zarrilli, in his writing, spends so much energy promoting as a pinnacle of contemporary practice. This notion of body-mind is not so innovative as Zarrilli would have readers believe. It has been integral to Stanislavski's System all along although it was never named as such.

In his "Introduction to Part 1" in *Acting (Re)Considered*, Zarrilli speaks of the "Euro-American experience of the dichotomy or gap thought to exist between the cognitive, conceptual, formal, or rational and the bodily, perceptual, material, and emotional." ⁷³ Zarrilli writes:

Body-mind dualism can be traced back to Plato who asserted that the mind (*Psyche*) had an independent and superior metaphysical

status capable of participating in the knowledge of the world of forms. The body was a part of the physical world and therefore a deterrence or hindrance to a person's epistemic and spiritual development. . . . American psychological realism's approach to constructing the theatrical character is particularly susceptible to body-mind dualism. The rhetoric and semantics used to represent "creating a character" all too often give the impression that the character is an object logically constructed by the mind and then put into the body. There is little if any discussion of the process by which the character so constructed gets in-corporated [sic]. But if the physical body is lost in many of the discourses and practices of American method acting, the physical was never lost to Stanislavsky and many of his best known students.⁷⁴

Zarrilli talks about "Euro-American" practice as one in which mind and body diverge without being specific as to whose practice he refers. Stanislavski and his disciples are rightly exonerated from any guilt of dualism, but they seem to be given little more than honorable mention in a polemic at which they are the epicenter. The quotation marks surrounding the phrase *creating a character* are suspiciously sarcastic. Zarrilli does not really discuss the extent to which Stanislavski was interested in the actor's psychological motivations, privileging a more Soviet view of the System. Zarrilli seems more concerned with the Boleslavski—Strasberg foundations of American acting. But even with Boleslavski—Strasberg, the body is deemed crucial. In his "The First Lesson in Acting" Boleslavski writes, "The education of an actor consists of three parts. The first is the education of his body, the whole physical apparatus, of every muscle and sinew."⁷⁵ It is true that Boleslavski treats the body as separate from the mind, but in addressing the beginning actor he realistically separates acting into different levels so that the process can be addressed in a classroom using a step-by-step pedagogy. In the consideration of acting pedagogies it is useful to

consider how pedagogues approach the beginning actor. In his writings Grotowski talks about a “language of beginners.”⁷⁶ Kuhlmann calls Stanislavski’s poetics “a learner’s special language.”

Zarrilli’s main concern is how students and practitioners understand pedagogy and tradition, and how they shatter the body-mind in their effort to work on the process piecemeal. But ultimately all actors must shatter their process in rehearsal situations. The shattered pieces are reunited in performance. Actors must eventually embody their practice if they are to make theatre, rather than rehearsals or works-in-progress. It may be that Zarrilli believes body and mind ought to exist as a unit and that the acting process unnecessarily divides them. However it is also possible that even if they are usually united, the performance process differs so drastically from daily life that the enervation of being on stage separates them thus necessitating a gradual process of reunification through training and rehearsal.

Whether Zarrilli is separating himself from Stanislavski or not is hard to tell. He attempts to separate Boleslavsky—Strasberg from Stanislavski though not explicitly, rather choosing to imply distinctions in methodology through the subtleties embedded in the terminology of acting such as “in-corporated” and “psychophysiological.” However, these words parallel Stanislavski’s “incarnate” and “psychophysical.” Stanislavski writes:

[A]ll the actors without exception, partake of creative food according to the laws of nature, treasure what they receive in their intellectual, emotional, or muscular memory, digest the material in their artistic imagination, give birth to the image and life of the human spirit, and incarnate it according to well known, natural laws that are incumbent upon all. These creative laws that yield to

our consciousness are not many. . . . [T]hese laws of nature should be studied by every actor . . . *These elementary psycho-physical laws have so far not been mastered.* [italics mine]⁷⁷

Are Zarrilli and Stanislavski not ultimately talking about the same thing? Perhaps Zarrilli's distinctions are too subtle. Could *psycho-physical* and *psycho-physiological* be interchangeable? By taking a stand against Plato and Descartes, Zarrilli gives the impression (perhaps unintentionally, but given the title of his book, *Acting (Re)Considered*, its content must be taken as new configurations of methodology) that the body-mind or the psycho-physiological is somehow part of a contemporary methodology rather than fully recognizing the traditions from which these ideas come.

The most salient polemic with regard to the distinctions between Stanislavski and Barba's methodologies is captured by Zarrilli's proposals in the area of actor motivation. Zarrilli writes, "The actor does not *have* to produce logical, behaviorally motivated, psychological signs for an action to have any meaning for an audience."⁷⁸ But what then motivates the actor? What impels a *Noh* actor to move his feet slowly or to stamp them? Does Zarrilli not recognize a difference between the actor's actions and the actions a character produces—literal action as opposed to literary action? Though the signs the audience receives are not required to appear logical or motivated, the actor still has to produce personally intelligible internal signs of action to motivate him or herself at the level of impulses.

Is the actor's behavior ever actually unmotivated? Zarrilli believes it can be.

When directing Euripides's *Hippolytus* a number of years ago, I instructed the actor playing Hippolytus to open his first scene

kneeling, chopping wood with a hatchet. I further explained that he should use the hatchet in a rhythmically measured but focused manner so that each blow would have a “heavy” quality, and, once he began to deliver his opening speech, to set the rhythm and tone of his speech to the chopping. Since, like most American actors at his level of experience, this actor’s primary training had been in various forms of Stanislavsky-based Method acting, I was not surprised when he asked what his motivation might be for chopping wood. Although either of us could have invented a motivation for Hippolytus which might have allowed the chopping to make sense in motivational terms, we resisted using such language. We worked toward clarity about what the actor’s task was at this moment—simply chopping wood.⁷⁹

Cannot clarity and motivation exist simultaneously in the same acting body?

Zarrilli ignores a very important distinction, attributing the actor’s understandable desire for motivation deftly to Method-oriented acting and Stanislavski as though this link was a whole chain. But perhaps Zarrilli misunderstood the student’s question. It is not Hippolytus who requires motivation, but the actor who requires a reason to take an action. As Roberta Carreri puts it, “I like to know what I am doing.”⁸⁰ Even if the audience does not need to know the motivational force residing in the actor, the actor will have one at the level of the impulses whether or not it is supplied in advance by the director or the playwright.

Non-text-based performances like the Odin’s require motivational forces found within the actor at the level of the self, not the texts that are ultimately exploited in the performances. This approach, finding the intention of an action in the self, was crucial to Stanislavski’s methodology, but its importance is obscured by the emphasis placed on the drama in his text-based theatre. In Barba’s methodology, motivation for actions is cultivated in the teaching/learning situations (training), in which the actor works without a text. Shearing motivation from characters’

needs and focusing on actors' need for it helps determine what psychophysical aspects of acting are necessary to the process, especially in a theatre like Barba's that renounces the primacy of the dramatic text. Stanislavski's work on self, at the level of impulses to action, is what is especially important about Stanislavski to Barba. Zarrilli does not identify actors' internal impulses as separate from those of characters. This distinction is essential to grasping the relevance of Stanislavski's methodology to Barba's practice.

These internal impulses are connected to action by mental leaps, what Torgeir Wethal calls "intellectual choreography" and what Stanislavski calls "inner poetry."⁸¹ The audience never needs to be aware of the actor's process, but, if the actors are not focused on something meaningful to them, their actions will not be clear. If nothing energetic radiates from the stage, the audience will merely objectify the actor, watch and listen without being stimulated on a visceral level. Undoubtedly something internal must go on for the actor who is "simply chopping wood" that motivates the act of chopping, but it does not have to fit into any logical pattern of thought. Maybe the actor playing Hippolytus is not motivated by a secret desire to chop off his stepmother's head. But the impulse to lift the axe is neither automatic nor involuntary. Some thought, a brain wave, must accompany the impulse. Zarrilli seems to know what goes on in people's body-minds even when he has instructed them to think of nothing. If this is not what Zarrilli means in this important discussion of body-mind and motivation, then he should say more about these issues and give more explicit examples in others' methodologies. It is not clear whether he is talking about actor or

character when he speaks of motivation, and this is, of course, an important distinction, essential to understanding the applicability of Stanislavski or Barba's principles beyond their own theatres.

When Ruffini writes on the same theme, the body-mind and psychophysiological approaches to acting, he takes the view that the kinds of perspectives that Zarrilli finds somehow revelatory are inherent in the Stanislavski tradition. Ruffini writes:

The organic body-mind actually is the 'simplest most normal human condition', and it definitely is disconcerting that it 'disappears without a trace as soon as the actor sets foot on the stage'. Disconcerting but true, as we all know. As soon as it is on stage, the body tends to become redundant, defaulting and incoherent: it acts in vain, it refuses to act, it contradicts itself. It loses the organity [sic] it had before it appeared on stage and which it will regain as soon as it leaves the stage. To re-create organity [sic], the 'voice of human life, of reality', work, study and technique' are necessary. *This* is the 'system. . . . [According to Stanislavski,] "In daily life this is not necessary: the demands which the mind makes of the body are real; on stage however, demands which are not real must become so."⁸²

According to Ruffini, Stanislavski's System involves training the mind to make demands on the body. Ruffini is leading the discourse of "self-use" towards Barba's concept of the imaginary or "fictive body" through the accumulation of extra-daily techniques.⁸³ He is also taking an approach to the concept of believability, central to Stanislavski's System, that fits a non-realistic theatre like Barba's, finding believability on a level distinctly different from aesthetic considerations surrounding the genres naturalism and realism.

But why does Ruffini concern himself with believability? Is the notion of believability in theatre questioned? Again Zarrilli is instructive as to the way

post-structuralist theorizing draws attention to and questions how the notion of the Truth is thought to be inherent in actors' methodologies. This hostility to universals, such as the Truth, sometimes confounds contemporary theoreticians to the extent that they throw out the theorist with the theory—this seems especially to be the fate of Stanislavski. Zarrilli writes:

[A] common difficulty is that the stereotypical psychologically-based method acting paradigm that students bring with them to actor training *seems* to contradict the type of corporeal training in which they are engaged. Such confusions are most obvious in some of the ways students have been led to think and talk about acting, especially the commonplace use of “believability” and “honesty.” By way of example I want to discuss a male undergraduate’s confusion when told by an acting teacher, “I don’t think you believe what you are doing.”

The use of “believe” or its commonplace synonym, “be honest” by many acting teachers and directors stems from the predominant viewpoint implicit in realistic acting that when enacted a character must be “believable” – a viewpoint constructed from the spectator’s (not the actor’s) point of view.⁸⁴

The importance of the actor’s viewpoint as opposed to the spectator’s is certainly a core argument in this study, but Zarrilli does not address the question of *how* actors construct their viewpoints. Besides the tacit disparagement of Stanislavski’s famous “I don’t believe you,” Zarrilli does not appear to understand the acting teacher’s remark. The remark refers not to whether the audience believes, but rather to whether or not the actor believes, a far more important issue. Zarrilli writes:

The audience is to be “convinced” that the character is behaving in an appropriate and therefore “believable” way which is psychologically motivated. The spectator “believes” that the character’s action is “true, valid, or honest” according to the given circumstances. . . . The request for “believability” collapses the character as a fictive construct and sign system into character-as-

person as it seems to ask the *actor* to be “believable” or “honest,” and not to create a certain psychophysical relationship to specific actions that might be read by the director/spectator/teacher as signs of honesty.

Since “believe” is a propositional statement about a cognitive act, it is devoid of any reference to the body, i.e., there is no apparent indication that “believability” needs to be embodied [T]his student assumed that his problem with believability was “just mental.” He could not yet see that it might also be a “physical problem.”⁸⁵

It is not necessarily true that the term, “believability” does not refer to the body, especially if the link between the mind and body, inherent in the tenets of reflexology, is an actual link and not merely a technique of acting deployed at the actor’s will. It is also not clear whether Zarrilli supports the proposal that the body believes or that believing is strictly a mental process.

Ruffini examines the question of body-mind believability differently through the examination of the contested Russian word *perizhivanie*. According to

Ruffini:

This is the purpose of *perizhivanie*. . . . The actor’s mind must not only create the reaction’s logical, motivating and emotionalising context, but this context must also function *as if* it was a real demand; the actor must believe in the context he has created. . . . *Perizhivanie* ends only when the context of rational, volitional and emotional justifications becomes a real demand. At this point, reaction, while not yet developing in movement, is already active. For Stanislavski *perizhivanie* is already ‘impulse to action’ or we would say, ‘action in impulse’, even though it is not yet in action.⁸⁶

To say the mind’s demands develop into “action in impulse” addresses exactly that which Zarrilli claims acting theorists leave unexplained, that is, *how* the mind and body function as an individual entity or how a character gets “in-corporated.”

The body must believe the mind's demands. In fact Ruffini's body-mind locates the site of unity and in-corporation in the impulses.

This discourse on impulses is perhaps even more germane than Ruffini indicates when Barba's writings on the absorption of energy and micro impulses, contained in *The Paper Canoe*, are considered (discussed in Chapter 4). But Ruffini moves more towards establishing linkage between Stanislavski's System and Barba's concepts of the extra-daily and pre-expressivity, central tenets of Theatre Anthropology. Ruffini writes:

One must not forget that *perizhivanie* is not a real demand but only functions as if it was so. . . . In order to function as a real demand, *perizhivanie* cannot be simple, linear: it must be complex and dynamic and include contrasts. . . . In daily life . . . there are complex demands to which the body must automatically and appropriately respond. But this occurs in extreme situations. In life on stage, on the contrary, every situation is extreme, since if this was not the case it could not be (could not function as) a 'real situation'. *The body-mind's norm is its exception in daily life.* [italics mine] . . . For Stanislavski, the organic body-mind is the foundation of the rôle's meaning; it is the *first condition*, upon which that *final condition*, which is the character, can be built. . . . Construction of the organic body-mind [and] . . . of the character [are] . . . two stages [that] . . . occur *before* the manifestation of meaning.

This does not exclude the theoretical and methodological existence, in the Stanislavskian actor's overall work, of a level which occurs before the manifestation of the meaning, a level which exists *before* expression and which is a condition for expression.⁸⁷

So Ruffini has made the case not only for the importance of believability to the body-mind, and the presence of the extra-daily in Stanislavski's methodology, but also for a first stage in the actor's work, pointing towards the existence of Barba's pre-expressivity before it was named as such. Ruffini claims, "This level is the pre-expressive level with which theatre anthropology is concerned . . . In

Stanislavski's 'system', the actor's work is work at the pre-expressive level, and is independent of the director's poetics and aesthetic choices."⁸⁸ Ruffini then quotes his Italian translation of Stanislavski: "It has nothing to do with 'realism' or 'naturalism', it is a question of a process indispensable to our creative nature."⁸⁹ The first level in this process, a level separate from expression, the pre-expressive, for which the actor trains to allow a reciprocity between body and mind whereby fictive demands made by one on the other function as though real, is basic to both Stanislavski's and Barba's methodology. Thus principles shared among actors function not as new ideas, but old ones emerging from and abiding in tradition.

Resident in Stanislavski's System is the idea that what the actor does, what motivates him or her is independent of the drama and the production, but is already located in the actor's self. That self has to be trained or reconditioned to respond to the demands of the performance situation, a situation remarkably different from daily life. To act naturally onstage (such that performing is a natural state of being) the actor must move in opposite directions away from what is natural in life, and enact the recurring principles that Stanislavski proposed.

¹ Nothing indicates that Grotowski ever relied on the Hapgood English translations of Stanislavski.

² Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998).

³ For a comprehensive account of the issues raised by and the conditions surrounding J.J. Robbins's translation of *My Life in Art* see Senelick, Laurence, "Stanislavski's Double *Life in Art*." *Theatre Survey*. vol. 22, 2 (November 1981).

⁴ Recently Routledge was bought by the Thompson Group. The new owners were not interested in the new translations, deeming them too expensive. Since Routledge now owns the rights to Stanislavski translations formerly held by the Hapgood estate (since 1936) nobody else can do the job. The Hapgood estate was willing to start the process, willing to sell the rights to Routledge as long as the Hapgood translations of Stanislavski's trilogy were to remain in print in addition to new translations. No other publisher could guarantee Hapgood continued publication therefore the Hapgood estate deemed it best to stick with Routledge. Routledge was willing originally to keep both in print. All this was financially agreeable to the Hapgood Estate but after the Thompson buyout Routledge saw finances as a problem. After the sale the project was seen as too expensive a procedure. Routledge was and remains unwilling to put more money into the project. After the sale to the Thompson group all the Routledge people negotiating the translation were fired or left the firm. The new financial policy people were not in sympathy with the project. At this juncture no other publisher can do the project because Routledge continues to hold the rights. They believe it is too expensive to hire all the necessary translators, especially translators in Russia because of the anticipated heavy costs. For example, shipping paper to Moscow because they do not even have the paper to print on becomes an unmanageable cost. Carnicke has no sense that the tide will change in near future.

Originally Carnicke was to be joined by a group of international scholars and translators her, Jean Benedetti, Laurence Senelick, Inna Solovyova, and Anatoly Smeliansky. They were the board on this project and were considering hiring other translators. But there is no money to pay them. The project is still listed as in-progress but Routledge is not moving forward. The person whose mission this was was fired in the wake of Routledge's 1996 unionization debacle. There is no intellectual reason for the stoppage. But Carnicke and her colleagues do not want to beat their heads against the wall without commitment.

⁵ Jerzy Grotowski in Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Jerzy Grotowski*. (London: Methuen, 1985), 110.

⁶ Thomas Postlewait, "Historiography and the Theatrical Event: A Primer with Twelve Cruxes." *Theatre Journal*. (May 1991), 173.

⁷ It should be stated that this study does not deal with the work of those contemporary Russians who continue the tradition begun by Stanislavski like Oleg Tabakov, Lev Duodena, or Georgia Tostogonov. This is not because their work is unworthy of consideration but rather because in dealing with Barba it becomes necessary to ask how Stanislavski's work was transmitted outside Russia.

⁸ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988).

⁹ Sharon Carnicke, "Stanislavsky: Uncensored and Unabridged." *The Drama Review*. vol. 37, no. 1 (1993): 26-27.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, ed. Donald F. Bouchard. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 123, 131.

¹¹ Michel Foucault. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, ed. Donald F. Bouchard. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 160.

¹² Burnet M. Hobgood. "Stanislavski's Preface to *An Actor Prepares* and the Persona of Torstov." *Theatre Journal*. May 1991, 220-21.

¹³ In a conversation with the author, Sharon Carnicke pointed out that the Russian root *pere* means *through*, *zhivanie* means *living*, so *perezhivanie* is translated as a calque in the States, a word whose roots are translated literally. She believes that this is what Strasberg did with the word, but *living through* does not capture the word's subtleties in its Russian usage. In the Russian it is a bifurcation of both *through* and *living*. Strasberg's understanding of the System and what was in the air at the time influences a reading of Hapgood through her lens of Freudian pop culture.

¹⁴ See Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), 1, her "*An Actor Prepares/Rabota aktera nad soboi Chast' I: A Comparison of the English with the Russian Stanislavsky.*" in *Theatre Journal*. vol. 36, no. 4, (December 1984); and Franco Ruffini, "Stanislavski's System" in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991). For an extended discussion of America's love affair with Freud read the essays in "Part III" of Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick, *1915: The Cultural Moment*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press), 1991.

¹⁵ Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), 107.

¹⁶ Ibid. 109.

¹⁷ Ibid. 109. The Danish translation of *An Actor's Work on Himself (En Skuespillers Arbejde Med Sig Selv*, trans. Ellen Røvsing and Egill Røstrup. (Copenhagen: Arnold Busck, 1967) exemplifies the problem.

¹⁸ Théodule Ribot's writings include *Problemes de psychologie affective*. (Paris: Félix Aclan, 1910), and *The Psychology of the Emotions*. (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1987).

¹⁹ Théodule Ribot in Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), 132.

²⁰ Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), 1-2.

²¹ Konstantin Stanislavski from “Zapinske knizhki dnevniki Stanislavskogo, 1919-1920” in Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), 140. Stanislavski says:

Having worked in the realms of sub- and super conscious, Yogis give much practical advice in these realms. They approach the unconscious through conscious, preparatory devices, from body to soul, the real to the *unreal*, from naturalism to abstraction. And we, actors, must do the same.

²² Sharon Carnicke, “Stanislavsky: Uncensored and Unabridged.” *The Drama Review*. vol. 37, no. 1 (1993): 26-27. Carnicke writes:

In 1936, the government calls such dubious terms “hazy” (*tumannye*), and adds “intuition” and “subconscious” to the list. . . . All the concepts attacked by dialectical materialism go to the heart of his System. Stanislavsky saw them as essential components of artistic creativity and defended all suspect words like “soul” and “subconscious” in a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party . . . To maintain the terms, the Party in turn, asked Stanislavsky to “concretely” uncover their “realistic” content in his texts . . . Compromises were made on both sides. . . . Whenever Stanislavsky mentions the mind and emotions, he reiterates their connection with the body. By making such concessions to materialism, Stanislavsky retained “idealistic” aspects of his System within the texts . . . [I]t remained for Soviet critics to make the content more acceptable to Marxism than the text itself. Soviet interpretations of the System emphasized its physical aspects, privileging the Method of Physical Actions over other experimental techniques for the actor.

²³ A wonderful example of this Americanization and popularization of pop-Freudian psychology can be seen in George Cram (Jig) Cook and Susan Glaspell’s collaboration, *Suppressed Desires*. The play is about a young couple whose propensity to psychoanalyze every thing that goes on around them ultimately leads them to abandon analysis and actually communicate with each other.

²⁴ Sharon Carnicke, “Stanislavsky: Uncensored and Unabridged.” *The Drama Review*. vol. 37, no. 1 (1993): 29, 32.

²⁵ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 180.

²⁶ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1984), 127.

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- ²⁷ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Das Geheimnis des Schauspielischen Erfolges*, trans. Alexandra Meyerburg, (Zurich: Scientia, 1940), in *Ibid.* 128.
- ²⁸ Sharon Carnicke, "An Actor Prepares/Rabota aktera nad soboi Chast ' ' I: A Comparison of the English with the Russian Stanislavsky." *Theatre Journal*. vol. 36, no. 4, (December 1984): 488-89.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.* 493.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* 492. See also Jean Benedetti, "A History of Stanislavski in Translation." *New Theatre Quarterly*. vol. 6, no. 23, (August 1990): 275.
- ³¹ Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Jerzy Grotowski*. (London: Methuen, 1985), 110.
- ³² Jerzy Grotowski in Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*. (London: Routledge, 1995), 75-76.
- ³³ Sharon Carnicke, "An Actor Prepares/Rabota aktera nad soboi Chast I: A Comparison of the English with the Russian Stanislavsky." *Theatre Journal*. vol. 36, no. 4, (December 1984): 492.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.* 493.
- ³⁵ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 28.
- ³⁶ Annelis Kuhlman, "Concepts in Stanislavski's Terminology" in *Knowledge is a Matter of Doing*, eds. Pentti Paavolinen and Ana Ala-Korpela. (Helsinki: Acta Scenica 1, Teak, 1995), 92-93. This essay was written in English.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.* 92-93.
- ³⁸ Sharon Carnicke, "Boleslavsky in America" in Laurence Senelick, ed. *Wandering Stars: Russian Émigré Theatre, 1905-1940*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 117.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.* 118. Ironically Grotowski was also nicknamed "Stanislavski" when he was a GITIS student (c. 1955). See Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*. (London: Routledge, 1995), n110.
- ⁴⁰ This is surprisingly similar to Barba's ideas about the Third Theatre as theatres who are essentially without roots, always travelers, always immigrants or emigrants, islands in an archipelago, connected to each other not by nation but by membership in a theatre culture. Stanislavski's desire to establish theatre studios and provincial theatres linked to the Moscow Art Theatre and its values can be paralleled with the archipelago of Third Theatre groups who are inspired by Barba's Odin. Groups who, after many years of loose confederation, have joined

together as ISTA, and who Barba often encourages to use the Odin name in their literature.

⁴¹ Sharon Carnicke, "Boleslavsky in America" in Laurence Senelick, ed. *Wandering Stars: Russian Émigré Theatre, 1905-1940*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 119.

⁴² Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba. (Kent: Methuen 1984), 206.

⁴³ Sharon Carnicke, "Boleslavsky in America" in Laurence Senelick, ed. *Wandering Stars: Russian Émigré Theatre, 1905-1940*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 120.

⁴⁴ Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 198-201.

⁴⁵ Vasily Osipovich Toporkov, *Stanislavsky in Rehearsal*, trans. Christine Edwards. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1979), 157.

⁴⁶ Sonia Moore, *The Stanislavski System in Class: Training an Actor*. (New York: Viking Press, 1968).

⁴⁷ Anatoly Smelienski, in a telephone conversation with the author, July 1997.

⁴⁸ Burnet M. Hobgood, "Stanislavski's Books: An Untold Story." *Theatre Survey*. vol. xxvii, nos. 1 and 2, (May and November 1986), 161, 162-63.

⁴⁹ Sharon Carnicke, "Boleslavsky in America" in Laurence Senelick, ed. *Wandering Stars: Russian Émigré Theatre, 1905-1940*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992).

⁵⁰ In fact Vakhtangov was angry with Boleslavski during the early days of the First Studio because he did not believe that Boleslavski genuinely observed the values and ethics of collectivity espoused by Stanislavski and Sulerzhitski. In a letter to Sulerzhitski dated March 27, 1913, Vakhtangov writes that Boleslavski was in the habit of missing rehearsal and had not embraced the ethics practiced at the studios of the Moscow Art Theatre. See Eugene Vakhtangov in Lyubov Vendrovskaya and Galina. Kaptereva, eds. *Evgeny Vakhtangov*, trans. Doris Bradbury. (Moscow: Progressive Publishers, 1982), 30-31.

Boleslavsky's unethical behaviour (and it is not the first time) makes the Studio's work – the work of an organisation – more like amateur, home theatricals. . . . Boleslavsky's entire manner and way of conducting himself during rehearsals, his attitude towards his work, his way of working disturb me not only as a director, but

as a member of the Art Theatre and as a person who gives a great deal to the art which he serves.

Always careless, always frivolous, always superficial, always disrespectful of his partners on stage, even when the latter are in the throes of profound emotions, when he should stop fooling around, if only from a sense of tact, Boleslavsky has become as extremely disagreeable partner for all of us. . . . He has turned our joy in work into sheer torment. A torment to me and all those engaged in the play. Please do something.

⁵¹ Sharon Carnicke, "Boleslavsky in America" in Laurence Senelick, ed. *Wandering Stars: Russian Émigré Theatre, 1905-1940*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 121.

⁵² See Sharon Carnicke, "Boleslavsky in America" in Laurence Senelick, ed. *Wandering Stars: Russian Émigré Theatre, 1905-1940*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992, 123.

⁵³ Konstantin Stanislavski in Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 315-16.

⁵⁴ The Library of Congress gives only the approximate date "195?" as the date of the original Russian publication.

⁵⁵ Jean Benedetti, "A History of Stanislavski in Translation." *New Theatre Quarterly*. vol. 6, no. 23, (August 1990): 276.

⁵⁶ Nikolai Gorchakov, *The Vakhtangov School of Stage Art*, trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev, ed. Phyl Griffith. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, nd), 15-16.

⁵⁷ Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), 153.

⁵⁸ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 111.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 105.

⁶⁰ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Creating a Role*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Routledge, 1989), 149-50.

⁶¹ Konstantin Stanislavski in Nikolai M. Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs*, trans. Miriam Goldina. (New York: Limelight, 1991), 333.

⁶² This is the implication in Natalie Crohn Schmitt's "Stanislavski's Nature; Stanislavski's Art" in *Actors and Onlookers; Theater and Twentieth Century Scientific Views of Nature*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990).

⁶³ Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre. <http://ibm.park.org/biomech.html>, 1998.

⁶⁴ Konstantin Stanislavski in Konstantin Rudnitsky, *Meyerhold the Director*, trans. George Petrov, ed. Sydney Schultze. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981), 56.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 57.

⁶⁶ Konstantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*, trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), 455-57.

⁶⁷ This is best supported by Sharon Carnicke, “*An Actor Prepares/Rabota aktera nad soboi Chast’ I: A Comparison of the English with the Russian Stanislavsky.*” *Theatre Journal*. vol. 36, no. 4, (December 1984). See also Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 230. Benedetti describes the Association of Proletariat Writers, RAPP’s evaluation of Stanislavski’s System.

Early in 1931 the Association of Proletarian Writers, RAPP, held a ten day conference from January 25 to February 4 at which an attack was launched on the system. It was declared to be idealistic and inimical to proletarian art . . . Stanislavski had published nothing. The attack, founded on half-knowledge and hearsay, was renewed when a second conference was held in December. *The system was accused of being ‘an-historical’, dealing in ‘abstract timelessness’ of reducing multiform social qualities into a few basic laws of biological behavior of man in general and of translating socio-political problems into the language of ethico-moral concepts’ and transforming ‘the complex processes of the actors’ perception of reality into primitive childlike credulity, naiveté into the ‘Creative If’ – the word ‘magic’ was not allowed to cross their lips.*” [italics mine]

The remark about the ‘an-historical’ quality of Stanislavski’s System should not be dismissed. This condemnation carries a modicum of truth and could just as easily have been uttered by one of many historicist theatre scholars whose addiction to context-driven analysis of theatre is so prevalent in contemporary scholarship.

The second half of the statement seems to suggest a simplistic, romanticist approach on Stanislavski’s part but does not really capture the extent to which he was a romantic, or carry as much weight as the first part. Regardless of the actual accuracy of RAPP’s findings, the statement certainly serves as an index to RAPP’s fear of Stanislavski as a cultural force and its members’ efforts to discredit him within the Stalinist framework which only paid lip service to marxism-leninism invoking the rhetoric of historical-materialist.

It is interesting to note Lenin’s views on Stanislavski. He had no desire to uproot the national heritage or artistry of the Art Theatre, loved the repertoire,

especially the classics, and was in no rush to establish a Soviet aesthetic. Also of ironic interest are Trotsky's remarks about the impossibility of a proletarian theatre in a classless state. It was Lunacharsky who opened the way towards the more stilted, limited Socialist-realist dramaturgy, whether he wanted to or not, primarily because he opposed Trotsky and sought to establish a proletarian theatre—proletcult etc. But Stanislavski was not in on these manipulations of culture, and, although he was equally manipulated, he allowed this as an act of survival. What survived was his pedagogy, his so-called System. His most important work, his work on the actor's methodology, gradually became that which he did in virtual seclusion, in his own home. He never openly defied the Soviets, nor did he ever fully succumb, and so he worked in resistance and refusal. This refusal to give his work over to the cultural mainstream is a value shared by Barba, and a foundation of theatre culture.

⁶⁸ See Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988).

⁶⁹ Annelis Kuhlmann in a conversation with the author, August 1997.

⁷⁰ Franco Ruffini, "Stanislavski's System" in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 150.

⁷¹ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Il lavoro dell'attore*. in Franco Ruffini, "Stanislavski's System" in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese. *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 151.

⁷² Franco Ruffini, "Stanislavski's System" in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 150.

⁷³ Phillip B. Zarrilli, introduction to part one of *Acting (Re)Considered: Theories and Practices*, ed. Phillip B. Zarrilli. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 12.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 12-14.

⁷⁵ Richard Boleslavski, "The Laboratory Theatre." *Theatre Arts Magazine*. (April 1923): 291.

⁷⁶ Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Jerzy Grotowski*. (London: Methuen, 1985), 110.

⁷⁷ Konstantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*, trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), 463.

⁷⁸ Phillip Zarrilli, "Between Theory[es] and Practice[s] of Acting: Dichotomies or Dialogue?" *Theatre Topics*. vol. 5, no. 2 (September 1995): 115-16.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 117.

⁸⁰ Roberta Carreri, *The Whispering Winds in Theatre and Dance*. Video from 1996 Copenhagen ISTA. (Holstebro: Odin Teatret, 1996).

⁸¹ For the term “intellectual choreography” see the interview with Torgeir Wethal in Appendix H or his *The Whispering Winds in Theatre and in Dance*. Work demonstration video from 1996 Copenhagen ISTA. (Holstebro: Odin Teatret, 1996). And for “inner poetry” see Konstantin Stanislavski in Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), 137.

⁸² Franco Ruffini, “Stanislavski’s System” in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 151.

⁸³ The term “self-use” is borrowed from Jack Clay, “Self-use in Actor Training.” *The Drama Review*. vol. 16, 1 (March 1972). The term “fictive body” can be found in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 195.

⁸⁴ Phillip Zarrilli, “‘On the edge of a breath, looking . . .’: Disciplining the Actor’s Bodymind Through Martial Arts in the Asian/Experimental Theatre Program.” *Asian Martial Arts in Actor Training*. Phillip Zarrilli, ed. (Madison: Center for South Asian Studies Publication Series University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993), 73-74.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 73-74.

⁸⁶ Franco Ruffini, “Stanislavski’s System” in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 151.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 151-52.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 153.

⁸⁹ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Il lavoro dell’attore* in Franco Ruffini, “Stanislavski’s System” in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 153.

Chapter Three

Genealogy: How Barba and Stanislavski Are Linked through Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, and Grotowski

What has influenced me? The most powerful influences are not the evident ones. How can you explain it? The difference between a master and a pupil is that the pupil copies the results; that which is perceived on an external level, while the master reaches down to the hidden sources, the origin and the secret motor of the result. . . . It is difficult to explain this conception of a theatrical genealogy. Who are your ancestors, your blood relatives? Not in terms of technique or aesthetics, but of values, because this is the dimension they have extracted from our craft in our century. When you ask: who has influenced you, and I answer: Vakhtangov, then everybody thinks about fantastic realism. But it is interesting and worth knowing the way Vakhtangov overcame the limits and restrictions imposed on him by his illness or the historical circumstances, how he was able to transform daily objects and poor props into scenically magic elements during the Soviet revolution and the civil war; a period of misery and penury.

Eugenio Barba – 1997 Interview with Author

Evgeny Vakhtangov, Vsevelod Meyerhold, and Jerzy Grotowski's methodologies all are salient to Barba's claim of professional descent from Stanislavski because each addresses specific aspects of the Stanislavski—Barba progression. But connecting rather than separating these three from Stanislavski requires care. Often what isolates them are the repeated myths and misconceptions inherent in the practice of considering them only within the context of their times, and an equally misleading tendency to confuse of pedagogy with aesthetics. To counteract these confusions is to pursue skeptical analysis of what is considered common knowledge of all three. This chapter's focus is the genealogical and methodological links connecting Stanislavski to Barba through the work

of the three intervening director/pedagogues. This chapter also links aspects of the actor's methodology in a supra-methodology—how expression passes through various human media, from inner self, through the performing body, to the audience.

Vakhtangov Myths: Fantastic Realism—a Synthesis of the System and Biomechanics?

The most pervasive Vakhtangov misconception is that he taught Stanislavski's System better than Stanislavski. Moscow Art Theatre actor, Nikolai Gorchakov writes: "According to rumour, Stanislavsky had said of Vakhtangov: 'He knows how to teach my system better than I do.' Later I personally heard Stanislavsky repeat this."¹ This myth feeds the most influential misconception: Vakhtangov bridges the pedagogical gap between Stanislavski and Meyerhold.

Did Vakhtangov consciously strive to bridge the gap between two people who outlived him? Vakhtangov died in 1922, Stanislavski in 1938, and Meyerhold in 1940. Perhaps Vakhtangov's methodology was comprised of elements dear to the other two, but was synthesis the purpose of his work? Emerging from training with Stanislavski, like Meyerhold, Vakhtangov was dealing with some of the same issues as his mentor, but he found his own solutions. His approach to etudes, theatre's professional ethics, the musicality in his *mise en scènes*, his struggle with the socio-political aspects of theatre, his investigation into a grotesque style of acting, his innovations with respect to actor/audience

relationship, and his attention to the connection between the plasticity of the human form and its connection to the psyche were all uniquely his own.²

Vakhtangov's work on plasticity engendered his formulation of a grotesque style of acting, such that there was less of a schism between exaggerated action on stage and its believability to both actor and audience. His work on Chekhov's *The Wedding* is instructive. Actor Ruben Simonov writes:

At times Vakhtangov used to tell us that he was dreaming of putting on Chekhov's *Seagull* theatrically." What does that mean, "theatrically"? The word "theatrical," the word "grotesque," for some reason frightens many theatre workers and critics, even now. While the true theatricality aims at the most convincing and impressive scenic images, it also strives to excite, to captivate, to shake the audience. An actor can attain true theatricality only if his temperament is dynamic and possesses deep profound emotions which can express the crux of the character, its very essence. . . . The essence of theatricality is to create a deep, complete, poetically exciting scenic image. Only thus can we understand Vakhtangov's thought about the theatrical embodiment of Chekhov.³

The grotesque does not refer to the exaggeration of characters' particular physical features.⁴ Vakhtangov was concerned with finding an acting style, a style of stage movement that enabled the exteriorization of "deep profound" inner qualities through extreme physicalization. This style, described as the grotesque, is more than a style, it is a principle of acting useful a variety of performance genres.

Vakhtangov's work was not a radical departure from the teachings of Stanislavski, but rather an effective exposure of the psyche using means other than those associated with "emotional memory." His methodology combined an actor's fantasy with an assiduous physical technique that was then embedded in the *mise en scène*. It was also a different approach to Chekhov than previously applied by the Moscow Art Theatre. Vakhtangov believed the Art Theatre's so-

called psychological realism did not allow the humor of Chekhov's characters or plays to emerge through all the layers of emotion. Vakhtangov took the path of a broader realism whereby elements within a character—psychological traits (including incongruities and deformities)—were condensed in the *mise en scène* and reverberate throughout the entire performance. The overall effect was the creation of a grotesque style of playing which lent itself to the play's gesture, in the case of *The Wedding* tragicomedy, and in a broader sense, to the development of Vakhtangov's Fantastic Realism.

Vakhtangov refined actors' movement technique into what could be called "plastico-precision."⁵ His goal was to work with the actor's external form emphasizing movement and voice before psychological states. When the psychological dimension was later added, the result was Fantastic Realism, a "plastico-precise mode of expression," which could include exaggeration. Vakhtangov believed Fantastic Realism allowed the deepest feelings to be embodied. According to Simonov, the goal of Vakhtangov's work with actors was not to do away with feelings but to etch them more clearly on the audience's perception by deepening them first in the actor. This deepening is achieved through physical and psychological means. Vakhtangov's work can be seen as something more profound and carefully conceived than a mere synthesis of Stanislavski and Meyerhold.

Plastico-precision should not be confused with Meyerhold's Biomechanics. Plastico-precision is a performance technique, whereas Biomechanics is a training regimen. Unlike Biomechanics,astico-precision did not take specific forms, but

rather depended upon the psychological state of the actor and the actor's physicalization of it in the character. Biomechanics, on the other hand, was a series of specific exercises that never varied regardless of who performed them or in what production they were deployed.

Vakhtangov's work on inscribing a character's deepest emotional characteristics onto the external and expressive form of an actor's body required investigation into that actor's psyche and incisive character analysis to find a means to transform these internals into action. This kind of deeply personal research is a significant aspect of Grotowski's work that Barba exploits.⁶ (For two examples of this kind of research see the descriptions of Torgeir Wethal and Ryszard Ciésłak's improvisations without action in Chapter Four.)

The misconception that Stanislavski and Meyerhold are separated into two distinct theoretical and methodological schools of thought that only Vakhtangov, Stanislavski's star pupil, could reconcile through a systematic synthesis of both methods is in part influenced by the general movement among Vakhtangov's generation, the Soviet youth in the theatre, away from the mystical and spiritual into the realm of dialectic materialism. This misconception can be traced to Vakhtangov himself. In 1922 he said:

[Stanislavski] was carried away by genuine truth and brought naturalistic truth to the stage. He sought theatrical truth in the truth of life. Meyerhold went through symbolic theater (which he is now rejecting) to the genuine theatre. But Meyerhold was carried away by theatrical truth; he removed the truth of emotions. The truth, however, must exist both in Meyerhold's theater and in Stanislavsky's.⁷

These assertions about Stanislavski and Meyerhold however are not necessarily true. They seem like an attempt to subject acting pedagogy to historical-

materialist analysis. However, like most generalizations they obscure more than they expose.

Vakhtangov categorizes two types of truth, the theatrical and the truth of life, and uses the distinction to pry Meyerhold and Stanislavski apart by distinguishing how each approached the function of emotion in their work. And then virtually all theatre scholars adopted this generalization as if it was categorically true.

Aviv Orani writes:

[Vakhtangov's] synthesis combined the psychoanalysis of the experienced emotions and theatrical invention. Vakhtangov sensed that Stanislavski had impoverished the theatre, expelling theatricality in the name of psychological realism and that Meyerhold, at the same time, had deprived it of the truth through excessive insistence on the technical and theatrical game. Vakhtangov's goal was now to achieve theatricality through the system, or rather to reclothe the expressive forms with the internal inquiry.⁸

This analysis, which proclaims that Stanislavski wanted natural truth whereas Meyerhold wanted theatrical truth and Vakhtangov synthesized the two, oversimplifies all three. Even if Vakhtangov said it, it is not central to his work nor does it describe his teacher's or his colleague's work.

Actors Gorchakov, Simonov, and Boris Zakhava, all members of Vakhtangov's various studios, assert that he understood Stanislavski's System better than Stanislavski. Though Stanislavski himself may have said this, it also is not automatically true. The same was said of Vakhtangov's teacher Sulerzhitski. Benedetti says that Sulerzhitski was Stanislavski's "most devoted assistant, disciple and friend."⁹ Benedetti quotes Stanislavski as saying in 1934, "Only Sulerzhitski understood me fully and Vakhtangov half."¹⁰ Not only was it

Sulerzhitski who mediated between Stanislavski and Gordon Craig when the two found it no longer possible to communicate on their collaboration for *Hamlet*, it was Sulerzhitski in whom Stanislavski placed his faith when it came time to organize the First Studio in 1912. So, who understood Stanislavski *best*? Sulerzhitski or Vakhtangov?¹¹ This reverence of Vakhtangov may be well-deserved but it is too singular to capture the web of interpersonal relations and influences surrounding Stanislavski at the Moscow Art Theatre, and puts Stanislavski on a rather unstable historical footing.

Studio Spirit

What is of especial significance about Vakhtangov's work as it pertains to this study's consideration of Barba's roots is that, because of his loyalty and devotion to theatre, which paralleled Stanislavski's in terms of assiduous seriousness, Vakhtangov established the ethos of the studios. In a letter to studio members and associates, dated November 14/15, 1918, Vakhtangov wrote:

Each group has a different sense of "the Studio Spirit" in its heart. . . . If everyone is to be equal in this respect, if everyone is to understand this notion in the same way, they must first live the life of the Studio; secondly, they must give of themselves to the Studio so that it becomes something near and dear to them, then they must defend it against all dangers. . . . The "Studio spirit", then, is the essence for which, in which, and through which the studio exists. . . . This essence is reflected in each Studio member's artistic, ethical, moral, psychological, and public life, as well as his comradely relations with others.

Above all discipline. Discipline is everything. At every step. If a group has this discipline, then naturally it is defended by the group.¹²

Thus the studios became a kind of culture unto themselves anticipating Barba's concept of the floating island while echoing Stanislavski's dream of an ideal theatre, especially those inspired by Sulerzhitski's Tolstoyan communalism (see Appendix F).¹³ In 1918 Vakhtangov also espoused many of the ethical and moral imperatives later announced by Stanislavski in his "Towards an Ethics for the Theatre," and embraced much later by Grotowski in his *Towards a Poor Theatre*. The notion of studio spirit is a major link to Barba's notion of theatre culture.

What fascinates Barba most about Vakhtangov is the Russian's dedication to the theatre group's integrity or, in Barba's terminology, the floating island—especially at the Habimah Theatre, where conditions were similar to the Odin's early years when the theatre was an amateur group in Oslo. In his 1997 interview Barba says:

Vakhtangov's absolute value was that he was working with amateurs, i.e. a bunch of people with limited or no experience at all, who found the work in itself gratifying and felt no artistic obligation towards their spectators. And then he was able to take them and to lift them to a very high artistic level, awaking in them a spirit which transcended their private ambitions and/or wishes. The Habima is exemplary. A group of Jewish amateurs accept to use a language which they don't know, Hebrew, follow the demands and claims of an intransigent director to such an extent that their theatrical activities transcend their private personalities and become the symbol (and the National Theatre) of a collective hope: Israel, a country to which they migrate. Vakhtangov was able to infuse such a spirit in a bunch of amateurs and this is why I consider him to be my uncle.¹⁴

The struggle of a theatre artist to gain the imprimatur of legitimacy was part of Barba's early career. The rejection of Barba by the Norwegian professional theatre establishment in 1963-64 was one of Barba's foundational personal experiences as a professional. This rejection is what Barba would call a "personal

wound,” something that decides an artist’s future path.¹⁵ His work as a writer and intellectual demonstrate that, in spite of his self-imposed exile from the mainstream, Barba wanted the recognition of both the professional and scholarly community—a kind of legitimacy. Under these circumstances it is understandable that he would empathize with Vakhtangov and his work with the amateurs of the Habimah, who, as Gad Kaynar points out in his “National Theatre as Colonized Theatre: The Paradox of Habima” (1998), became virtually mythological.¹⁶ But Barba’s work on gaining access to the deepest emotions, the most profound vicissitudes of the actor’s inner self, is also important to understanding his relationship to Vakhtangov. How does the internal reach the external through the various media of theatrical performance? What is its path to the audience?

Meyerhold as Antithesis of Stanislavski Myth

Barba is connected to Meyerhold for different reasons than he is connected to Vakhtangov. Since, as Watson points out, there is a strong methodological link between Meyerhold and Barba, and in order to establish the Stanislavski—Barba continuum, it is necessary to explore the link between Meyerhold and Stanislavski.

Before examining what Stanislavski and Meyerhold agreed upon, their supposed antipathy should be examined in the hope that it can be explained as something other than a bitter competition. At its outset their relationship was negatively affected by Stanislavski and Nemirovich Danchenko’s relationship.

Though initially close colleagues, these two grew apart over the years to the extent that Stanislavski believed himself an outsider in his own theatre company. Their split positioned Meyerhold as a game piece to be moved closer and further away from Stanislavski depending on Nemirovich Danchenko's stratagems.

The initial split between Stanislavski and Meyerhold came as a product of Nemirovich Danchenko's hostility to his former pupil, Meyerhold, whom he came to consider a troublemaker at the time when the Art Theatre was to undergo a process of reorganization in 1902. Benedetti claims the reorganization was a result of Nemirovich Danchenko's concern over the possibility of losing control of the company to Stanislavski's people, chief among them their financier, the merchant, Savva Timofeievich Morozov. Ironically, Morozov proposed that the actors, and not he, own their own company, each holding a portion of the shares. In order to create new power relations within the company, Nemirovich Danchenko manipulated Morozov's proposed reorganization to position himself as a more central figure. Benedetti writes:

It was strictly understood that shares could be acquired by invitation only and a list of shareholders was issued in January 1902. . . . Some names were conspicuous by their absence: Sanin, Stanislavski's production assistant, and Meierhold. Nemirovich, it appeared, had written his former pupil off.

An uncomfortable meeting of the shareholders in February decided who among the actors were to stay and who were to go. Meierhold, who was already at odds with the theatre's policy, did not wait to be pushed out but resigned, taking a number of other members of the company . . . with him to form a theatre in the provinces.¹⁷

Meyerhold resigned as a result of Nemirovich Danchenko's action against him, and, not, as is often reported, because of aesthetic or methodological differences

with Stanislavski. Throughout the next year, Stanislavski and Nemirovich Danchenko's division widened with regard to a variety of practical and methodological issues. These issues would affect the Moscow Art Theatre for the remaining thirty-six years of Stanislavski's career. For example their differences over the necessity of actors engaging in literary analysis widened into a virtual chasm across which the two could not communicate.¹⁸ In later years each would deny the validity of the other's approach. Nemirovich Danchenko was more focused on the play and Stanislavski more on the actor, rehearsal, and performance. The deterioration of Stanislavski and Nemirovich Danchenko's friendship is a fairly significant aspect of Moscow Art Theatre's policies and politics and should be considered a context for Stanislavski and Meyerhold's relationship.

In 1904, after working with his own company, The Fellowship of New Drama, in the Black Sea port city, Kherson, and in the Georgia city, Tiflis, Meyerhold returned to Moscow. At the time Stanislavski was struggling to find a style for Ibsen's *Ghosts* that would not only support the play's speech patterns, but, more important, move the Art Theatre towards reforming methods that had worked so well in Chekhov plays, but were now becoming static.¹⁹ Meyerhold claimed he had discovered how to "convey the ineffable."²⁰ He was full of pronouncements that attracted Stanislavski. Interestingly some of these pronouncements have the same tenor as Barba's early manifesto-like proposals. They speak to the importance of isolating the theatre group in work conditions that make it possible to renounce conventional theatre. In 1904 Meyerhold wrote, "The theatre must be

a hermitage and the actor forever a dissident.”²¹ Barba says, “It is only in the catacombs that we can prepare a new life.”²² Benedetti writes:

Stanislavski responded to this outpouring of ideas with the enthusiasm of a man dying of thirst. . . . Meierhold was a man after his own kind, an artist who created in and through the theatre itself, not through literature. There was an affinity between the two of them which purely theoretical or aesthetic disagreements could not destroy.²³

At this point Stanislavski invited Meyerhold back into the company. Meyerhold proposed that experimentation should be carried out over a longer period of time than was normally devoted to rehearsal, in what he called a Theatre Studio. This was the first time this idea had ever been proposed or attempted. When this studio, referred to as the Studio on Povarskaya Street, was opened, the main body of the Moscow Art Theatre regarded it as “idealistic nonsense.”²⁴

Pivotal moments in theatre history may seem tame a century later, but Meyerhold’s proposal is a significant factor in the advent of experimental theatre. Grotowski and Barba are exemplary beneficiaries of this innovation. The theatre studio or laboratory is one of the most salient features of twentieth century theatre practice. The union of Stanislavski and Meyerhold during this short time is of great if not greater import than those more superficial issues that kept them apart over the span of their careers.

The majority of theoretical pronouncements over the next few years, to which scholars point when trying to expand the Stanislavski/Meyerhold dichotomy, came from Meyerhold, who, in his experimentation, moved as far away from illusionistic naturalism as he dared. He made his mark as a theorist by announcing the difference between his work and that of the Moscow Art Theatre.

But Meyerhold was not attacking Stanislavski as much as he was the Art Theatre's institutionalization of one style, naturalism, at the expense of breaking new ground in other genres.

Meyerhold's broadsides at the Art Theatre were more an attack on Nemirovich Danchenko than Stanislavski. Meyerhold did not attack the System, especially since the System did not materialize on paper until, at the earliest, 1924.²⁵

Benedetti writes:

Meierhold had been an unrelenting critic [of the Art Theatre] over the years . . . But it was the theatre and, in particular Nemirovich whom he loathed, that he attacked, not Stanislavski. He had told Alexandr Blok . . . 'I am a pupil of Stanislavski's. It was a position he maintained albeit not uncritically. Indeed, it was a standing joke among his friends in the Twenties that when he went to see Stanislavski he put on his best clothes like a schoolboy.'²⁶

After Lenin died in 1924, when the new state was attempting to consolidate itself, Meyerhold had become the "high priest" of the avant garde in the guise of constructivism. "The dominance of the Art Theatre was, or so it seemed, a thing of the past. . . . Nemirovich had watched the growth of Meierhold's influence with alarm. He had sent anxious letters to Stanislavski . . . warning [him] of the new situation."²⁷ The result of the 1924 letters was the reorganization of the Art Theatre's three studios, which were then in turmoil. The First Studio had caused the Art Theatre embarrassment because of its success with productions that engaged in social criticism while the repertoire from the theatre's main branch was deemed stagnant and outmoded. This negative perception was magnified by the defection of many Art Theatre members, some to Prague and others to the United States. But, although Nemirovich Danchenko's manipulation of the

situation functioned to solidify the Art Theatre, the possibility of Meyerhold and Stanislavski's collaborating resurfaced, this time on the exploration of the actor's possibilities within the style known as *the grotesque*.

Nemirovich Danchenko's plan was to make the First Studio independent and call it the Second Moscow Art Theatre. The Third Studio would also become independent. The Second Studio was to be merged into the main company. Stanislavski was happy to see the Third Studio go. But the events surrounding the reorganization tell a story.

The Third Studio wrote to Stanislavski proposing he and Meierhold should run the Studio together. Meierhold followed this up with a letter . . . offering his help. . . . Privately [Stanislavski] could not see himself finding common ground artistically with Meierhold. And yet, younger colleagues, the second generation, as Stanislavski called them, could see the potential of bringing the two men together, and this was not merely motivated by a sentimental attachment to an old and respected teacher. . . . In the event, certain members of the Third Studio chose to come over to the Second. . . . The newly organized group was transformed into the Dramatic Studio with Stanislavski in charge. . . . These reforms put an end to the ambiguities concerning the artistic policy by getting rid of the 'dissident' elements.²⁸

Although Meyerhold did not "come over" in 1924, Stanislavski succeeded in gaining moderate support for his own experimentation, thereby establishing the validity of his and Meyerhold's mutual interest in grotesque styles of acting. The grotesque emphasized physicality and a so-called theatricality that required more highly trained actors than those who acted in the earlier naturalist/realist productions. The notion of grotesque styles of acting, centered around exaggerated physicality emphasized by Vakhtangov, Stanislavski, and Meyerhold, each in his own way. The necessary physical training it required is a clear link

between the experimental vicissitudes of Grotowski and Barba and these three Russians. Thus a clear linkage between all five can be made through the grotesque. Though each has a different view of the grotesque, a generalization can be proffered—the grotesque is exaggerated physical movement connected to and expressive of psychological depth.

In spite of political differences, at significant moments in their careers, Stanislavski and Meyerhold publicly displayed their support for one another to such a degree as to evince genuine artistic affinity. That affinity goes beyond the respect a student and teacher might have for each other. It functions rather as a challenge to the entire profession to attain standards of artistry that go beyond the clichés of any convention, naturalism or the so-called avant garde, and to stand outside the cultural agendas of the mainstream theatre. Their affinity serves as a reminder that what holds value within the profession is quite different from the ways in which theatre is perceived and received by the public. In 1925,

Meierhold shocked many of his supporters by turning to the audience at a performance of . . . *Yell, China* and expressing his delight at the production by the ‘wizard’, Stanislavski, adding that young directors could not hope to equal the mastery the Art Theatre had shown that day. This was the second time he had made a public show of his support for Stanislavski. The first was in April, 1923, at the jubilee to celebrate his [sic] own 25 years in the theatre, when he had insisted that a telegram of congratulations be sent to his old master in New York. This latest expression of his esteem, however was . . . for critics . . . treason against the avant-garde.²⁹

Reports of Stanislavski and Meyerhold’s antipathy towards one another are exaggerated and, to a large degree, emerge from Nemirovich Danchenko’s refusal to embrace Meyerhold’s experimentation in 1902. Stanislavski, perhaps guarding

his own interests, did nothing to protect Meyerhold's personal investment as a founder of the Art Theatre. The more Stanislavski attempted rapprochement with Meyerhold over the years, the more Nemirovich Danchenko resisted Stanislavski's own efforts at experimentation.

Aesthetics aside, Meyerhold always supported Stanislavski's project of process-oriented work and the Art Theatre's policy of studio experimentation, one which Meyerhold himself set in motion in 1904-05 during that brief moment when he and his mentor inaugurated the theatre studios. Process-oriented work is distinct from the director's work of constructing a performance. Process-oriented work focuses on actors' technique without regard for the product. Often the discoveries made in process-oriented work manifest themselves in production even though this is not the stated purpose of the work. The founding of the studios was also the signal moment for beginning the actual working out of Stanislavski's process-oriented System which was not realized so much in Moscow Art Theatre productions, but rather was the constant *modus operandi* at the Studios where experimentation could be pursued.³⁰ To a large extent, Meyerhold established the context within which Stanislavski would conduct his research into methodology.

Rather than attribute Stanislavski and Meyerhold's differences to a theoretical and methodological split, another explanation can be given. Stanislavski's survival at the Moscow Art Theatre depended on handling Meyerhold delicately, keeping him at a distance. At the time, Meyerhold was enormously popular. Stanislavski's estrangement from both Nemirovich Danchenko and Meyerhold

left him isolated and often excluded from the activities of his own theatre. In the thirties, as Stalin solidified the Soviet state, Meyerhold fell out of favor and Stanislavski came back in. Ironically the latter became more open in his support for Meyerhold. But by 1934 both were in their own professional exile. Meyerhold was forced by the State to close his theatre and Stanislavski, under virtual house arrest, was unable to do his experimental work except in the privacy of his home, where, providently, there was a studio at his disposal. Their struggle for survival necessitated each denying the other's significance as well as suspending their master/disciple relationship.

The history of Stanislavski's legacy is distorted by the attention that scholars focus on the efforts made by Stanislavski and Meyerhold to distance themselves from each other. William B. Worthen claims that Stanislavski provides an "anti-thesis for Meyerhold."³¹ This is inaccurate and creates the false impression of an unbridgeable abyss, a dichotomy. Marvin Carlson and Yvonne Shafer write, "Although Vsevelod Meyerhold (1874-1940) worked at the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) early in his career, he turned against it after Stanislavsky stopped one of his productions in the rehearsal stage."³² First, although Meyerhold did turn against the Art Theatre, he had done so well before the rehearsals about which Carlson and Shafer talk. Second, by inserting the name *Stanislavski* into the discussion of Meyerhold against the Moscow Art Theatre, the issues become unclear. The role of the Stanislavski/Nemirovich Danchenko relationship is rarely mentioned when discussing the 1904 split. The tendency to invoke Stanislavski's name whenever the Art Theatre is turned against in the chronicle of

Meyerhold's career is to suggest that he turned against Stanislavski. This assertion appears not only in basic introductions to theatre history, but in advanced studies. It is done through an operation of proximity, such that placing names together in short generalizations about different genres (naturalism/symbolism or realism/constructivism) and equally brief descriptions of acting styles which are then measured against each other, sets up a false Stanislavski/Meyerhold dichotomy.

Since Stanislavski and Meyerhold are so important to the actor's methodology, which, in turn, is central to the entire field of theatre, it would seem that their affinity ought not be treated as a minor incident by basic textbooks. But even in more focused analyses, the false dichotomy remains. For example in his introduction to *Meyerhold at Work* (1980), Paul Schmidt writes:

Stanislavski's influence has been, and remains to this day, powerful, inside Russia as well as out. Yet the triumph of the Moscow Art Theatre and the Stanislavsky system was a triumph of culmination, not of innovation. It marked the end of the nineteenth century, not the beginning of the twentieth. It was Meyerhold who brought theatre into the twentieth century, yet he and his theater were obliterated, and he is still strange to us here.³³

It is hard to accept Schmidt's assertion that Stanislavski was not an innovative initiator of twentieth century theatre practice; the work of the Group Theatre alone should affirm his importance in this century. It is self-contradictory to say first that Meyerhold brings theatre into the twentieth century, and then in the same sentence to say his work is strange to us.

Schmidt makes no mention of any methodological continuity between the two and reinforces the myth of their polemic. He tends to see Stanislavski strictly in terms of the genre of conventional realism. He writes:

The Stanislavskian actor is always idiosyncratic, autochthonous; Stanislavsky's drive was toward improvisation: acting "as if": as if it were spontaneous. Hence his acting is illusionary, subjective, conventional in the sense of stereotypical (since how else would we recognize it?). It is a concept of acting that rests ultimately on individual genius and denies the idea of any except supplementary training.³⁴

This passage raises some strange perspectives. First, what exactly does Schmidt mean by the "Stanislavskian actor?" That seems to be an invented category, one Stanislavski never endorsed. Second, is Schmidt saying that the truth or authenticity for which Stanislavski spent his career searching is a stereotype? It seems that the opposite is true. What else could be meant by Stanislavski's dissatisfaction with "stencils" expressed in *My Life in Art*? Schmidt's Stanislavski is hemmed in by boundaries erected by the Stanislavski/Meyerhold dichotomy rather than seen through the complexities of what is actually known about Stanislavski's work.

Meyerhold's Attitude towards Authentic Emotion, Mimesis, and Theatre Traditions

When it came to emotions, Meyerhold rejected the same things as Stanislavski: clichés and pumped up inauthentic emotions. According to Russian theatre critic Konstantin Rudnitsky:

Meyerhold offered another method in place of [the System] – "the method of true improvisation that pulls together as a magic trick, all the achievements and delights of true theatrical cultures of all

times and peoples.” He asked: “What is needed?” And answered: “Culture of the body is needed, the culture of physical expression, perfecting this single tool of the actor’s work” (i.e., his body). “A single gesture of the hands resolves the verisimilitude of the most difficult interjection ‘akh,’ which the ‘leftovers’ futilely force out of themselves, replacing it with impotent sighs.”³⁵

Through what he called “true improvisation” (which differs from the common misconception that improvisation is spontaneous free behavior) Meyerhold opposed clichés and promotes the notion of external action stimulating the “verisimilitude” of internal reaction.

Meyerhold’s affinity for Stanislavski goes beyond the professional; it was highly personal. Both shared an artistic loneliness, almost as though no one truly understood them. But in this loneliness each was invested in aspects of a Russian theatrical tradition that, over the course of the century, expressed some crucial questions for theatre practitioners. Rudnitsky notes:

It is interesting that at the same time, in April 1921, Meyerhold undertook an attempt to contrast the Art Theatre to none other than its founder K. S. Stanislavsky. Together with Bebutov, Meyerhold published in one of the last issues of *Bulletin of the Theatre* their famous article “Stanislavsky’s Solitude.”³⁶

“Stanislavsky’s Solitude” demonstrates how Meyerhold connected himself to his teacher. Rudnitsky’s excerpted translation of the article differs slightly from the one offered by Edward Braun in his important *Meyerhold on Theatre* (1969).³⁷ Rudnitsky curiously omits a key phrase which, in this study, is offered in brackets in the following citation. The bracketed material is drawn from the Braun translation.

Think what a tragedy! A man born for the theater of exaggerated parody and tragic concern, year after year under the pressure of the hostile forces of banality, was compelled to break out and distort

the essence of his Gallic nature, imprisoning himself in the tastes of people who go to the Hermitage, Mauritania, the Ravine, and the Prague—all of these overdressed, stupidly self-satisfied shopkeepers from Kuznetsky Bridge, banking houses, offices, and coffee houses . . . But fortunately an alchemist is preparing a reliable antivenom against the office: Vakhtangov, like a true armor-bearer, does not abandon his knight. [In these ancient Hebrew and Armenian surroundings the fanatics of the Moscow Art Third Studio are present to a man] when Stanislavsky gives his lessons.

No suffering! Ringing voices! Theatrical walk! Suppleness! Expressive language of gestures! Dance! Bow! Battle with rapiers! Rhythm! Rhythm! Rhythm! – calls Stanislavsky... He and only he in his solitude is capable of restoring the lost rights of theatrical traditionalism with its “*relativistic improbability,*” “*diverting action,*” “*masks of exaggeration,*” “*truth of passions,*” “*verisimilitude of feelings under the proposed circumstances,*” “*freedom of judgement by the street,*” and “*blunt openness of popular passions.*”³⁸ [Rudnitsky’s italics]

Meyerhold demonstrates Stanislavski’s dual identity, one, the man who for years indulged the tastes of the theatregoing public, and, two, the one who, in the safety of the studio, devoted himself to breaking with the banal through what Vakhtangov called *theatricality*. What is most important is that Meyerhold confirms Stanislavski’s devotion to that which is theatrical, to “exaggerated parody,” i.e., “theatrical walk” and “expressive language of gestures.” But what is also important about “Stanislavsky’s Solitude” is that Meyerhold positions himself and Stanislavski together on important methodological grounds, rooting them in the same tradition, a tradition Meyerhold calls the “house of Schepkin,” a tradition that comes to them from Pushkin. Pushkin’s pronouncements in his “On National-Popular Drama” make up the final list of italicized theatre principles in Meyerhold’s essay.³⁹

The importance of tradition, a theatrical tradition based on shared principles, is also explicit in Barba's work. As has been mentioned before, Barba says, "Different performers at different places and times and in spite of the stylistic forms specific to their traditions have shared common principles. The first task of theatre anthropology is to trace these recurrent principles."⁴⁰ The idea of recurring or shared principles is part of a tradition initiated by Stanislavski and Meyerhold not only in their recognition of each other but of great theatres of the past. These principles were articulated by Pushkin.

Another important figure in this tradition is the Russian actor, Pavil Plavilshchikov. He not only proposed the notion of *narodnost*, the Russian national spirit expressed in the drama, but also a theory of the art of the actor, which although, he proposed it as a Russian aesthetic, really functions as the cornerstone of research into the actor's technique, or Theatre Anthropology.⁴¹

The Russians demand not words, but deeds; they desire little to be said, but much to be implied; they love the intricate; but cannot endure the excessively sweet; love order and will not suffer pedantry—in a word, Russians desire the perfect, which cannot exist in imitation, for all imitation is far removed from its original.⁴²

Plavilshchikov questions mimesis a full century before it became popular to do so. Skepticism with regard to mimesis' value in actors' technique clearly predates its supposed harbingers, be they Artaud, Derrida, Grotowski, or Stanislavski. In *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Grotowski articulates the same problem differently when he proposes freeing the actor from "the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction." Consequently, impulse and action are simultaneous and "the body vanishes and

burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses.”⁴³ This “time lapse” is caused by a thought process that intercedes between mind and body disengaging them from one another so that, in the analytic moment, the body pauses to imitate that which transpires in the mind. When the time-lapse is eliminated, the actor no longer imitates action but is the action. This notion articulated, although differently, by both Plavilshikov and Grotowski, is essential to the continuum from Stanislavski to Barba. The development of this notion of the elimination of mimesis is at the core of the notion of believability in Stanislavski’s view of emotions and physical actions, and the motivation behind Barba’s understanding of the role of impulses in the body-mind.

Meyerhold’s position within the traditions from which he emerges connects him more strongly to Stanislavski than their aesthetic differences separate them. Deconstructing Meyerhold misconceptions helps explain Stanislavski’s methodology. The central myth surrounding Meyerhold was that his theories are ultimately impractical and unrealizable, especially Biomechanics, because it disavows the inner, emotional world of the actor. Since this inner world of emotions is traditionally thought of as Stanislavski’s domain, Meyerhold and Stanislavski are often portrayed as opposites. This has had a powerful effect on twentieth-century theatre history and is thankfully being set aright in a variety of forums. For instance, although they made an error in their initial epigraph, Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre’s Biomechanics web page states:

It is a misconception . . . to think of Meyerhold and Stanislavsky as diametrically opposed. Despite their different paths, by the end of their lives they came to recognize that their two approaches in fact represented two halves of a whole, resulting in total actor training:

body and self. In Meyerhold's words "We are two systems that complete and complement each other."⁴⁴

But this somewhat enlightened view of Meyerhold and Stanislavski will require more than a web page to be disseminated and correctives are few and far between. The Gertrude Stein Repertory web page never really explains what half of the whole is Stanislavski's and what is Meyerhold's. Maybe they have them both wrong. Is Stanislavski's half the self and Meyerhold's the body? If Meyerhold's interest is restricted to the body, the Gertrude Stein is mistaken. But they are not alone.

In his *Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Peter Brook* (1989), James Roose-Evans writes:

It was in 1920 that Meyerhold began to develop his theory of biomechanics, a form of training that aimed at developing actors who would be part athlete, part acrobats, part animated machines. . . . Its aim was to discipline both the emotional and muscular response of the actor. As with a dancer, so every movement or gesture made on stage would be calculated, controlled and never spontaneous. . . . Meyerhold demanded from his actors the vigorous elimination of all human feeling and the creation of an order based on upon mechanical laws; the actor was to function as a machine – a somersault, *salto-mortale*, or headspring would suffice to convey different states of emotion.⁴⁵

If Meyerhold's complete opus is considered, Roose Evans's assertions—"Machines" "Never spontaneous" "Elimination of all human feeling"—become facile. The above passage contradicts itself. Why should Meyerhold bother to "discipline the emotional . . . response" if his goal is "the vigorous elimination of all human feeling?" Is the total purpose of Biomechanics to replace the externalization of the actor's internal impulses (emotions) with a somersault?

Probably not. It is just that Meyerhold conceived of emotion and its origins differently than Stanislavski. Meyerhold writes:

The imaginary gesture valid only in the theatre, the stylized theatrical movement, the measured tones of theatrical declamation: they are all condemned by public and critics simply because the concept of “theatricality” still bears the traces of the style of acting which was developed by the so-called “inspirational actors.”⁴⁶

The “inspirational” actor is not the actor of the Moscow Art Theatre. When Meyerhold says “inspirational” actors, he is referring to the declamatory, convention-bound actors of the preceding era, for example Toporkov’s former teacher, Davydov, described in *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*. Meyerhold is not taking up Diderot’s *paradoxe* and its resulting discourse. That assumption narrows Meyerhold’s argument into a proclamation of the supremacy of technique at the expense of spontaneity and obscures his point of view.

Meyerhold has precise views on the issue of the usefulness of inspiration, and emotion. He certainly does not discard them. In his essay “Two Puppet Theatres” (1911-12), Meyerhold writes:

The inspirational actor is content to rely exclusively on his own mood. He refuses to bend his will to the discipline of technique. The inspirational actor proudly claims to have rekindled the flame of improvisation in the theatre. In his naïveté he imagines that his improvisations have something in common with the improvisation of traditional Italian comedy. He does not realize that the improvisations of the *commedia dell' arte* had a firm basis of faultless technique. The inspirational actor totally rejects technique of any kind. “Technique hinders creative freedom” is what he always says. For him the only valid moment is the moment of unconscious creativity born of the emotions. If such a moment comes, he succeeds; if not, he fails.

At first Meyerhold’s invocation of the value of technique may lead a theatre historian like Watson to make the connection between Barba and Meyerhold

solely on the basis of this value. But did Meyerhold not dissever the value of technique from emotion; it was almost always proposed as a cognate. Meyerhold continues:

Does the display of emotion really diminish the self-discipline of the actor? Real live men danced in plastic movements around the altar of Dionysus; their emotions seemed to burn uncontrollably, inflamed to extreme ecstasy by the fire on the altar. Yet the ritual in honor of the god of wine was composed of predetermined rhythms, steps and gestures. That is one example of the actor's self-discipline unaffected by the display of emotion. In the dance the Greek was bound by a whole series of traditional rules, yet he was at liberty to introduce as much personal invention as he wished.⁴⁷

Meyerhold was confident that “personal invention” or “unaffected emotion” was inherent in the actor. He was more interested, however, in the liberating nature of technique.

Another active misconception is that Meyerhold's theatre was a director's theatre and his actors were little more than marionettes. This perception has the potential of spilling over onto other physical theatres like Barba's. Roose-Evans writes, “Like a ring-master, he put his actors through their paces; like a puppet master he manipulated his marionettes in space.”⁴⁸ Edward Dee says, “[Vera] Kommissarzhevskaya dismissed him, believing, as did Stanislavsky, that Meyerhold placed too much emphasis on the director at the expense of the actor.”⁴⁹ Actually he was dismissed in 1907, both because the reviews were bad, and because Meyerhold had been discredited in Kommissarzhevskaya's eyes by her brother, Fyodor, who wanted Meyerhold's job and got it. It is true that she neither understood nor cared for his aesthetics, but it is simplistic to ascribe his dismissal to his directorial prerogative.⁵⁰ These evaluations of Meyerhold as a

puppeteer or autocrat contribute to the myth that he had little interest in what the actor brings to the creative process.

Often, in Vakhtangov scholarship, Stanislavski and Meyerhold are opposed to one another so that Vakhtangov can be made to appear in the middle ground. In these formulations Meyerhold generally fares the worst. In William Kuhlke's "Vakhtangov and the American Theatre of the 1960's" (1967), for example, Meyerhold is described in such a way as to detract from his career of collaboration with actors in their performances and training. Kuhlke writes:

[Vakhtangov and Meyerhold] differed over the place and function of the actor . . . Meyerhold tended to see the actor as just another element of the *mise en scène*; he did not recognize him as a creative partner. Vakhtangov recognized his actors as creative partners . . . He saw them not as passive tools of the artist director but as unique individuals with wills of their own.⁵¹

The connotation is that Vakhtangov was a collaborative (democratic) benevolent director, whereas Meyerhold was an autocratic, manipulative, single-minded (cold and unemotional), malevolent authoritarian. Actors had a different view. Many held that Meyerhold was highly collaborative in spirit, especially in his work with Erast Garin and Igor Ilinski who saw themselves as their director's fellow creators.⁵²

Corrective Measures

Fortunately Anna Muza's "Meyerhold at Rehearsal: New Materials on Meyerhold's Work with Actors" (1996) is a thoughtfully composed essay that looks more deeply into Meyerhold's methodology than most analyses.⁵³ Muza's conclusions are based on her translation of the Russian *Meyerhold* [sic]

Reputeruet (Meyerhold at Rehearsal) (1996)—stenographic notes taken at the actual rehearsals of Meyerhold’s work. She proposes that the notes demonstrate “Meyerhold’s search for an acting style that would bring together genuine emotion and sharp characterization, elements of his own biomechanics and of Stanislavsky’s psychological analysis.”⁵⁴ Muza asks whether Stanislavski’s term, *emotional memory* and Meyerhold’s notion of “reflex excitability” are not actually two ways of describing the same thing. The latter is central not only to Meyerhold’s borrowings from Jamesian/Pavlovian reflexology in his *Biomechanics* but also to Stanislavski’s borrowing of the same as the foundation of his Method of Physical Actions (although that should not imply that the two are one and the same).⁵⁵ Both are essential to understanding Barba’s methodology.

How Stanislavski and Meyerhold conceived of the emotions is not so different when considering Stanislavski’s System as one in which two cognates (body and mind) come together to form a unit. In the body-mind, Ribot-based emotional memory works in conjunction with Jamesian/Pavlovian ideas of reflex excitability. Although Meyerhold was more interested in the second approach to the psyche, he was not willing to sacrifice the first. Via the internal instrument of believability, reflex excitability can be linked to the emotions. In *Meyerhold Reputeruet* Muza translates Meyerhold as saying:

Excitability—this is our term in the theatre. We know that everything we may do on the stage, our actions, walk attitudes, facial expressions, movements, everything has to convince the audience; the audience must believe the actors even when you’re enacting the improbable. And when a grotesque interpretation gets too theatrical, too broad, the audience has to believe it anyway. . . . And if what the audience sees on the stage is a fish who has no

blood and, moreover, is frozen, can it believe such an actor, can he be convincing at all?⁵⁶

According to Muza's analysis of Meyerhold's notion of excitability, believability (being "convincing") is as much an issue with Meyerhold as Stanislavski. Just as Muza proposes genuine methodological linkage between Stanislavski and Meyerhold, this present study proposes a strengthening of the link between Stanislavski and Barba en route by way of Meyerhold.

Here is Muza's translation of what she considers a key passage in *Meyerhold*

Reputeruet:

The actor's assignment is to play the following scene: the ground has been cut from under his feet. You have come here to make a disclosure, you have come to announce the truth as you see it, suddenly it turns out that it is not the truth at all, that very likely you will be thrown out of the house as a scoundrel who has perpetuated most vicious slander. Here is the actor on the stage: he must forget about words, he must enact the situation as such, he must perform it gesturally. There exist numerous means and no recipes. One will wipe cold sweat off his face, another will stay on the same spot and stare off into distance, with his body swaying back and forth. Not a single director will dare prescribe anything. Your role is intuitive, and this particular fragment will show to what extent you're "in character," as they used to say, and actors knew it in the old days. I have seen one such actor, Galinsky. . . . He stood on the stage and played nothing at all, he merely buttoned his jacket unevenly, mismatching buttons and holes, like this (demonstrates), and the audience knew that everything had been ruined for him. Gestures like that become a tradition passed over and over. Then all the actors in the provinces started to button their jackets unevenly, without feeling any thing.⁵⁷

Based on the preceding Muza makes the argument that

The passage may serve as an epigraph to Meyerhold's later work in its peculiar blend of the "Meyerholdian" and "Stanislavskian." The notion of the actor's "reflex excitability" was developed by Meyerhold in the early 1920s; it advocated nervous psychological excitement versus soul-searching. . . . At the same time, "convincing" and "believing" belong to the idiom of

Stanislavsky's vocabulary—the famous “I'm not convinced” haunted Stanislavsky's actors in their worst nightmares. It is well known that, while rejecting MAT's “pan-psychologism,” Meyerhold always revered Stanislavsky as an actor. Nevertheless, Stanislavsky's overt and latent presence in Meyerhold's work over the years is a striking discovery. Meyerhold's rehearsals reveal . . . to what extent both in major and minor things, he is indebted to Stanislavsky against whom he has been revolting for decades.⁵⁸

Muza is unique in that she is convinced that the linkage between Stanislavski and Meyerhold is stronger than their supposed antipathy. Her assiduous investigation of Meyerhold's rehearsal logs helps forge a crucial link in the methodological chain connecting Stanislavski to Barba through Meyerhold's work on reflex excitement and believability. She continues:

In Meyerhold's late work, the notion of the *emploi* was internalized in the actor rather than externalized in the production. For Stanislavsky, stage types had to be discarded because they were conducive to automatism, hollow reproduction of the tricks of the trade. Evidently, Meyerhold was anxious to avoid “a merry wink and gray pants” no less than his teacher, yet he did not see the awareness of the role's archetypal meaning as contradictory to its individual perception or even identification with the character. At a rehearsal of *Krechinsky's Wedding* in 1932, Meyerhold explained to an actor that his character was consistent with the messenger in Greek theatre who brought with him anxiety and disturbance. A moment later, he demanded from the performer an “intuitive,” entirely non-ritualistic approach to the part.⁶⁰

Muza's point with regard to Meyerhold's commitment to the value of actor's emotions is that, although he uses the term *intuition* rather than *emotion*, intuition connotes an internal process that can be likened to emotions. It becomes increasingly clear how ineffectual a word *emotion* is. In *My Life in Art* Stanislavski focused on cultivating the actor's intuition. Meyerhold's instructions to actors were not as cold or centered upon training and exercises as others have proposed. Muza's writing does much to counteract the stereotypical view

whereby Meyerhold functions as the antithesis of Stanislavski, that their disagreements amounted to mutually exclusive theories of acting, or that Meyerhold was a cold and calculating director who placed no value on the psychological dimensions of an actor's work.

Lee Strasberg perhaps best expressed the stereotypical view of Meyerhold.

Visiting with Meyerhold, I not only spoke to him, but also to the people who were in charge of the work in bio-mechanics [sic]. I saw their work. I was frankly not impressed by it from the acting point of view. They seemed interesting exercises physically, but I couldn't foresee, either on the stage or in theory, what they could actually accomplish for the actor from an acting point of view.⁶¹

But Strasberg does not make much out of Meyerhold's answer to his questions.

The acting on the stage at the Meyerhold theatre was not satisfactory, and Meyerhold himself was the first one to recognize it. When I confronted him with it . . . asking whether he didn't want his actors to feel, to experience on the stage, he looked at me with annoyance and said he did. I then asked him: "Well, why don't they?" And he very abruptly said: "Because they are bad actors."⁶²

Meyerhold's response is telling. Perhaps he looked beyond the obvious—professional actors should already have wholly developed emotional lives—and believed that they are genuinely in need of a physical vocabulary to communicate to the audience.

It also seems that Strasberg mistakes Biomechanics for an acting style. It was not. It was a training technique. It was a means of training the body-mind to function *as if* fictional and theatrical demands are real. In their *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia* (1996), Mel Gordon and Alma Law believe that many authoritative theatre scholars who had never seen Meyerhold's work with actors or considered them in the context of

Russian experimental theatre misunderstood the Biomechanics. The resulting misconception erroneously held that *Biomechanics was a machinelike acting vocabulary, or a mechanical style of acting.* [Law and Gordon's italics]⁶³ They write:

The British writer Huntley Carter was probably responsible for this most common and frequently repeated notion of Biomechanics in *The New Theatre and Cinema of Soviet Russia*, written in 1924. . . . Carter failed to mention that Biomechanics was an actor training program. Following Carter's limited definition, authoritative scholars like Nikolai A. Gorchakov, in his *Theatre in Soviet Russia* (1957), and Edwin Duerr, in *The Length and Depth of Acting* (1962), assumed that Biomechanics was a "new system of acting" or a "new kind of acting." . . . The reader was left with the heady impression that Meyerhold's biomechanical actors moved about the stage and interacted like robots or human machines. . . . In fact Meyerhold believed that the outward appearance of Biomechanics should disappear from his actors' movements on the stage, leaving only their kinesthetic effects to act on the spectator. . . . For Meyerhold, Biomechanics was not a "style." It schooled the actor in tragedy as well as comedy, agitprop as well as highly realistic productions; it was equally useful for contemporary Soviet political melodramas and grand opera.⁶⁴

Law and Gordon's assertions are important because Barba's approach to actor training, like Meyerhold's has nothing to do with style or aesthetics, but rather amplifies recurring principles active in all performance situations.

Supra-methodology

By harvesting recurring principles from the methodology of the five pedagogues (and their students and colleagues) Barba's idea of recurring principles can be considered. Do certain principles recur to the extent that, when taken together, they comprise a methodology independent of the pedagogues' aesthetics?

By linking different aspects from different director/pedagogues' work an overall methodology or supra-methodology becomes possible. That is to say, each director/pedagogue stresses different aspects of an extensive system in which what is expressed starts at the level of the actors' impulses (ostensibly located in the torso) and proceeds outward towards the audience (in the theatre). Expression is carried by energy through various human media: the psyche; the body; face; voice; action or gesture; *mise en scène*; relations between actors; and the relationship between actors and audience—a few stages along the way to performance. Each of these and other media can be engaged at different amplitudes depending upon pedagogy and style. Most important is that the supra-methodology links the concepts emotional memory, the Method of Physical Actions, and Biomechanics.

These concepts are not of themselves equivalent, yet they are derived from similar principles. Actors apply the principles, not the concepts. Law and Gordon reject the notion that “*Biomechanics and Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Action were similar concepts.*” [Law and Gordon's italics]⁶⁵ They claim:

The Method of Physical Action has little to do with body behavior or training. It was a means to manipulate the work of the actor during rehearsals in helping him to achieve a genuine sincerity and belief in the role he was playing.

Meyerhold created Biomechanics primarily as a kinesthetic training device. The entire stage picture could be revitalized through a more expressive use of the human figure in movement.⁶⁶

Law and Gordon have captured a crucial distinction between Stanislavski and Meyerhold, but the implication is that Meyerhold was not interested in sincerity, believability, or actor's emotions. But Gordon and Law's observation about the

difference between the Method of Physical Actions and Biomechanics can be teased out to draw a slightly different conclusion. In the Method of Physical Actions, actors' authentic internal impulses (emotions) are the result of the physical action. In Biomechanics the internal impulses (emotions) are produced in the audience as a result of the action.

Dancing in the Chairs

At both ends of the supra-methodology, for both actor and audience, the impulses are engaged (both in their role as senders and as receivers). At the 1996 ISTA in Copenhagen, Barba introduced a session on dancing and acting with a phrase that captures the connection between Meyerhold and Stanislavski's methodologies. Barba says:

If I look back now and try to understand what happened here in Denmark when we moved to Holstebro, [it] was that training slowly—especially when, after a few years, we went [beyond] this very oppressive and rigid attitude—I had to impose certain directions. When the actors became more experienced they started, by themselves, to find solutions. [It became possible] to elaborate [on] my ideas; I then had to accept theirs. They experienced that. There was a sort of way of moving or displacing oneself that made me dance on my chair. I've been all my days to sit on a chair—since 1961 when I went to Opole and Grotowski. Maybe I should say the training makes me, at one second, one of the actors. He is doing something which . . . functions, because I start dancing in my chair. So if I have to say what is the difference between theatre and dance, it is what makes the spectator dance in his chair⁶⁷

Making “the spectator dance in his chair” corresponds to Meyerhold's deployment of Biomechanics to stimulate the audience through the physical work of the actor. Yet, Barba claims to become one of the actors in this dance, so the

dance in the chair also points towards actors' internal work, an aspect of Meyerhold's deployment of reflexology that Gordon and Law do not concede. Interestingly Barba likens the actors' internal world to an internal dance that also goes on externally at the level of physical expression. Barba writes:

The tendency to make a distinction between dance and theatre, characteristic of our culture, reveals a profound wound, a void with no tradition, which continually risks drawing the actor towards a denial of the body and the dancer towards virtuosity.⁶⁸

Barba sees less of a generic difference between acting and dancing as formal disciplines than they are generally thought; for him dancing comprises the actor/dancer's internal actions. Barba writes:

In all actors I look for the hidden dance that gives intensity to their presence. I try to discover the undulations of rhythm, of powerful action harboured in the depths of their bodies, even if they barely make any movement, if they are seemingly motionless and their behaviour is apparently "quite normal".

When actors conceal the violence and energy that infuse life into their stage presence, even if they do not dance overtly something dances within them. Without this hidden dance, their acting is not authentic. For an actor, acting is not a matter of pretense. Acting is only real when it involves the whole body, when the slightest movement is rooted in the torso, not in a part of the body such as the hands, the eyes or the mouth, and springs from the unity of body and mind. This integrity, this unity of the living organism is what I call "dance".⁶⁹

This dance of the actor is done on the level of impulses to action. The interior impulse and the exterior action are united through the processes of what Barba calls reduction and dilation.

Barba believes that in order to stimulate the audience, the actor's expression must be stimulated by something internal. That internal thing is an impulse.

Impulse translates intention into action. The impulse can be aroused by externals

like action or internals like memory, but is part of the actor's creative process, a pathway leading from internal to external (even if it is initially stirred by external stimuli). Barba says of the impulse translated into action, "It's like an emotional meteor that cannot be halted."⁷⁰ So a clear confluence of Stanislavski's Method of Physical Actions and Meyerhold's Biomechanics resides in Barba's work—impulse and emotional reaction travel through physical media from the actor's torso to the audience's, compelling them to dance in their chairs.

The Role of Reflexology

To establish a supra-methodology or Stanislavski—Barba continuum this study remains skeptical of efforts to prize Stanislavski and Meyerhold apart. At the level of principles they have a lot in common.

Should scholars and practitioners be completely convinced of Gordon and Law's assertion that Meyerhold's work was targeted at making montages solely in the audience's imagination? Do the theories of reflexologists and behavioral psychologists, (Ivan Sechenov, William James, Ivan Pavlov, and Vladimir Bekhterev, whose work comprises the major theoretical fabric of Biomechanics, along with the expressive gymnastics of Rudolf Bode and the theories of economic movement espoused by Frederick Winslow Taylor) also work on the actor's inner creative forces, the emotional dimension?

In his comprehensive study of the importance of reflexology to the work of Stanislavski and Meyerhold, "The *Paradoxe* as Paradigm: The Structure of a Russian Revolution," Joseph Roach posits:

[The work of Sechenov, James, Pavlov, and Bekhterev] explained all psychological phenomena by reducing them to physiological laws. Sechenov, for instance, demonstrated the operation of *central inhibition*, the repressive effects of the thalamic nerve centers on spinal reflexes. . . . All manifestations of brain function can be reduced to muscular movement propelled or repressed by reflex. Emotions are merely intensified reflexes. Thoughts are merely reflexes, from those of a girl trembling at the first awakening of love to those of Newton enunciating the universal laws of motion. . . . Complex behaviors, moreover, consist of a “whole series of successive reflexes.” . . . Reflex action thus constitutes the basis of all behavior . . . the convenient terms *mental* and *physical* simply describe two aspects of an indivisible phenomenon—life.⁷¹

What is important here is the reflexologists’ substitution of reflex for brain functions, especially emotion. “Emotions are merely intensified reflexes”—this is a clear equivalence. Whether the language used refers to the internal reality as emotion, idea, memory, or reflex, the emotions continue to exist, they are simply named differently, sometimes reflecting more the material than the ethereal. In Soviet Russia the adoption of the behaviorists’ theories may be as much a response to materialist political imperatives than any genuine intellectual revelation in the field of psychology. Roach continues:

It was against this scientific backdrop, as well as in the midst of a political revolution that Vsevelod Meyerhold called for a biomechanical method of actor training in 1922. Biomechanics offered the actor preparatory exercise routines. The obvious goal of such exercises was to condition the neuromuscular responses to peak efficiency. Their ultimate purpose was to induce in his body the appearance of second nature. . . . “All psychological states,” he wrote in his biomechanical manifesto, “are determined by specific physiological processes.” Above all, his new theatrical technique was to be predicated on the actor’s “*innate capacity for reflex excitability*.” [Meyerhold on Theatre, 199]⁷²

“Innate capacity” connotes Meyerhold’s acknowledgement of the internal regions of the actor’s identity. Roach continues:

Igor Ilinsky, an actor under Meyerhold's direction when the biomechanical exercises were developed, explained them by way of this familiar example: "an actor representing fear must not experience fear first and then run, but must first run (reflex) and then take fright from that action" (*Actors on Acting* 504).⁷³

Ilinsky's comment is basically a restatement of William James's position. Mel Gordon writes:

James concluded that emotional consciousness and its transitory states were directly linked to the physical body; in fact the body's automatic response to stimuli itself was the emotion, preceding the mental perception of the emotion. Using the dictum, "I saw the bear, ran, I became frightened," James attempted to demonstrate the physiological basis of his theory: to trigger the sensation of fear, a person would only have to run – with his eyebrows raised and pupils dilated. Regardless of what the person was stimulated by or thinking, an automatic reflex signifying fear would be felt throughout his [sic] body.⁷⁴

From this it can be concluded that Meyerhold was interested in the manifestation of so-called emotion in the actor as a result of action. He called it by a different name though, "excitability." Roach, however, ultimately supports the position taken by Gordon and Law. He writes:

A principle difference between the acting theories of Meyerhold in his biomechanical period and Stanislavski resides in their relative attitudes towards organic spontaneity, the degree to which they permitted "bio-," vitalistically interpreted, to figure into their mechanics. Meyerhold had less interest than Stanislavski in the psychological content of motion.⁷⁵

But the fact that Meyerhold had "less interest" in the "psychological content of motion" (action) does not mean he was totally uninterested.

It was Meyerhold's student, director Sergei Eisenstein however who took the position that the actor's emotions are of no value when it comes to the deployment of the Biomechanics in creating montage. He was exclusively

interested in the audience's emotions. Ironically, he did not say that the emotions do not exist, but that they are of no value, a position probably more radical than Meyerhold would have been willing to take.

In their essay, "Expressive Movement," Eisenstein and playwright, Sergei Tretyakov investigate the relationship between the consciousness or will and "primary biological reflexive movements."⁷⁶ Eisenstein and Tretyakov conclude that a reflex is independent of consciousness. But, most important, their equation does not work reciprocally. Consciousness is not independent of reflex. In other words, although consciously created reflexes (actions) may evoke emotion, consciously created emotions cannot evoke reflex actions.

Although Eisenstein and Tretyakov were primarily concerned with the audience, their understanding of reflexivity is crucial to the actor as well, and echoes another of Stanislavski's basic concerns, that the pumped-up or willed emotion is not only ill-advised but an impossibility, therefore emotion must be enticed through action. However this particular value of excitability, the excitability of the actor, was of no interest to Eisenstein and Tretyakov because their concern was how the *mise en scène* or montage would evoke reactions in the audience.

These differing concerns can be distilled into a question: in which group are the emotions evoked, the actors, or the spectators? Eisenstein and Tretyakov write that Rudolf Bode's principles embodied by the expressive gymnastics he devised in 1921 in the Deutsche Filmschule

make possible the construction of motor expressions of the most complex psychological phases (emotions), characterized by duality

(the struggle of motifs) . . . It is the factual fulfillment of this struggle which is the sole material content of acting, completely independent of the psychological conditioning of each phase of such "acting." *Thanks to such a construction of stage movement, there is no more need for an actor's emotional experiencing (perezhivanie) of movements by the actor, the emotional experiencing is transferred where it belongs, specifically to the auditorium.* [italics mine] For the actor, there remains the work, completely analogous to the work of the circus performer or the athlete – the same overcoming of obstacles which have been set up – and the objective is expressive movement as a factor of visually perceived [zritel'naya] emotion.⁷⁷

Eisenstein and Tretyakov reduce the role of emotion in the actor to expressive movement that stems from the actor overcoming obstacles, but their analysis of the role of emotion in the audience ultimately supports the notion of a supra-methodology that culminates in the audience's reaction to performance that begins with the actor. They write:

It is precisely expressive movement, built on an organically correct foundation, that is solely capable of *evoking this emotion in the spectator*, who in turn reflexively repeats in weakened form the entire system of the actor's movements: as a result of the produced movements, the spectator's incipient muscular tensions are released in the desired emotion. [italics mine]⁷⁸

Eisenstein and Tretyakov intelligently distinguish actor-driven process from audience-driven process. But in their analysis the spectator's emotional reactions (dancing in the chair) are not matched by an equal and opposite (if not greater) emotional or internal action on the part of the actor.

If it is simply the ephemeral nature of the word *emotions* that Eisenstein and Tretyakov disapproved, they did not offer anything in its place. They did not take the step Barba takes of focusing on the way reflex action stimulates the actor's impulses, or how those impulses are manifestations of intention or desire

(conscious and willful). They do not admit the physical manifestation of the actor's imagination described by Wethal's term, *intellectual choreography*. That which makes the spectator release "incipient muscular tensions," that which makes Barba dance in his chair, is also that which makes the actor's process a dance of energy, a dance of impulses.

Although Law and Gordon, and Roach as well, tend towards the view that Meyerhold was uninterested in the presence of the actor's inner reality or emotions, that may not necessarily be the case, as Muza's writings demonstrate. The controversy over the value of the actor's internal process may have more to do with what words are used to describe it in performance than the actual existence or non-existence of that internal region. It is of course foolish to believe that if it cannot be seen it must not be there, but perhaps the term *emotions* is too facile. Wethal uses the expression "emotional concerns" and "emotional reactions," while Barba looks more at intentions and impulses. Carreri playfully breaks the word *intention* down into component parts and relates them to the body, i.e., the prefix *in* and the root *tension* [purposefully confusing *tention*—not a word—with *tension*], connoting *tension in* the body as it fulfills needs and desires by taking action.⁷⁹ If the use of the words *emotion* and *feelings* in Stanislavski are too simplistic for the contemporary practitioner, his System is nonetheless a means to gain access to those internal mechanisms that function to express, to act. Meyerhold's work helps illuminate the extent to which that which is physical is emotionally evocative. He amplifies a crucial Stanislavski value—daily training. He fulfils Stanislavski's dictum:

“The time has come for the unreal on stage.” These two, Stanislavski and Meyerhold, are not dichotomous, and more than cognates, their principles are the teeth of an elaborate meshwork of interlocking parts. Like the wonderful machines of the constructivists, they are interdependent, making each man’s work integral and indispensable parts of a supra-methodology.

What Is Really Important about Grotowski for Barba?

The next genealogical step is a leap from Meyerhold to Grotowski—not an altogether chronological step. But Grotowski’s studies at GITIS and his earliest professional activities position him as an heir to Stanislavski. Inasmuch as Grotowski’s work is distinctly different from Barba’s, since Grotowski was Barba’s direct mentor, it would be difficult to get a clear picture of Barba without understanding some basics about Grotowski. Throughout this study Grotowski’s example and proclamations have functioned as a true North for understanding Barba’s origins and motives. But Grotowski was known as much by his work as his reputation. If certain misconceptions about Grotowski are allowed to stand they are easily transferred to Barba.

The myths surrounding Grotowski emerge from a cluster of attitudes stemming, to a great extent, from how his productions and later his experiments were received by the general public, theatre professionals, scholars, and critics. The range of these attitudes manifest themselves as objections to (1) the difficult circumstances of being a member of Grotowski’s audiences in the sixties and early seventies; (2) a kind of Grotowskianism whereby people imitate his work,

adopting its external form without understanding how his work principles were connected to his sociopolitical or professional background; (3) his guru status; and (4) his abandonment of the actor/spectator paradigm.⁸⁰ These myths tend to contextualize Grotowski, and by association Barba, as members of the 1960's pop culture who somehow betrayed the values of its theatre avant-garde with which they are erroneously linked.⁸¹

Improvisation and Spontaneity

Many of the persistent negative attitudes towards Grotowski were evident in Eric Bentley's scathing letter reacting to the New York performances of *Akropolis*, "Dear Grotowski: An Open Letter from Eric Bentley," published in the *New York Times* on November 10, 1969. Although Bentley no longer embraces the views he expressed then, they still cogently express the basis of anti-Grotowski sentiment. Bentley said:

Those who disliked [Peter] Weiss's show [*The Investigation*] complained that its subject was too unpleasant. Those who liked yours praised various technical devices. In New York, thousands of whose families lost relatives in the extermination camps, you show us an Auschwitz that is of technical interest to theater students! If that isn't an example of a deplorable formalism, what would be?⁸²

A certain fear of formalism whose symptoms include aversion towards the existence of an acting technique that promotes anything other than spontaneous, knee-jerk, emotional or psychological reactions to everyday life and popular social problems (such as the Holocaust, as it was depicted in *Akropolis*) persists to

this day.⁸³ This fear is symptomatic of a tacit consensus in some critical circles that the best acting should seem unplanned—improvisation.

Grotowski was always opposed to all that is frivolous and trivial in theatre. Instead he practiced a theatre of value and, although it may have been a highly personal value, it was not falsely relevant but rather grounded in what he perceived as theatre's highly structured professional milieu. Grotowski had a very different notion of spontaneity improvisation, which focused on the precision of physical actions and how they liberate the self in the actor rather than manifest acting clichés portraying behavior that can be found in everyday life.

In Grotowski's American colleague, Jacques Chwat's directing class at Hunter College on February 16, 1982, Grotowski said:

Improvisation is not without a goal and a starting point. It is not just freeing; it is working from point A to B. It is finding similarities between the character and the self, not freeing, but something leaving and something appearing—but don't lose the precision of the form. Changes in precise order change everything in improvisation. . . . It is not just to have free behavior—free behavior is just the vomiting of daily experience. This is not improvisation, just actors doing what is easy for them. Improvisation is a way of conducting attention to something that is not routine. Improvisation is a way to fight the routine. Improvisation brings new significance to the work. . . . An improvisation is a chain of precise elements. . . . The purpose of improvisation is not just to have free behavior. . . . In free behavior all stereotypes of daily life appear. There is no such thing as improvising in general. "What are you improvising?" The quarrel with the father is banal acting school vomit, but to improvise a way of walking, that is true improvisation.⁸⁴

Grotowski's pronouncements cover a whole range of positions taken by both Stanislavski and Barba, from the renunciation of stereotypes and the reproduction of daily behavior to the value of precision and improvisation of fixed physical

actions rather than spontaneous or free behavior. This view is reinforced in the writings of Grotowski's student, Thomas Richards, who gives an excellent example of Grotowskianism.

We showed up at Grotowski's workspace to do our presentation. While improvising, I thought we were achieving something quite intense. . . . In his analysis Grotowski shocked our entire group by thanking us for showing him all the clichés of "paratheatrics" (or "participatory theatre"). He said in "paratheatrics" certain clichés inevitably appear, and he was astounded that they had appeared in the presentation of we young students who had not yet been exposed to such work and learned these clichés from others. Thus it was possible for him to see that such clichés were universal human banalities, not just limited to certain groups of people involved in this kind of work. Grotowski made a list: to carry someone in the air as if he is dead; to throw yourself down on the ground in a pseudo-crisis; to scream; to herd up in a close bunch, singing improvised songs with syllables like "Ah ah" or "La la"; etc. He said that often, before any real work could begin, a human being would have to vomit out all these banalities.⁸⁵

These observations are also borne out in Lisa Wolford's introduction to her excellent study, *Grotowski's Objective Drama Research* (1996).

The limitations Grotowski identifies in paratheatrical work were not aesthetic, and yet were in some sense connected to elements of craft. Grotowski's experiments in "untaming" reinforced his initial notion of the *conjunctio oppositorum*, which asserts that spontaneity cannot exist without structure. His attempt to de-emphasize structure and technique provided sufficient empirical evidence (for his own purposes) that unstructured contact among random groups of individuals frequently remained at the level of personal and/or cultural cliché: performing intimacy or spontaneity rather than accomplishing an act of disarmament.⁸⁶

Wolford's comments on the importance of the interrelationship between spontaneity and structure, a century-long professional discourse begun by Stanislavski and passionately pursued by Meyerhold, is a hallmark of Barba's beliefs and practices.

Wolford overrides doubt concerning the Stanislavski's linkage to Grotowski, and gracefully draws Barba into the discourse:

Grotowski maintains that repetition of precise details of physical behaviour provides the necessary framework for the discovery/appearance of the actor's internal life, a premise that clearly links the Polish director's work to the theories of Stanislavski. As Eugenio Barba observes, "Inner lives don't communicate with each other. Technique is not the essential in theatre and dance, yet in order to reach the essential we must pay attention to the problems related to technique."⁸⁷

The Stanislavski—Barba continuum stands for a century of pedagogy dedicated to technique, to training the actor to make the journey from internal life to external form to expression directed at the spectator. In this continuum, improvisation has its place in the process and therefore is surrounded by the structure of which it is a part. But it is by no means the end or an end—it is a means.

The Guru Myth

An especially distracting commonplace among Grotowski misconceptions and myths is that he was a self-important guru. Barba is also often described as a guru.

Suspicious of his intents, historians, educators, and critics denigrate Grotowski's work by classifying it as mystical and the man as an autocratic guru or cult figure. Halina Filipowicz, in her auspiciously titled "Where is Grotowski," a study of Grotowski's critics, does not disparage Grotowski's Guru status, but rather draws attention to the linguistic slippage that occurs when attempts are made to capture Grotowski's professional identity through modernist turns of phrase. She prefers to resist unifying "antithetical" aspects in his work

into a harmonious whole as she claims Zbigniew Osinski does in his essay “Grotowski Blazes the Trails.” She quotes Jan Kott’s “*Grotowski albo granica*” in reference to what Peter Brook has called Grotowski’s spiritual search:

Kott reported that Grotowski gave him a French translation of Martin Buber’s *The Tales of Hasidism*. This is the book, Grotowski told Kott, with which he never parts. Over a plate of Pierogi, later that evening, “*the former guru,*” noted Kott, looked like one of the Hasidim. [italics mine]⁸⁸

But if he ever was a guru, really, in what sense was he one? He was a guru to the extent that the word is used as it is defined in Hindi as teacher or mentor, indeed a master in the classical sense of the word (as opposed to any connotation of ownership).

In her essay “Oriental Examples” Rosemary Jeanes Antze translates the *Advayataraka Upanishad*, verse Five, which says:

*The syllable gu means shadows (darkness)
The syllable ru, means he who disperses them.
Because of his power to disperse darkness
The guru is thus named. [Antze’s italics]*⁸⁹

Though Antze gives examples of the function of the guru in the master/disciple relationships established in Indian dance pedagogy, their applicability to all traditions of performance pedagogy is qualified in her writing:

Continuity in the arts relies on human beings. Written texts may record certain principles, but the belief in the efficacy of the living teacher goes back to the time of the ancient sage/teacher, *Narāda*: ‘What is learnt from the reliance on books and is not learnt from a teacher does not shine in an assembly’. Moreover, since dance and music communicate through non-verbal means and their nuances of expression lie beyond word, these arts are especially indebted to the living-oral tradition. Students rely on their chosen *guru* as the key to the rich world of creative endeavour.⁹⁰

With this explanation Antze makes the case for the oral transmission of knowledge characteristic of the Stanislavski—Barba continuum, indeed most acting pedagogy. She thereby puts the idea of the guru, be it Grotowski, Barba, or any other great teacher into the context of the guru/disciple relationship inherent in classical Indian dance pedagogy. But the connotations carried with the use of the word *guru* in the States or Great Britain are not founded on any facts about Grotowski or Indian dance pedagogy. A guru is a teacher chosen by students who shows them a way towards something for which they search. In that sense Grotowski was a guru, but not a charlatan deceiving young people into following him after divesting their parents of all their worldly goods, which is often what the word *guru* is taken to mean in the West. This distinction is important to Barba who, more than Grotowski ever did, practices the master/disciple pedagogical model practiced in Asian dance training. The guru is an essential medium for the oral transmission of incorporated (physical) knowledge.

Grotowski's Position within a Tradition of the Theatre Group as a Spiritual Community

In spite of Grotowski's insistence that he has no interest in certain fields of intellectual endeavor or theatrical theorizing, he is often presented in scholarly writings on the theatre within the context of those very personages he rejects.

A good example of the rather ersatz but commonplace linkage of Grotowski with pop-psychoanalysis or pseudo-social and cultural anthropology can be taken from Barnard Hewitt's *History of the Theatre from 1800 to the Present* (1970):

Also influenced by Artaud were Jerzy Grotowsky [sic] and Ludwig Franszen [sic] of the Laboratory Theatre in Opole, Poland. Beginning in 1959, they have attempted to make a modern secular ritual of theatre, using archetypal images and actions drawn from myth to break down the spectator's conscious defenses and force him to react to, even to take part physically in, the ritual performance.⁹¹

Force? What about all those spectators who participated willingly? It was not Grotowski who made theatre a modern secular ritual. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that he was the first to make the theatres of the West aware of a tradition which dates back to Russia's pre-revolutionary years, especially the experiments by Sulerzhitski in Siberia and Juliusz Osterwa in Poland in the mid to late teens.

Hewitt continues:

The aim of the actor in the Polish Laboratory Theatre is to create a magic action through incantation and symbolic movement, in which the spectator will be actively caught up. The aim of the Polish Laboratory Theatre is psychoanalytical. Influenced *perhaps* by Carl Jung's concept of racial heritage in the collective unconscious and by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss' conclusion that the mind of primitive man was not fundamentally different from the mind of modern man, it aims to reveal man's primal passions under the mask of mid-twentieth-century taboos, conventions, and accepted values, and, in a kind of exorcism, to purge the spectator-participant of his destructive impulses.⁹²

What is "symbolic movement?" What compelled Hewitt to conclude that Grotowski was interested in the pacification of his audience? What does Grotowski actually say about Jung? Where does he mention Levi-Strauss? In fact Grotowski appears to renounce Jung. Grotowski says:

When I speak of "roots" or "mythical soul," I am asked about Nietzsche; if I call it "group imagination," Durkheim comes up; if I call it "archetypes," Jung. But my formulations are not derived from humanistic disciplines, though I may use them for analysis. When I speak of the actor's expression of signs, I am asked about oriental theatre, particularly classical Chinese theatre (especially

when it is known that I studied there). But the hieroglyphic signs of the oriental theatre are inflexible, like the alphabet, whereas the signs we use are the skeletal forms of human action, a crystallization of a role, an articulation of the particular psycho-physiology of the actor.⁹³

Grotowski distinguished between his work, in which, whenever he confronted an idea it became embodiment (a physical way of knowing) and the work of others, whose ideas are often never more than ethereal; he politely resists his ideas being attributed to other people. Wolford writes:

According to [Donna] Harraway, theory is bodily, literal, corporeal. . . . While Grotowski might not agree with Harraway that all theory is embodied, he displays scant patience, either in discourse or practical work, for that which is not.⁹⁴

Grotowski was not doing what Jung, Lévi-Strauss, or Artaud were doing, even if there is similarity, because he did what he did for very different reasons. One of the great distinctions between Grotowski and so many other twentieth century theorists and visionaries is that he exercised programmatic plans of action, making his writings far less important than his complete opus.

Placed in the theatre history books between his constant bedfellows Artaud, Brook, and Beck, it becomes very difficult to extract Grotowski from the context of the sixties, the hippie culture, happenings in the U.S. (the nascence of performance art), and the radical culture in Paris after the *événements de mai*. In his *Cold War Theatre* (1992), John Elsom so imbricates Grotowski's career into the author's own rather one-sided, latently puritanical analysis of the sixties, as though a decade had a meaning, that Elsom's Grotowski is virtually unrecognizable as a man of the theatre.

In order to distinguish Grotowski and Barba's theatre culture from other cultural phenomena of the sixties, attention can be drawn to a spiritual level of theatre organization found in the experimental communal theatre cultures of Stanislavski's friends, Sulerzhitski and Osterwa. Each created conditions whereby theatre practitioners would live and work on theatre at a far remove from the cultural mainstream, creating theatre in an insular community, while collaborating on the exigencies of daily life, Sulerzhitski in a rural setting in Siberia, Osterwa in the urban landscape of Warsaw. This approach to the life of the theatre artist is prevalent in the thinking of Grotowski and Barba and distinct from the so-called free-love communities of the sixties and Happenings on the cultural scene. Consider Sulerzhitski's dicta regarding strict discipline (see Appendix F).

Osterwa, a Pole, was interested in theatre's spiritual value as sacrifice and redemption. During his exile from his homeland during World War I, Osterwa met and befriended Stanislavski. Kazimierz Braun writes:

In 1919 [Osterwa] established Reduta (Redoubt), an experimental theatre-laboratory for new acting and playwrighting. Three years later, he opened Reduta's "Institute" (acting school) which became known for its demanding training program, communal life, and new theatre ethics based on the notion of service to the public and the country. . . . Truth in Osterwa's view, was the foundation for all theatre work, having both theatrical and moral aspect, and acting was therefore a process of revealing truth. Osterwa treated acting as a "sacrifice," as an "act of redemption," and consequently the performance was for him a "sacerdotal sacrifice for the congregation." In this context he referred to spectators as "witnesses" and spoke of the "communion" between the actors/priests and the public/congregation. Osterwa put moral, spiritual, and social values at the core of his theatre creation.⁹⁵

The values embraced by Sulerzhitski and Osterwa, especially their focus on morals, ethics, and the spiritual, were at a far remove from the actual values of the so-called hippies of the sixties. Though the young generation of the sixties is to be applauded for its devotion to social justice and political values, the interrelationship of discipline and art in those communities was conceived of differently, discipline taking a low priority. Sulerzhitski and Osterwa's values are a significant part of Barba's inheritance from Grotowski. Explaining Grotowski's work as a unique theatrical phenomenon of the radical spirit of the 1960s often leads scholars astray to the misconception that he was an aspect of pop culture.

Grotowski's Professional Identity

Many scholars and critics present Grotowski in contexts other than the ones he carefully constructed for himself. Elsom exhibits all the symptoms of the Grotowski-phobia that characterizes so many reactions against Grotowski and the tradition from which he emerges. Grotowski had a unique, personal context.

After completing his graduate studies at the State Institute of Theatre Art (GITIS) in Moscow and traveling through Central Asia (1955-56), Grotowski, along with other young intellectuals, notably Jan Kott, was an active participant in the de-stalinization of Poland, during what is described as 1956's Polish October. During this period Grotowski moved away from political activity as a means of achieving freedom. He subsequently devoted all of his intellectual attention to discovering freedom through theatrical activity. In a 1975 interview with Kazimierz Braun, Grotowski says of this Polish October period:

I was so fascinated by Gandhi that I wanted to be him. I came to the conclusion that not only was this improbable for objective reasons, but incompatible with my nature – although equal to fair play I am incapable of a total and generalized assumption of everyone's good intentions. . . . Freedom is associated neither with freedom of choice, not with sheer volunteerism – but with a wave, with giving oneself up to this huge wave, in accordance with one's desire.⁹⁶

It is more likely that during the period of de-stalinization the influence of Osterwa in Poland, the indirect influence of Stanislavski at GITIS, and the novelty of the recently recuperated Meyerhold had far greater influence on Grotowski than did the imperatives of Gandhian pacifism, free-speech, civil rights, and neo-Marxist movements just getting under way in the mid-sixties in Northern Europe and the United States.

Another Grotowski misconception that incorrectly closes the discourse of his and Barba's theatres in which the human form in action is so prominent in the dramaturgy is that their interest in the human form is a kind of theatre semiotics. Along the same line, another misconception is that Grotowski's interest in archetypes was inspired by Jung and Artaud's use of the word *archetype*. Elsom again is an example of one who insists on these connections even though Grotowski strenuously resisted them. By making these connections Elsom goes way wrong in his description of Grotowski's project. Elsom writes:

The object of his research might be described as an enquiry into the very nature of theatrical language, derived at several removes from Saussure. It assumed that language was a structure of signs inserted into the mind like software into a computer, which shaped our perceptions of the world and helped us to communicate with others.⁹⁷

Elsom is speaking of theatrical language, but shifts into computer language and transforms Grotowski into a linguist. Elsom continues:

Grotowski's experiments were intended to break through the surface sign systems of modern societies to reach the primitive building blocks from which all languages were made. He had two motives, which he shared with other behavioural scientists who did not want to call themselves artists. If it could be proved that there were behavioural patterns common to all mankind, these might have provided the basis for *a new world order* and *global harmony* perhaps. [italics mine] Such structures could be likened to the Absolute Values of Classicism. They provided a common standard against which the transitory world of daily experience could be measured.⁹⁸

All of this is unsubstantiated by Elsom and has little to do with Grotowski's work.

At best these are peripheral conjectures. Where did Grotowski ever mention a "sign system" or a "new world order?" Grotowski certainly did not appear to support either structuralist or post-structuralist theories of communication or utopian dreams of world order, but rather his interest was in the purpose of training and its relationship to actors' essential (archetypal) identities.

Grotowski's interest in the archetype and the sign may echo some of the theorists and theories that Elsom mentions, but Grotowski went in a different direction. The confusion seems to be located in Elsom's rush to equate archetypes with primitivism. Grotowski had no interest in the human as a primate. It is like confusing the idea of roots with the primordial pools of creation. They are different.

The question of things' sources is not asked here. But to understand Grotowski's perspective on archetypes and roots it is especially worthwhile to investigate Grotowski's "Theatre of Sources" period and his final "Art as a

Vehicle” work to discover what Lisa Wolford calls “links in a chain back to something forgotten.”⁹⁹ In this return to that which is forgotten lies the ultimate abandonment of mimesis as theatre’s telos.

In his 1995 treatise, “From the Theatre Company to Art as a Vehicle,” Grotowski makes a distinction between theatre which moves through its own process on a “horizontal” plane, so that the performance can take off as if on a “runway” and a process oriented according to “verticality.”¹⁰⁰ Verticality functions to establish a non-presentational work principal through which the performance, which is a series of actions, moves downwards, internally within the performer to what Grotowski calls “the seat of the montage.”¹⁰¹ Grotowski claims that the “seat of the montage” resides in the spectators, during a performance, but in his actor/doer-oriented work, the “seat of the montage” resides in the “artists who do.”¹⁰² The notion of the seat of the montage not only captures the more subtle distinctions between Meyerhold and Stanislavski’s methodologies, it also captures that which *really* unites Barba and Grotowski, and the significance of both their work on the actor’s process. That which resides in the seat of the montage, some internal reality is the sense with which Grotowski used the words *roots* and *archetype*.

Grotowski’s identity throughout his career is best defined by this vertical expedition into the internal regions of the actor and the means by which they can be exposed through performance. The importance of the vertical expedition is more pronounced in Grotowski’s work than Barba’s if merely by the fact that Barba continues to mount performances for the public whereas during the last

twenty plus years of his career Grotowski did no productions. He worked with actors exclusively in laboratory settings eliminating the audience as participant in theatrical activity. Ultimately, and hopefully, these activities will be justified not only for their own sake but for their practical value to actors.

The Supra-methodology Revisited

The supra-methodology consists of stages of the actor's process whereby performance is transmitted from the actor to the audience. The Stanislavski—Barba continuum covers all the steps along the way from the internal processes of the actor to those of the audience. Stanislavski devoted more attention to the internal and Meyerhold to the external, yet each is concerned with the other's territory. Indeed Meyerhold's concern with the audience is best explained in the work of his students Eisenstein and Tretyakov (cited earlier). What Vakhtangov added is the importance of the group, its ethics, and his pioneering research into making connections between the actor's process and the audience's experience. Grotowski and Barba each embody the process of uniting internal psychological work and external physical work, tying them to the ways theatre montage affects the audience. Although the focus herein has been on the actor's process (not the audience's), that in and of itself consists of an enormous interconnection of human media ranging from the smallest impulse to the broadest gesture. But the supra-methodology also entails working conditions conducive to actor exploration and experimentation. The culture of the theatre and its ethics are essential to the supra-methodology and in this way Grotowski and Barba each in his own way

fulfill Stanislavski's project of the reform of theatre auspiciously begun in 1898. Seeing Barba as a professional descendent of Stanislavski requires seeing the influence not only of the master, but of those disciples who grasped and then expanded the principles Stanislavski pronounced at the beginning of this century, Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, and Grotowski.

¹ Nikolai Gorchakov, *The Vakhtangov School of Stage Art*. trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev. ed. Phyl Griffith. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, nd), 9.

² See Nikolai Gorchakov, *The Vakhtangov School of Stage Art*. trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev. ed. Phyl Griffith. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, nd), 10-11, for his description of the *études*.

³ Ruben Simonov, *Stanislavski's Protégé: Eugene Vakhtangov*. trans. Miriam Goldina. (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1969), 78.

⁴ In the theatre, the grotesque requires flexibility of movement, and it is an altogether different kind of grotesque than found in visual arts and literature. Vakhtangov's understanding of the grotesque is unique to the theatre and only peripherally related to the grotesque in visual arts and literature, the best description of which can be found in Mikhail Bakhtin's introduction to *Rabelais and His World*. However, in the theatre, the grotesque is more than the unification of the earth and the natural with the human, of death with life, as Bakhtin describes it. In performance, the grotesque is the unification of the actor's psyche and the depths of the character in a human form, the synthesis of content and form—distinguished from literature and visual art by virtue of the actor's living presence within the work.

⁵ Ruben Simonov, *Stanislavski's Protégé: Eugene Vakhtangov*. trans. Miriam Goldina. (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1969), 38.

⁶ This was a question for which, through collaboration with actors, especially Michael Chekhov, Vakhtangov found various solutions. This work was the by-product of his devotion to bringing what he called *theatricality* back into the theatre. His importance in his own time lay in resuscitating Stanislavski from the deadness of the Moscow Art Theatre dramaturgy of routine naturalism while,

recognizing his own role as Stanislavski's disciple, remaining loyal to their master/disciple relationship.

⁷ Evgeny Vakhtangov in Nikolai Gorchakov, *The Theatre in Soviet Russia*. trans. Edgar Lehrman. (New York: Columbia University, 1957), 251.

⁸ Aviv Orani, "Realism in Vakhtangov's Theatre of Fantasy." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 36, no. 4, (December 1984): 470.

⁹ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 104.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 326.

¹¹ In *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 233, Jean Benedetti mentions a spat between Stanislavski and Vakhtangov over the 1913 production of Hauptmann's *Das Friedensfest*:

The production was extremely tendentious, stressing the negative aspects of the situation and presenting overt social criticism, violating Stanislavski's basic tenet that a play should always present counterbalancing forces and reveal its meaning to an audience rather than force it on them. After the dress rehearsal Stanislavski, white-faced and more furious than anyone had ever seen him, threatened to cancel the show. . . . Had Stanislavski believed less in Vakhtangov's talent his anger might perhaps not have been so great. The incident caused an artistic breach between them that was never fully resolved, although personal relations continued affectionate and they engaged in regular argument.

¹² Eugene Vakhtangov in Vendrovskaya, Lyubov, and Galina. Kaptereva, eds., *Evgeny Vakhtangov*. trans. Doris Bradbury. (Moscow: Progressive Publishers, 1982), 81-82.

¹³ Konstantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*. trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), 410-11.

¹⁴ Eugenio Barba in Seth Baumrin, "My Grandfather Konstantin Sergeievich: Interview with Eugenio Barba." *Mime Journal*, (1998/1999): 36.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 33.

¹⁶ Gad Kaynar, "National Theatre as Colonized Theatre: The Paradox of Habima." *Theatre Journal*. vol. 50, no. 1, (1998): 1-20.

¹⁷ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 119.

¹⁸ Ibid. 125.

¹⁹ For descriptions of Meyerhold's work in 1902-05 see Edward Braun, *Meyerhold: A Revolution in Theatre*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995), 17-26. For an analysis of Stanislavski's work on *Ghosts* see Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 147-49.

²⁰ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 149.

²¹ Vsevolod Meyerhold in Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 149.

²² Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*. trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch, and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 23.

²³ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 149.

²⁴ Nemirovich Danchenko in Ibid. 150. See also pages 150-01 where Benedetti writes:

For his part, Stanislavski wanted to carry over the new artistic policy into the main company . . . Discussing the play [*The Drama of Life*] with Nemirovich he announced his intention to start rehearsals using improvisation, dispensing with all preliminary discussion and analysis, attempting to stimulate the actors' creativity through action. Nemirovich was outraged. He had concealed his dislike of the new studio under a veil of politeness . . . But the sight of his colleagues violating every artistic principle he held dear proved too much to take. . . . [N]ow the whole supremacy of the text was in question. He attributed Stanislavski's behaviour to the malign influence of Meierhold whose interest it was to drive a wedge between them.

In a letter to Stanislavski, Nemirovich Danchenko writes:

Left to yourself you create with one hand and destroy with the other . . . Under the influence of Meierhold's absurd chatter on the necessity of rehearsing as the spirit moves the desire rose in you to exploit a method you have obviously been "thinking of for some time" . . . In your serious moments you emerge as a teacher of the ethical view of art . . . But not when . . . you transform serious matters into a personal plaything. Then you are no more than a talented but naughty child busy with trifles.

It appears as if Stanislavski was chastised into an artificial split with Meyerhold. The Studio on Povarskaya Street project was unfortunately abandoned when the

critics responded negatively to their experiments in Symbolist drama. Meyerhold moved on, but Stanislavski resuscitated the theatre studios in 1912 under the supervision of Sulerzhitski.

²⁵ Some unauthorized versions of the System had been written before 1924. The first of them, Michael Chekhov's "On Stanislavski's Method" appeared in 1919. Stanislavski did not endorse Chekhov's piece and Vakhtangov publicly attacked it in "To Those Who Write about Stanislavski's Method" as being inaccurate and having treated only a few isolated aspects of the system out of context.

²⁶ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 238.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 281.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 282.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 284.

³⁰ It is important to remember that Stanislavski did not begin work on the System in earnest until 1906-09, *after* the studios were in place. This is clear when considering Stanislavski's plans for the Stanislavski/Craig production of *Hamlet* (1911), begun in 1909, and from reading Stanislavski's correspondences with Olga Knipper from the period when the two were at work on *A Month in the Country* (1909) in which he tried to employ techniques he first used in *The Drama of Life* (1907). His journals from 1909 reflect his initial struggle to gain the veteran Art Theatre actors' acceptance of the system. In *Stanislavski: A Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 188-89, Jean Benedetti translates:

When we got onto the stage it wasn't a rehearsal, it was hell. Everything just disappeared. What had seemed fine at the table, emerged as weak. They all spoke quietly, could not expand their voices . . . Knipper drove us mad with her obstinacy, Koroneva by her bad character. . . . Boleslavski out of inexperience turned into a complete idiot. The enemies of my system spread gloom and doom, said it was boring and brought the whole rehearsal down to a low point.

³¹ William B. Worthen, "Stanislavsky and the Ethos of Acting." *Theatre Journal*. vol. 35, no. 1 (March 1983): 62.

³² Marvin Carlson and Yvonne Shafer, *The Play's the Thing: An Introduction to Theatre*. (New York: Longman, 1990), 453.

³³ Paul Schmidt, ed, *Meyerhold at Work*. (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1981), xi-xii.

³⁴ Ibid. xiii-xiv.

³⁵ Konstantin Rudnitsky, *Meyerhold the Director*. trans. George Petrov. ed. Sydney Schultze. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981), 284-85. The term “leftovers” refers to people for whom there was no place in post-Revolutionary Russia.

³⁶ Ibid. 284-85.

³⁷ Each translation has its merits and there need be little consternation over the possible recasting of Meyerhold’s ideas in the way Stanislavski was distorted by Haggood.

³⁸ Vsevolod Meyerhold in Konstantin Rudnitsky, *Meyerhold the Director*. trans. George Petrov. ed. Sydney Schultze. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981), 285.

³⁹ Aleksandr Pushkin, “On National-Popular Drama” in Laurence Senelick, ed. *Russian Dramatic Theory from Pushkin to the Symbolists*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

⁴⁰ Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*. trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1991), 8.

⁴¹ Laurence Senelick, *Russian Dramatic Theory from Pushkin to the Symbolists*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), xvii.

⁴² Pavil Plavilshchikov in Toby Cole and Helen Kritch Chinoy, eds. *Actors on Acting*. (New York: Crown, 1959), 475.

⁴³ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*. ed. Eugenio Barba. (Kent: Methuen, 1984), 16.

⁴⁴ Rachel Shteir in Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre.
<http://ibm.park.org/biomech.html>

⁴⁵ James Roose-Evans, *Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Peter Brook*. (London: Routledge, 1989), 28.

⁴⁶ Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Meyerhold on Theatre*. trans. and ed. Edward Braun. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 129.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 129-30.

⁴⁸ James Roose-Evans, *Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Peter Brook*. (London: Routledge, 1989), 29.

⁴⁹ Edward Dee, "Vsevolod Emilevich Meyerhold" in *Theatrical Directors: A Biographical Dictionary*. eds. John W. Frick and Stephen M. Vallillo. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 266.

⁵⁰ Edward Braun, *Meyerhold: A Revolution in Theatre*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995), 60, 76.

⁵¹ William Kuhlke, "Vakhtangov and the American Theatre of the 1960's." *Educational Theatre Journal*. Vol. 19, (1967): 181.

⁵² For an assortment of Ilinski and Garin's memories see Paul Schmidt, ed. *Meyerhold at Work*. np: (University of Texas Press, 1981).

⁵³ Anna Muza, "Meyerhold at Rehearsal: New Materials on Meyerhold's Work with Actors." *Theatre Topics*, vol. 6, 1 (March 1996), and Konstantin Rudnitsky, *Meyerhold the Director*. trans. George Petrov. ed. Sydney Schultze. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981).

⁵⁴ Anna Muza, "Meyerhold at Rehearsal: New Materials on Meyerhold's Work with Actors." *Theatre Topics*, vol. 6, 1, (March 1996): 17.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 22.

⁵⁶ Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Meyerhold Repetiruet*, II, 196 in *Ibid.* 17.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 19-20.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 18-19.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 18-19.

⁶¹ Lee Strasberg, "Lee Strasberg's Russian Notebook." *The Drama Review*, vol. 17, no. 1 (March, 1973): 108.

⁶² *Ibid.* 108.

⁶³ Alma Law and Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia*. (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 1996), 2-3.

⁶⁴ Alma Law and Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia*. (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 1996), 2-3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 5-7.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 5-7.

⁶⁷ Eugenio Barba, *The Whispering Winds in Theatre and Dance*. Video from 1996 Copenhagen ISTA. (Holstebro: Odin Teatret, 1996).

⁶⁸ Eugenio Barba, "Introduction" in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese. *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*. trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 12.

⁶⁹ Eugenio Barba, "Drama's Hidden Depths." *The UNESCO Courier*. (January 1996): 16.

⁷⁰ Eugenio Barba, Videotape. *In Search of Theatre*. dir. By L. Ripa di Meana for RAI (Italian Television, 1974).

⁷¹ Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 198-201.

⁷² Ibid. 198-201.

⁷³ Ibid. 198-201.

⁷⁴ Mel Gordon. "Meyerhold's Biomechanics" in *Acting (Re)Considered*. Phillip Zarrilli ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), 89.

⁷⁵ Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 202.

⁷⁶ Sergei Eisenstein and Sergei Tretyakov, "Expressive Movement" in Alma Law and Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia*. (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 1996), 186-87.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 186-87.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 186-87.

⁷⁹ Roberta Carreri in Seth Baumrin, *Journal of Roberta Carreri's New York Workshop*. (Unpublished. 1993).

⁸⁰ Raymonde Temkine, *Grotowski*. trans. Alex Szogyi. New York: Avon, 1972, 32.

Temkine writes:

What is unbearable is the untimely zeal, the awkward infatuation, of those who, in admiration, wish to do as Grotowski does— "doing Grotowski," without knowing what that means. What

profound searching that implies, *to what depths one must descend into oneself*, and what self-questioning, what repeated labors, and what patience this requires! [italics mine] They have kept the provocation. They think they provoke. But do they really? No. Because what they tackle offers no resistance at all. The surrealists, among others, have taken the edge off the sensitivity of the man of our time and you will not easily scandalize him. One could, really, but . . . the taboos; or else good manners! They merely flutter the cape around, they never wield the sword. What one wishes to pass off as daring is only mischievous. And the confusion! For they mingle Grotowski and the Living Theatre in their admiration, if not Grotowski and the Happening. A confusion that is moreover perpetuated by the gathering together, in certain magazines, even when the difference comes through in the reading, of articles concerning all the new forms of entertainment.

In spite of the virtual antiquity of Temkine's *Grotowski* in terms of Grotowski studies, she captures two essential aspects of this area. First she talks about the verticality of the process, and second she talks about the intellectual injustice of conflating Grotowski with his contemporaries, his times, and the socio-historical context within which the theatre artists of the sixties worked.

⁸¹ The Third Theatre assumes no alliance with any avant-garde.

⁸² Eric Bentley, "Dear Grotowski: An Open Letter from Eric Bentley." *New York Times*. (November 10, 1969).

⁸³ Dramaturgically, Grotowski's tendency was to examine modernity's historical wounds through the indignities of martyred people by doubling their reality with the indignities of the ancients. This is true not only of *Akropolis* but *The Constant Prince* as well.

⁸⁴ Jerzy Grotowski in Seth Baumrin, "Broken free; Jerzy Grotowski on Improvisation and Montage" Typescript. Unpublished. (New York, 1982).

⁸⁵ Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*. (London: Routledge, 1995), 20.

⁸⁶ Lisa Wolford, *Grotowski's Objective Drama Research*. (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1996), 14.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 11.

⁸⁸ Halina Filipowicz, "Where is Grotowski" in *The Drama Review*. vol. 35, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 182-83.

⁸⁹ “*Advayataraka Upanishad*” verse Five, in Rosemary Jeanes Antze, “Oriental Examples” in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 30.

⁹⁰ Rosemary Jeanes Antze, “Oriental Examples” in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 30.

⁹¹ Barnard Hewitt, *History of the Theatre from 1800 to the Present*. (New York: Random House, 1970), 167.

⁹² *Ibid.* 167.

⁹³ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*. ed. Eugenio Barba. (Kent: Methuen 1984), 24.

⁹⁴ Lisa Wolford, *Grotowski's Objective Drama Research*. (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1996), 32.

⁹⁵ Kazimierz Braun, “Vsevelod Emilevich Meyerhold” in *Theatrical Directors: A Biographical Dictionary*. eds. John W. Frick and Stephen M. Vallillo. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 294, 296.

⁹⁶ Jerzy Grotowski in Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Jerzy Grotowski*. (London: Methuen, 1985), 6.

⁹⁷ John Elsom, *Cold War Theatre*. (New York: Routledge, 1992), 87.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 87.

⁹⁹ Lisa Wolford, *Grotowski's Objective Drama Research*. (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1996), 16.

¹⁰⁰ Jerzy Grotowski, “From the Theatre company to Art as a Vehicle” in Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*. (London: Routledge, 1995), 121.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 122.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 122.

Chapter Four

Barba's Methodology as a Derivative Elaboration on Stanislavski

If I asked you “go back in the genealogy of your family and tell me, which grandfather do you feel more connected with?” then maybe you will answer: “My mother’s father, who was, say, a Rabbi, or coal seller, or immigrated and then became a janitor. I feel very connected with him.” Then I would answer that he is probably still living within you in spite of the fact that you are neither a Rabbi, nor a coal seller, nor a janitor. He resides within you as a kind of guiding star. He is very much alive and gives you inspiration, because his life was vibrantly filled with events, adventures, and misfortunes. Maybe even something you are longing for, or something you are laughing at in your secure position. It doesn’t matter. One thing is sure: you are not repeating what he was doing.

It is the same for me when it comes to Stanislavski. He is my grandfather. I like what characterizes him: contrasts. He was a rather naïve person, a generous one, yet moralistic. He was an aristocrat. He possessed a style which has disappeared in our day and age. This quality makes him very dear to me from a human point of view, far more than Meyerhold, who was theatrically more effervescent, but in his way of life retained the characteristics of his offspring: the son of a rich businessman. So my attachment to Stanislavski stems from his ‘social’ values, very rare to find today: an aristocrat who tries to behave justly out of a code of honour.

Eugenio Barba – August 1997 interview with the author

This chapter is to demonstrate those aspects of Barba’s methodology that can truly be said to have been derived from Stanislavski. It is my view that Barba is right when he claims professional descent. Thinking and practice central to his process interact with Stanislavski’s methodology, even some attributes of Barba’s Odin not obviously Stanislavski-based, are in fact Stanislavski-based. The following are those values and ideas considered in this chapter that link the two: professional identity and the group; levels of organization; reevaluation and change; the current work process at the Odin; Barba’s understanding of the

Method of Physical Actions; theatre ethics; commitment to discipline and tradition; rules, precision, form, codification; training the autonomous actor and “the decided body”—a body united with mind in action; training as a vocation, not a pragmatic project; emotions; exercises, etudes, and improvisations; impulses; the extra-daily; pedagogical lexicons and theatre culture; and finally Stanislavski’s solitude—Barba’s isolation. These values and ideas will be handled topically in this chapter because, though they are interrelated, no hard and fast formula binds them. They are so intricately and deeply woven into the fabric of the actor’s creative process that unraveling one without unraveling the others is impossible. For that reason some salient ideas will be repeated when their reappearance is necessary to maintaining the structure of Barba’s methodology.

Heredity (Stanislavski and Barba’s Poetics)

Annelis Kuhlman, the Russian Studies and Stanislavski scholar at Århus University, in Denmark, writes on what she calls “Stanislavski’s poetics.”¹ Kuhlman implicitly takes the view that Barba is Stanislavski’s heir. As she describes Stanislavski, her language turns towards Barba’s lexicon, using Barba’s language to describe Stanislavski, rather than describe Barba in the context of Stanislavski, which has been the method of this study.

When Kuhlman says of the System, “It is not a rehearsal system; it is a training system” or when she calls Stanislavski’s “learner’s special language” “extra-daily” she invokes Barba’s voice and values to describe Stanislavski.² Kuhlman uses certain terms much the same way Barba does, adopting his vocabulary to talk

about Stanislavski. Using language like “culture,” “training system,” or “extra daily” to describe Stanislavski’s work supports a unique, actor’s language at the level of utterance (choice of words). As has been demonstrated in Chapter Two, Ruffini does the same thing. This infrastructural and linguistic historiography supports Barba’s heredity metaphor. Maybe when Watson objected to the heredity metaphor (see Introduction) he was taking Barba’s heredity metaphor so literally that he did not see its utility. French Theatre scholar Jean-Marie Pradier points out, “In his abundant writings and public speeches, Barba is often taken ‘literally’ without taking into account the sensitive and physical experiences behind the words.”³

But the notion of artistic heredity also runs throughout much of the material that investigates Stanislavski’s importance. Stanislavski thought in these terms. In 1938, as he was dying, Stanislavski is reported to have said, “Look after Meyerhold, he is my sole heir not only in our theatre but in general.”⁴ But in spite of his deathbed announcement, the question still arose as to who would inherit Stanislavski’s role as theatre reformer and most elevated among pedagogues.

American Journalist Norris Houghton’s *The Moscow Rehearsals* (1936) is a fascinating first-hand account of his experience of Soviet theatre in Moscow in the mid-thirties. Houghton’s conclusions on the matter of Stanislavski’s heir apparent or lack thereof (although incorrect) are unique because of the particular moment of the writing. In the years 1934-36 Houghton could not have predicted that Stanislavski would name Meyerhold as his heir. But Houghton also pondered theatre’s future in terms of heredity.

The Art Theatre has this advantage: it may carry its past into the future because it is a collective adventure in art and the descendants of Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko are as much a part of the collective as the generation that dies with them. . . . Meierhold's adventure into art has been solitary; when he is gone there is no one to succeed him. His contribution was that of providing the impetus to theatrical revolution, and it is a contribution which has been completed.⁵

At the time of Houghton's writing Meyerhold had not yet been tortured to death by the NKVD. His murder sheds a different light on Houghton's proposal that Meyerhold's success was a kind of *coup de théâtre*, whose culmination was, as Houghton says, a contribution "which has been completed." Houghton does not identify Meyerhold as the inheritor or even a part of Stanislavski and Nemirovich Danchenko's "collective adventure in art." But that adventure was also Meyerhold's and it has by no means been completed.

Artists like to claim their own lineage, as does Barba. But perhaps more significant is that Stanislavski proposed one on his deathbed, one that went against the wisdom of his times. It was not so much a calculated betrayal of the Stalinist project of socialist realism, or merely (as Smelianski has proposed) an attempt to protect Meyerhold from Stalin's cultural police, but rather Stanislavski's projection of a continuum based on values he shared with Meyerhold. Stanislavski's last wish implies that he saw theatre moving in directions other than conventional theatre or realism. It tends to give credence to Barba's claim of heredity and gives the lie to the assumption that realism/naturalism is the centerpiece of Stanislavski's legacy.

Professional Identity—the Self and the Group: Levels of Organization

This treatise is not an actor's manual and therefore will not be useful to those who want to learn to act by reading. But that is the point. An actor can sometimes learn how to learn, or learn how to question, or learn to distill a principle from another's practice. That principle then becomes the frame or context for the student's work in training.⁶ A student can learn about the ontology of the actor by reading the writings of other actors, and considering their professional biographies. In his opening remarks on the videotape, *Whispering Winds of Theatre and Dance*, Barba says, "I deeply believe that it is impossible to approach artists—it doesn't matter what discipline, (the choreographer's)—way of seeing without also knowing certain aspects of his biography."⁷ Barba is suggesting that students learn about an artist's performance techniques by understanding that artist's identity, and that developing a personal performance technique is equally rooted in the student artist's own identity.

For Barba, individuality (the self) is at the core of an actor's work. This belief was also held by Stanislavski. Barba writes:

[Stanislavski] seeks *truth* on stage, as total sincerity, as authentic vitality. The actor must not 'seem' to be the character he is representing. He must 'be' what he represents. Here is the key word: to *be*, to become unity, individual, *in-dividus*, non-divided. He hated the 'theatre' in theatre, the mechanical signs of absent feeling. In his own words: 'The theatre is my enemy'. Just as the 'actor' was his enemy: the 'actor' showed something on the outside which he [sic] did not feel on the inside. He wanted to reach the creative state in which the actor is animated by a total concentration of his entire moral and physical nature.

His results, and the way in which he achieved them, are *his* search. He bequeathed them to me, to all of us, the question: how to achieve this total concentration of our moral, spiritual, and

physical nature? Once again: how to *be*, how to become *individual*, by and in the theatre.⁸

This spirit of individuality can be found in Stanislavski's words to Josh Logan in the "Introduction" to *Building a Character*. "You must not duplicate the Moscow Art Theatre. You must create something of your own. If you try to duplicate, that means you merely follow tradition. You are not going forward."⁹ Stanislavski's admonition "to create something of your own" echoes throughout his writings, as it does Grotowski and Barba's—a warning to those who want to turn their teachings and questioning into prescriptions and recipes.

There is no Barba Method. The actor's methodology cannot be refined into a set of rules (dos and don'ts); it is unique to each individual actor. And in spite of the regimental ring of the word *System*, there is no codified or codifiable Stanislavski System. When the paradox is accepted that the study of actors' methodology reveals that no solid method actually exists, then actors and scholars are faced with a great body of writing and ruminations which are ostensibly useless unless they are seen as reports of individual experience of theatrical creation. Actors' writings about acting are generally proposals borne by the pedagogues' obsessive questions about the actor's process, but not necessarily solutions or codifiable results. The way Stanislavski and Barba's teachings intermesh is through the questioning each does of the actor's creative process and through their exercise of a value system they believe all actors share or should share—identity linked to the group.

One way of seeing the affinity between Stanislavski and Barba's general view is to compare their assessment of the actor's self as the center of actor's process.

Stanislavski believed that the approach espoused by actors like Coquelin, of constructing characters through calculated external representation, although technically admirable, was false and produced stereotypes. In order to bring authenticity to the role, Stanislavski proposed actors should first work from the self. That is why it was so important to him that actors train the self.¹⁰

In *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavski speaks of a “kinship between the actor and the person he is portraying” filled with details and circumstances “taken from sources near to [the actor’s] own feelings” establishing “contact between [the actor’s] life and [the actor’s] part based on [the actor’s] own experience in life.”¹² The literal translation of the original Russian title of Stanislavski’s trilogy would be *An Actor’s Work on Himself*, referring to what in this study is deemed the first stage of the process of theatrical creation—the work on self. Stanislavski writes: “If you only knew how important is the *process of self-study*! It should continue ceaselessly, without the actor even being aware of it, and it should test every step he takes.”¹³ In both Stanislavski and Barba’s work, the actor’s “self study” is the actor’s responsibility and should be a habitual mode of a training that never ends.

The work on self is but one of many levels of organization in the actor’s work. The term *levels of organization* (borrowed from biology), although never used by Stanislavski, and only since 1979 by Barba, is a helpful way of stratifying the creative process of the actor into different layers. These layers do not necessarily have to be engaged in any particular chronological order but can be thought of as three-dimensional, vertical as well as horizontal, like shelves, to which the actor can gain simultaneous access at his or her own discretion.¹⁴ Work at the

organizational level of self should eventually lead actors to their own individual performances rather than imitations of the performances of their mentors or whoever inspires them.

Barba identifies the three levels of organization as:

- (i) the performer's personality, *her/his* sensitivity, artistic intelligence, social persona: those characteristics which render the individual performer unique and uncopiable;
- (ii) the particularities of the theatrical traditions and the historical-cultural context through which the performer's unique personality manifests itself;
- (iii) the use of the body-mind according to extra-daily techniques based on transcultural, recurring principles. These recurring principles are defined by Theatre Anthropology as the field of pre-expressivity.

The first two aspects determine the transition from pre-expressivity to performing. The third is *idem*, that which does not vary; it underlies the various personal, stylistic and cultural differences. It is the level of the scenic *bios*, the 'biological' level of performance, upon which the various techniques and the particular uses of the performer's scenic presence and dynamism are founded.¹⁵

The first level is clear—the self. At the second level of organization are values that function as steps toward the establishment of a creative collective (a theatre group). These are not the pre-expressive principles of acting, nor is their “historical-cultural context” automatically their national-cultural context. This “historical-cultural context” is comprised of the (a)cultural values associated with the Third Theatre or (floating island) which stands outside the flow of the mainstream theatre culture of national and ethnic identities, but within theatre culture internationally. The second level is the one at which groups are formed. At either of the first two levels (personal or group), *how* the work is done rather than *what* work is done is the most resistant to description, because the *how* is not

a product, it is a work process (in this case one without recipes). If the aesthetic level of the work, the productions themselves, the results, or the hoped-for results are shorn away, what remains of the process are techniques, ethics, values, and praxes: theatre's ethos. It is in these aspects of the actor's creative process that Barba and Stanislavski's methodologies are interwoven.

Two foundational interwoven values are Barba's notions of professional identity and theatre culture (self and group). The term "professional identity" was coined by Barba, and may more thoroughly capture what is meant by the term *the self* in the actor's lexicon. He explains:

I speak of legacy, of professional identity, of professional history, but I was not given this by my master or by the drama school, it is something I myself built out of personal necessity. I want to know what I am doing and give a meaning to what I am doing. It is very difficult to give a meaning to what I am doing but I don't want to be a sort of blind instrument manipulated by circumstances. . . . The tradition is you, you are the tradition. What you create, embody, incarnate, what you choose in this very moment to give birth to, is just a prolongation of something created before. . . . The tradition is what I have received, something I have been able to name as belonging to me, to my legacy, whereas other things do not belong to me.¹⁶

Barba's notion of professional identity connects with another useful way of considering an artist's identity, what Barba calls "personal wounds." To some extent professional identity is constructed of these wounds. It is through certain personal wounds that Barba makes another connection with Stanislavski.

To say that you are influenced by Stanislavski means that you are influenced by your grandfather. Stanislavski is my grandfather and he lives in me, even if, as a director, I've learnt more from Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, and, of course, Grotowski. But I always say that my beginning lies with Stanislavski; mostly because of his wounds. . . . [W]hen you, as a director, start to weave and assemble

the intricate threads created by the actors, the text, the scenic space, the music, etc., then *your personal wounds* decide.¹⁷

Who someone really is as an artist can be a composite of experiences or wounds.

What wounds do Barba and Stanislavski share? Perhaps it is enough to say that each has been held at arm's length by the profession and ridiculed for his obsession with technique. Stanislavski was certainly held at arm's length. As an amateur he was turned down by the Maly. His vocal weakness and years of amateur work prevented him, in his early days, from gaining entry into the profession. In later years he was ridiculed by his colleagues for his System. Both Barba and Stanislavski transformed these early experiences (their wounds) into principles that they then passed on to their students by creating actor-oriented work conditions for training and rehearsal. By addressing the most significant of these wounds, exclusion from the profession, by starting their own groups—groups that then survive over thirty years, each throughout its founder's career—these wounds culminate in establishing both Stanislavski and Barba as professionals in spite of the resistance exercised by mainstream theatres.

Group values, the core of Barba's second organizational level, differ from personal ones. These two values, the professional identity (self) and the group, may seem polar opposites, one stressing individuality, the other a sort of democratic leveling of the individual, but, in theatre (by nature both an egoistic and a collaborative art form) neither is possible without the other. As Roberta Carreri said in her 1993 New York Workshop: "The most difficult and, at the same time pleasant, experience is being yourself while melting into the collective. Stop listening to yourself and listen to us."¹⁸ A small group of professionals who

recognize the value of others' work can create conditions conducive to pursuing their individual work in a protected environment. Inside the small group, members have the opportunity to learn from each other. When the group chooses to learn together it is pedagogical in nature. Odin Teatret and the studios of the Moscow Art Theatre are such groups. Through both professional and group identity the pedagogical traditions of actor training are inculcated according to a mentor/student or a more classical master/disciple relationship. It is in recognition of the mutuality of these values that the possibility of a genealogy of traditions in the theatre and the notion of Barba's heredity from Stanislavski is proposed.

Reevaluation and Change

Another value shared between Stanislavski and Barba is that of reevaluation and change. Reevaluation and change produce useful results. Stanislavski and Barba both have practiced reevaluation and change such that their methodological theorizing (or knowledge) would grow throughout their careers. Because of these two values, reevaluation of self and change in the work process, neither Stanislavski nor Barba's methodologies become fixed and calcified.

The most well-known of Stanislavski's personal reevaluations is his revelation in Finland with regard to how to use memories and intuition to stimulate the spiritual and physical life of a character, in this case Dr. Stockman in Ibsen's *Enemy of the People*. The Finland revelation marked, according to Stanislavski lore, one of foundational events of the System. Sitting on a rock, Stanislavski noticed:

Like Dr. Stockman, I made a great discovery. I discovered the old truth that the actor's mood on stage – when he stands before the footlights and an audience of 1,000 – was unnatural and greatly hindered creation in public. Moreover, I realized that in such a spiritual and physical state it was only possible to pose, to pretend to live the part; that it was impossible to really to live the part and yield to emotion. I had known this, of course, but only in my mind. Now I felt it. And in our language to understand is to feel. That is why I can say I had discovered a truth I had long known.¹⁹

Actually much more than material for the System was generated at this moment.

The first clue that Barba's notion of the extra-daily has its basis in Stanislavski's System is that both believe that the actor's mood onstage is unnatural.

Stanislavski understood that, regardless of naturalism as a genre, the behavior and experience of the actor onstage differ from those of the human in quotidian circumstances. This is the basis of Barba's Theatre Anthropology.

Another moment of reevaluation and change came with Stanislavski's declaration in 1904 that the time had come to stage the unreal—a declaration that led to the establishment of the first studios of the Moscow Art Theatre. There were other shifts, for example, the 1904-08 period during which Stanislavski moved away from Chekhov naturalism, and towards experimental productions. Beginning with the three one-acts by Maeterlinck in 1904, then Hamsun's *The Drama of Life*, and Andreyev's *The Life of Man*, both in 1907, this period of his work on symbolist drama whose high point was marked by the 1908 production of Maeterlinck's *The Bluebird*, bespeaks Stanislavski's preoccupation with that which is theatrical, in spite of his great success with realism during the Chekhov period. During this experimental period Stanislavski's yearning for other changes emerges—changes like longer rehearsal periods of several months, a new

conception of the visual and musical elements of production, or a network of provincial theatres. This last hope was never achieved.

Another important change came at this moment. Reacting against Stanislavski's experimentation with symbolist drama, his work on the System was thwarted by Nemirovich Danchenko. Nemirovich Danchenko openly humiliated Stanislavski by denigrating his interpretation of Andreyev's *The Drama of Life*, and refusing to pay Sulerzhitski, Stanislavski's assistant. In a letter to the committee of shareholders Stanislavski created a crisis. He renounced the convention of "at table" literary analysis at the Art Theatre (a Nemirovich Danchenko tradition), and also perforated the notion of the divine right of the director. Stanislavski all but demanded the adoption of the System, though he was still many years from its formal articulation in his books. The result of Stanislavski's angry letter to the Art Theatre's board of shareholders was his resignation from the board.²⁰

The crisis had a dual effect. On the positive side, in order to keep him connected to the theatre, Stanislavski was granted a freer hand; once a year he could produce an experimental production along any lines he desired. On the negative side, this period marked the beginnings of Stanislavski's solitude.

The term *Stanislavski's solitude* has a tragic ring to it, but it was in his solitude that he made his greatest changes and ultimately his strongest contribution as a director and pedagogue. Benedetti writes:

The kind of research [Stanislavski] wanted to undertake could not be contained within the constraints of a theatre which had to be commercially viable. For the next thirty years he would work in the periphery of the Art Theatre, in one of its Studios or in opera.

The whole pattern of his activities changed. His productions, highly successful as most of them were, were part of his research. The rehearsal process and the discoveries it produced became more important than the actual performance.²¹

This movement towards experimentation but away from the main dramaturgy of the Moscow Art Theatre was a significant change in Stanislavski's career.

Stanislavski's solitude is echoed by Barba's isolation in Holstebro, and, like Stanislavski, Barba uses rehearsal more as a laboratory for research than as a result-oriented practice. Rehearsal-as-research and working in solitude can be seen as two more values Stanislavski and Barba share.

Another change precipitated by this crisis, one that Stanislavski's renunciation of at-table rehearsal ultimately facilitated, was the apparent shift towards the Method of Physical Actions in Stanislavski's final years. This was decidedly not a major shift in methodology as much as it was an outward shift in emphasis that was announced in such a way as to deflect the Marxist critics and censors while attracting actors from the younger generation. For Stanislavski, the focus on physical actions had always been a way to stop actors from excessive emotionalism, a plaguing confusion among those who had been trained according to the System, though not by Stanislavski himself, but rather his assistants, such as Sulerzhitski and Boleslavski. Stanislavski moved further away than ever from the technique of emotion memory as a device to elicit expression because he saw that it "often produced hysterics or self indulgence."²² But this shift, which became official policy in 1928 as far as Stanislavski was concerned, marks another, perhaps more salient point, though one less prominent in Stanislavski discourse than the myth of a complete changeover to the Method of Physical

Actions. At a time when he once and for all terminated the practice of at-table textual analysis whereby a play was divided into units, and the subtext discerned prior to actually rehearsing, he changed his strategy for rehearsal to what he called “active analysis,” and began to stress that “[w]hat an artist playing a major role must do is establish its dynamic, its ‘economy’, the curve of the action . . . The surest path, it . . . seemed to him, lay through concentration on the physical action.”²³ What is usually not made clear is that the shift to active analysis necessitated a thorough accounting of the chain of all the physical actions throughout the work—its score. This shift in methodology is not prominent probably because it was his most radical shift and at the furthest extreme from the work on emotional analysis found in *An Actor Prepares*.

These and other changes, both organizational and methodological caused upheaval at the Moscow Art Theatre. Older Art Theatre actors often resisted Stanislavski’s innovations, and some younger members distorted Stanislavski’s ideas by going in political directions he believed antithetical to art. These upheavals forced the Art Theatre to transform itself mostly because the company could not afford to lose Stanislavski who often threatened to quit. His performances and productions were essential to attracting and winning the support of audiences and critics. Through these upheavals Stanislavski was able to protect that which he believed most essential, the value he placed on what he called “true art” and his mission to establish a methodology for the actor. Upheaval within the group (a way of regulating its ethos internally) is certainly a characteristic of Stanislavski’s work that Barba shares.

Like Stanislavski, Barba also creates crises within the Odin whereby drastic change facilitates their ongoing work. But these are not intended to emulate Stanislavski. They have their own causes. Some of the upheavals originate with Odin actors who often question and resist Barba. ISTA scholar Fernando Taviani calls Barba's periods of change in Odin methodology or the constitution of the group "earthquakes"—each one "an interior laceration, an intimate violence."²⁴ Taviani writes that the group's changes emerge out of a break with its members' "own conditioning" and past. He calls such changes "earthquakes" because they hit the Odin so hard. He is referring to moments such as 1964 when Barba uprooted the newly-formed Odin from Oslo, an urban center, to lead it to live in Holstebro, a rural farming center; or when Barba broke up the group after the international success of *Ferai* (1969) demanding that the few remaining actors begin all over again; or when, after *My Father's House* (1972), he "turned the Odin's habitual life inside out," leading it to live and train in Carpignano, a village in Southern Italy, the beginning of their period of Barter. Taviani writes:

After a certain period, all groups come to feel that their current conditions are suffocating them, they feel the need for change. This change is generally nothing more than the beginning of the group's dissolution. . . . On the other hand, without major changes a group cannot survive for long.

But Barba has provoked these changes, in fact, not merely for the sake of change itself, but in order to reinforce, to strengthen the intimate cohesion, the deep community within the group.²⁵

In both cases, Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre and its studios and Barba's Odin Teatret, rather than allowing their theatres to stagnate at moments of stasis, each director changed his methodology and strengthened his group's work.

Whereas Stanislavski provoked change out of intuitive frustration with the Art Theatre's stagnation, Barba provokes change more consciously, because he views reevaluation and change as part of the process.

Perhaps when considering Barba's methodological shifts, most significant are the various ways actor training at the Odin has changed.²⁶ Although these changes are too numerous to investigate here, two are worth examining briefly. They both occur at virtually the same moment. They are Barba's exit from the studio and the development of what he calls the autonomous actor. This moment of change occurred during the early 1970s during one of the Odin's then customary twelve hour training sessions when Iben Rasmussen, who had struggled for years with a weak voice, "suddenly and without warning, found her voice which changed from its normal thin texture to a rich, sonorous instrument that she was able to manipulate freely for the first time[.]"²⁷ At this point training was based on variations of exercises linked together in montages, a technique learned from Ryszard Ciésłak. Yet each actor was working on basically the same set of exercises. Watson writes:

Rasmussen's vocal discovery made her aware that these exercises were not extending her as fully as they might, so she began to use her montage exercises as the basis for further physical and vocal improvisations. These experiments proved so successful that gradually, over a period of several months, she developed a sequence of exercises which she felt best served and challenged her own potentials and limitations.

Even though collective training continued after this period, Rasmussen's experiments did not go unnoticed, and there was a great deal of discussion between her, Barba, and her fellow actors. Gradually everyone began to develop their own training, and eventually, between 1972 and 1973, collective training was abandoned altogether. Each actor now explored what s/he felt was

important for him/her, but within the supportive environment of a single room where others engaged in similar research. . . . The personalization of the training was a natural development, stemming from the Odin's early autodidactic tradition in which the actors taught each other. . . . The ascendancy of the individual led to Barba's exit from training. . . . With the shift in focus from skill acquisition to process, and then the emergence of individuality, Barba gradually ceased to function as the leader of the training sessions. He now allowed the actors to explore whatever they chose out of discussion with him and/or their colleagues. . . . In the Odin of the 1990s training is entirely the domain of the actor.²⁸

This change is significant because it is a powerful expansion of Stanislavski's idea of the actor's work on the self. This innovation made Barba's notion of the autonomous actor a reality based in Stanislavski's methodology, in particular the notion of work on the self.

The Current Work Process at the Odin

Given the continual state of reevaluation and change characteristic of Barba and the Odin's methodology, what the Odin actors are doing now in the late 1990s is especially significant to this study. In a 1997 interview, Torgeir Wethal talked about the significance of their current work process, "When you think about what was formed twenty, thirty years ago, compared with what we have done in the last ten or fifteen years, it's nothing. Absolutely nothing."²⁹

The current work process can best be described as a process of elaboration on what Odin Teatret actors call *the subscore*. In this process actors create physical actions associated with a particular piece of text. These physical actions are shorn away from that text and perfected with precision. They are then attached to a different text even though the actions and the new text are unrelated. The actions

are then justified so that they function as appropriate physical actions for the new text. However, the process of adaptation and justification of actions to different texts is an arduous task of reducing (sometimes magnifying) or changing the rhythm of the original physical actions. In order to reduce or magnify a physical action, its original impulse in the torso must be located and retained. The extremities of movement, the external movements of the limbs or head, can be augmented by percentages—they use less space, or more, or are executed at different tempos, but the initial impulses to action remain the same. Through elaboration and reduction, Odin actors give entirely new meaning not only to the original score of physical actions, but also, by justifying the actions, new meaning is given to the new text. Most important they give the text a personal meaning discovered through individual means.

Through this process, the Odin actors have developed the useful principle for all actors, the notion of the *subscore*—that which stands behind the actions and has its source in the actor's impulses and imagination. A subscore differs from a subtext. A subtext's sources are buried in the text and its author's imagination, usually beyond recovery whereas a subscore is personal to the actor. The subscore is located within the actor's body/mind in the linkage of internal image and impulse to external action. Although it is a principle originating in Barba's work with the Odin, the subscore is a logical extension of two of Stanislavski's ideas, the subtext and the score of physical actions.

In the new work, *Mythos*, an observer can sometimes see the physical scores used in *Kaosmos* used again, however differently. The physical score's potential

meaning is instantly changed when used with a new text and within a new context. The impact on the meanings within the unseen subscore must also change. How the actors re-elaborate on their scores and subscores within the new material often leads to exciting solutions that become the new performance.

Barba's Understanding of the Method of Physical Actions

The meaning of dramatic text is portrayed by physical actions taken on its behalf in the theatre—this has always been so. The Method of Physical Actions it is at the center of this study. It has previously been stated that the essential methodological link between Stanislavski and Barba is the Method of Physical Actions and that Barba's contribution to Stanislavski's System consists of his clinical elaboration on the Method of Physical Actions. But just how this elaboration works is crucial to understanding what the Odin is doing now.

Within the actor's creative process various levels of organization (self, internal image, external stimulus, and physical action) interconnect and overlap. The interconnections between the levels can be understood as steps taken (ascended or descended) within the process—these steps can be understood as conduits for expression that actors use to leap to and from various levels within the process. However some leaps are not taken by volition as much they take themselves. The Method of Physical Actions works through these kinds of leaps.

In the Method of Physical Actions, action functions as a lure or bait for the electric energy of emotions. In this way, according to Stanislavski, emotions are said to be stimulated by the actions, and leap forth from the actor's invisible and

internal world to the visible level of expression. No discernible path between action and emotion (thought) can be traced, but through the Method of Physical Actions, the actor places faith in a process whereby the leap occurs. Barba postulates that it is through the impulses that the energy connecting action and thought is generated. But since so much of his description of the creative process is hypothetical, and not easily probed on a biological level (one cannot vivisect an actor and see neurotransmitters in action—nor, if they could be seen, could they be connected to what an actor thinks, says, or does), Barba relies on metaphoric models to formulate explanations both for what he knows and what Stanislavski knew to be true. This is why Barba finds Niels Bohr's concept of the quantum leap is so useful.³⁰ In quantum theory, electrons are believed to jump from one atomic orbit to another with no perceptible path. In Barba's methodology, expression is an electron that leaps forth from the actor's internal orbit, the impulses, to the outer orbit, the actor's body, and then further, out to the spectator, a third orbit. And, although Barba and the Odin actors postulate the existence of such trajectories in the actor's work, energy moves along them so quickly that its path is indiscernible, leaving only its aftereffect—the performance.

The most pronounced methodological link between Stanislavski and Barba is the use of *the score of physical actions*. A score of physical actions is a series of actions drawn from a text or story linked together in a chain. The actor remains faithful to the chain because it is fixed. The way physical actions lead to improvisations or etudes through actors' imaginative leaps makes the Method of Physical Actions more characteristic of Barba and the Odin's work than

Meyerhold's Biomechanics. This is because the Odin's understanding of *the direction of reflexivity* (the theoretical foundation for both the Method of Physical Actions and Biomechanics—see Chapter Three) differs significantly from Meyerhold's. The stimulus provided by an action in Stanislavski and Barba's methodology is turned towards the actor to elicit expression of internal meaning. This understanding of reflexology is actor-oriented, whereas for Meyerhold the purpose of the physical action is to stimulate the audience.

These conclusions run counter to Watson's view of Barba's professional heredity, which he claims stems from Meyerhold and not Stanislavski. But Meyerhold was ostensibly not as interested in the actor's inner world as he was in the audience's emotional reaction to the human form and action. This is a significant distinction. Barba's work (though extremely physical) is decidedly more focused on the actor's perspective and internal process. In this respect, as has been argued, he is more akin to Stanislavski than Meyerhold who was more interested in the audience's reaction.

Mel Gordon and Alma Law suggest that scholars be wary of using the personal rapprochement between Stanislavski and Meyerhold as evidence that the Method of Physical Actions was equivalent to or inspired by Biomechanics.³¹ It is true that the Method of Physical Actions and Biomechanics are not equivalents. Equally true is that simply because a theatre group, like the Odin, creates what some call *physical theatre*, that does not mean their point of departure is Meyerhold's Biomechanics. Not only the distinctions but also the affinities between Stanislavski and Meyerhold, although complex, must be borne in mind.

Gordon and Law's analysis of the Method of Physical Actions obscures one crucial point. They write:

The Method of Physical Action has little to do with body behaviour or training. It was a means to manipulate the work of the actor during rehearsals in helping him to achieve a genuine sincerity and belief in the role he was playing. Meyerhold created the Biomechanics primarily as a kinesthetic training device. The entire stage picture could be revitalized through a more expressive use of the human figure in movement. A graduate of Meyerhold's workshops was able to execute physical actions on the stage with greater agility and poise. True, like Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Action, Biomechanics followed no special style. But while one can refer to a biomechanically-trained actor, there is no such thing as a Method of Physical Action-trained actor.³²

Although Gordon and Law claim Stanislavski's System was not a kind of training, Kuhlman disagrees. She says, "It is not a rehearsal system; it is a training system."³³ The System was actually a training regimen for connecting the intuitive and internal levels of the actor to external expression. Although Gordon and Law's view of training is narrow, if what they say about the differences between the Method of Physical Actions and Biomechanics is true, then, in spite of Barba's seemingly Meyerholdian/directorial interest in the iconography of the human form, and his belief that the audience is a kind of collaborator, the Method of Physical Actions is more foundational to Barba's training practice than Biomechanics.

The distinction between Stanislavski and Meyerhold's notion of the function of physical action can be reduced to one key dynamic—the direction of reflexivity—internal for Stanislavski (directed towards the actor) and external for Meyerhold (directed to the audience). If it can be accepted that action is a lure to reaction (emotional or otherwise) then it can be demonstrated how each

pedagogue theorizes the role of action differently. Stanislavski was interested in how action stimulates the viscera of the actor. Meyerhold's attention was focused on how action stimulates the viscera of the audience. This alone distinguishes the two. Although it may be convenient to view Stanislavski and Meyerhold through the lens of this distinction, and somewhat artificial since their work was not restricted to these bailiwicks, the majority of their work tends in these directions. Barba is, however, interested in how action travels in both directions. Since the focus here is on Barba and Stanislavski's actor training, however, it is important to examine how the actor is stimulated and to wonder why, in his theorizing, Meyerhold, who was so devoted to actor training, says so little about the effects of the physical training on the actor's identity. Barba's focus on identity in training distinguishes him from Meyerhold in a significant way.

Perhaps it is more accurate to say that Barba has fused the Method of Physical Actions with Biomechanics by proposing that the actor employ extremely vigorous and precise physical actions to stimulate the internal world. In Barba's approach, the Odin actors' extreme physical exercises, their pseudo-biomechanics (what might be called neo-biomechanics—actually the Odin's early acrobatic exercises), turn inward, toward the actor, rather than out toward the audience. This is a training process, so it is to be expected that the work be directed toward the actor. Inherent in this training is the process of elaboration, a slow process of transforming actions and subactions (the raw materials at the inner level) from training into a performance. What is found at the inner level is called many

different things—emotion, intention, feelings, memory, sensations, or thought. Their journey outward is expression.

The difference between Stanislavski's use of physical actions and Barba's is that, for Stanislavski, the emotions that action stimulates are those of the character in a particular drama. For Barba, the internal dimension of the actor not the character is stimulated by action, therefore the original, textual sources of the physical actions are not the sanctified dramatic texts as in Stanislavski's theatre; in Barba's theatre original texts can be exchanged for other texts while training. Therefore, at the Odin, the actor's actions are stimulated by deeper, more personal motivations than those of a character. They are the actors' own. These actions, serialized in a score can become the score for a new text. Since the actions carry their own motivation within the actor, they function as the new text's external and internal world. The actor (not the author) prevails over the vicissitudes of any dramatic character. (It is in this exchange or meeting that exciting theatrical discoveries are made.) The Method of Physical Actions, in either Stanislavski or Barba's case, allows actors to discover what is actually required in their ultimate performance—what is generated from the actor's self (rather than the director or playwright). It is a premise for actor autocracy.

Professional Identity: The Self is the Premise for Theatre Ethics (Stanislavski's "pray you avoid it")

At ground zero, before character, text, and performance, it is at the level of the actor's identity that Stanislavski and Barba meet. At this level, associations between the mind and body take form as images and desires that reside in the

impulses and stimulate action or can be stimulated by action, though they have yet to actually take the form of action. Barba calls this level the professional identity mostly because, at this level, neither the private nor the social self (the one who is a family member or an active member of the external culture) is engaged, but rather the artisan-actor. This is why the pedagogues say “the actor” so often. This is not a universal actor so much as it is the actor in the self. Stanislavski’s Torstov speaks to the actor in the self when he says:

Never come into the theatre with mud on your feet. Leave your dust and dirt outside. Check your little worries, squabbles, petty difficulties with your outside clothing—all the things that ruin your life and draw your attention away from your art.³⁴

This is why the Odin, as inheritors of Stanislavski’s mission, appears to function as a Franciscan monastery with its codes of silence and vows of poverty.

Protection of professional identity becomes a kind of precondition for other values like ethics and the secular holiness of the theatre group and its work.

When Grisha (a character in *Building a Character*) responds to the above Torstov proclamation by pointing out that there are no such theatres, Stanislavski continues:

Unfortunately you are right. People are so stupid and spineless that they still prefer to introduce petty, humdrum bickerings, spite and intrigues into the place supposedly reserved for art.

They do not seem to be able to clear their throats before they cross the threshold of the theatre, they come inside and spit on the clean floor. . . . From the very first steps you take in the theatre’s service train yourselves to come into the theatre with clean feet. . . . A true priest is always aware of the presence of the altar during every moment he is conducting a service. It is exactly the same way that a true artist should react to the stage all the time he is in the theatre. An actor who is incapable of this feeling will never be a true artist.³⁵

An outside observer will never see a dirty floor at the Odin, never hear bickering, or self-pitying griping. No one may have become a priest, but the clarity of focus within the Odin borders on the asceticism of the penitent. In this sense they function within the spirit of Stanislavski's call for theatre ethics.³⁶

Secular holiness in the theatre has a long history in the theatres that work within traditions in which an actor forms a professional identity over a lifetime of training. The holiness of the theatre culture is prominent in other Eastern European twentieth-century theatres notably Sulerzhitski. (See Appendix F for Sulerzhitski's program and for Smelianski's description of theatres as sites of "communion" in post-Revolutionary Russia) Stanislavski believed his praxis both to be "an entire culture in which one must grow up and be raised over the course of many years," and a set of teachable techniques ("an entire series of exercises").³⁷ This kind of culture is not limited to the theatre fervor of post-revolutionary Russia. Fifteenth-century Japan's *Noh* theatre functioned as a professional theatre culture imbued with spirituality. But at the Odin there is no religiosity. Their seemingly spiritual work conditions have nothing to do with worship or penitence, but rather with the protection of professional identity and cultivation of art in the self. If there is any spiritual focus at the Odin, it is not voiced. Maybe Stanislavski's *life of the human spirit* best describes Odin's spiritual point of departure.

This professional spirituality is fragile. The complexity of the process needs to be protected, by first protecting professional identity. At the level of professional identity, pre-expressivity is possible because, at this level, the actor accumulates

energy, both physical and psychic, through a training that is a kind of research into self or identity. This kind of training allows the actor to adjust and justify physical actions to personal memories and images by connecting them to impulses. At this level, action and thought (images and memories, external and internal, motion and emotion) meet through the impulse, a conduit towards expression.³⁸ At this level the actor has the security of knowing that his or her initial reactions to stimuli are personal, organic. At this level an actor can construct scores of physical actions and subscores of internal actions independently of meetings with text, the director, other actors, or the public. These two, physical action and internal action, can be interwoven in any way the actor discovers at the pre-expressive level of professional identity. It is a level of autonomy where the individual becomes “the actor,” one who always carries his or her professional identity into the work.

By establishing a professional identity and becoming what Barba calls *the autonomous actor*, an actor is insured continual freedom of expression. This is why the studio labs of both Stanislavski and Barba and the ethical attitude associated with them are interrelated. They guarantee a protected zone for the actor’s most delicate work. Masgrau explains:

You know we don’t have to confuse the work ethic with a sect or monastery. So, everything you are doing, not only in theatre, you have to do seriously. If you are directing a corporation and you have a very important meeting, of course, no one will come in with a call from your mother. So it is the same. I think here at the Odin, they have come, through the years, to a very good balance between professional ethics and tolerance. You can have this open attitude only if you have a very strong ethical tissue. You will never see Eugenio saying to an actor, “You need to be here on time. You don’t need to use the props of the other performance,”

because everybody knows that. Everybody has assimilated that. So it is not discipline any more.

People like you and me, when we come to observe the rehearsals we suddenly understand the rules that are working there. They are silent rules—Rules that have not been written anywhere. But you can understand these rules because everybody is respecting these rules spontaneously. So you come into this kind of ethical discipline normally. . . . The work of the actor is so fragile. If you don't protect it, it is impossible for this work to function. It is so easy to damage because something from outside will come to contaminate our work. If you don't learn to protect this moment of work, you are completely lost. [See Appendix E for Masgrau Interview]³⁹

It is because of this fragility that ethics are important. This is why Barba says:

Theatre Anthropology singles out principles which the performer must put to work in order to make this dance of the senses and mind of the spectator possible. It is the performer's duty to know these principles and to explore their practical possibilities incessantly. In this consists her/his craft. It will then be up to her/him to decide how and to what ends to use this dance. This is her/his ethic.

Theatre Anthropology does not give advice on ethics; it is the premise of ethics.⁴⁰

Habits and customs related to the work routine at the Odin and their values reflect more than the daily life of a theatre removed from the mainstream of culture. They are a distinctly professional code of ethics especially suited to the theatre practitioner. They can be instructive to any theatre group regardless of what stylistic concerns or layer of culture surrounds them.

The attitude towards ethics taken by both Stanislavski is especially important because the ethical infrastructure of creative collectives like Grotowski's Polish Laboratory Theatre and Barba's Odin Teatret virtually replicates the ethical ideals of the Moscow Art Theatre and its studios. Ironically Grotowski and Barba

eschew the term *ethics*. Whereas Stanislavski was explicit about the ethical standards he expected company and studio members to uphold, Barba allows the ethics in play at the Odin to go unspoken. But they are practiced nonetheless.

In his “Towards an Ethics for the Theatre” Stanislavski speaks about ethics as

a state which is favorable to creativeness. . . . “It is not the creative state itself but it is one of the main factors contributing to it. . . . I shall call it ethics in the theatre because it plays an important part in preparing us in advance for our work. Both the factor itself and what it produces in us and for us because of the peculiarities of our profession.

“A writer, a composer, a painter, a sculptor are not pressed for time. They can work when and where they find it convenient to do so. They have the free disposal of their time.

“This is not the case with the actor. He has to be ready to produce at a fixed hour as advertised. How can he order himself to be inspired at a given time? It is far from simple.

“He needs order, discipline, a code of ethics not only for the general circumstances of his work, but also and especially for his artistic and creative purposes.

“The first condition towards the bringing about of this preliminary state is to follow the principle I have aimed at: Love art in yourself and not yourself in art.”⁴¹

Like Barba, Stanislavski views self-knowledge as a premise for ethics and ethics as a premise for creativity.

Vakhtangov writes about theatre ethics in a far more explicit way. In his 1928 letter to studio members and associates on the deterioration of “studio spirit” at the First Studio, he writes:

In order to possess the *Studio spirit* . . . you must live the Studio’s life, give of yourself to the studio, and defend this spirit, which is the result of time and hard work.

The “Studio spirit”, then is the essence *for which, in which, and through which* the Studio exists. . . . This essence is reflected in each Studio member’s artistic and ethical, moral, psychological, and public life, as well as his comradely relations with others.

Above all it means discipline. Discipline in everything. At every step. If a group has this discipline, then naturally it is defended by the group. . . . To continue, this year I began to feel sharply that Studio discipline was declining.

This was shown in lateness for classes, skipping classes, carelessness towards Studio property, the tone in which the students address each other, frivolous behaviour in class, a strange, new attitude towards me, the Studio’s only head, in disorder backstage, a careless attitude towards the stage, rudeness towards outsiders, criticism of senior Studio members by junior members – crude and inappropriate criticism, a total lack of interest in the Studio’s work, a superficial attitude towards the evening performances, lack of comprehension of the Studio’s tasks, and a tacit support for the idea that “the actor must try everything” in order to be an actor.⁴²

Vakhtangov goes on at great length, unlike Stanislavski, to list each infraction of theatre ethics and explains why it is wrong.

Stanislavski and Vakhtangov’s ethical standards are what the Odin guarantees its members. These are the values they embrace. When Grisha interrupts Torstov to protest that no such theatre exists and is told he is right, it then becomes a kind of theatrical justice that roughly thirty years after Stanislavski wrote his books at least two such theatres came into being, the Polish Laboratory Theatre and Odin Teatret. Yet in Grotowski and Barba’s own time they both have been strangely disparaged for being too disciplined. The constant cry of “monastery” as a kind of mocking denigration betokens a turning away from those values Stanislavski hoped would be passed on through the generations. But at the Odin Stanislavski’s

precepts are practiced but never given voice. Barba, like Grotowski, avoids the words *ethics* and *morals* although each gives moral counsel indirectly.

Grotowski is more direct than Barba. In *Towards A Poor Theatre*, he invokes medicine's so-called Hippocratic oath, "*Primum non nocere*" (First do no harm).⁴³ But in the theatre the patient is the work, and the actor-as-doctor must not harm it. In the "Skara Speech," Grotowski explained that the core of his group's work is morality, but not in the everyday sense. If an actor has committed a murder, that is the ethical problem of the actor but not of the director or collaborator. For Grotowski morality is to express the "whole truth" in the work. Having the courage to speak of this or any other pathos creates "greatness in art."⁴⁴ He says:

I think it essential . . . that you must be strict in your work and you must be well organized and disciplined, and the fact that the work is tiring is absolutely necessary. Often you must be totally exhausted in order to break down the mind's resistance and begin to act with truth. . . . The rules of work are hard. . . . When I speak, for example, of the necessity for silence during work, I speak of something which is difficult from a practical point of view, but which is absolutely necessary. Without outward silence you cannot achieve inward silence, the silence of the mind. When you want to reveal your treasure, your sources, then you must work in silence. Avoid all elements of private life, private contact, whispering, talking etc. You can enjoy yourself while working but within the bounds of the work and not in a private fashion.⁴⁵

In an interview with Richard Schechner, Grotowski clarifies his attitude about ethics:

During the course I did not use the word "ethic", but nevertheless at the heart of what I said there was an ethical attitude. Why didn't I use the word "ethic"? People who talk about ethics usually want to impose a certain kind of hypocrisy on others, a system of gestures and behavior that serves as an ethic. Jesus Christ suggested ethical duties, but despite the fact that he had miracles at his disposal, he did not succeed in improving mankind. Then why renew this effort? . . . We cannot hide our personal, essential things

– even if they are sins. On the contrary, if these sins are very deeply rooted – perhaps not even sins, but temptations – we must open the door to the cycle of associations. The creative process consists, however, in not only revealing ourselves, but in structuring what is revealed. If we reveal ourselves with all these temptations, we transcend them, we master them through our consciousness.

That is really the kernel of the ethical problem: do not hide that which is basic; it makes no difference whether the material is moral or immoral; our first obligation in art is to express ourselves through our own personal motives.⁴⁶

Grotowski carefully constructs the parameters of theatre ethics that differ from social ethics. In the spirit of Stanislavski's "Towards an Ethics for the Theatre" Grotowski describes a professional ethic as a precondition for creativity. Barba and the Odin actors combine the proposals made by Stanislavski and Grotowski, but it is almost as if they practice them secretly, hoping to be freed of their necessity. They never mention the rules at the Odin; they embody them.

Barba says, "I don't believe in groups which are governed by rules. I believe in groups in which the members incarnate the rules to such an extent that there is never a need to speak of them."⁴⁷ The dictum at the Odin is "What you must do, you must do. And do not ask, do not ask."⁴⁸ So it is not ethics, but speaking of them that is an anathema to Barba.

The most cogent explanation for this attitude may have to do with the way Grotowski and Barba had to take realistic steps while working in post-Stalin Poland. Barba says:

I was with Grotowski in Poland at a time when you didn't go around preaching to people how to behave like a hero. We had enough difficulties in trying to live with dignity ourselves. We had enough problems with ourselves and the surrounding circumstances. I lived this experience and was vaccinated against

all moralistic bacteria. At the moment you are in Auschwitz, you don't go around and say: I want to die as a hero, die singing, join the resistance movement, or refuse to become a kapo. You become a kapo if you feel this is the only way to survive.

This skeptical attitude depends on what sort of circumstances determine your first steps in the professions, on the people who became your models, your reference points. It is the moment of truth, as Spaniards say, when the toreador faces the bull in the corrida. If you do not have any moments of truth, then you can write all the bullshit you want, because it doesn't commit you to anything. I have enough in trying to live with dignity myself.⁴⁹

Both Barba and Grotowski are also careful not to translate ethics into rules of behavior. They learned this not only because of the political situation in Poland, but from first-hand experience with actors. Taviani writes:

The discipline that reigns at the Odin is the observance of rule whose sole aim is to protect each individual's work, to give him all the time and the conditions necessary for his autonomous development. The rules, therefore, often change radically. The Odin members explain this with a paradox: "the rules are there in order to show how one breaks them." One must do this with facts, making the rules useless. Thus it was with the rule that in the early years prohibited sexual relations between members of the group, because aspects of the actor's private lives would have interfered with their work. In the same way, the Odin now presents in public the training that, in the early years, was rigorously closed to observers.⁵⁰

Explicitly voiced ethics are counter-productive and inferior to those that are incarnated. Now, in the 1990s, the Odin actors still prove how, without losing their cohesion or group identity, they can break their own rules as they exhibit in their work demonstration how they construct the inner actions or subscores behind their training and performances. “Something which we never do,” as Julia Varley says on her work demonstration *The Dead Brother*, and then proceeds to explain her secrets.⁵¹

Rules/Precision/Form/Codification: Commitment to Discipline and Tradition

Though the morality of the persons in the group is flexible, as they are in all matters, the moral demands of the group’s rules (tacit or explicit) are rigid. The rules of the work differ from the ethics of the group. It the pursuit of how meaning is transmitted through the actor’s presence and precision of form that impels Barba to take an interest in the codified rules or techniques embraced by theatres of the East. Laws, rules, and principles that aid the actor in manifesting presence or radiating energy are not characteristic of Western theatre, which is more focused on individualism and free expression. But in the West, some theatre groups do accept a kind of formalism akin to rules in their performances. A kind of codification, achieved through precision of action and conscious attempts at stylization, comprises what has been called *physical theatre*, or a variety of other misnomers that balkanize non-realist performance such as *dance theatre*, *intercultural theatre*, *performance art*, *post-modern theatre*, examples of which can be seen in *mise en scènes* of Pina Bausch, Lee Breuer, Richard

Foreman, and Robert Wilson, to name a few. But for Barba rules are an integral part, not so much of the *mise en scènes* but of the actor's training.

Rules also played a significant role for Stanislavski. Whether Moscow Art Theatre actors understood the System or not—and there are many indications that a majority of them held the System in contempt—they still abided by Stanislavski's rules. As a director, Stanislavski was known as “the boss,” and he created rigorous work conditions in order to search for a methodology of the actor.⁵² Anatoly Smeliansky writes about Stanislavski's work on his final projects in the mid-thirties.

He experimented unrestrainedly, driving to desperation actors who felt they already had the whole thing off pat. . . . In his determination to have the actor exist authentically in the role, Stanislavsky was quite capable of going over a single phrase, which the actor regarded as a throw-away line, for two or three hours. . . . He was pursuing perfection with the fanatical obstinacy of a musician with perfect pitch. Stanislavsky's rehearsals at Leontiev Lane became an immensely demanding school for the production's actors. . . . Mikhail Yanshin was involved in the rehearsals both of *Dead Souls* and *Molière*. Many years later he was to recall that many actors were unenthusiastic about Stanislavsky's perfectionism. ‘Rehearsing with Stanislavsky was difficult, exhausting, sometimes agonising for the actor . . . We tried to avoid Stanislavsky's rehearsals and having to work with him. Nowadays it is considered rather improper to remember such things, but it is the truth of the matter.’⁵³

In spite of resistance to the System, Moscow Art Theatre actors, because Stanislavski was their director, rehearsed according to his proposals, often doing exercises or reviewing smaller and smaller moments of a play in what may have seemed to them excruciating detail. His rules are perhaps best characterized by his insistence on specificity and details. Gorchakov quotes Stanislavski in rehearsal telling the actors,

I see you are constructing actions preceding from the concrete facts. This is very important. Only the concrete thought, the specific action, and knowledge of reality make our art powerful, strong, impressive, and, what I consider most important, realistic. That's why I am constantly opposing general fantasies—fantasy for the sake of fantasy—not directed toward disclosing and enriching the facts and circumstances given by the author. Now act. Live the facts you have named. At times I will prompt you with the line of your action. Do not interrupt your acting, and include all my 'prompting' in the line of your behavior.⁵⁴

Gorchakov describes Stanislavski's "actors' rehearsals:"

These were long hard hours for Stanislavsky and the actors. He was strict, demanding, patient. Nothing could be hidden from his eyes. His demands covered all aspects of the actor's skill. . . . There were often tears, but they did not soften Stanislavsky. "Cry all you want, it doesn't disturb my rehearsal." . . . Stanislavsky was very strict and demanding both as teacher and director. He never tired of telling us again and again that the inner technique of an actor is of first importance, but that almost as important are diction, voice placement, breath control, and the knowledge of the laws of speech.⁵⁵

Stanislavski's injunctions against doing anything "in general," his insistence on specifics as a rule integral to actors' internal work, and his focus on physical training were often forgotten by those who work along the lines of emotional memory. In *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*, Vasily Toporkov quotes Stanislavski's student, Mikhail Kedrov, as saying:

Well, what is this? Everything is *in general*: *in general* he offers him food, *in general* he makes him sit down, *in general* he dreams. Where is the aim of all this hidden—where is his through-line-of-action? Only in dependence on the through-line-of-action can I decide how to do this. . . . For pity sakes, there *is* no objective here.⁵⁶

Kedrov's call for specificity was made at the same time that the Method of Physical Actions became the pinnacle of Stanislavski's System. The desire was not so much for specificity in the actors' so-called objectives, but their physical actions. Stanislavski's interest in precise physical action is at the root of Barba's methodology.

In spite of their mutual interest in specific physical actions, formal rules embraced by Barba are quite different from those embraced by Stanislavski. In fact, it is in the area of codification of rules that Stanislavski and Barba differ most pronouncedly. But the same cannot be said about Meyerhold—he saw codification as a necessity. This is why he is so important to understanding Barba. Meyerhold's manifesto-like treatises on physical technique and Biomechanics demonstrate this. As the Russian actor Gennady Bogdanov has shown in his 1996-98 international pedagogical tours of biomechanical training, and in his ISTA work demonstrations, the Biomechanics have a very specific external form. This is the most compelling link between Meyerhold and Barba, but it does not constitute the same kind of ancestral link between artists that Barba believes connects him to Stanislavski, nor is it enough support Watson's claim that Barba's linkage to Meyerhold is stronger than it is with Stanislavski. One of Stanislavski's concerns when considering his more modern contemporaries in *My Life in Art* was that none of them had worked out a methodology that focused on a

precise inner technique. Stanislavski always moved in that direction, whereas Meyerhold's research was focused on greater and greater physical virtuosity.

Whether Meyerhold was concerned with inner technique is arguable, although there are reasons to believe he was not as unconcerned with it as has been traditionally taught. But Barba's actors revel in both their external and internal precision, drawing from both Stanislavski and Meyerhold. Barba's position with regard to physical precision is that it is the route by which the actor gains access to his or her inner world of emotional reactions, images, memories, and thoughts. The more precise the action, the more it evokes the internal, and the more likely the actor is to return to that internal stimulus without solely relying on the ephemeral emotional pathway. Thus the Odin comprises a confluence of two methodologies, codification and individual expression, that have been erroneously presented through history as antithetical (as they are in Diderot's famous *Paradoxe*). Barba demonstrates that they are not antithetical at all, but rather parts of the larger arc of the actor's creative process, a supra-methodology.

As an example of the confluence of codification and individual precision, Varley writes:

For me precision does not mean constant exact repetition, but to give life to a sign which can only be so, an action which contains all its intentions. Precision is the actor's 'intelligence': it is not to know if the intention or the action comes first, it is the score which has become the subscore and the other way round. Precision comes when one cannot ask the actor what is determined by an internal motivation or an exterior physical movement, when these words are no longer relevant and the technique has become life.⁵⁷

Varley has embraced the two complementary aspects of the System in her explanation of precision: internal reality stimulating external actions

simultaneously while external action stimulates internal reaction. For Varley the rules are in the precision of the action.

It is through rules, through precision, that an actor becomes acquainted with recurring principles. At first glance, Stanislavski appears to have been willing to leave expression to chance, allowing expression to be carried by emotions, hoping that they will be aroused by affective memories. But this was not the case.

Stanislavski's concern was how to get a performance to be full of life as though each performance was the first time. His work was to give his students experience with necessary principles with which they could ignite the fire of expression under given circumstances when the fleeting emotions they may have once felt in rehearsal were no longer available. He wanted to stimulate what he called "the life of the human spirit," which could pass from the actor to the spectator. To this extent, Stanislavski's rules were based on first-hand experience of acting. Stanislavski was never so committed to emotion not to see the validity of the physical approach as a fulcrum for releasing the inner self and, through it approaching the spiritual. Stanislavski writes:

If you take all these internal processes, and adapt them to the spiritual and physical life of the person you are representing, we call that living the part [*perezhivanie*]. This is of supreme significance in creative work. Aside from the fact that it opens up avenues for inspiration, living the part helps the artist to carry out one of his main objectives. His job is not to present merely the external life of his character. He must fit his own human qualities to the life of this other person, and pour into it all of his own soul. The fundamental aim of our art is the creation of this inner life of a human spirit, and its expression in artistic form.⁵⁸

The paradox here is that the work's rules function on a spiritual level, and mitigate against the harsh military nature of regulations. But if the spiritual

dimension of the System is not held within the actor's technique (and identity) then the System is torn asunder and becomes an empty set of unrelated maxims.

Barba understands the necessity of rules for the actor as part of the initiation into a life's work in which principles are inculcated through practice rather than book learning and dilettantish tourism of the various techniques of many disciplines. He believes the actor should commit to the discipline he or she chooses in the first days in the profession. Barba explains:

Theoretically, one knows that absolute scenic rules do not exist. . . . But this is only true in theory. In practice, in order for a well-proven complex of rules to actually be useful to the performer, it must be accepted *as if* it was a complex of absolute rules. . . . [Asian and European masters such as Decroux] maintain that only in this way is the purity and quality of their own art preserved and only in this way does the student demonstrate his/her dedication to the path s/he has chosen.

The merit of this defense mechanism is that the pathological tendency which often derives from the awareness of the relativity of rules is avoided: moving from one path to another in the illusion that one can thereby accumulate experience and widen the horizon of one's own technique. It is true that one path is as good as another, but only if one follows it to the end. A long-term commitment which, for a long time, does not allow one to think of any other possibility, is necessary.⁵⁹

This statement amounts to a commitment not only to a personal perspective on methodology, but to a way of life, an actor's ontology.

Stanislavski's commitment to establishing a systematic approach to acting technique is an expression of a principle which stands behind Barba's embrace of the codified techniques of both the East and of the French masters such as Decroux. The principle is that mastering one technique in all of its external forms

liberates the internal world of the actor. Through mastery and precision comes freedom.

Applying certain principles consciously, as if they were rules, liberates that which lies at the subconscious level. For Barba, the internal world, the world of meaning (thought, idea, emotion) is parallel to Stanislavski's notion of the life of the human spirit. Both lie at the subconscious level. Stanislavski's search for the life of the human spirit, a search for the spiritual through theatre, is articulated quite well by Barba when he describes theatre as a search for meaning. The search for meaning may help liberate the actor from the false refuge of the emotions, because the search for meaning is also a search for the why of human experience. Barba describes the investigation of the spiritual side of the theatre in a way that is very useful for actors.

Louis Jouvet once made an observation which has the echo of an enigma: 'There is a legacy from us to ourselves.' . . . It would be foolish to become discouraged by something which has been obvious for almost a century: theatre is an artistic activity in search of meaning. . . . To search in the heaven of ideas is one way to discover, as in a mirror, the secrets of our biography. . . . The condition of the Third Theatre is, consciously or unconsciously, the search for meaning. But we must not be seduced by the nobility of the language: the search for meaning signifies above all the personal discovery of its craft . . . One can't go on for long with one's eyes fixed on the stars and one's heart abandoned to the waves. You need the well-built bridge of a ship.

Everyone ought to be able to translate these metaphors into the concrete reality of their own personal language. This, too, is part of the craft. And it is competence in the craft which transforms a condition into personal vocation, and becomes in the eyes of others, a destiny which is also a legacy.⁶⁰

Within these proclamations on form and rules lies more than an artistic credo.

They announce a principle: personal meaning is carried within forms. This new

formalism affirms the latent power of the performer, not only to transform him- or herself, but the conditions in which he or she lives and works.

For both Stanislavski and Barba a significant portion of the professional identity is shaped during an actor's first days in the profession. These first days are ones in which the apprentice becomes acquainted with the rules.⁶¹ Barba believes, "[t]he first days of apprenticeship of classical ballet dancers, the first days of a *buto* dancer [contemporary Japanese avant-garde dance combining Japanese traditional performing arts with German Expressionist dance and performance art], the first days of a clown . . . It is on this threshold that the recurring principles meet."⁶² In his 1997 interview Barba says:

The question is always the first day. It is the first day in our profession which makes us choose a particular road and not another. It is as an inkling which, afterwards, makes us say yes or no. It is what I call the way of refusal and the first day teaches it to us. Therefore, I am always interested in the first day of people. Sometimes they are in the profession, sometimes not. Our journey is determined by a double trail. One is very private: our personal wounds, our childhood, our parents and family, our first love, the death of a person very near to us. The other one is the professional—the artists you have met and who have provoked an earthquake in you, the earth shaking you from all the obvious handcuffs and containers in which you are enveloped.⁶³

In his early writings Barba says:

"Each time that the ground begins to shake under your feet, each time that you are no longer sure of the stability of your past experiences" – Grotowski advised me – "go back to your origins, to where you started." We were sitting in a Polish railway station restaurant, a quarter of a century ago. And he added: "This is also what Stanislavski advised: 'Go back to your origins, back to your first day in the theatre.'"

It is the first day of the work which determines the meaning of our path. . . . What then are my origins? What was *my* first day in the theatre?⁶⁴

It is in the spirit of the first day that Stanislavski wrote his trilogy. The treatment of the enthusiastic and naïve beginning student, Kostya (real name: Nazvanov), attests to the importance in the pedagogical tradition of making a strong impact on the student before he or she has accumulated a repertoire of unshakable clichés that prevent investigation into art in the self. The rules exist not only to break them, but for the one who breaks them, to expose the self.

Training Barba's Autonomous Actor and the "Decided Body": Beyond Professional Identity

Is it necessary to train throughout an entire career to reach a professional identity, a physical literacy? Where does all this training lead? Barba has always given high emphasis to actor training and how it relates to what he calls the actor's "personal temperature."⁶⁵ The "personal temperature" is a way to describe how the actor uses energy. Barba believes the actor models energy at the pre-expressive level, and in turn that energy radiates simultaneously at the expressive level.

According to Barba, actors in training are not merely working on body and voice. They are working on that which is invisible: energy. Energy ought not to be confused with excess of "muscular and nervous activity, with impetuosity and shouting," it is "something intimate, something which pulsates in immobility and silence, a retained power-thought which grows in time without manifesting itself in space."⁶⁶ The concept of energy is elusive, though Stanislavski and Barba invoke it repeatedly. It can be seen *via negativa*; that is, through what it is not—

not “impetuosity and shouting.” For Barba, energy “pulsates in immobility.” Barba and Carreri’s concept of dynamic immobility addresses one particularly challenging aspect of the actor’s work with energy—holding still on stage while remaining present, energetic, and stimulating to spectators. This particular principle, dynamic immobility, is useful for actors in any theatre, any genre. It suggests that all actors, regardless of their onstage activities, or lack of activity, must attain and maintain a performative energy that radiates at all times.

Dynamic immobility is a way to address the question of how an actor should fill dramatic pauses. They should be filled with energy. To fill stillness with energy requires a conscious pre-expressive technique. Pre-expressivity involves the accumulation of energy through the *sats*. To repeat, Carreri defines *sats* as “energy in the legs and in the spine that can make you jump whenever you want. . . It is latent presence, but it is always there.”⁶⁷ “Latent presence” is a valuable way of explaining not only dynamic immobility and the *sats*, but also Barba’s overarching concept of pre-expressivity. Pre-expressivity, *sats*, latent presence function to manifest energy powerfully without the reliance on broad physical action. Barba sees training as a way of learning to model energy according to the actor’s identity. In his configuration the actor’s professional identity is also modeled in training.

Although Stanislavski never used the terms *professional identity* or *autonomous actors*, these notions are nonetheless present in his writing. Stanislavski believed it was an actor’s duty to train independently from the rehearsal or the acting class throughout his or her career. For him, like Barba,

taking responsibility for the training empowers actors with autonomy. He did not work alongside the actor in training the same way Barba did in the Odin's early years, yet he expected his actors to work assiduously outside rehearsal.

Stanislavski writes:

The great mass of actors have quite a wrong idea about their attitude toward rehearsals. They believe that they need work only at rehearsals and that they can be idle at home.

Whereas this is not the case at all. The rehearsal merely clarifies the problems that an actor needs to work on at home. . . . an actor, more than any other special artist, is in need of that work at home. . . . an actor is responsible for his arms, his legs, his eyes, his face, the plasticity of the whole body, his rhythm, his motion and all the program of our activities here in the school. These exercises do not stop with graduation, they go on through your whole lives as artists.⁶⁸

It is true that Barba's training has been more specific and codified than Stanislavski's, but Barba invokes the same value of physical and vocal training and the actor's responsibility to that training, a value inherent in the Stanislavski tradition. The actor who takes this responsibility seriously, who brings his or her personal discoveries into the work, Barba calls the autonomous actor.

Barba's concept of the autonomous actor is well within the Stanislavski tradition. Stanislavski says:

There are many actors and actresses who do not take creative initiative. They do not prepare their roles outside the theatre by letting their imaginations and subconscious play on the character they are to portray. They come to rehearsal and wait around until they are led on a path of action.⁶⁹

But what "path of action" should the actor pursue outside of rehearsal? One of those paths is physical training. With specific regard to ongoing classes in physical training, Stanislavski explicitly advises the actors to pursue the study of

gymnastics and look at visual art for form and dynamics. He talks about “training the physical instrument” at the same time that he talks about looking at classical art for form.⁷⁰ Similarly, in her 1993 New York workshop, Carreri had all the participants look at images from classical painting and then select bodies frozen in action—forms of dynamic immobility. The actors were then to embody these forms as part of an interpolation of classical form and acrobatic movement as part of the training.

Stanislavski, like Barba, placed value on tumbling and acrobatics. Acrobatic exercises differ in form from Meyerhold’s Biomechanics in that they are strictly athletic, lacking the iconicity of such well known Biomechanics exercises like shooting the arrow or throwing the stone. Acrobatics, and not Biomechanics, were among the very first forms in which the Odin Actors trained, although they erroneously called their acrobatics “biomechanics.”⁷¹ Stanislavski writes:

Today we are adding tumbling to our activities. Although this may seem strange it helps the actor in his great moments of highest exaltation and for his creative inspiration. Is that astonishing? The reason is that acrobatics aid in developing the quality of *decisiveness*.” [italics mine]⁷²

Stanislavski’s use of the word “decisiveness” ties in with another of Barba’s principles, “the decided body.” For Barba, “to be decided” is an expression that carries “both passion and action.”⁷³ It does not “mean that we are deciding, not that some are carrying out the action of deciding.”⁷⁴ He claims that the decided body—body united with mind in action—is a principle that defies simple explanation. An actor’s personal experience demonstrates what it means to be decided. As an example Barba describes Japanese actor Katsuko Azuma’s

training with her master Tohuko Azuma, in the technique of breaking the rhythm of a walk up into three segments which are named *jo-*, *ha-*, and *kyu* (*jo-ha-kyu*), a term familiar to those who study Zeami's treatises as a structural device around which the practitioners of *Noh* organized their dramas and festivals. However in this context, it is used to structure actors' movement. Barba explains the function of each phase into which the "performers' actions are divided." *Jo* is a restrained action, as if the actor meets a strong force and pushes against it; *ha* occurs when the actor breaks through this force, thereby freed of restraint; and *kyu* is movement of great speed which stops suddenly "as if faced with a new *jo*."⁷⁵ Barba writes, "When a performer has learned, as a second nature, this artificial way of moving, s/he appears to have been cut off from everyday space-time and seems to be 'alive': *s/he is 'decided.'*"[italics mine]⁷⁶ At first this sounds very different from what Stanislavski proposed as the value of acrobatics. But Stanislavski's explanation verges on Barba's notion of pre-expressivity and the decided body.

In his explanation of decisiveness, Stanislavski compares the moment before making a *salto-mortale* (somersault) to significant penultimate moments of dramatic tension. For instance: "When . . . Othello cries, 'Oh blood, blood, blood!' the actor cannot stop to think, to doubt, to weigh considerations, to make ready and test himself. He must act, he must clear the jump at a gallop."⁷⁷ When Othello murders Iago in revenge at the play's end, he must be decided; he must react instantly, and not consider whether or not this is the appropriate reaction. Barba makes the transition from the *Noh* principle of *jo-ha-kyu* to Western acting

to draw much the same conclusion as Stanislavski. The Western performer does not mechanize and codify the body as much as he or she substitutes magic ifs that bring “out what is essential in the actions.”⁷⁸

But the Western actor does more than create fictional characters, he or she also creates “fictive bodies” that function *as if* the physical substitutions are real, and it is in this sense that the Western actor must be as decided as a *buyo* dancer like Azuma.⁷⁹ (*Buyo* is a genre with roots in *Kabuki*—*nihon-buyo* literally means classical Japanese dance.) Barba’s understanding of decisiveness is borne out by Stanislavski’s *salto-mortale* and finally by a wonderful example Barba gives of Niels Bohr and his assistants playing with toy pistols to gain an understanding of why, in the cinema genre of the Western, the gunfighter who draws first is always killed by the other gunfighter’s seemingly slower hand. “[Bohr] came to the conclusion that such a truth did indeed exist: the first to draw is slowest because he *decides* to shoot, and dies. The second to draw lives because he doesn’t have to decide, *he is decided*.”⁸⁰ Bohr’s experiment can be said to be the proof not only of Barba’s position, but Stanislavski’s as well. The incarnation of decisiveness is essential to understanding how Stanislavski and Barba are linked, to how Stanislavski genuinely understood the body-mind as the unification of two levels of organization into one, which then become indiscernible, and through which intention and action occur simultaneously and generate expression.

Training as a Vocation, not a Pragmatic Project

Barba did not initially approach training in the Odin's early years with Stanislavski as his point of departure. Nor, as it is popularly believed, did he unwaveringly expect his European actors to adopt the *Kathakali* exercises to which he was exposed in India. Early on, he realized that *Kathakali* exercises themselves were of little use, because, for his Western actors, they hid rather than exposed the internal. According to Watson, Barba used a variety of "home-made" exercises based on what the actors already knew, such as acrobatics, non-text improvisation, and modern dance, creating a personal biomechanics.⁸¹

What Barba did adopt from *Kathakali* was the idea of theatre as a vocation, not merely a profession. In "Words and Presence," he writes:

It is not the exercises in themselves that are decisive, but one's personal attitude, *that inner necessity which incites and motivates the choice of one's profession*, justifying it on an emotional level and with a logic that will not allow itself to be trapped by words. [italics mine]⁸²

In *Paper Canoe*, he writes:

The long nights of kathakali in 1963 helped me catch a glimpse of the limits which the performer can reach. But it was the dawn which revealed to me these performers' secrets, at the Kalamandalam school in Cheruthuruthy, in Kerala. There, young boys, barely adolescents, diligently repeating exercises, steps, songs, prayers, gymnastics, eye movements and votive offerings, crystallize their own ethos as artistic behaviour and ethical attitude.⁸³

This ethos of theatre as a way of life is what Stanislavski encouraged in "Towards an Ethics for Theatre." So did Vakhtangov. According to Ruben Simonov:

Vakhtangov considered that a narrow professional attitude in the theatre was not permissible. The theatre for him was life itself; he served humanity through the theatre. One of the sicknesses of

contemporary acting is “professionalism.” Students who came into the theatre merely to show off and achieve cheap success Vakhtangov used to criticize severely in front of the whole theatre collective, and he spared neither time nor himself in order to straighten out a student who had lost the aim of true art. The high exalted aim of creativity gives birth to a singular atmosphere in the theatre, an atmosphere of great spiritual uplift.⁸³

Theatre as a job, and training as a kind of job-readiness did not concern the *Kathakali* students. Nor was it of interest to Vakhtangov. Stanislavski and Barba have viewed it similarly. Theatre as a meaningful, spiritual vocation is a precondition for theatre culture; its ethos includes its ethics, language, and the practice of recurring principles.

Training, from Barba’s perspective, is not a pragmatic project. His discussion of “the myth of technique” clarifies Vakhtangov’s view that narrow professionalism is antithetical to art; technique is not the accumulation of skills or a pathway to virtuosity, but rather “personal temperature,” a way of finding meaning in one’s work.⁸⁴ Barba writes:

In our first phase, the main stimuli were the aspiration to a formal perfection as with Asian actors, the necessity for a methodology as suggested to me by Stanislavski, the research into theatricality which derived from Meyerhold, the care taken with the montage inspired by Eisenstein. But the motivation for this formal and pedagogical pursuit sprang from other personal needs which at that time were expressed through purely theatrical preoccupations.⁸⁵

In their “theatrical preoccupation,” training, according to Barba, he and the Odin actors virtually stumbled across principles that were there all the time, but lay hidden beneath the surface of performance, or as Barba might say, concealed by the actor’s epidermis.⁸⁶ The best example of this is the principle of opposition which Odin actors discovered in their training and then was found to be at the

basis of a variety of Asian acting techniques, but also inherent in Meyerhold's practice and Brecht's theorizing, for example his famous "not . . . but." The Odin actors exposed these other theatres' principles' utility through their own search for personal answers. Barba's work on actor training proceeds from using what is already known as points of departure.

Training is not the accumulation of skills. It is the inculcation of technique such that identity is tied to form through the application of precise physical actions that penetrate actors' epidermises enabling them to model energy and thought into action. Training frees rather than fetters the actor. Barba writes:

Training does not teach how to act, how to be clever, does not prepare one for creation. Training is a process of self-definition, a process of self-discipline which manifests itself indissolubly through physical reactions. It is not the exercise itself that counts . . . but the individual's justification for his own work, a justification which although perhaps banal or difficult to explain through words, is physiologically perceptible, evident to the observer. This approach, this personal justification decides the meaning of the training . . . This daily task, obstinate, patient, often in the darkness, sometimes even searching for a meaning, is a concrete factor in the transformation of the actor as a man [sic] and as a member the group.⁸⁷

The Odin approach has nothing to do with virtuosity. It is not an accumulation of tricks but rather a personal commitment to self-discovery and expression in a group. It is far more rigorous than the miscellaneous assortment of disciplines offered at conservatories and universities where students fly from one model of the actor to the next, constructing an eclectic assortment of skills that they deploy as needed depending on the production. For Barba training is a way of life, an ethos of the actor.

The Emotions at Odin Teatret and the Moscow Art Theatre: Internal Realism

When reading Barba and Odin actors' writings, the concept of emotions does not appear to exist. The word *feelings* is rarely used in any of their writings and they are very cautious when using the word *emotions*. This is because emotions are never thought of as a product but rather as conductors of meaning and always a part of the process. In an August 1997 interview, Torgeir Wethal says:

I never use the word *emotional levels*. It's one of the ways in the profession that hurts actors more than you believe. If I go to produce emotions, I'm lost. . . . Of course I have all the different memories and so on, I can use them. But most actors working that way are creating emotional concerns and so do we, through a different path, have the same danger. That is, we change some of these much more profound personal works after ten years or so. . . . I can say in front of a person I love, imaginary, I want to touch your hair. And I touch her hair. That's the only thing I as an actor should do. That is, an action or an intentional action. Between these two points, this imaginary point and me, there might be something which is emotional. But the moment I start to think about that or to produce that, then there are clichés. Of course I love her and of course I want to touch her hair. But I should not produce these things. I should be in concrete situations on an imaginary level. That's one possibility. Another possibility is that a situation is created, quite cold. Formal. Then, I can put these other thoughts of these other imaginary situations into it to give it life. And then there are ones that are quite close to the interpretation of a text. But when you go to produce emotion, you, quite simply, mostly just pump yourself up. . . . You are afraid, so you run or you hide. You should never think about being afraid. All the reasons are external in combination with you as a complexity. And this complexity should be there and give a result, but you cannot think about producing that result. You must just remain alive. React and act. That means that the whole world around you, and yourself, with all your senses and political opinions and intellectual laziness and whatever, must be present and defined and that's why I say I have to bring all these things very slowly, or not necessarily slowly, but they have to be rooted and clear and evaporate and remain the essence.⁸⁸

At the Odin the idea of emotions is not abandoned. It is supplanted with a more precise terminology that speaks of “emotional concerns” and the “complexity” of an actor’s inner world, which, though invisible, is connected directly to the physical and external. Barba explains the emotions by delineating five levels of complexity:

There is a naïve conception according to which emotion is a force that takes hold of and overwhelms a person. But an emotion is a complex pattern of reactions to a stimulus.

This complex web of reactions expressed by the term “emotion” is characterized by the activation of at least five levels of organization, which inhibit each other in turn but which are all simultaneously present:

1. a subjective change, which we normally call “feeling”: for example, fear (a dog comes up to me in the street);
2. a series of cognitive evaluations (I consider: the dog seems well behaved);
3. the manifestations of involuntary autonomous reactions (acceleration of the heartbeat, of breathing, sweating);
4. an impulse to react (I want to walk away quickly);
5. the decision on how to behave (I force myself to walk calmly).

It is the complexity of the emotion and not a vague feeling that the actor must reconstruct.

We must therefore work on all different levels that we have identified as characterizing an “emotion,” which—although belonging to the world of the invisible—are nevertheless *physically concrete*. [italics mine]¹¹⁶

The notion of physical concretion helps clarify what Barba and Grotowski mean when they say that all action must be real as opposed to realistic, and help to distinguish the real from realism in the pedagogy of Stanislavski. Barba, like Ilinski in Chapter Three, recapitulates James’s position (I see the bear, I run away, I am afraid), but he goes beyond the standard construct of reflexology in the

actor's work in items 4 and 5. The subject does not run away but rather restrains him- or herself such that the impulse to run is restrained and transformed into walking away quickly. In that moment, a complicated moment, the energy of the impulse to run is checked and fear radiates through its opposite, to walk (not run) away quickly. This is how Barba sees emotions' manifestation.

In his 1967 interview with Denis Bablet, Grotowski, speaking of Stanislavski, describes an "existential realism."

JG: Stanislavski was always experimenting himself and he did not suggest recipes, but the means whereby the actor might discover himself, replying in all concrete situations to the question: "How can this be done?". [sic] He naturally brought all this about within the setting of the theatre of his country, his time, of a realism which . . .

DB: An interior realism . . .

JG: . . . An existential realism, I think, or rather an existential naturalism.⁸⁹

This interior or existential realism is not an aesthetic of play production, but rather a technical level of organization whereby the actor begins to create logical but personal connections between impulse and expression, and most important, action and emotion.

With this in mind, the idea that Odin Teatret and their direct progenitors, Grotowski's Polish Teatr Laboratorium, are physical theatres of athletic virtuosity can be dropped, and their work can be seen as a pinnacle of the psycho-physiological methodology. Although, of all Stanislavski's principles, Barba and his actors appear to be more devoted to the those associated with the Method of Physical Actions than work on emotional memory—that they are exclusively a

physical theatre is only how it appears. Although they renounce the word *emotions* when used to refer to emotions as a desired result of the process, they do not discard them as a part of the process. It would be simplistic to think that Barba's process relies solely on the physical action or to believe that Stanislavski intended the emotions' appearance to constitute a performance.

Careful reading of Stanislavski bears out Barba's more complex understanding of the emotions. In the Chapter "Emotion Memory" in *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavski says:

The unfortunate thing about [emotions] is that we cannot control them. They control us. Therefore we have no choice but to leave it to nature and say: 'if they will come, let them come. We will only hope that they will work with the part and not at cross purposes to it.' Of course, an infusion of unexpected, unconscious feelings is very tempting. . . . But you must not conclude from this that you have any right to minimize the significance of repeated feelings drawn from emotion memory—on the contrary, you should be completely devoted to them, because they are the only means by which you can, to any degree, influence inspiration.⁹⁰

He clearly conceives of the emotions (actually the "repeated feelings drawn from emotion memory") as a "means" or pathway towards expression and not the thing expressed. The emotions are not the substance of the part.

Exercises: Etudes and Improvisations—Separating Work on Self from Work on Text.

Perhaps the best example of the value of Stanislavski's exercises as means towards unifying the body-mind by attaching inner meaning to the impulses is an exercise recorded by Barba. The exercise emerges from the oral tradition surrounding Stanislavski's teachings (a necessary tradition since, as Benedetti

points out, the Method of Physical Actions was never fully recorded in written form). In *Paper Canoe* Barba wants to show that, through what he calls “the absorption of action,” a broad physical action can be miniaturized such that, although the outward movement of the extremities, arms, legs, and head, may no longer be seen, the impulses that drove them into action originate in the spinal column and are maintained in the torso. For every miniaturized action, although microscopic in comparison to the original action, its impulse still has the aura of truth and theatricality of the original action.

Barba writes, “Each cell of this web-in-life [an actor’s performance], each piece of the sequence-mosaic, has its own specific charge of energy.”⁹¹ This is of extreme importance to those who wonder whether Barba’s discoveries and methodology is of value in a conventional theatre of realism. Barba writes of his experience as a student in a Warsaw directing class in 1960, taught by former Art Theatre actor Bogdan Korzeniewski who spoke about a Stanislavski physical actions rehearsal at which he was present.

Two merchants who are in ruthless competition and who detest each other are seated at the same table at a reception, enjoying tea and exchanging pleasantries. In order to bring out the double flavour of their behaviour, Stanislavski asks the two actors to improvise a fight between two scorpions. He reminds them that these animals attack and kill with their tails. The impulse against the adversary must begin from the bottom of the spinal column. The actors improvise a merciless fight, walking, sitting down, standing on the chairs. The scene loses any realistic connotation. There are no longer two merchants, but two-actor scorpions. Ever alert, they pretend to ignore each other. Suddenly their tails attack. This broad and varied improvisation is then fixed and so begins the patient work of miniaturizing each individual phase: looks, rotations of the trunk, cautious or indifferent steps, feints, strikes, parries . . . of the tail.

The result is a credible scene; two merchants who are in ruthless competition and who detest each other are seated at the same table at a reception, enjoying tea and exchanging pleasantries. Their rhythm – pouring tea, adding sugar, offering each other pastries, lifting cup to lip, smiling, nodding in agreement, chatting – is articulated exactly according to the individual phases and intensity – now restrained – of the mortal fight of the monstrous scorpions who have invaded.⁹²

Although this kind of exercise is often referred to as an independent action, an exercise relevant to but independent from the text, something else is at stake. Stanislavski's etude separates work on self from work on texts. Separation of work on self from text and performance is at the core of the Odin's methodology. Barba separates the various aspects of theatrical creation, theatre's raw materials, into components, and works on each in isolation as exercises, refining small details before reconnecting them in improvisations. The virtue of this distance from work on text is the possibility of determining the actual anatomy of an action, its location within the body and then tracing that action back to the center of physical impulses in the spine and torso where the body and mind are unified. This is one of the more technical virtues of training, and perhaps Barba's greatest contribution because it clinicalizes earlier acting methodologies such as Stanislavski's so that their complexity can be understood, and not left to chance.

In his recent "An Amulet Made of Memory; the Significance of Exercises in the Actor's Dramaturgy," Barba claims that in "the 20th century a revolution of the invisible has taken place."⁹³ He traces that revolution to Stanislavski.

At the beginning of the 20th century, *when Stanislavski, Meyerhold and their collaborators invented "exercises" for the formation of actors, they gave birth to a paradox. [italics mine] Their exercises were something quite different from the training followed by students in theatre schools. By tradition, actors practiced fencing,*

ballet, singing, and, above all, the recitation and acting of particular fragments of classical plays. The “exercises,” on the other hand, were elaborate scores, codified down to the smallest detail, and an end in themselves.⁹⁴

Exercises were *invented* by Stanislavski and Meyerhold. Actors draw from them; they do not perform them. They are extracts not only from the play or text but also from the work on self that inform the eventual performance. They are invisible to the audience, existing solely for the actor on the pre-expressive level. For Barba (and others) they can sometimes function as steps toward improvisation.

The theatre student or scholar may find Barba’s use of the word *improvisation* as part of his process confusing. What does Barba mean when he uses the word *improvisation*? Clearly he is not interested in improvisation as performance. It is more correct, in this context, to view improvisation as a link between training and rehearsal. Barba speaks of the commonplace understanding of improvisation as a kind of “direct creation” whereby actors “do anything” or free themselves. This understanding of improvisation leads to a practice in which “inert energies ooze out through fortuitous movements, inarticulated sounds, fossilized ways of behaving.”⁹⁵ He compares that notion of improvisation to the learned, rehearsed conventions of the Commedia dell’ Arte. But he proposes another, third, kind of improvisation, one he uses, and Stanislavski used.

[T]here is a third meaning one can give to the word improvisation which is neither the improvised montage of preconstructed material, nor a sort of direct first person creation. It is rather a process of bringing to the surface the raw materials from which will be carved the basic building blocks of the performance.⁹⁶

Barba links exercises with improvisation in a configuration in which training is not calisthenics and improvisation not banal.

The word *improvisation* is not rejected by Barba, but, as his third definition demonstrates, he uses it differently than it is in improvisational theatres who embrace the spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment creation such as the Chicago/Toronto Second City tradition of Viola Spolin and Paul Sills, or the work of Mike Nichols and Elaine May. But the word *improvisation*, according to Carnicke, was probably not in Stanislavski's vocabulary.⁹⁷ She says, "Stanislavsky uses *etude* as we in the States use *improvisation*. I can't actually think of an instance when he uses *improvisatsia*."⁹⁸ Perhaps the shades of difference between Barba's usage of *improvisation* and Stanislavski's *etude* are not that extreme.

However, like Grotowski (see Chapter Three), both Barba and Stanislavski are leery of the word *spontaneity*. Stanislavski recognized its importance but shied away from it as a goal. He writes:

"Do you think it wise for an actor to give himself up to such spontaneous emotions as that?"

"Does that mean they are never desirable?" I asked.

"On the contrary, they are extremely desirable," said Torstov. "But these direct, powerful and vivid emotions do not make their appearance on stage in the way that you think. They do not last over long periods or even for a single act. They flash out in short episodes, individual moments. In that form they are highly welcome. We can only hope that they will appear often, and help to sharpen the sincerity of our emotions, which is one of the most valuable elements in creative work. The unexpected quality of these spontaneous eruptions of feelings is an irresistible and moving force."⁹⁹

Although Stanislavski admits spontaneity is both desirable and possible, it is elusive, unreliable, and ultimately not a sufficient foundation for performance. Neither Stanislavski nor Barba uses the word *spontaneity* in the way it is conceived in North American theatre practice. Barba writes:

The myth of spontaneity comes from the non-acceptance of oneself. We therefore mythicize a different image of ourselves, an image which in reality is difficult for us to concretize. The consequence is a violence towards what we are and do not want to be. In search of this image, we let ourselves be guided by that which characterizes our culture and society: violence as a condition for the obtaining of results. This mentality, which makes us conceive of change as rupture, as laceration, and not as a gradual and organic process, pushes the actor into chaotic outbursts, makes him artificially stretch and force his body.¹⁰⁰

The improvisation or etude in either Stanislavski or Barba's methodology is a way of focusing on a single aspect of the work, outside the context of the performance. That particular aspect of the work (a relationship, the rhythm of the language, a way of taking action) is separated from the text, and, in isolation from other aspects of the work, focus turns toward the self and away from clichés, social conditioning, and cultural inscription. The improvisation may take many forms, but it is not spontaneous creative combustion. It is often a way of discovering physical actions. The improvised physical actions can slowly become a score of physical actions to which the actor always returns. And then, within the fixed score, small changes can be made so that even something fixed and precise can be changed or justified—elaborated—and liberate something energized from within the actor.

Another way of conceiving of improvisation focuses on actors' internal work as described by Torgeir Wethal as "the hour without physical action." He remembers his first improvisation with Barba. Barba told him:

Begin from a situation which is a combination of a known face and a definite action in a definite place. Let this world come alive, follow it, live in it. There are no rules. Everything can change along the way. Maybe it's like a day-dream, or a dream. Maybe it's something you remember. Take your time.' ¹⁰¹

Wethal lay on the floor with his eyes closed and let his imagination create a situation.

First I met the heavy and uncomfortable darkness. Then slowly I let spaces, people and actions appear. Friends, parents, girlfriends . . . faces passed by, stayed with me. I finished some old, interrupted experiences from the past. Formerly withheld reactions were expressed. It was sometimes chaotic. It flickered with various faces and actions, all mixed up together. This occurred most when the thought that something had better happen pretty soon – surely I wasn't meant to lie there on the floor with closed eyes – worked its way into my other consciousness. I don't know how long it lasted. My perception of time disappeared, it still does during improvisations. Finally I opened my eyes and got up from the floor, where I had lain motionless the whole time. . . . In the course of the hour and a half that I suppose the improvisation lasted, Eugenio sat still and watched, he didn't interrupt me, and neither did he criticize me afterwards. The hour without physical action contained an intensity which it took years to bring alive in a theatre space.

My first improvisation was like a film shown by a projector with no bulb. ¹⁰²

Improvisation (as Barba understands it) does not necessitate action or even acting; it can be a process of modeling memories and images that can be given expression later through action.

Improvisation can be a way of constructing a character's past but it can also help the actor chart an internal map of personal memories. This internal process

or “film shown by a projector with no bulb” is at the core of the actor’s work. This internal map is filtered through the impulses and transformed into physical actions; it is the site of the performance of memories in the perception of the actors. Grotowski has named this site “the seat of the montage.” “In a performance the seat of the montage is the perception of the spectator; in Art as a vehicle [training], the seat of the montage is in the *doers*, in the artists who do.”¹⁰³ Grotowski gives, as an example, Ryszard Ciésłak’s internal improvisation connected to the latter’s work in *The Constant Prince* which in some ways resembles Wethal’s experience.

Before meeting in work . . . *Ciésłak* worked alone with me. Nothing in his work was linked to the martyr that . . . is the theme of the role of the Constant Prince. All the river of life in the actor was linked to a certain memory, which was very far from any darkness, any suffering. His long monologues were linked to the actions which belonged to that concrete memory from his life, to the most minute actions and physical and vocal impulses of that remembered moment. It was a relatively short moment from his life – we can say some tens of minutes, a time of love from his early youth. This referred to that kind of love which, as it can only arrive in adolescence, carries all its sensuality, all that which is carnal, but at the same time, behind that, something totally different that is not carnal, or which is carnal in another way, and which is much more like a prayer. It’s as if, between these two sides, appears a bridge which is carnal prayer. The moment of which I speak was, therefore immune from every dark connotation, it was as if this remembered adolescent liberated himself – step after step – from the heaviness of the body, from any painful aspect. And, on the river of the memory, of its most minute impulses and actions, he put the monologue of the Constant Prince.¹⁰⁴

These anecdotes about Wethal and Ciésłak’s approaches to improvisation—internal improvisation—lead directly to memory, emotional memory; these are then translated into scores of physical actions. This may be surprising for those

who still see Grotowski and Barba's theater as theatres of affective athleticism strictly along the lines of Meyerhold. The anecdotes point to what Barba calls "the complexity of emotions."¹⁰⁵

Barba's *complexity of the emotions* is parallel to the emotions' complexity in Stanislavski. Both describe something internal that, if it happens, usually happens in a fraction of a second, yet each has devoted years of research and volumes of writing to the question of how the internal gains expression. What Barba brings to the discourse is that emotions' activity is physically concrete and located in a web of stimuli and impulses. Barba's elaboration on the physical action and emotional memory allows him, as Stanislavski's heir, to go more deeply into the latter's investigation of the actor's internal technique.

Impulses

Barba's work functions as a pinnacle of research based on Stanislavski's questions and proposals. Considering the emotions and their position in Barba's methodology is a premise for understanding his position with regard to impulses, a centerpiece of his methodology, distinguishing it from many others.

Eliminating the gap between internal image and expression, between thought and action, between body and mind, eliminating mimesis in preference to presence requires the speed of primary impulses. This understanding of the value of impulses is at the core of Grotowski's pedagogy. Grotowski writes:

The education of the actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process [the integration of the actor's psychic and bodily powers]. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between

inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses.¹⁰⁶

It is possible to see emotions, or what Stanislavski called “inner poetry,” as connected to action through impulses, and then carried on those impulses, travelling towards performance. Impulses fill the gap between thought and action, emotion and expression. This is what Wethal means by “intellectual choreography.” At the very core of pre-expressivity are the impulses. Impulses connect to action because they trigger actual movement; they carry information between internal and external mechanisms, motivated by both internal and external stimuli.

Barba’s research into the linkage between the actor’s internal and external levels of organization has led to a kind of actor’s neurology in which actions and thoughts are connected by the impulses and gain expression. Though Barba does not engage in excessive clinical talk, he uses just enough to locate the anatomy of something as ephemeral as action. Speaking to a group of actors in a workshop, Barba made the following observations:

When an experience hits the stomach, we do not ask questions. . . . I asked you to absorb your action during the work in pairs. *The objective was to destroy automatism, to make you concentrate and keep the core of each action, its DNA.* [italics mine] When you passed from the individual level to that of relationships you did not manage to preserve the impulses and internal tensions.¹⁰⁷

Stanislavski wanted to use conscious means to gain access to the subconscious, and Barba has worked out a variety of techniques to do that. By focusing on the impulses, the way messages travel between, and link mind and body, it can be

argued that Barba captures with greater precision than Stanislavski how the actor can consciously participate in a process which, although in daily life is usually involuntary, for the actor, must be voluntary.

The impulses, according to Barba, who bases this aspect of his research on Decroux' mime work, originate in the torso and send energy out to the limbs and the body's other extremities. Former-Decroux student, Deirdre Sklar, aptly calls this aspect of her teacher's work, Promethean Mime.¹⁰⁸ The actor can experience, literally feel the impulses and influence them through thought and action. An impulse is always real and never mimetic because it is a process of a virtually instantaneous communication between brain and body, which in its initial stages, is not subverted by questions of right and wrong, truth or fiction. In this way impulse differs from action. Action can be negated; an action need not be fulfilled. An impulse however cannot be withdrawn. Even if the action is not fulfilled, the impulse to action is still registered within the body-mind. It is organic in that its sources are within its agent, and is organized at the level of self. The question is what is the role of impulse in performance? This understanding of the impulses is for the actor, not the audience, but it is necessary because it underlies performance; it is crucial to the pre-expressive level.

The value placed on impulses emerges from Stanislavski's teachings, and now has become the pinnacle of Barba's contemporary practice. Barba explores the impulses in greater depth than Stanislavski, and uses them to break action down into macro- and micro-actions.¹⁰⁹ He writes:

[M]ovements, if they originate only in the joints – shoulder, elbow wrist, knee, ankle, etc. – do not involve the trunk and therefore do

not change the body's balance. They remain pure gesticulation. They become scenically alive only if they are a prolongation of an impulse or a micro-action which occurs in the spinal column. The same concept is found in the teachings of all masters of 'physical actions', from Stanislavski to Grotowski (even if the 'method of physical actions' is not limited to this aspect only and can imply a detailed composition of internal images).¹¹⁰

In other words, within the body, internal action is material in spite of its invisibility. This further demonstrates the materiality of emotion. Barba continues:

From the foregoing can be drawn a valuable orientation for our craft: we can go down the same street in the opposite direction. Macro-actions, if they are really such and not gesticulations, can be absorbed by the trunk, while their original is preserved. The actions become transformed into impulses, into micro-actions of a nearly immobile body which is acting. This process, according to which the space the action occupies is restricted, can be defined as the absorption of the action.¹¹¹

Barba breaks impulses down into micro- and macro-impulses and reminds actors that they originate in the trunk or torso, and that they are both big and small. The function of the impulses is at the core of the Odin actors' recent work of miniaturizing the broad or acrobatic physical action to justify and adapt non-realistic action into believable performances such that even the smallest details of actors' behavior are justified through highly energetic impulses drawn from actions. This is the area of the Odin's research most likely to have lasting impact on the field beyond the experimental theatre movement because it is valid even in so-called realistic acting.

Extra-Daily

Another value shared between Stanislavski and Barba is what Barba calls *the extra-daily*. What has been described by virtually all of Barba's commentators as uniquely Barba's, the extra-daily actually has its roots in Stanislavski. Barba describes the extra-daily:

The way we use our bodies in life is substantially different from the way we use them in performance. We are not conscious of our daily techniques: we move, we sit, we carry things, we kiss, we agree and disagree with gestures which we believe to be natural but which are in fact culturally determined. . . . The first step in discovering what the principles governing a performer's scenic bios, or life, might be, lies in understanding that the body's daily techniques can be replaced by extra-daily techniques that is, techniques which do not respect the habitual conditionings of the body.¹¹²

From this it can be discerned that the extra-daily is not an anti-naturalistic dramaturgical device. Those who see Barba's productions can identify the extra-daily in actions that do not match the text, that often contradict the text (such as Polly Peachum's grotesque limp or Katrin the Mute's use of her voice both in *Brecht's Ashes II* (1979-84)), but that is not the full meaning of the term. Acting is intrinsically extra-daily. Even in a so-called naturalistic performance the extra-daily is necessary because of the estrangement inherent in the act of performing actions from daily life divorced from the needs and desires usually associated with those actions. The extra-daily is not an aesthetic of performance. It is an aspect of acting arrived at through the actor's recognition that something inherently unnatural is happening when a human stands in front of an audience and behaves as though he or she were in private or was having a fictional experience. Barba calls this "extra-daily" behavior. Rather than hide behind

theatrical strangeness, the extra-daily reveals the self because it helps the actor strip away culturally inscribed daily behavior patterns and clichés. On stage these behavior patterns do not communicate at an energetic, performative level, but rather merely reinforce that which is mundane. The mundane can be seen on any street or in any home, only less believably because banal behavior on stage is without purpose. It is commonly recognized by the continuum of director/pedagogues (Stanislavski, Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, Grotowski, and Barba) that that the actor in performance is behaving differently than he or she does in daily life. This was made clear to Stanislavski at the time of his Finland revelation. Meyerhold's questioning of so-called naturalism also stems from an intuitive understanding of the way the actor on stage is alienated from the habitual behavior practiced in his or her personal life. Meyerhold writes:

In his search for verisimilitude the actor of today concentrates on eliminating his 'self' and tries to create an illusion of life on the stage. Why do they bother to write actors' names on the playbills? . . . Can a man who plays himself on stage really be called a 'performer'? Why mislead the public?

The public comes to the theatre to see the art of man, but what art is there in walking about the stage as oneself? The public expects invention, play-acting and skill. But what it gets is either life or a slavish intimation of life. Surely the art of man on the stage consists in shedding all traces of environment, carefully choosing a mask, donning a decorative costume, and showing off one's brilliant tricks to the public – now as a dancer, now as the intrigant at some masquerade, now as the fool of old Italian comedy, now as a juggler.¹¹³

In his renunciation of naturalism, Meyerhold called for a new actor and new forms constructed out of the conventions of older popular theatre and entertainment. When he eventually stripped these conventions of their aesthetic

heritage, he then moved them towards grotesque styles of stage movement through biomechanical training. Although this is not yet Barba's Theatre Anthropology, Meyerhold was really calling for the extra-daily without naming it as such. Meyerhold wrote, "The grotesque has its own attitude towards the outward appearance of life. The grotesque deepens life's outward appearance to the point where it ceases to appear merely natural."¹¹⁴ The most significant difference between Barba's extra-daily and Meyerhold's grotesque stylization and his model, the puppet, is that Meyerhold's project was rooted in a reaction against naturalism, whereas for Barba the extra-daily is at the basis of the technique of any actor in any genre.¹¹⁵ That is why Stanislavski's recognition (at the time of his Finland revelation) of something extra-daily about acting is so important. The extra-daily is integral to actor training and the passage from pre-expressivity to expression.¹¹⁶

The extra-daily also enables actors to deconstruct daily behavior in their training to rediscover its mechanics for use on the stage. In this way theatrical movement becomes a kind of second nature. In *Building a Character* Stanislavski explains that as soon as his students go on stage they forget how to walk—something they have been doing all their lives. He is demonstrating the extreme difference between daily and theatrical behavior. He is also talking, not only about extra-daily behavior, but also about the responsibility of the actor to make such behavior second nature. Stanislavski's notion of "second nature" parallels the extra-daily. Stanislavski writes:

We may admit that these movements [dancers' poses, gestures without "any inner stimulus to action"] are fluent, but they are also

vacant and unintelligent. . . . Let us rather try to adapt these stage conventions, these poses and gestures to the carrying out of some vital purpose, the projection of some inner experience. Then the gesture ceases to be just a gesture, it is converted into real action with purpose and content.

There are other kinds of dancers and actors than the ones we have discussed. They have worked out for themselves a permanently fixed kind of plasticity and they pay no further attention to that side of their physical actions. Their motion has become for them part of their being, their individual quality, *second nature*. [italics mine] Ballerinas and actors of this type cannot move except with fluidity.¹¹⁷

Julia Varley discusses the function of second nature in her work demonstration video, the *Dead Brother*.

All this work on details, repeating and refining them is the most important phase of the creative process. It is what we call elaboration. It is here that the unity and organicity between text and action is achieved allowing the life to slowly reappear through all this artificiality, finding a second nature. It is the moment in which the performance decides for itself.¹¹⁸

Barba goes beyond second nature to problematize the concept of training by using a politically charged term, one that implies the occupation of one nation by another, *colonization*:

The social use of our body is necessarily the product of a culture: the body has been accultured and colonized. . . . In order to find the other it must detach itself from its models. It must inevitably direct itself towards a new form of “culture” and undergo the latter’s “colonization.” . . . The training exercises represent this “second colonization.”¹¹⁹

Barba’s penchant for deploying a metaphor to describe something complex can be troubling. Here, by viewing the actor’s body as a territory and theatre as a culture, the term *colonization* is apt, but it may be little more than a contemporary rewording of what Stanislavski believed a simple truth. *Stanislavski* writes:

Do you ask whether the way you walk on the stage is different from the gait you use on the street? [italics mine]

Yes it is, and for the reason that in life we walk incorrectly whereas on stage we are obliged to walk correctly, as nature intended and in accordance with all her laws. Therein lies the greatest difficulty. . . . In other words, let us learn how to walk all over again from the beginning, both on the stage and off it.¹²⁰

So at the beginning of the discourse on the extra-daily resides the notion that action on stage is different from action in life. Although it replicates life, it must be approached with that difference in mind. Behavior on stage has its laws, and actors are bound by them, whether they agree to them or not.

Pedagogical Lexicons, Oral Transmission, and Theatre Culture

Theatre scholars often have a difficult time justifying the actual personal identities and work of actors in academic writing projects because theatre praxis is both experiential and poetic but somehow not structured in ways that wholly lend themselves to the language of scholarly analysis. Barba asks, “Does Theatre Anthropology have a scientific nature?”¹²¹ Embedded in his answer is his understanding of the paradox of deploying the language of empirical research into the investigation of the creative process. He writes:

The language which one chooses to transmit certain precise, technical, and comprehensible experiences gives birth to numerous misunderstandings. . . . Many people become perplexed when confronted with an apparent contradiction: why precisely at the moment in which we are attempting to *go beyond the obvious knowledge about the theatre*, do words refuse to become scientific, clear, free from ambiguous nuisances? [italics mine]¹²²

The poetics of acting methodology are often transmitted through metaphors for the actor’s process. To write without these metaphors often results in comparison

after comparison without engaging the actual work processes of actors and their mentors. Scholarship about acting rarely goes beyond “obvious knowledge” as Barba suggests. Beyond obvious knowledge lies a web of actors’ identities that makes the paradoxical programmatic in the way that a method is not a method, or the unreal is real, and whereby the fantastic becomes believable. These paradoxes may be alien to many theatre historians who try to quantify and define the work of practitioners whose activities occupy the territory of metaphor, subjectivity, identity, and will not conform to categories, conventions, or genres but rather make and renew traditions.

Each pedagogue in the Stanislavski—Barba continuum shares with the others whole sets of interrelated values. When taken together, they become habitual ways of working—a theatre ethos. In this way of work each communicates these values through what Kuhlman calls a “learner’s special working language,” a language that enable actors to communicate with each other.¹²³

Stanislavski and Barba’s mutual preoccupation with developing a lexicon for actors reflects how communication has been carried out in their work. The group-as-theatre-culture is one significant commonality between the two men. Shared language links the individual to the group through the usage of terms that describe shared work principles. In his proposed introduction to *An Actor Prepares*, which does not appear in the Hapgood’s translation, Stanislavski calls for an actor’s lexicon, “a special learner’s language.”¹²⁴ The following is from the proposed introduction, not found in Hapgood:

My task is to talk to the actor in his own language . . . The terminology I use . . . was not invented by me, I took it from the

practical expressions of student actors; I defined their creative feelings in verbal terms. These are valuable in that they are close to a beginner's comprehension.

Do not look for any scholarly or scientific derivations. We in the theatre have our own lexicon, our own actor's jargon which has been wrought out of life.¹²⁵

Grotowski also talked about a "language of beginners."¹²⁶ The "actor's jargon" functions to help actors specifically. The existence of a unique language is one way to identify a culture. Using the specialized language is a significant means of establishing and maintaining a professional culture.

Barba discusses the problems surrounding books on acting and their language and talks about the tendency in the history of culture in which "daring clusters of words like 'electrical current', 'electro-magnetic waves', 'forces of inertia', 'Oedipus complex' . . . crystallize into conventions."¹²⁷ He points out that these become "common languages."¹²⁸

In the theatre, the groups of people who share the same terminologies are few. There is not much discussion about the performer's practice. The languages of work, which characterize the communication within a group, and which, for its members, are useful professional indications, to outsiders seem prosaic, insignificant, abstruse or purely metaphorical.

One cannot write, speak to the outside world with the conventions of one's own working language.

But at the same time, if one wants to relate a concrete experience which is not known to everybody, one must shun prefabricated definitions, the verbal networks which are only a parasitic imitation of the languages of other sciences and other learning.

The exact languages of the sciences, when transposed in order to give the effect of concreteness or the appearance of seriousness to one's argument, become a screen which is even more opaque than lyrical, suggestive, or emotive images.

The principal danger does not reside in the unavoidable risk of equivocation, but in the continuous reference to an ostensible scientific clarity which exploits what is already known and spares the researcher one of the most fertile of efforts: that of also searching for one's own words.¹²⁹

This “searching for one's own words” characterizes Stanislavski's and Barba's work and sets their theatres apart from mainstream theatre as theatre cultures who are unique not only in their work but in their solitude and autonomy. Specialized language then becomes a determinant of autonomous culture.

Much of what makes Barba's language unique he shares with Stanislavski.

Stanislavski writes:

We have our own theatrical lexicon and our actors' jargon, which life itself has created. To be sure, we do make use of scholarly words—for example, “the subconscious” and “intuition”—but they are used by us not in a philosophical, but rather in a simple workaday meaning. It's not our fault the domain of stage art is disdained by scholars, that it has remained unexplored and that we have not been given the words for practical work. We had to do what we could, so to speak, with home-made means.¹³⁰

Just as Stanislavski's mission was to create a lexicon for actors, so is Barba's.

Barba's terms are more often also the “workaday” language of the Odin's workrooms than the terms of intellectual and academic study. The actor's lexicon is often passed from actor to actor without being fully analyzed in scholarship. The oral transmission of Stanislavski's methodology through “workaday” language reflects not only on the importance of Boleslavski and the network of Moscow Art actors who taught various versions of the System, but as Carnicke points out, it also demonstrates the function of oral tradition in the transmission of actors' methodology in general.

Carnicke, who makes a strong case for the value of oral transmission in theatre historiography, also shows that the lexicons emerging from the site of oral transmission reflect what is deemed practicable knowledge.

Because acting training most often works through active practice in the classroom, and not through the written word, Boleslavsky's linguistic abilities actively promoted a theatrical jargon that can be traced in Lee Strasberg's vocabulary at his sessions at the Actor's Studio (New York). Oral transmission of knowledge about Stanislavski often holds greater authority among theatre practitioners than do his books. While most theatre students own Stanislavski's books, they seldom read them. Instead they place the books on their shelves as totems of great theatre. As late as 1961, Strasberg criticized the critics who claimed that his practice of theatre did not reflect what we find in Stanislavski's books. "Our knowledge of [Stanislavski] came from the practice, not from the books."¹³¹

Similarly, that is why what Odin actors and those who watch their training and rehearsal process say about Barba is of great importance. Odin actors do not necessarily read Barba's books, yet a significant portion of his methodology, some of which can be found in his books, is based on their utterances about their practical work. These utterances are central to how Barba influences the field. Terms like *oppositions*, *sats*, *resistance*, *refusal*, *reduction*, *macro-* and *micro-impulses*, *elaboration*, *extra-daily*, and *pre-expressivity* gradually gain usage outside of the Odin and ISTA, for instance in the writings of Phillip Zarrilli (on contemporary acting methodologies), Richard Schechner (on theatre anthropology), and Annelis Kuhlman (on Stanislavski). The terms' meanings capture the actor's work on contemporary notions in the theatre such as presence and absence, or energy and its displacement, and are means by which actor-oriented theatrical composition becomes a reality. But few performers actually

borrow from Barba the way they do from Stanislavski. Although theatre scholars often use Barba's language to evaluate his work, they rarely apply it to that of others. Notable exceptions are Per Brask (on Richard Fowler), Eelka Lampe (on Rachel Rosenthal), and Lisa Wolford (on Grotowski). But the terms are the expression of work principles drawn from rehearsal and training rooms and are part of Barba's own assiduous study of and communication with actors. Within the network of theatre groups influenced by Barba, they are already part of an oral tradition.

Problems arise when actors' working language is used as a means of interpreting a performance. Both performance and methodology become confused with each other and then contaminated by misunderstandings. When terms harvested from actors' lexicons become part of intellectual or cultural polemics designed to associate those who speak this working language with ideological imperatives, another confusion sets in. Examples of such polemics are Rustom Bharucha's *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* and Erika Munk's "The Rites of Women" with regard to Barba, or Natalie Crohn Schmitt's *Actors and Onlookers; Theater and Twentieth Century Scientific Views of Nature* which is veiled attack on Stanislavski's work through a conflation of his public identity with naturalism (the literary theory). It is not necessary to confuse Barba or Stanislavski's working language with their socio-political beliefs. It is true that each man's politics and work are interrelated, but once the work has begun, it is unique unto itself, regardless of the conditions outside the rehearsal room.

Stanislavski's Solitude—Barba's Isolation

Ironically Stanislavski's forced solitude was greater, more engulfing, and lonelier than the kind of solitude which both Grotowski and Barba voluntarily imposed upon themselves as a desirable work condition. Stanislavski's solitude may have helped more than it hindered the development of his work on actor training, especially if the anecdotes about the development of the Method of Physical Actions found in Toporkov's *Stanislavski in Rehearsal* are taken into consideration. The work was conducted in a private studio in his own home, out of the eyes not only of the public, but also of the main branch of the Moscow Art Theatre. The political state of affairs, both outside and inside the Art Theatre, may make it difficult now to see Stanislavski and, for that matter, Meyerhold, as men who secluded themselves in theatre studios—as men in search of a personal and professional connection to theatre rather than as participants in the mainstream of cultural events shaped and controlled by the ideologies of Bolshevism, Stalinism, and socialist realism. Working in solitude connects Stanislavski to Barba because, as a personal renunciation of theatre's obligation to serve any socio-political agenda and a choice to privilege artistic agendas, it is integral to theatre culture. Ultimately neither Stanislavski nor Meyerhold had a choice, but it is possible that each made his most profound discoveries and long-term contribution to the art of acting while in relative exile.

In a recent interview Barba gives his views on the significance of Stanislavski's solitude:

SB: You point out that many people like Stanislavski were isolated. In order to make theatre they had to isolate themselves.

EB: This was not necessarily their wish, but rather circumstances and especially their need to concentrate on what was essential led them to separate themselves from the accepted criteria and practices of their contemporaries. . . . I suppose that a feeling of solitude constantly accompanied Stanislavski, or of being an outsider, since he was not able to become a professional actor within the demands of the craft of his time. When he was still an amateur, he wanted to be an actor at the Mali Theatre. Within a very short time, he noticed that he had trouble with the voice. He could not meet up to the standards necessary to perform at the Mali. He was deeply wounded by this harsh experience and realized that he would not be able to fit himself into the established norms and demands of the theatrical environment of the time. The only possibility was to shape his own niche.

He meets Nemirovich-Danchenko and founds The Art Theatre, thus establishing an alliance and a collaboration based on theatrical expertise and artistic views. But, along with his scenic skills, Stanislavski brought this personal wound of professional inadequacy with him. And this determined the type of questions which harassed him and pushed him into very specific and practical solutions—questions dealing with an actor’s creativity, *how* to instigate a process of authenticity and sincerity, how to present such a process to the spectators and allow them to experience it. . . . But Nemirovich-Danchenko does not share this preoccupation. Stanislavski has to confront these questions alone. He begins to invent a practice, create training, and do all these exercises. But all this was just a means of learning how to set in motion a process of scenic presence, which he felt was constantly escaping him.

Of course Nemirovich-Danchenko (as well as the majority of other theatre artists, even the actors of The Art Theatre) objected to and opposed, what they considered, Stanislavski’s manias. He was refused [financial] support. So the studios Stanislavski opened were paid out of his own pocket. It is not surprising that he felt isolated within his own theatre. . . . I believe circumstances decided for him. Stanislavski was not an introverted person who wanted to have a small stage. Many factors coincided: his position at The Art Theatre, his relation with Nemirovich-Danchenko, his failure as an actor, his illness, and the golden seclusion cunningly imposed on him by the Stalinist regime. It is touching to see how

he tried to keep his body and soul alive, continuing to work in the sarcophagus Stalin boxed him into.¹³²

Barba's brief history of Stanislavski is telling.

Whereas Stanislavski's isolation was forced upon him, Barba chose isolation. His retreat from Oslo to Holstebro, and his decision to subsist there with the Odin, has resulted in a career spent in virtual isolation (although through touring and ISTA, Barba has also had his fair share of exposure). The choice of isolation was not imposed but chosen as the best possible work situation. This decision was inspired to a significant degree by Grotowski. The latter's isolation, initially a by-product of the circumstances under which he entered the profession in Poland, deepened over his career as he chose more and more remote locations in which to work, at the same time imposing severe restrictions upon his colleagues' contact with the outside world.¹³³ Unlike Grotowski, Barba chose isolation. Originally in Oslo, Odin Teatret's isolation was enforced through the rigid work conditions Barba imposed (see Chapter One for Barba's discussion of "A Rift Theatre"), but after the move to Holstebro, isolation was a given by virtue of geographical conditions—Holstebro is by nature removed from the mainstream. Stanislavski's and Barba's careers demonstrate that they were citizens not of their homeland, but of a theatre culture in what Barba calls an archipelago of floating islands. This image embodies a principle that Barba holds central to the Third Theatre, populated by what he calls the travelers of speed, who embrace his "way of refusal." Barba writes, "our action through theatre springs from an attitude towards existence and has its roots in one transnational and transcultural country."¹³⁴

This identification with and commitment to a “transnational” culture is the clearest evidence that the roots of Barba’s career were in Stanislavski’s experiences. It is one aspect of what Barba means when he speaks of Stanislavski as his ancestor.¹³⁵ Solitude, whether imposed or chosen, separates the theatre practitioner from the mainstream in such a way as to promote an independent culture of the theatre through collectivity, autodidacticism, and autonomy. As an independent culture, it is a program of resistance without a discernible agenda, except in its function as an apparatus of theatrical creation.

¹ Annelis Kuhlmann, “Concepts in Stanislavski’s Terminology” in *Knowledge is a Matter of Doing*. Pentti Paavolinen and Ana Ala-Korpela, eds. (Helsinki: Acta Scenica 1, Teak, 1995).

² A conversation with the author, August, 1997.

³ Jean-Marie Pradier, “The Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium or the Mind-Body Islands” in *Nordic Theatre Studies*. vol. 9, ed. Kacke Götrick (Stockholm: Universitetet i Bergen, 1996), 61.

⁴ Konstantin Stanislavski in Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: a Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 345.

⁵ Norris Houghton, *Moscow Rehearsals: The Golden Age of the Soviet Theatre*. (New York: Evergreen, 1962 (first published 1936)), 117.

⁶ In her pedagogical videotape, *Traces in the Snow*, dir. Torgeir Wethal. Holstebro: Athen and Odin Teatret Film, (1994), Roberta Carreri proposes that a principle is frame within which an actor may train.

⁷ Eugenio Barba, *The Whispering Winds in Theatre and Dance*. Video from 1996 Copenhagen ISTA. (Holstebro: Odin Teatret, 1996).

⁸ Eugenio Barba, “The Way of Refusal: the Theatre’s Body-in-Life” *New Theatre Quarterly*. vol. IV. no. 16, (November 1988): 292-93.

⁹ Konstantin Stanislavski in Josh Logan's Introduction to Konstantin Stanislavski *Building a Character*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), xiv.

¹⁰ Although the actual meaning of the term *the self* can be debated eternally, and in contemporary studies of theatre and critical theory *the self* is a notion that has come under severe scrutiny by such notables as Antonin Artaud, Jacques Derrida, or Phillip Auslander, Stanislavski's understanding of the self was of his time and not this one—it was probably a composite of ideas harvested from the Romantic theories of his time. Barba's notion of *the self* seems to resemble Grotowski's in that it is an essential aspect of the actor's identity that is unaffected by the social and cultural world in which the actor lives, an archetype of the person, the self as opposed to the citizen. Søren Kierkegaard gives a useful although rather opaque definition in *The Sickness unto Death*. ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, 13 that I find appropriate to this study. "The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating to itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating to itself."

¹² Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1984), 46.

¹³ *Ibid.* 123-24.

¹⁴ Pradier explains, "I recall the creation of the notion of pre-expressivity in 1979, when during a colloquium in Karpacz (Poland), Eugenio Barba met this famous and atypical biologist [Henri Laborit] and, thanks to him, discovered the idea of "levels of organization." See Jean-Marie Pradier, "The Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium or the Mind-Body Islands" in *Nordic Theatre Studies*. vol. 9, ed. Kacke Götrick. (Stockholm: Universitetet i Bergen, 1996), 60.

¹⁵ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 10.

¹⁶ Leo Sykes, "Interview" in Appendix to *Directing through Montage: A Chronological Look at the Construction of Performance through the Creation and Combination of its Various Elements*. Typescript. Unpublished. (Copenhagen, 1996), 16-17.

¹⁷ Eugenio Barba in Seth Baumrin, "My Grandfather Konstantin Sergeievich: Interview with Eugenio Barba" *Mime Journal*, (1998/1999), 33.

¹⁸ Roberta Carreri in Seth Baumrin, *Journal of Roberta Carreri's New York Workshop*. Typescript. Unpublished. (New York, 1993).

¹⁹ Konstantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*. trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), 348.

²⁰ See Konstantin Stanislavski in Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: a Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 174-75. A portion of the Stanislavski letter reads:

The committee is wrong if it thinks that the director's preparatory work in the study is necessary, as previously, when he alone decided the whole plan and all the details of the production, wrote the *mise en scène* and answered all the actors [sic] questions for them. The director is no longer king, as before, when the actors possessed no clear individuality. . . . Above all the Art Theatre must not stop experimenting. What is called the director's inefficiency is more often than not attributable to the cast. For instance the absence of a method among those playing the major roles during rehearsals arises from *our lack of professional artistic ethics*. [italics mine]

²¹ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: a Biography*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 175.

²² Ibid. 312.

²³ Ibid. 313.

²⁴ Fernando Taviani, "The Odin Story" in Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*. trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch, and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 270-71.

²⁵ Ibid. 272.

²⁶ In *Towards a Third Theatre*, 45-63, Ian Watson tracks the changes in Odin's training methodology and divides them into specific periods. He divides them into physical and vocal training, subdividing physical training as follows: "Beginnings (1964-1968)," "Composition exercises and individual rhythm training (1968-1972)," "Individual training and Barba's exit from the studio (1972-1974)," "Requisites in the training (1974-1975)," "Apprentices (1974-1977)," "A pause in the training (1976-1977)," "The fishtank (1977-1981)," and "Principles East and West (1981-1991)"—he only devotes one section to vocal training.

²⁷ Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre*. (London: Routledge. 1994), 50-53.

²⁸ Ibid. 50-53.

²⁹ Torgeir Wethal, in an interview with the author, (August 1997).

³⁰ Barba's adoption of Bohr's coat of arms as Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium's logo portraying a red and black yin and yang symbol, above which is inscribed *contraria sunt complementa* (opposites are complementary), is tied to Barba's principle of opposition in which the body struggles against fields of resistance such as gravity or inertia, accumulating energy while moving away from its object. Physical expression results from the tension created by these opposites in action. Bohr's maxim supersedes Brecht's "not . . . But." The invocation of the principle of complementarity and the coupling of theatre with anthropology (not cultural anthropology but theatre anthropology), show that, though it is not Barba's intention to reduce theatre to a cold science, he is not reluctant to borrow images from science when it might be helpful.

³¹ Alma Law and Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia*. (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 1996), 5-6.

³² *Ibid.* 5-6.

³³ Annelis Kuhlmann, in a conversation with the author, August 1997.

³⁴ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), 244.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 244-45.

³⁶ It is important to remember that this call for theatre ethics was voiced with equal passion by Stanislavski's two most devoted disciples, Sulerzhitski and Vakhtangov.

³⁷ Konstantin Stanislavski in Sharon Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*. (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998), 107.

³⁸ It is probably the case that between impulse and motion, the information is carried by neurotransmitters, but for the purpose of this study, it is sufficient to focus on impulses.

³⁹ Lluís Masgrau, in an interview with the author, (August 1997).

⁴⁰ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 39.

⁴¹ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), 242.

⁴² Evgeny Vakhtangov in Lyubov Vendrovskaya and Galina Kaptereva, eds. *Evgeny Vakhtangov*. trans. Doris Bradbury. (Moscow: Progressive Publishers, 1982), 82-83.

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- ⁴³ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*. ed. Eugenio Barba. (Kent: Methuen 1984), 47.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 238-41.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 238-41.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 243-44.
- ⁴⁷ Eugenio Barba, Videotape. *In Search of Theatre*. dir. By L. Ripa di Meana for RAI, Italian Television (1974).
- ⁴⁸ Janne Risum, *The Odin Actors*. Typescript. Unpublished. (Århus, 1995), 11.
- ⁴⁹ Eugenio Barba in Seth Baumrin, "My Grandfather Konstantin Sergeievich: Interview with Eugenio Barba" in *Mime Journal*, (1998/1999), 50.
- ⁵⁰ Fernando Taviani, "The Odin Story" in Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*. trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 256-57.
- ⁵¹ Julia Varley, *The Dead Brother*. Videoproduction by Claudio Coliberti. (Holstebro: Odin Teatret Film, 1993).
- ⁵² Stanislavski jokingly refers to himself as "the boss" when, while observing Moscow Art Theatre director Nikolai Gorchakov's rehearsal of *The Sisters Gérard*, others present deferred to his authority in all matters even though it was Gorchakov's rehearsal. Nikolai M. Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs*. trans. Miriam Goldina. (New York: Limelight, 1991), 286.
- ⁵³ Anatoly Smeliansky, *Is Comrade Bulgakov Dead?* trans. Arch Tait. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 200.
- ⁵⁴ Konstantin Stanislavski in Nikolai Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs*. trans. Miriam Goldina. (New York: Limelight, 1991), 382.
- ⁵⁵ Nikolai Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs*. trans. Miriam Goldina. (New York: Limelight, 1991), 29-31.
- ⁵⁶ Vasily Osipovich Toporkov, *Stanislavsky in Rehearsal*. trans. Christine Edwards. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1979), 104.
- ⁵⁷ Julia Varley, "'Subscore': a Word that is Useful – but Wrong." *New Theatre Quarterly*. vol. xi, no. 42, (May 1995): 174.

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- ⁵⁸ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1984), 14.
- ⁵⁹ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 14.
- ⁶⁰ Eugenio Barba, "The Third Theatre: a Legacy from Us to Ourselves." *New Theatre Quarterly*. vol. VIII. no. 29, (November 1992): 3-9.
- ⁶¹ See for example Zeami's program for the seven-year-old child entering the profession in J. Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu, trans. and eds. *On the Art of the No Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. It is full of dos and don'ts and very rigid, but it is a premise for freedom in performance, for manifesting those *Noh* drama values such as *yugen* (grace) and *hana* (the flower).
- ⁶² Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 73.
- ⁶³ Eugenio Barba in Seth Baumrin, "My Grandfather Konstantin Sergeievich: Interview with Eugenio Barba." *Mime Journal*, (1998/1999), 50, 51.
- ⁶⁴ Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*. trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 18-19.
- ⁶⁵ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 62.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 62.
- ⁶⁷ Roberta Carreri in Seth Baumrin, *Journal of Roberta Carreri's New York Workshop*. Typescript. Unpublished. (New York, 1993).
- ⁶⁸ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), 250-53.
- ⁶⁹ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), 256.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 35.
- ⁷¹ In a discussion with the author in August 1997, Barba said that they called their early acrobatic exercises *biomechanics*, but that they based that decision on the well-known still photographs of Biomechanics. Given what he has recently learned about the specificity of the actual Biomechanics, Barba now realizes that the Odin's biomechanics had nothing to do with Meyerhold's Biomechanics.

⁷² Ibid. 37.

⁷³ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 33.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 33.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 33.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 33-34.

⁷⁷ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Haggood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), 38.

⁷⁸ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 34.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 34.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 35.

⁸¹ “Home-made” is the Stanislavski spirit—the spirit of the amateur in the Stanislavski tradition. For a detailed history of the progression of change in the Odin’s training regimen see Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 41-72.

⁸² Eugenio Barba, “Words and Presence.” *Theatre: Solitude Craft Revolt*, ed. Luis Masgrau. trans. Judy Barba. (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain, 1999), 54.

⁸³ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 42.

⁸⁴ For the expression “myth of technique” see Eugenio Barba, “Words and Presence.” *Theatre: Solitude Craft Revolt*, ed. Luis Masgrau. trans. Judy Barba. (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain, 1999), 54.

⁸⁵ Eugenio Barba, “The Pedagogical Paradox: Learning to Learn.” *Theatre: Solitude Craft Revolt*, ed. Luis Masgrau. trans. Judy Barba. (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain, 1999), 57.

⁸⁶ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 42.

⁸⁷ Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*. trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 56.

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- ⁸⁸ Torgeir Wethal, in an interview with the author, August 1997.
- ⁸⁹ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*. ed. Eugenio Barba. (Kent: Methuen, 1984), 206-07.
- ⁹⁰ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1984), 166.
- ⁹¹ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 162.
- ⁹² *Ibid.* 53.
- ⁹³ Eugenio Barba, "An Amulet made of Memory; The Significance of Exercises in the Actor's Dramaturgy." *The Drama Review*. 41, 4 (Winter, 1997): 127.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 128.
- ⁹⁵ Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*. trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 100-01.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 100-01.
- ⁹⁷ Although Miriam Goldman's translation of Gorchakov's *Stanislavski Directs* does use the term improvisation, it is hard to say whether the usage was hers or Gorchakov's, but it was probably not Stanislavski's.
- ⁹⁸ Sharon Carnicke, correspondence with the author. July, 1998.
- ⁹⁹ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1984), 165.
- ¹⁰⁰ Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*. trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 91-92.
- ¹⁰¹ Torgeir Wethal in Erik Exe Christoffersen, *The Actor's Way*. trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1994), 44-45.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.* 44-45.
- ¹⁰³ Jerzy Grotowski, "From the Theatre Company to Art as a Vehicle" in Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*. (London: Routledge, 1995), 122.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 122-23.

¹⁰⁵ Eugenio Barba, "An Amulet made of memory; The Significance of Exercises in the Actor's Dramaturgy." *The Drama Review*. 41, 4 (Winter 1997): 130.

¹⁰⁶ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*. ed. Eugenio Barba. (Kent: Methuen, 1984), 16.

¹⁰⁷ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 165.

¹⁰⁸ For Decroux' term *Promethean Mime* see Deirdre Sklar, "Etienne Decroux's Promethean Mime" in Zarrilli, Phillip B. ed. *Acting (Re)Considered: Theories and Practices*. (New York: Routledge, 1995).

¹⁰⁹ See Nikolai M. Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs*. trans. Goldina Miriam. (New York: Limelight, 1991), 70, and Konstantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), 223-233.

¹¹⁰ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 28.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 28.

¹¹² Eugenio Barba, "Introduction" in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*. trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge. 1991), 9.

¹¹³ Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Meyerhold on Theatre*. trans. and ed. Edward Braun. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 130.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 139.

¹¹⁵ It is inaccurate to relate Meyerhold's notion of stylization to Barba's extra-daily. Stanislavski speaks of Meyerhold (and his generation of theatre artists) in *My Life in Art*. See Konstantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*. trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), 455-57.

So long as the physical culture of the body assists the main creative tasks of art, i.e., to convey human emotions in an artistic form, I welcome whole-heartedly the new expressive achievements of the contemporary actor. But the moment physical culture becomes an end in itself in art, the moment it begins to slow down the creative process and engenders a split between spiritual desire and conventions of external acting, the moment it suppresses feelings and experiences, I become an ardent opponent of these fine new

achievements. . . . The outward must be justified by emotion, and only then can it move the spectator.

The new theatre has not produced a single actor-creator who is strong in portraying human emotion, nor has it worked out a single method, instituted anything resembling a search in the sphere of inner technique or built up any brilliant ensemble. In a word, there is not a single achievement in the sphere of spiritual creativeness.

It was this absence of a sphere of “spiritual creativeness” that was eventually filled, first by Grotowski, then Barba and their actors.

¹¹⁶ It was not until later in his career that Meyerhold began to strip actor training away from aesthetics, which he did in his work on Biomechanics. And then, perhaps surprisingly for some, according to Ann Muza in her “Meyerhold at Rehearsal: New Materials on Meyerhold’s Work with Actors” in *Theatre Topics*, vol. 6, 1, (March 1996), he was able to deploy principles from biomechanical training in his later, decidedly more realistic productions.

¹¹⁷ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), 45-47.

¹¹⁸ Julia Varley, *The Dead Brother*. Videoproduction by Claudio Coloberti. (Holstebro: Odin Teatret, 1993).

¹¹⁹ Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*. trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch, and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 95-96.

¹²⁰ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), 45-47.

¹²¹ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 39-40.

¹²² Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 39-40.

¹²³ Annelis Kuhlman, “Concepts in Stanislavski’s Terminology” in *Knowledge is a Matter of Doing*. eds. Pentti Paavolinen and Ana Ala-Korpela. (Helsinki: Acta Scenica 1, Teak, 1995), 93.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 93.

¹²⁵ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Stanislavski’s Legacy*. trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1958), 30.

¹²⁶ Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Jerzy Grotowski*. (London: Methuen, 1985), 110.

¹²⁷ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, trans. Richard Fowler. (London: Routledge, 1995), 41.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 41.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* 41.

¹³⁰ Konstantin Stanislavski in Burnet M. Hobgood, "Stanislavski's Preface to *An Actor Prepares* and the Persona of Torstov." *Theatre Journal*, (May 1991): 230.

¹³¹ Sharon Carnicke, "Boleslavsky in America" in Laurence Senelick. ed. *Wandering Stars: Russian Émigré Theatre, 1905-1940*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 123.

¹³² Eugenio Barba in Seth Baumrin, "My Grandfather Konstantin Sergeievich: Interview with Eugenio Barba." in *Mime Journal*, (1998/1999), 32.

¹³³ See Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Jerzy Grotowski*. (London: Methuen, 1985). for an account of Grotowski's entrée into the theatre.

¹³⁴ Eugenio Barba, *Beyond the Floating Islands*. trans. Judy Barba, Richard Fowler, Jerrold C. Rodesch, and Saul Shapiro. (New York: PAJ, 1986), 10-11.

¹³⁵ Eugenio Barba, "The Way of Refusal: the Theatre's Body-in-Life." *New Theatre Quarterly*. vol. IV, no. 16 (November 1988): 292. See also Seth Baumrin, "My Grandfather Konstantin Sergeievich: Interview with Eugenio Barba." *Mime Journal*, 1999.

Appendix A

My Exposure to the Odin

My contact with Barba and the Odin is detailed in the following chronology:

- 1) March 1984. LaMama. I see *Brecht's Ashes*, *The Million*, and Barba, Roberta Carreri, Iben Rasmussen, and Toni Cotts in a work demonstration. Richard Schechner introduces me to Barba and I invite him to speak at Hunter College
- 2) March 1984. Barba speaks as the guest of the Hunter Theatre Club at Hunter College.
- 3) March 1985. I visit Odin Teatret in Holstebro, Denmark as an observer for one month. I see the final eleven rehearsal and the premiere performance of *The Gospel According to Oxyrhincus*, two productions from Iben Rasmussen's group, FARFA, *Wounded by the Wind and Marriage with God*, and Richard Fowler's Canada Project, *Wait for the Dawn*. At that time both FARFA and the Canada Project were autonomous theatre groups beneath the umbrella of the Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium, which also umbrellas the Odin. Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium is the pedagogical and research institute, founded by Barba and his colleagues which unites their activities into the kind of cultural project the municipality of Holstebro and the Danish Ministry of Culture support. I also watch daily training. I travel to Århus to see the beginnings of Tage Larsen and Anna Lica's Teatret Yorick with their work *Madame Bovary Downtown*.

- 4) July 1985. Barba visits New York in the hope of booking *The Gospel According to Oxyrhincus* at the Episcopal Church, St. John the Divine—a project which never materialized. He visits me at my job at a rasp and file warehouse and at a rehearsal of my group, Five Moon Theatre's *Romeo and Juliet*, and watches Ellen Stutman's "Banished" monologue, which she and I have adapted to a Kendo sword training exercise. He walks down Broadway with us for one hour and talks about how we can train our voices for the highly technical work of using the weapons while speaking the text.
- 5) February 1988. I produce Larsen and Lica's *Madame Bovary Downtown* along with their work demonstration at Brooklyn College's Center for the Performing Arts.
- 6) August 1988. My colleague, actor Vernice Miller and I take our *Medea; Nine Night* to Holstebro to perform at Odin Teatret; we remain for three weeks as observers. We see four rehearsals of Barba's *Talabot* which, at that time was one year away from its premiere, Carreri and Barba's *Judith* in its final stages of rehearsal, and a children's theatre piece. We also watch Larsen and Lica's daily training.
- 7) June 1992. I return to Holstebro in June 1992, to do research for two articles on Barba. At this point I have just completed my first year of studies as a doctoral student in the Ph.D. Program in Theatre at the City University of New York. I watch seven rehearsals of *Kaosmos* in its early stages of conception, two years before it is to open, three performances of Else-Marie Laukvik's *Memoria*, one

performance of Iben Rasmussen's *Itsi-Bitsi* and Julia Varley's work demonstration *The Dead Brother*.

- 8) August 1992. I return at the end of that summer to invite and arrange for Roberta Carreri to come to New York to perform *Judith*, her work demonstration *Traces in the Snow*, and to give a two week workshop for actors. I am an observer at Larsen and Lica's training for their students at Nordiskeaterskole in Århus, and watch rehearsals for the production they are directing their students in, *38 Timer*, which is about the Hindenberg disaster.
- 9) January 1993. Roberta Carreri comes to New York for three weeks to perform *Judith*, *Traces in the Snow* and to give her workshop, "Advanced Corporal Training for the Actor." People travel from Toronto, Boston, and Philadelphia to see the work. Carreri is exposed to various New York Arts milieus; the most sincerely attentive hosts are a group of Flamenco dancers who had spent the year with Miller's and my Five Moon Theatre engaged in pedagogical work. The event is a strange kind of success. Many theatre artists make vital and lasting connections during Carreri's stay; many American groups doing similar work finally meet each other. Two critics come to the performances but neither writes a review. One critic says she cannot write about Carreri's work because we have not provided her with any "context." The other critic politely says, "You don't want me to review this. Roberta is a great actress, but she should get a better director." The acting workshop brings together members of Five Moon Theatre, Stacy Klein's Double Edge Theatre, The Bond Street Theatre, the Living Theatre, and Richard Schechner's East Coast Artists.

- 10) 1993-96. My colleague, Vernice Miller, commutes between New York and Denmark, touring our work, *Mother Knot*. She participates in three actor workshops with Roberta Carreri and begins her own actor training workshops in New York while acting in Schechner's East Coast Artists productions.
- 11) August 1993. I go to Philadelphia to see Julia Varley and Barba's *The Castle of Holstebro* which was presented as part of the tribute to Ettiennne Decroux organized by ATHE (Association for Theatre Education). There is no time for talk, just a hug, hello, and goodbye.
- 12) September 1996. I travel to Montreal for a day to see a performance of *Kaosmos*, watch a work demonstration by Torgeir Wethal, and a panel discussion with all the Odin actors. This is produced by the theatre group Carbone 14 and the University of Montreal. I have lunch with Odin Actor Isabel Ubeda and spend an hour and a half with Barba before the evening performance. These conversations along with Wethal's work demonstration help me to understand how I had been misunderstanding the Odin methodology for years, seeing it only as a kind of dynamic physicality which reached the spectator's viscera. What I had overlooked for so long is the way the work reached back into the actor's own viscera to make this relationship with the audience possible.
- 13) August 1997. I spend three weeks in Holstebro watching the second round of preliminary rehearsals of the new work, *Mythos*, a considerable amount of vocal training and rehearsals for the street theatre or parade, *Ode to Progress*, for Holstebro's annual *Festuge* in late August.

Appendix B

Actors' Biographies

ELSE MARIE LAUKVIK was born in 1944 in Oslo, Norway. She was one of the five young people accepted to work with the then unknown Eugenio Barba in Oslo in 1964. Else Marie followed the group to Holstebro, Denmark. Her experiences as an actor are published in *The Actor's Way* edited by Erik Exe Christoffersen. Among Else Marie's various experiences is her work as director for Teatro Marquez in Århus, Denmark.

TORGEIR WETHAL was born in 1946 in Oslo, Norway. He has taken part in all of Odin Teatret's collective performances since the beginning in 1964. His experiences as an actor are published in *The Actor's Way* edited by Erik Exe Christoffersen. Torgeir is in charge of the production of Odin Teatret Film and has directed several films about the group's performances as well as films on the work of Decroux, Ciésłak, and Odin Teatret's Actors.

IBEN NAGEL RASMUSSEN was born in 1946 in Copenhagen, Denmark. She was the first actor to join the theatre after its arrival in Holstebro in 1966. Her experiences as an actor are published in *The Actor's Way* edited by Erik Exe Christoffersen. Iben's main pedagogical project is a yearly gathering of actors from different countries who share their artistic experiences as well as create a performance which takes the name of the group, "Vindenes Bro" (*The Bridge of Winds*).

TAGE LARSEN was born in 1949 in Århus, Denmark. He started at Odin Teatret in 1971 as a "helping hand," and soon was accepted as an actor. Tired of theatre life, he took a break in 1974, but returned to it almost immediately. He remained with Odin Teatret until 1987 when he started his own group, Yorick Teatret. Tage also taught at the Nordisk Teater Skole in Århus. In 1997, he once again returned to Odin Teatret.

ROBERTA CARRERI was born in 1953 in Milan, Italy. She joined Odin Teatret in 1974 during the group's permanence in Carpignano, Italy. Her experiences as an actor are published in *The Actor's Way* edited by Erik Exe Christoffersen. Roberta gives workshops for actors all over the world along with her work demonstration, a professional autobiography, called *Traces in The Snow*. Twice a year she leads Odin Week in Holstebro.

JULIA VARLEY was born in 1954 in London, England. She started at Odin Teatret in 1976. Julia's writing has been published in journals such as *Mime Journal*, *New Theatre Quarterly*, *Lapis*, and *Mascara*. She has directed two performances for Theatre im Pumpenhaus (Germany) and is a member of the Magdalena Project. Furthermore she is editor of *The Open Page*, a journal devoted to women's work in the theatre.

JAN FERSLAV was born in 1949 in Copenhagen, Denmark. He has a background in music including rock, jazz, Latin, and classical. As a guitar player in the sixties he participated in various recordings and composed for different forms of theatre. Jan joined Odin Teatret in 1987, first as a musician/composer and later as an actor.

KAI ERIK BREDHOLDT was born in 1960 in Copenhagen, Denmark. He has an apprenticeship as a boat builder. As a folk musician he played in the streets and popular cabarets. His music studies include extensive exposure to various genres of European traditional and folk music, especially the music of Denmark and Greenland. He has been at Odin Teatret since 1988, first as a musician/composer, later as an actor.

FRANS WINTHER was born in 1947 in Buderup Sogn, Denmark. Frans studied at the Ålborg Music Conservatory and composed for various theatre groups. He joined Odin Teatret in 1987 and has worked in and composed for various performances.

HISAKO MIURA, ISABEL UBEDA, AND TINA NIELSON are no longer with Odin Teatret. Nielsen and Ubeda performed in *Kaosmos*.

RICHARD FOWLER is no longer with the company. He performed in *Talabot* and *Rum i kejserens palads*. He was with the Odin from 1985 to 1989. He currently runs Primus Theatre in Winnipeg, Canada and is Barba's translator for most of his English language publications, including *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* and *Paper Canoe*.

Appendix C

Rehearsal Journals *Kaosmos* 1992

In a conversation with Barba, I asked a question based on an observation. “It seems to me that at first, after seeing *Memoria* and *Itsi Bitsi*, the role of director here is quite different. That although traditionally the director’s vision is the center of the wheel from which all theatre performances generate, yet at Odin in many senses the actors’ vision has supplanted the director’s vision and that the director plays a uniquely different role.” Barba thought a moment and said, “Seth, there is no hierarchy here. What you are seeing is the autonomous actor. I do not say that there is any spirituality in this work. But that the actor is involved, not only with their “vision,” as you say, but also that they are part of a culture, and that is what this theatre is. There is no other theatre like Odin and it is the culture of Odin from which the work stems.” In *Webster’s Dictionary*, the fourth meaning ascribed to culture is “development by special training or care.” The fifth says “the skills, arts, etc. of a given people in a given period.” Both of which are what we have here, yet I surmise that Barba means much more when he says culture because much of what I saw specifically falls under that heading.

A culture that arises out of the need to do theatre grows and takes on the same characteristics as any other culture. It develops a unique language, a way of life which emanates from the exigencies surrounding people’s work and survival, both physical and emotional, the development of history, belief, ethics, and taboos. This evolves into a fertile world from which stories emerge and a way of telling develops and continues to grow within the community.

This is what I believe Barba meant. There is ample evidence that this is true. I had the pleasure of being a guest at many dinners in the homes of the actors and administrators. During our talks, Odin's past was discussed, not in terms of dates, as one might read off a calendar, but rather reference points were periods during which a certain performance was being given publicly (which might run for a number of years). Or an idea might be being discussed and a way of clarifying that idea, reference might be made to some element of a text, character, movement, or song from some performance known to all in the room. Had I not been a witness to a good portion of this work, I might not have seen the culture around me, but rather truly been the provincial outsider who knows no language but his own.

What follows are two moment-by-moment accounts of rehearsals one week apart - stages in the process.

1st Thursday

8:00 a.m. start. Barba introduces me to all. "This is Seth Baumrin, a director and professor from New York, who is making a brilliant career writing for encyclopedias. He is here to discover if we are still here.

"We are in the middle of a process. We don't know where it is going - maybe to performance, maybe not."

Participants:

Leo Sykes	Apprentice Director
Tina Nielsen	Actor/ recent member/Danish

Kai Bredholdt	Actor/recent member/Danish
Hisako Miura	Actor/recent member/Japan
Isabel Ubeda	Actor/recent member/Spain
Julia Varley	Original member/Great Britain
Torgeir Wethal	Founder/Norway
Jan Ferslav	Musician/Actor/member/Denmark
Roberta Carreri	Original member/Italy
Eugenio Barba	Italy

Moment of silence. Talk. Activity. Folding and cutting of cloth. Preparing musical instruments. Testing of Carreri's whip. Six knives up Ferslav's sleeve.

Work is conducted in Italian, Danish, Norwegian, and English. A great deal of time and care goes into folding, cutting and laying out material (bits and scraps of cloth), and the exact placement of musical instruments. After setting activities into motion, Barba sits silently in the back row of seats. The Black Room is a black box. People move in front of him to show their costumes. He talks quietly in each actor's ear as they continue without distraction. More material is brought in. It is folded and arranged. A piece of music is practiced. Oversized boots go on. Bredholdt wraps a chair in a piece of fur. Barba addresses all the actors in Italian. All are seated on the perimeter of the playing area, women on one side, men on the other, like a high school dance. Already this is different than other rehearsals I have seen. It feels less defined than rehearsals of *Oxyrhincus*, 1985, or *Talabot*, 1988. I realize that this work is in a much earlier stage of development than what I had witnessed before and that things are not as well

defined.

Varley is behind Miura, who moves in an exploratory way as though finding her way through darkness. She is responding with her hands to the movements of Miura's feet. The movement seems to be a form of nurture. My impression is one of motherly nurture and protection. A chant explodes from Ubeda and Carreri. A 15th Century Spanish chant celebrating the arrival of Christ by shepherds in the fields from Luke. Bredholdt binds himself with chains as he sings. He is posed like Christ on the Cross. Clothes are strewn about the stage. The singing continues. Bredholdt, in chains, is lying on fur and is dropped outside the playing area as a song which must be from Kipling's *The Jungle Book* is sung. "Children of the camp are we, scaring ancient history." Ferslav, with knives up his sleeves, begins an absurd dance with an equally absurd look on his face, and pulls knives from all parts of his body continuing the dance as the knives drop onto a red cloth upon which he is standing. Images of self-castration. Next there is a parade followed by a song in English with food stomping, whip cracking and belt snapping for rhythm. "It's gonna rain." It sounds familiar but I can't place it. Miura stands behind a sheet of clear plastic which is coated with a white flour or powder of some kind. Ubeda picks up Ferslav's knives which are now wrapped in red fabric and, with the points of the knives, splits the powdered sheet, revealing Miura. There is a dance in which it appears that Miura's movement is controlled by Ubeda from behind (similar to the movements of Varley at the beginning yet, with a different outcome.) Through this pattern of movement, Miura is gradually pulled to the ground. She appears to be dead and

Ubeda appears to be trying to revive her, to get her to stand up again. The image is that of one animal trying to nudge a dead animal playfully, but of course the dead one doesn't rise. Ubeda then bites the material on the right side of Miura's skirt by her thigh and tries to drag Miura. She then lifts her, puts her across her back and carries her to the side.

It occurs to me much later that this may be an enactment of material from *Jungle Book*, but my own impressions are so strong, it does not occur to me to ask. This "process" is already very refined, I think.

Image after image. Nielsen dancing with a doll in her teeth as her torso seems to turn 360 degrees while her waist remains immobile. Songs are sung with voices placed in the throat. I get the impressions of original actors transmitting their knowledge and expertise to the younger ones by process of the work. The newer actors also appear so highly trained that the transfer works. Nielsen sings a powerful song in Danish while throwing coins at Wethal who appears to be suffering from that which seems to be starvation. The coins come from a small red bag which, moments ago, had been the head of Nielsen's doll, ripped off the body by Wethal and returned to Nielsen. At this point he puts his fingers to either corner of his mouth and tries to stretch his lips into a smile. The underlying aspect of suffering puts a lie to his smile. His painful steps become a dance and she finally gives him the bone which she pulls from the beheaded body of the doll. This bone was the structural device that was giving the doll its human form, by simply running across the shoulders of its shirt. He takes it with a viscous tug and beats himself with it while "Happy Birthday" is hummed. This ends with

Wethal posed in Nielsen's arms – a Pieta (Mary and Christ) and she drops the remaining coins into a plate which moments earlier Varley threw at Wethal.

Another march. Latin music. Footsteps creating rhythm. Here I observe Miura playing the maracas perfectly. When I say perfectly, I mean that when one plays maracas, the goal is to never let the little beads roll around. They must click, like drum beats. It is not supposed to be a fuzzy rattle, but rather a staccato. This is executed perfectly. On another occasion, I observed Miura teaching "Sakura," a Japanese song, to Ferslav. She plays a small recorder, he the ukulele (by no means a Japanese instrument). I am reminded of an idea put forth by Barba at one of the many ISTA conferences. That of "crossing" from one culture, learning and adopting the performance techniques of another. This is a small instance of that.

Another instance which sticks out in my memory is Anna Lica in a demonstration of her work with Tage Larsen when they came with me to do pedagogical work in February, 1988, at Brooklyn College. She did the Lady MacBeth text in Danish while her movements were a replica of the woman warrior from Peking Opera, which she had seen on film. By means of the contrast, she had deepened the meaning and her own and the spectator's reaction to the text. This crossing is an essential aspect of Odin's work. Not only does it lie behind much of the performances, but it is often the focus of Barba's pedagogical work with ISTA—the exchange of the means of performance and actor training from one culture to another.

One actor's interest in another's performances and techniques is not necessarily limited to fascination. These means may be useful in creating a

deepening any actor's work. This is a topic that deserves greater consideration than given here. In my talk with Barba, I asked about crossing

SB: When discussing "crossing," I am fascinated. For example, Miura's perfect playing of the maracas. "Is there any danger to the purity and organic nature of an actor's training, when that actor comes from a specific performance culture, of polluting that training with technique from a different performance culture?"

EB: "Not when the new technique is assimilated or adopted voluntarily. Then it becomes a personal part of their work. If, however, the new technique is imposed externally (not voluntarily) then there is some danger.

Back at rehearsal Barba yells, "Stop, Stop, Stop!" He hands us observers coins and instructs us to give Varley coins as she walks around the room with a plate at the end of her outstretched hand, like a church collection plate. We comply.

Another stop is called for Varley to walk with a piece of gauze held in front of her legs, rather than simply walk. Now gauze over head. Now wrapped like veil. Now held over her head like a canopy. Finally crouching instead of walking with tent-like use of gauze. Each actor's discovery leads the other actors.

More action: Ferslav is standing reading a newspaper. Ubeda splits Ferslav's newspaper in half with a knife wrapped in red cloth. Here again, as in action with Miura, she pulls him to the ground until he appears dead! Then Ubeda repeats the same activities which I associated with bringing the dead back to life, including tugging at his pants leg with her teeth and carrying body off stage. All the time Varley sits watching silently. Movement and song appear interrelated yet independent. It is never clear if the one cues the other or vice versa, but they are clearly interrelated. There is already a seamlessness at this early stage of work.

I hear fragments of the *Jungle Book*, music from the film, *Baghdad Café*,

“Sakura,” a Spanish religious chant, Danish folk songs, and Latin-American music. Most of the time, I am not associating this material with its sources, but rather with the actors’ action. This action is engaging, very stimulating, but it defies definition.

After a short break, there is the repetition of a ninety second fragment. Barba is refining Nielsen and Wethal movements. Nielsen shows the difference between a series of movements with and without the doll in her hands and in her teeth. She is working on a complete score of action involving fifteen to twenty distinctly different and specific movements, all emanating from the action of taking the doll in her mouth after an impaling gesture, and then turning the upper torso out to the audience while the lower body remains in an upstage orientation. The movement is done again without the props and is established as distinct and perfect action before she returns to working with the doll. At this point, I am seeing without interpreting. The doll is cloth wrapped around a bone and Nielsen is turning her upper torso, and then her head with the doll in her teeth, in complete opposition to the direction her feet are facing.

What I am seeing here is the working of sixty to ninety second dramatic phrases worked coldly through movement.

Notes from rehearsal one week later.

Same material—completely different approach. At the start specific melodies are repeated phrase by phrase. Patterns of movement are repeated in same way. Barba gives instructions to an actor. Carreri, Wethal, Nielsen, Varley, Ubeda,

Frans, and Miura make a circle. They begin a movement exercise. It appears to be a movement with an imaginary stick in hand in which the actors assume positions of throwing, catching, preparation to throw, and preparation to catch, as well as specific movements associated with maintaining balance. This is done with a step or two to the side incorporated after one specific movement. Barba instructs from seats. The movement is done in unison, but there seems to be no particular initiator. While watching for initiation, I observe that at one moment, one person appears to initiate but that when the phrase is repeated, the initiation begins with someone else, and never with whom I expect. This is not a clockwise or counterclockwise orientation. It is a leaderless exercise done in perfect unison. Barba says “Julia, resist. Slow Motion. Slow Motion! Torgeir! *Slow Motion!*” This slow motion gradually establishes itself. It appears difficult to resist the temptation to go at full speed. The actors stop themselves to work out what is going wrong. Carreri is coaching. I observe Miura is alive and stretching with every motion. I find myself watching individual feet—how they work for long stretches of time. I also wonder, how this same work is achieved when they are wearing the boots, which, for the most part, seem much too large for the actors.

I observe that this is *not* a “warm-up.” It is essential to the work. It consists of phrases and movements taken out of context and refined, perfected. There is no rush. Ample time is taken to achieve the goal.

Another exercise is begun. Carreri coaches. The actors make loud and rhythmic footsteps opposed by hand slaps with changes. These rhythms are based on the music of the song, “It’s Gonna Rain.” “Stop.” Roberta works out

problem. She starts again. “Repeat. Repeat.” They repeat the stomping with Carreri and Ubeda singing. Again with complex hand clap at start. Stop, turn, walk. The song exercise is becoming a dance. I am reminded of Rasmussen’s demonstration at La Mama in 1984 of how an exercise based on throwing a stick led to the leaping which was part of the language of movement done by her Katrin the Mute in *Brecht’s Ashes*.

Now they work on song high voices. “Can’t you see the clouds gathering,” Varley and Miura take the soprano and low voice respectively. “It’s gonna rain.” It is repeated six times. Each time, the contrast between foot stomps and hand claps becomes more and more pronounced, resulting in a kind of percussive counterpoint. Now they change to silent footsteps but louder hand claps. They repeat the phrase of hand claps. Carreri and Barba coaching. Their circle is broken. They walk silently to find the exact rhythm of feet without the hand claps. Back in the circle they do the same work with silent stepping; heel to toe, toe on floor, twist heels out. Change foot. Switch—twist knee in, now out. Carreri works with Frans to separate upper torso from hips to make more fluid motion. She works with others individually. Barba demonstrates the step to Winther by taking a shoe and holding it against the floor to demonstrate position of the foot moving from heel to toe. Carreri shows how the muscles control the shift from heel to toe. Barba instructs others to watch Carreri’s feet and calves. They all repeat the exercise. Barba is pacing. He leaves the room. Work continues without any discernible difference after director leaves. Carreri instructs Bredholdt to exhale on with every down step. Miura is at rest. She has

her feet and toes turned in, legs slightly bent, and her hands behind back. Even at rest there is an energy which is bursting forth. I am reminded of conversation with Ubeda: “Sometimes, when I am working, I feel as if my whole body is going to explode. Like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon.” This surely fits with Barba’s projection of “The Dilated Body” into performance.

I remember a discussion in New York City, 1984.

SB: If your work evolves in stages from training, to allowing that training to grow into a chain of stimulating images, sounds (poetic and musical) and actions without necessarily relying on a script, how do you know if and when the work is ready for performance.

EB: There is a moment when something shines forth through the work. It glows. It is alive. That is how I know. I know because it is alive.

So this desire to burst forth, be it conscious or buried, seems to be a uniting factor and provides limitless justification for such a painstaking process.

Carrerri demonstrates how to turn a sheet in and out repeatedly and rapidly, making a snapping sound to Bredholdt. Ubeda and Nielsen go to a corner and work on all song elements in unison. Barba returns. Work continues. The actors return to a circle and do the silent walk with a hand clap. They start over twice. Exactly when does hand clap come in? They start again. Again. Now they walk with the song. Again! Again! Again - a little farther into song. Again. Bredholdt checks his vocal pitch against the accordion. The intricacies of clapped rhythm begin to emerge. Where exactly does the first word of the lyric come in? - not on the downbeat, but just after. Find that delay while using the hand clap and foot stomp step. When something is not working or out of place it is corrected immediately. Nothing is allowed to slip by. Rehearsal is finished. Barba leaves

room.

They make a new circle, and begin a new song, lyric sheets in hand. Frans plays his violin while he conducts the singers with nods of his eyes and the arch of his eyebrows. The song in Danish. They repeat it. They start another song. Ferslav plays guitar, Frans the accordion. They sing another song, a Kipling poem set to music. Carreri and Ubeda sing a powerful chant. Barba re-enters. They sing another song. The vocal quality constantly shifts from something strong and bold to something soft and pianissimo. Frans sings harmonies. They begin again. Varley moves into extremely high register. The men go to their lowest pitches. The Spanish chant is repeated. Another song is sung with flute, violin, and guitar accompaniment. Carreri and Barba instruct on diction in different registers. Another. Barba says, “find and maintain elements of staccato.” Another song in Danish is sung by Nielsen. Then another, with a rock and roll sound to it. Three hours have passed. Another song. Another. Barba sends Carreri, Nielsen, Ubeda, Varley, Wethal to the reconstruct text of a forgotten song. Barba, Ferslav, and Bredholdt work on two other songs. Frans plays another on violin. Frans shows Barba music on laptop. I leave for a break

I feel free to come and go as I please, but there are sublime limitations and I never enter a room with a red wooden placard hanging on the door unless the door is specifically opened to me. All activities are focused around the work and there is no such thing as having anything else to do. I return. All present. More music. Carreri dancing and with pure joy describes the delicate quality of the music to Barba. It seems to me that “places” are now being taken. Ferslav plays a rock

and roll melody. Barba asks for the name of the song. “Banana Split” is Ferslav’s reply. Places taken. Barba sits in the front row with a book of poetry. Bredholdt sings while Barba is reading.

We move to a different part of the piece. All have instruments—Ubeda, an accordion, Carreri, a cello, Miura, a recorder, Nielsen, a bell. Nielsen and Varley sing. The song is dirge-like. Miura switches to a plucked, three string Japanese instrument. Meanwhile, Wethal, seated in the front row, is working out a complicated series of hand and head movements. Barba and Miura discuss exactly when to switch instruments. There is an ironic mix of Danish language and Japanese music. Barba and the actors discuss breaking up a syllable into three beats.

We have been here four hours. Now Barba asks that the observers, Lluís, Marco and myself sit against the wall. They begin the rehearsal of all the material from today in the context of the piece. I am fully engaged and put aside my notebook. Work continues without a break for two more hours. As I watch, the material I saw in the rehearsal a week ago is repeated. The images are somehow stronger and more meaningful to me than before and I feel sometimes as though I am watching a seduction by death and alternately death being seduced by the living.

One remarkable factor emerges and that is the sensitive caring hand of Barba which almost, imperceptibly guides the rehearsal. When I say hand, I mean hand literally. There is a moment when Ubeda clutches many knives wrapped in red cloth and, with their points, splits Ferslav’s newspaper perfectly in half. To do

this she rushes at him from the downstage edge of the playing area nearest the front row of the room's risers. Maybe this is dangerous, maybe not. At the moment when she picks up the knives, I observe Barba's hand rise and remain poised six inches from her back. She cannot see or feel the hand but it is the hand of care. It is a delicate way of tempering the violent nature of her work with the needed grace and precision of movement. I have observed this hand before in training films and have noticed that it never interferes or physically controls the work, nor is it visible to the performer, but it does work to moderate between the extremes of the physical work and the precision required to achieve them. It is also an emblematic gesture of caring, understanding, and commitment to his work partners.

Appendix D

Journals of *Mythos* Rehearsals and 1997 visit to Holstebro

Collaborative Work with Playing Space and Scenic Properties

Monday, August 4, at 11:45 a.m.: rehearsal in the White Room. Here I find the beginnings of a set. The playing space is a runway extending across the room with vertical strips of black curtain at either end and seating risers on both sides of the runway. However, only the risers extending from the door of the White Room to its far wall are being used by observers. The other side is occupied by two benches, plastic barrels of gravel, and Larsen's tools. At head level, running across the playing space, is a long strand of black and white goat hooves strung between the two curtains. Theatre lights shine through the black curtain strips. The long strand of goat hooves is strung together out of many goat hoof necklaces Barba purchased at a market in La Paz, Bolivia.

Wethal is sitting in the risers with a dimmer board in his lap. Light shining from left sharply outlines the rectangular form of a doorframe on the floor. An approximately twelve-foot-high tower stands at left. It is about three feet deep and made out of two by fours. It has a platform in its midsection and ladders on either side. At its top, two small, hand-carved beams run along the front and back.

Another identical tower stands at the right curtain, lying on its side. Barba and Piia Sanderhof, an assistant unwrap two sets of new bamboo window blinds. Barba and Bredholdt try to find a way to use the bamboo blinds to make a

tabletop on the right platform's exposed side that faces the ceiling. The tower has roller skate wheels at the top so that it can be pulled across the floor. Larsen unloads a wheelbarrow of gravel into a trough attached to the underside of the left platform, which is now also lying on its side. Larsen uses a rope to harness himself to the table. He is trying to move it. Winther helps him, but the table starts to break apart. They stop. The actors move the roller-skate wheels from the front to the back of the table near the gravel trough, and it finally moves. As the platform rolls, the gravel seeps out onto the floor through a crack running the width of the trough, positioned at the bottom of the gravel bin. The gravel is spread in the shape of a road, exactly the width of the tower, covering one half the playing area, perfectly centered in the middle of a four-meter strip of thick gray cloth taped to the wooden floor. Barba asks that the gravel be spread out to the edges of the cloth by scraping it with wooden planks. The actors accompany the scraping sound with chanted overtones. Winther proposes moving the gravel with a plow or rake or even a two-handled plow. Six large stones are set in the gravel. The attention actors return to the problem of attaching the bamboo shades to the table. The rehearsal ends at 4:45 p.m.

The Designer as Collaborator/Actor-Designers

When the rehearsal continues the next day the two tables are moved together to form a long table at center. This is then covered with bamboo shades and white tablecloth. Eight chairs and eight places are set. The actors discuss what kind of glasses to use and whether to have a centerpiece or a large soup tureen. They take

their places at the table and ask Barba about seating arrangements. Then the actors get in line against the black curtain at right. They are bunched into a group, as if posing for a portrait photograph. Barba looks at this for a long time.

Leaving them posed, he tests the strength of the table and knocks over a glass with a flick of his finger. He changes positions in the group pose. He asks them each to justify why they have taken these positions and how they intend to get from the pose to their next positions.

Barba clears the table by simply rolling the glasses and plates up into the cloth covers and bamboo shades, striking them to the sides. He asks about the strength of the table cover and the supporting frame. A thin wooden frame has been attached to the table-top side of the tower to keep the tablecloth and bamboo from sagging under the weight of the plates; it is not working. He comes to the observers and says, “The problem is that everything must be used. As a director you must solve problems early. I can take away the plates but I have the frame. The frame is large and on tour we may not have so good a space. It should be magical! Everything should be magical, including moving the props and scenery. How to solve problems—It takes time but it brings the group together. Sometimes the youngest actor gets an idea—Kai for instance. You should try his ideas. Ideas are good but they don’t always function. So we have to practice.” They try to set the tables without the frame. They make many attempts. Rasmussen appears to have an answer. She proposes to do away with the frame and run thick twine across the tabletop to strengthen it. Barba speaks to us again. “This is one reason you cannot use stage designers. If you want to transform the

scenery it is impossible because the stage designer will build beautiful towers which will remain in place. He will not understand what you are doing when you put them on their sides and use them as a table. This kind of scenery should be created by actors who work together with the scenery one to one. For a stage designer to work like this he needs to be here all the time which is impossible for a professional designer. The expertise of a stage designer is for an end product, but this is not useful for us.”

“What about Luca [Ruzza]?” one of the observers asks. Barba says, “Luca, on *Oxyrhincus*, was a collaborative designer. He followed *Brecht’s Ashes* for two years before he worked on *Oxyrhincus*. You could ask him anything and he would think about it and design it and build it with Tage and Leif [Bech], and he would continue to transform the stage.¹ This was easier because Tage and Lief, as artisans, could build anything. This was very special and unique. What we’re doing now is easier because Tage is here.² It would be impossible without him. This is one of the most gratifying parts of the beginning – solving these problems with the whole group. It is not the director’s work. Whatever idea we take is the work of whoever is the leader at that moment.” Leadership of the group shifts from one member to another almost imperceptibly usually depending on who is working out a problem.

On August 7, at 1:30 p.m., work begins in the White Room. The strand of goat hooves runs right to left in a straight line through the gravel. Rasmussen is gathering it in a picturesque snakelike coil. Then she uncoils it back into a straight line. Rasmussen coils the hooves again into a figure eight. On top of this

double coil she places two tribal masks facing up and out to the audience with the frayed rope ends of the hoof strand poking through the masks' eyes. Carreri removes the masks, pulls apart the figure eight, and stretches the strand from one end of the gravel road to the other. She rearranges it into a human form. Barba measures the width of the chest of the human form. Carreri puts a mask where faces would be. She pulls the strands and uncoils the human. Now Rasmussen coils a double figure eight; it looks like a snake.

The actors set up the tables. The coiled hoof strand is at center, lying in the gravel between the two tables. The tables are covered with the bamboo mats and white cloth. The two gravel-spreading troughs are attached to the tables. The strings extending from the ends of the hoof strand are buried under the gravel and are invisible. The position of the long table is spiked. The troughs are loaded. The right tower, is tilted from its table position on a forty-five degree angle, and rolled from center almost all the way to the right curtain, covering most of the stage right floor with gravel. The width of the trough is slightly narrower than the tower allowing the tower's wheels to roll without being impeded by the spreading gravel. Then the actors lift the left table forty-five degrees, roll it, and spread the gravel. Both troughs are reloaded with gravel. Then the table is set. The actors take their seats, ready to begin. Wethal runs out of the room to get a pair of sunglasses for Larsen. Others run off to get other props. All actors except Larsen go to the right curtain and take the crowd pose from yesterday. Larsen sits alone at the table in sunglasses. The actors at the curtain are passing around a flask. Then, they take their places at the table. Larsen taps his glass, rises, stands behind

his chair and speaks. He makes a toast and a little speech. They all rise and sing “The *Internationale*” softly. The song ends. They all sit. Larsen taps his glass. They all rise and Larsen makes another toast. “*O Sole Mio*” is sung with vigor and then all exit; half go right, half left. Wethal and Winther (Lucky) enter. Wethal speaks. “Think swine. Stool swine.” Winther picks up chairs. On orders from Wethal, Winther positions the chairs for the next scene. Winther separates the two table pieces, pulling the left one further left so the gravel pours out, extending the road to the black curtain. The same is done at right but the tables are not raised to their final tower positions.

Wethal and Winther are at right. Wethal sits in a chair. Ferslav tests a light on him. Winther takes the pose of a conductor and leads the actors in a song. “Stop!” Barba arranges the entrances. He wants to do it alphabetically. He asks us observers, “ABCD. Who comes first?” We are taken by surprise and get the letters out of order. He takes our suggestion anyway. Ferslav comes in first, crosses at the coil at center, kneels and rattles it with his fingers. The actors chant overtones, a new vocal technique, in the background. Ferslav places his head in the coil, rises slowly, crosses left and sits beneath the tower. Rasmussen enters from left, crosses to the corner of the table, touches it and, goes to the corner of the right table, touches it and sits on it. Carreri enters and crosses between the curtain and the table and then goes back to the side of the table; she walks slowly along the table’s perimeter with one hand outstretched, palm down, and stops at the coiled hooves. Slowly, she drops her outstretched hand to touch it. She then reverses her hand position, palm up, crosses backwards to the table, and lies on its

edge. Barba asks that she include elements of Flamenco in her walk, especially the positioning of the arms and hands above her head. The walk becomes a stylized Flamenco walk including the foot stomps. She whispers her text. Barba stops her to ask that she clasp her hands above her head and hold their backs together. He holds both wrists and asks her to push his hands away; she cannot. "Exactly" he says. The energy of her push creates a kind of physical tension. She repeats this segment of the score finishing with the hands clasped above her head, wrists locked together, pushing out with the forearms. This pose becomes action and has even greater energy than the Flamenco walk. Everyone else stops working and watches silently. The White Room fills with Carreri's physical presence.

Varley enters using a walk punctuated with half turns. She crosses to center with her attention on the goat hoof coil. She leaps over the road, shifts to a different walk, and, bending at her waist, uses her spinal column and neck to whip the coiled strand with her hair. She then curls up on the floor and remains there. The rest of the group underscores these actions with droning overtones. Winther rolls up the dishes in the table covering and strikes it offstage right and returns. "Stop!" Barba instructs Wethal and Winther to remove the trough from the right tower and then lift the tower into place. Confusion arises when the actors try to remove the tower's wheels. Barba silences the talk. "Ssh, ssh, ssh; concentration." He is concerned that the removal of the wheels may become comic.

Wethal holds Winther at the end of a rope. They cross from right to left, each walking on opposite sides of the gravel road, and then remove the rope. Winther wraps up the dishes at left in the table cover. Ferslav and Carreri enter with Rasmussen who climbs into the center level of the right tower with Carreri following her. Ferslav climbs to the top of the right tower. Varley gives them all African stools to sit on while she sits under the tower. Excess gravel in the trough at left is shoveled out. All the time the chanting of the overtones continues. Barba claps his hands twice. "Stop!" He asks Larsen to sit with him. They talk quietly about the gravel. Winther, at left, and Wethal, at right, are trying to figure out how to get the ends of the ropes attached to the goat hoof strand to pull it to the limit of its extension without unraveling the coil at its center. They slowly manipulate the ropes until the hoof strand moves, and then quickly pull it into place. The hoof strand appears to come to sudden life, rattling like a snake. It ends up suspended across the length of the stage at head level.

Larsen enters, blind, tracing a pattern in the gravel with his staff. Barba stops him to talk about the pattern. Larsen continues. Barba asks Winther to stand and conduct Larsen's movements as though they were music. This is done silently. Larsen turns and waves his staff. It strikes the strand of goat hooves with a crashing sound. He blows into the hollow staff. It sounds like a shofar. The whole time Ferslav is tapping out a rhythm with his fingers on the platform. "Stop!" Barba, Larsen, and Varley discuss cave paintings as a model for Larsen's tracings in the gravel. Rehearsal is finished.

Winther lifts the tower while Larsen walks down the gravel road as a blind man with a staff, tracing a pattern in the gravel. He walks directly to Winther. Barba asks if Winther can let go of the tower so that it will fall into its right place. Barba wants Larsen to walk past Winther just after he has pushed the tower into position while it is still momentarily teetering back and forth before rocking into place. Can Winther push it without it falling on the audience? There is a brief disagreement between Larsen and Barba. Barba is worried about safety. Larsen is not. Winther gives the tower a little push and it falls into place. He tries it a second time and it falls into the audience. At 2:15 p.m., rehearsal stops.

At 3:15 p.m., rehearsal begins again. Winther is raking the gravel, spreading it out to cover the entire playing area. He has adapted a rake so that two handles stick up from either end of its row of steel teeth. It can be pulled behind its user like an ox pulls a plow. Barba suggests Winther wear a yoke around his shoulders, attached to the rake handles. Winther tries spreading the gravel again with the rake.

In long, technically oriented rehearsals like these, no presumption is made by the actors that this is not their business or that they have something more important to do. Their contributions and participation are always at the same commitment and energy level as their acting. Their technical abilities as carpenters, electricians, and costumers are highly developed and always used. For example Winther, the composer, a violinist, builds a two-handled rake while Ferslav, also a musician, runs the lights.

The Severed Hands Rehearsal

Friday, August 8, at 11:50 a.m., we move to the White Room. The gravel road is now wider than tower width, about one foot from the edge of the gray cloth at the extreme edges of the playing area, perfectly even. Winther spent most of the previous night raking out the gravel into this perfect road. The gravel is raked as finely as a Japanese rock garden. Winther places six large stones on the road. He experiments with the placement of the stones, working from his own diagrams. The actors sing “*The Internationale*” quietly while Winther and Wethal set the stones.

Varley, Carreri, and Rasmussen bring on baskets of wooden hands, and place them around the rocks. The hands were carved by three Balinese sculptors. Some have long wrists; some have none. Some are children’s hands, some adult. Some appear to be women’s, some men’s. They are different sets of pairs. Rasmussen arranges hands on the gravel road as though each was gripping the wrist of the next. Varley arranges them, palms down, in lines as though they are all pulling themselves in the same direction. There are hundreds of them. Rasmussen positions some standing up on their wrists, as though reaching up from beneath the ground. Ferslav is placing hands less carefully. His have their palms up. Carreri has made the hands around one stone reach, palms down, in a line towards another line of hands reaching from another stone. Barba climbs the right tower carrying a machete and a hand. He shows Ferslav, who is at the top of the tower, how to make the illusion of chopping off a hand, letting it drop to the ground.

Ferslav climbs the tower to try this. Carreri brings on another basket of hands. They are all different shapes; some are limp as if severed, others outstretched as if waving laconically. Varley brings on yet another basket of hands. Larsen, whose eyes are closed, finds it more difficult to navigate. Instead of going around the hands, he moves them out of the way with his toes, disturbing the arrangement even as Rasmussen sets it. Carreri is building even more complex roadways of hands leading from one rock to another. Larsen leaves the road, rests his head on his staff, and scrapes the wooden floor outside the playing space with the staff. The road has become a desert of severed hands. Many hands are sticking up. The ones near the right tower lie in an arbitrary way. The further from the tower, the more organized the arrangements of hands, almost as if the tower is the place from which the hands are dropped after being severed.

Varley makes a line of hands standing on their wrists, like a fence. Wethal stands to one side and quietly begins his text and then walks the perimeter of the playing area. Wethal walks across the playing area. Larsen, walking through the area of the thickest concentration of hands, slowly moves them out of his way with his staff to plant each foot. Ferslav climbs the tower and crouches, holding his machete. Bredholdt walks, playing the accordion. Wethal continues his text. The accordion music stops abruptly. Wethal continues his text. Barba asks Wethal to speak while underscoring his text with movement in rhythm to the music that just ended. Larsen comes onto the road. He knocks over some hands. Varley replaces them. Wethal speaks his text in a raspy, Greenlander accent. He changes his voice, but not his text, into a steady, hypnotic tone. Barba stops

Larsen's progress. Larsen sits on the benches opposite the risers. Bredholdt brings two small hands with nails through their backs to Rasmussen. She gets a rock, crosses to the tower, singing. With the rock, she hammers the hands to the front of the tower. When she is done, the song stops abruptly. We break for lunch.

A New Vocal Technique

The Odin's training in a vocal technique called overtones is an example of how training is carried on through a process of mentorship and autodidacticism

On Monday, August 4, at 10:30 a.m. we go to the Music Room, a room filled with musical instruments. The actors work on chanting what they call overtones. Carreri was working on these overtones when she gave her workshop New York in 1993. She discovered overtones when listening to recordings of Hungarian shepherds calling their flocks. She discusses the overtones in her work demonstration videotape, *Traces in the Snow*.

The actor starts to build the overtones with nasal intonation while his or her mouth is closed. The actor then switches to oral intonation while the nasal passages open and close. The overtones begin when the actor is sustaining nasal resonance, and can open his or her mouth. Ultimately enough tension should gather in the soft palate to keep the nasal cavity slightly open without blocking off the mouth. Carreri does this very well. Rather than the vocal folds alone, it is the bones of her skull that are vibrating. This produces the overtone. Barba enters at a moment of exceptionally high concentration. The actors are working with Winther to match their overtones to different notes he plays on the violin. The

overtones no longer default to each actor's modal pitch but are now adjusted to the musical scale.³ One technical problem is to get directly to the overtone without having to build up to it, that is, to find an immediate point of initiation. Working on a technique to release the sound after initiation is another problem; depending on the phoneme, it works differently. The phoneme [i] positions the tongue differently from [a] and makes achieving the overtone difficult because of the way the back of the tongue pushes against the soft palate.⁴ The work stops at 11:30 a.m.

Day Three: On Tuesday, August 5, at 9:30 a.m., Viti and I join Larsen and Rasmussen in the Blue Room. They sit in straight-backed chairs and work on the overtones. At first, it sounds as if they are actually making the overtones. Gradually, I can hear the difference between her denasalized vocalization and his overtones. Then, I hear her soft palate open after a long denasalized sound; the overtones set in. Is it necessary to begin with denasalized sound, building up to a tone, then release the tongue from the soft palate, allowing a small passage to open in the nasal cavity where the overtone is set up with independent vibrations in the sinus? They are answering this question for themselves. They take turns. One begins, gets an overtone pitch and then, in the middle of the first person's tone, the second joins. Each continues for one breath. Their voices overlap, one fades out as the other continues. The tones undulate. The whole time Rasmussen is tapping rhythm in four/four time with her feet on the floor while Larsen makes a rhythmic undulation to the same beat by moving his jaw producing a "wah wah wah" articulation. Something like a song is being improvised.

At 10:00 a.m., Viti and I move with Rasmussen and Larsen to the Red Room to join Winther and Wethal. Together they put four/four rhythm under a pattern of undulations. Larsen and Rasmussen overlap their work with Winther and Wethal whose bass and baritone complete the sound spectrum. All four are undulating differently while Winther taps the four/four rhythm with his feet. The oscillating chant unites as one chord and then separates into divergent voices arriving at two sets of overtones. One set consists of each individual actor's tone. The other consists of those harmonic overtones emerging from different tones in contrast with each other.

At 10:30 a.m., they stop and join the others in the Music Room. Barba and the actors have a brief talk. Larsen says he is worried whether they are always making actual overtones. They are not. First the group works on singing one part in unison. Then, they all do various words from the text of the Norwegian poem in groups of two and four. Then, Ferslav sings Bob Dylan's "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" with the seven voices supporting him with undulating overtones droning underneath his melody. Ferslav also uses his own droning overtones whenever possible to sing the song.

The group returns to eight drones. Carreri improvises using an overtone melody to sing a Norwegian poem. With nothing more than a nod of his head Barba suggests Rasmussen start a vocal improvisation as Carreri finishes hers. She continues in a louder voice than Carreri with more complex lyrics. Barba orchestrates. He suggests that Wethal sing his poem over the chorus of overtones. Barba asks Ferslav to strum along on his ukulele. This goes on for ten minutes. It

requires significant endurance. Barba claps his hands. The improvisation is finished. They begin a new one. Rasmussen improvises a melody with a Norwegian text while the other singers follow Larsen's undulating rhythm. Then, the leading voice switches from Rasmussen to Larsen. Lindholt, who sits on my left, explains that these vocal improvisations are poems by Norwegian ex-patriot poet, Henrik Nordbrandt. Barba asks Carreri to sing Nordbrandt in Italian. When they are finished. Barba says, "So *triste*. Why so somber the drone?" Varley asks whether the chant can be simpler; there are so many variations. They break at 11:40 a.m.

Day Four: On Wednesday August 6, at 9:35 a.m., Larsen and Rasmussen work together on overtones. Taking turns, one chants for the duration of a single breath while the other listens to hear whether overtones are actually being made. This difficult technique distorts the movements of their faces as each focuses on this unusual form of nasalization. Both Larsen and Rasmussen are beginning to produce a set of genuine overtones caused not only by vocal fold vibration, but loud covibrations of the nasal cartilage and skull. They are louder than the initial vibrations in the throat. It sounds inhuman. Through nasalization and denasalization Larsen and Rasmussen create an undulating rhythm which alternates between tone and overtone. Larsen explains that their objective, after getting the overtones, is to match their oscillation with the underlying vibrations of the vocal cords.

At 10:35 a.m., we go to the Music Room. As the actors chant overtones simultaneously in different languages, the droning becomes hypnotically rhythmic. At 11:30 a.m., we break.

Through their work on the overtones, the Odin actors demonstrate two values central to their work routine: mentorship and autodidacticism. The technique was originally transmitted by Carreri. But after initial contact with the overtones, the actors taught it to themselves in private and in dual training. Each actor achieves the overtones according to its principle, but each accomplishes it in a uniquely different way, through a self-teaching such that, although the principle of the overtones is constant, the sound differs from actor to actor.

Collaboration with Raw Materials becomes *Mise en Scene* (Combining the New Vocal Technique with the Work on Scenic Properties)

On Thursday, August 7, I see the acting, the personal, physical, and vocal work infused into a score created just a few days ago. There is no directing. The actors' own work is injected into the very precise score. Larsen is seated at the table wearing sunglasses. Other actors are humming at right in a crowd, passing around a whiskey flask. They cross to their chairs at the table. Larsen rises and makes a toast. "The *Internationale*" is sung softly. Larsen rises, makes another toast, and then plays "O Sole Mio" on his cornet. All exit to the left or right towers or behind the black curtains strips. Overtone chanting begins. Winther, tied to the rope, and Wethal clear the table. Ferslav wears a red cape and an animal-skull mask mounted on a bicycle helmet poised on the crown of his head.

He stands at center by the coil of hooves. Barba says, "Text Iben! Not just the chant, but the song." Iben sings a Nordbrandt poem. Ferslav buries his face in the coiled goat hooves and crosses to the right tower. Rasmussen crosses to center and makes a slow turn to the right table. Carreri crosses to the left table near center, lies on it, rises, and starts her Flamenco walk, slowly at first but then quickens her pace, and clasps her hands over her head and becomes immobile. Once again an intense physical presence radiates through the room. The song lyrics stop and resolve into chanting on a high note.

Varley enters, whipping the coiled hooves with her hair and then kneels. Wethal and Winther roll up the table cover at right, strike it, detach the trough, and set up the tower. Larsen enters wearing a black trenchcoat and a rucksack mounted on a reindeer antler frame. He walks the road tracing a pattern in the gravel. It is a series of hieroglyphs. I recognize a human eye. Larsen hits the hooves with his staff and runs it along the strand making a rattling sound. Winther begins to rake. Bredholt plays his accordion and sings. Ferslav, wearing red boots and a red cape, comes down from the tower and gets a turtle shell-backed guitar. Wethal begins his text. Bredholdt stops playing the accordion and runs full speed around the perimeter of the playing area. Ferslav begins scraping the guitar in the gravel. Varley comes to him kicking gravel out from behind her as she walks. Winther stops raking. Carreri rattles the hooves. Varley approaches Ferslav, touches him, and then takes a brown ball of yarn and unrolls it in a random pattern across the gravel. It is hard to see. Bredholdt has stopped running. Ferslav rises in slow motion and walks on Varley's yarn while she is

rolling it up. Eventually the yarn gets scissored between his legs. She appears to manipulate the yarn trapping him. "Stop!" Varley gets some thick, white rope, which is easier to see, and ties it to the guitar's neck. Ferslav takes the rope away from Varley, and drapes it over the goat hooves, rattling them. He walks to the left, pulling the rope, dragging the guitar to him, while Varley dances slowly to the right. As the guitar passes her, Barba says, "Text!" She unties the guitar and begins her text. Ferslav crosses to the guitar and drags it facedown in the gravel. This is a meeting of Orpheus and Daedalus. He kneels and drops gravel onto the strings of his guitar, making chords. He conceals this action under his cape. Now, with the guitar concealed, he strums and sings, "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall." Carreri rattles the hooves. Varley chants a text in Italian. Winther resumes raking with the rope around his neck but Wethal is not leading him.

Barba asks that the quality of the energy be strong, but the actions be clipped short. He teaches Bredholdt an Italian partisan song. Barba demonstrates the different rhythms in the melody. Bredholdt is playing it as though it was a festival song, but Barba sings it as a dirge, slow and dismal. Bredholdt makes the adjustment. The melody becomes quiet and mournful. Wethal begins his text. Sounds and actions expand and shrink so that though everything appears to happen at the same time, my attention is taken by each sound and action as a kind of structured orchestration of one overarching action.

Overtone chanting begins. Bredholdt sings over it. Wethal stands in Bredholt's way and speaks his text. Wethal steps back to let Bredholdt pass. Bredholdt changes tempo and sings fast. He runs and lets the air out of the

accordion which makes a bellowing chord. Varley, Rasmussen, and Carreri dance on the gravel. Winther continues raking. Wethal begins his text again on a different spot on the stage. Barba says, "Look for the reactions of your characters in this situation." Winther finishes raking. Bredholdt kneels, sings, and plays his accordion. Wethal crosses to the center of the gravel. Barba speaks to him. Wethal starts his text again. This time he literally spits out the words. Winther enters with a large stone and drops it loudly on the gravel. "Stop!" Barba demonstrates how to place it rather than drop it. He throws it in the air, catches it, and then gently puts it down. He asks Bredholdt to sing a different song, another mournful, processional one. Barba tells him to avoid falling into a passion, but to simply sing out, looking up from his kneeling position on the ground. After singing Bredholdt allows the accordion to breathe. The rehearsal is finished.

¹ Leif Bech was a technician at the Odin from 1977 to 1988.

² Tage Larsen had just rejoined the Odin in 1997 after working with his own group. Yorick Teatret in Århus for twelve years. He started with the Odin in 1971

³ I take my speech vocabulary from Ann Seidler and Doris Bianchi, *Voice and Diction Fitness; a Comprehensive Approach*. (New York: Harper Collins, 1988). Seidler and Bianchi describe pitch ranges as being classified as either "modal" or "optimum." The modal is that range which people use most often, but is usually one or two octaves above their optimum range, which is the pitch at which their voices function with the greatest ease and clarity, and is usually lower than they are accustomed.

⁴ The bracketed characters represent phonemes as they appear in the International Phonetic Alphabet. See Seidler and Bianchi.

Appendix E

Segment of 1997 Interview with Lluís Masgrau

SB: In the States, we often use the term subtext. Are we talking about the same thing? Underscore. Subtext.

LM: No. That is a very important point. The subtext is a kind of underscore. But of course the underscore is much more general. The difference is the subtext is what is under the text—what the writer wants to say but does not say.

SB: Reading between the lines.

LM: Exactly. But the underscore is what is behind the score.

SB: Behind the physical score?

LM: Yes. Of course it can be a text but not necessarily. It could be an image, a rhythm, a sensation, some free associations; it could be a lot of things.

SB: I see it this way and tell me if I am on the right track. I see the actor working with a series of internal impulses that tell the muscles what to do and, when you have done your work, over a long period of time, there is a chain of impulses, which are invisible for the audience, but very present for the actor. Is this more in keeping with what you are talking about?

LM: Well, first of all, I don't think the chain of impulses is invisible. If the impulse is clear it could be visible. In fact it is subtle so that you have to train your eyes to see them. I remember Eugenio talking about *sats*—what you call impulse. And when I arrived here I read a lot about the *sats*. And I saw Eugenio in the room always telling the actors, "Ah, *sats* here. There. *Sats*. Put these *sats* together with that." And I was not able to see any *sats*. I was asking myself all the time, "what is he talking about?" And I had some conversations with Eugenio and he explained in subtle ways what *sats* was. But I was not able to see any *sats* in the room. And after several months of seeing the Odin Theatre actors work, suddenly I was able to see the *sats* in Roberta's work. It was the first time, because she is very clear with the *sats*. She is very good at working with impulse. So, I remember the day I had been able to see the *sats*. Ah! There is the *sats*. A very clear one. Then, you start to see the not-so-clear ones and then you are able to read the *sats*.

SB: So, if you are reading the *sats*, are you, in a way, reading the subscore?

LM: No. Because the subscore does not have any interest for the spectator. Which is interesting—it also depends on which aesthetic you are working in. If you are working in the Stanislavski aesthetic, that's important. The spectator should understand what the subtext of the text is. But what is important—What Hastrup is talking about—in several cultures, when the body is motivated by something, it has special abilities that it does not have normally. That's a very clear example. If you have a dog running at you, probably you will run farther than you normally can.

SB: And faster.

LM: And faster because you have very strong motivation that takes over your possibilities. So it is the same for the actor. One of the main questions for the actor is how to learn to motivate his body to keep his body alive. If you don't have any motivation, you are turned into toys. You are doing maybe very difficult things but it's completely empty. You are pure form. This happens sometimes in dance. The choreographer invents the choreography and teaches the dancer the choreography. The dancer is able to repeat the choreography perfectly technically, but it is an empty form. That's the difference between choreography and a score.

SB: I think I understand.

LM: Choreography is pure form, the score always has an underscore. The score is a choreography which is rooted in something which is working inside the actor; we call it the underscore which is keeping the score alive. It's motivating the actor's actions.

SB: So it could be many things. It could be intellectual choreography as Torgeir says, or it could be the chain of impulses we talked about before, or it could be some other meaningful . . .

LM: It could be, for example—here at the Odin Theatre is a very good place to see that, because all the actors are working with a personal technique. So here, they are using a lot of different ways but the main is always the same. How to motivate the score. In the training, technically, they are learning by the exercises how to incorporate some principles like balance, the oppositions, the segmentations, and when you have them incorporating these

principles, the body is an intelligent body. The body can think by itself. So when you do improvisation, the material that comes out is very good, more than if somebody else, who is not an actor, is making an improvisation. It would have a rough feeling. But then that is the technical work—to incorporate these principles. Then, comes the character work. And the character work here in the Odin Theatre is not to create a character, as in Stanislavski's work; it is in how to invent dramaturgical strategies in order to motivate, create partitures and be able to keep them alive.

SB: To create what?

LM: Partitures . . . oh sorry, scores.

SB: OK.

LM: For example, when Roberta is working to construct her scores, she is using poems or songs. So what she is doing is, she takes a poem and then she starts to create an equivalence with the words of that poem. She is not demonstrating. She is not trying to tell the spectator the poem. She is not representing this poem. She is using the poem with herself in order to create live actions. The spectator cannot understand that there is a poem there. The spectator just sees a series of live actions. But Roberta is following a logic which is the poem. That is one example of the underscore. Julia, to take another example, sometimes it is taking images. You have seen Julia's *The Dead Brother*?

SB: Yes.

LM: Then, you have seen when she took the three people by Delacroix and tried to see the dynamism of the people. She then created the subaction which is not representing the figures but just creating the dynamic mechanics, the dynamic vectors—So that is another example of underscore.

Appendix F

Russian Theatre Cultures

A fascinating description of the spiritual and paratheatrical project of Leopold Sulerzhitski can be found in Konstantin Stanislavski's *My Life in Art*. I prefer G. Ivanov Mumjiev's translation of the first Russian edition of *My Life in Art*. Sulerzhitski's project is uncannily similar to Stanislavski's initial retreat, the country estate at Pushkino, at the moment of the founding of the Moscow Art Theatre, the theatrical journeys into the rural Poland that Grotowski and his colleagues took during the seventies, and to the self-imposed exile of the Odin to the northern reaches of Jutland in Holstebro. Stanislavski writes:

Sulerzhitsky dreamed of creating with me a sort of spiritual order of actors. Its members were to be men and women of lofty views and ideas, of wide horizons, who knew the human soul and strove for noble artistic ideas, who were willing to sacrifice themselves for art. We dreamed of hiring an estate that would be connected with the city by tram or train and to construct a stage in the main building to present our studio performances. The actors would have quarters in the wings, part of which would be rebuilt into an hotel for the spectators, whose tickets would entitle them to a room for the night. They would be asked to come long before the beginning of the performance. After a walk in the park surrounding the house, a rest and then a meal in the dining-room, having shaken the dust of the city from their shoulders, the spectators would enter the theatre. In this way they would be ready for the aesthetic pleasure in store for them.

The receipts of such a suburban studio would come not only from the performances, but from household economy and from the cultivation of the soil. Spring sowing and autumn harvesting would be done by actors themselves. This would be extremely important for the general mood and the atmosphere in the studio. People who meet daily in the nervous atmosphere of the theatre cannot establish the close friendly relations necessary for true cooperation in art. But if, besides meeting on the stage, they met in the open, to work together in the field, their hearts would open

up, their ill feelings vanish and their physical labour cement their unity. Their stage work would stop for spring and autumn field-work and would be resumed after the harvest. In winter, when they were free from creative work they would work on the production of plays, i.e., paint scenery, sew costumes, make models. The idea of cultivating soil was one of Sulerzhitsky's oldest dreams; he could not live away from land and nature, especially in the spring. He longed for country life. And so the farm of our projected studio was to be under his personal management.

This dream, however, remained a dream, although we were able to carry out part of it.

I bought a large plot of land on the magnificent shore of the Black Sea in the Crimea, a few miles from Eupatoria, and placed it at the disposal of the [First] studio. With the receipts from a show in Eupatoria we erected communal buildings, a small hotel, a stable, a cow shed, barns for farming implements, and a store house for seed, food-stuffs, etc. Each of the actors of the studio had to build himself a house with his own hands, and the house was to become his property.

For two or three years studio actors, headed by Sulerzhitsky, went to Eupatoria for the summer and led the life of pioneers. They brought stones and cut them for communal buildings. We built these temporary houses in the same fashion as children build houses of blocks: instead of a roof we had canvas, instead of doors and windows we had carpets and cloth curtains, with stone divans covered with pillows as in a medieval palace, curtains on the walls, Chinese lanterns to give us light in the evening. The company spent the entire summer in the sun and became as brown as berries. Sulerzhitsky applied the methods he had used with the Dukhobors in Canada, and maintained strict discipline. Each of the actors had a communal duty—one was a cook, the other a coachman, and so on. The fame about the pioneering group spread throughout the Crimea, and attracted the curious, who came to see the “wild” actors of the Moscow Art Theatre Studio.¹

Russian Theatre Cultures after the Revolution

Anatoly Smelienski writes:

The leaders of the Revolution had realized immediately that the theatre could be used as a spiritual substitute for the Church they had dismantled. It would not be good for the holy places to remain empty. So for decades, until the fall of the Soviet Union, this model of a theatre-cum-church existed in one form or another. If it was sacrilege, it was also remarkably effective.

In Soviet Russia, the theatre replaced a parliament which had become just a rubber stamp, and a Church which had been half suffocated. Several generations of directors, actors and spectators had developed a kind of conditioned reflex. You didn't go to the theatre just for entertainment but for communion.

The elite's notion of communion (*sobornost*), which was very popular with the Russian symbolists at the beginning of the century, now found an unexpected place in society. The theatre became perhaps the only focal point of Russian *sobornost*, a spontaneous living contact between people. Directors and actors made themselves servants of the cult of the theatre [sic] Audience expectations rose, to the point where it was felt that life could be transformed by a moralizing production. . . . To be in the theatre in Russia is to share a common home and to devote your whole life to a joint endeavour. It's a long-term artistic association which demands a special set of structural, aesthetic and, especially, moral circumstances. . . . I think it was [Lev] Dodin who came up with the best summary. For him, the Art Theatre of Chekhov and Stanislavsky's time was a model for "home-made" theatre, family theatre built on two distinct foundations – great idealism (which made the theatre in to a kind of a cult), and the kind of clear-sighted economic calculation that is inevitable in a market economy.

The twentieth century rubbished these two foundations. Idealism degenerated into Stalinism or fascism. Economic rationality and honesty degenerated into cynical wheeling and dealing. The laws of the market place have infiltrated the remotest corners of the theatre business and robbed our theatre of some of its meaning.²

¹ Konstantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*. trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), 410-11.

² Anatoly Smeliansky, "A Common Home; The History of Theatre in Russia" in *Unesco Courier*. (November, 1997): 23.

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Appendix G
Social Interaction: Frans Winther's Birthday Party

The Scandinavian tradition of making decade birthdays after fifty very special occasions was given a transcultural spin for Winther's fiftieth birthday party. At 5 p.m. on Sunday an entourage of family guests and theatre residents barely fits into the theatre's van for the drive over to Rasmussen and Bredholt's farmhouse and barn, primarily because the van is stuffed to overflowing with virtually every table, chair, pot, and pan in the theatre. We bounce along the hilly dirt roads of the almost medieval Jutland farm country. The August air hangs with the perfume of fertile black soil; the radio plays old New Orleans rhythm and blues. We seem to drive forever in this intercultural visual and aural counterpoint of Nordic tenant farms and funky music. A half an hour later, after switching back and forth from two-lane blacktops to dirt roads, winding around hills and down through tiny glades, we come around a bend to discover about fifty cars parked on the side of the road. Up on a little hill, by the side of an old farmhouse, is a yellow stucco barn, framed by dark thick wooden beams covered by a thatched roof. The barnyard is full of people, easily a hundred, drinking white wine flavored with the nectar of local flowers. Fifteen members of Winther's family and his friends, the Odin members and their families (a good deal of whom are Italian or South American), and a collection of theatre artists from all over Denmark is wandering through the farmyard. Imagine a Martha's Vineyard garden party attended by the Viking avant-garde. People wear their flowered

shirts and fur-lined vests, their parents wear their tweeds, and their children flaunt leather jackets, spiked hair, and pierced noses and navels.

When it is time for the meal we go into the barn where seven old wooden tables are arranged in the letter “T” stretching from one end of the barn to the other, leaving hardly any room for the hundred people to maneuver. The tables are laid perfectly with white tablecloths, china, candelabras, crystal, bottles of traditional Danish akvavit, vintage Danish beers, and baskets of bread. Along the barn’s walls are smaller tables with meats, cheeses, more bread, fruit, and vegetables. I gleefully sit down to eat this glorious food and drink these strong drinks. Then the speeches begin – long sincere speeches, thoughtful speeches, and lighthearted humorous speeches, punctuated with the typical Danish, ego-deflating joke. For example, Barba says that Winther has been with the Odin for ten years and is the worst actor he has ever known. A family member talks about Winther’s days as a member of the communist party and his gradual maturation into a proper bourgeois artist. Each speech finishes with a serious, Danish toast – deep eye contact with a neighbor or the person across the table as the liquor races through the stomach and spreads into the blood and brain. Then we burst into song. “*Han skal leve, han skal leve, han skal leve højt*” (he shall live, he shall live, he shall live high) followed by wall-shaking shouts of “Hurra, hurra, hurra!” After another speech and some traditional Danish folk songs, Winther’s wife, Kathrine Winkelhorn, with a tear in one eye, looks directly into his eyes, and makes a toast. This is followed by a soulful rock and roll song from Winther’s two boys and the older boy’s girlfriend. There is a brief pause in the proceedings

to eat an egg. And then magically, romantic Spanish guitar music glides through the golden glow of candlelight. It is Ferslav. And then Rina Skeel begins to sing an Argentinean love ballad. We are all transfixed as she stands as though perched at the edge of a cliff singing to a chasm. After the ballad Ferslav and Skeel begin a tango. Larsen and Lica get up to dance on a patch of floor no bigger than a shower stall. They tango with their faces frozen in Marlon Brando scowls. Lica's back bends almost to the floor. Larsen sweeps her sideways. It seems miraculous that they do not crash into the table as he swoops her upright. Applause. Tears. And then Winther brings out the nine-month-old pickled herring. We eat and drink and eat some more and for a while no one makes a speech.

After dinner, Winther is given his birthday card, signed by everybody. Attached to the card is a long piece of red thread winding around the chairs at the table. It leads to the barn door, out into the farmyard. He reads the card, laughs, and follows the red thread which twists and tangles around our legs, out the door, through barnyard obstacles, out into the trees. Winther disappears into the woods and moments later he is laughing again as he returns, carrying a new bicycle on his shoulders. "Now all I have to is to learn to ride it." An uncle takes the bicycle and shows Winther a few ways to do this. First forwards, then backwards, then standing on the seat. The uncle pedals up the road and disappears around the corner. It is dark and from the place where the uncle disappeared comes a flaming, four foot high number Fifty followed by Winther's two boys who are holding it suspended from the end of two poles about six feet away from their bodies. The flaming Fifty appears suspended in mid-air as the boys walk behind

it. The whole party stands still in front of the farmhouse. There is complete silence as the Fifty floats by. As it comes parallel with the crowd, it illuminates Bredholdt and Varley standing across the road on a hillock in the tall yellow grass playing a fanfare of whole notes on conches. Then, Rasmussen, Varley, and Carreri, illuminated by the flames, begin to sing in strong deep voices. The Fifty is dripping flaming drops on the road. It appears to be two burning bicycle tires. One is wrapped around a stiff wire to form the five. They sing until the Fifty burns itself out. People go down to the road to examine the remnants of the Fifty. Others go back into the barn where accordion music and folk dancing has begun. Else Marie Laukvik rushes out of the barn door with an enormous smile and says, "Come in! Come in! There's dancing." Some rush in and others stay outside to talk and smoke. Soon cake and many pots of coffee are set on the three picnic tables in the barnyard. After cake and coffee some of the crowd begin to go home. A couple more bottles of akvavit appear on the table and the guitars are being passed around. Gradually the music changes to Latin and Rock and Roll. The music goes on until the early morning. The next day we are back in rehearsal at 8:30, a.m.

Appendix H

Interview with Torgeir Wethal—August 1997

TW: First, it will be extremely important for your way of listening, for you to understand that when I speak about what I am doing, I'm not speaking about what the actors are presenting or doing. First of all, we are very different, and apart from that, I might be the only one who has a leg in each of the three camps you mentioned before. [Stanislavski, Meyerhold, and Grotowski] It should be absolutely underlined that in the last years, I've been more and more fascinated by my very early theatre experiences, working in professional theatre as a child. And, even if for many years I made a kind of combination of the experiences, it has become clearer to me. I wrote, not a very long time ago, that what should reach the spectators is what we normally call the underscore or internal action. But that is on a very emotional level, an incomplete level. That's what some people call the tempo, other people call it radiation, other people call it so and so and so—call it what you want. But the different actors have found different techniques in our group—how to break down forms, or how to fight formalism. Since, in some of the works that we have done it's not a rule, it changes very much from performance to performance. The starting point has been quite formalistic in the last ten or fifteen years. It means actions, fixed actions, fixed forms which are not necessarily created from a profound base in your self. While in the early part of our story these forms or series of actions were not that formal, yet were quite often born from very deep personal sources through improvisations which were important for us. And these sources were the original base for what we did for all those years to give the inner quality to the actions, even if it was very far from the logic of the performance. It was not an interpretation of *Hamlet*. But you had used these sources in yourself to make these actions and the collections of these actions and these different sources become the part.

SB: The improvisations that actors do in the conventional theatre might be improvisations based on their emotional reaction to the text or a personal experience and they stop there and that becomes the subtext they work with to do a play. But how I understand your work and some of the other actors is that the physical actions are taken away or harvested from the experience of improvisation and become a form and then a new experience or a new text meets that form. Now maybe that's overly simple.

TW: No it's not overly simple. Once again I'm speaking just for

myself. Perhaps you are right. I was just thinking we have had a very strange experience just lately. We stopped a production that we had been performing for three or four years [*Kaosmos*]. That means even if it is absolutely digested, you never think about what you are doing. You never think about the forms, you never think about the execution of an action. OK. It's an action, it's a reaction, it's a relation with this universe we are living in during the performance. We took some of these actions and changed them back to forms again as they had probably originally been. And so, OK, three steps forward, arms up, turn your head and so that is what I'm doing. But we cut off, or I did, the inner life of it. We made an external form, and the relations, and the story, the context of the performance was my background to remember. And so, let's use this in the new performance as a base. It wasn't a performance; it was a kind of a dance show or whatever you want to call it, when new relations were created, these actions met completely different reactions from the other actors. What they did was completely different. Some might react with a very specific face at the beginning—just from the outside—choreography. We made something for a while, very short, left it, and we should pick it up again. When I look at the videotapes to remember what happened, since it had never reached a point of being really intricate, I do not remember the original reason and I must think, I must look and cut off most of my brain to understand where it comes from, since I only see the new relations and new reasons for these actions which are slowly growing. Slowly growing means that from day to day, you can make them complex. It's not to use hocus pocus, if you have learned how to dance the waltz then you know one, two, three, one—You do not think left right, left, right—You dance with the girl, you see how beautiful she is, but you are shy because you are sweating under your arms. You are proud of your shiny new shoes. You know that you have to be quite fast in this situation because if you want to make an appointment with her you have to do it before dinner is served and you can smell the smell of food coming in from the kitchen. And during the work process you are, adding all these things, one after another, perhaps not that simple, but yes, that simple. And when it comes to acting of course you do not think them in your head since there is not time for that, but they are incorporated in you. And then the only, or one of the few similarities I can see with all the laboratories or studios you spoke about is time. "The luxury of time." The excuse or a level of work which gives you time. Which makes the process very different. You get so many different possibilities of constructing your inner life. Constructing some sort of code. But when you get all these details and they become your own, you put scores of physical actions into these

forms. They are slowly melting down and become just one inner echo. And then you are acting. You are just in situations of reacting and acting, in relation with what is in front of you, with all this daily mixture and goulash of thoughts and reactions, wishes and wills that you have.

SB: When you said echoes, the original experience from which you got the physical actions, is only an echo at the point when it becomes a form and then it meets the new experiences.

TW: And if these forms, these original forms, the improvisations are not created on the personal level, the most important phase, as they mostly are not today, in what we are doing or I am doing, we are creating forms or actions, it disappears completely. I have to look at my diaries to figure out where this comes from.

SB: But this is perhaps very difficult for someone from my tradition, because our teachers would always say something to us when we had a performance and we had been in rehearsal and things had reached a level of form, they would say, "ah but you're mechanical."

TW: There is a long mechanical period. And if you do not have enough time, one shouldn't work that way. We use time to break down formal mechanics. Some actors do not. Some experienced actors are able to jump, at least, to the external, and from the audience point of view, this mechanical phase or period, which normally is in the work, this mechanical sense becomes essentially a repetition of forms. And these forms have no value until you have forgot them completely. And to forget them, you must learn them very well. Repeat them until you are, what do you say, vomiting? And you do not think of them and you use them like water. And then you come to performance, you stand in front of another person and you react. And as I say in the works demonstration, performance happens here and now, and for the first time every night.

SB: I read an interview that you did in which you talked about re-elaboration. Do you remember this?

TW: Yes.

SB: I see this as a process as elaboration on the original experience or fantasy . . .

TW: No, no, no. Not on the original experience or fantasy. The

new meaning which is born from the context that original thing has been put into, and my opinions on that, or my wishes in that situation, or my madnnesses which are born from what I see in that situation, or my strange extra thoughts coming into my head in that situation. So these forms are not more forms than a normal text of Shakespeare, which is also just a form, and the rest is an interpretation. So you can call it an interpretation of the score. Of course it exists. And for me it is a kind of mixture. There might be points in a performance which are kept from an improvisation where I keep the whole original and everything if it originally has been done from the sources which are deep enough or elemental enough that they will always remain alive.

SB: The “respect your father” moment [from Wethal’s ISTA work demonstration] seems to be one that survived the whole process. You know what I’m talking about? The gesture with the head to one side and the arms to the other and the words are something like “Yes, Father, I must respect . . .”

TW: Yes, but this is made up. This is intellectual. This is acting; this is traditional acting. Sorry. [Both laugh] I call the intellectual choreography from the ideas or just the thoughts coming up. So it’s about respecting father’s will. That’s the text and then the opposite, I say that and then I turn away. That is very intellectual, more a kind of director’s work, which most actors, after some years of experience, start to do themselves. But that form, that whole poem could then be very easily linked to lots of different lines of traditional acting. And that would probably not be enough for the long run. And a lot of other details would sneak into it during the process. And at the very end it would get its own nature, when these ideas, these thoughts are not there any longer but they are incorporated. I cannot tell. It happens in extremely good literature, I can hang emotional reactions on the text. Of course I can. But that emotional reaction is more like a river. It is extremely hard to catch. And it’s absolutely correct. It might work very well if I should produce it once. If I should produce it a hundred and fifty nights a year for four years, it’s not enough to keep me on the same level—or even on one level.

SB: So you’re really putting yourself in a position to have a unique or different emotional reaction every time.

TW: I never use the word emotional levels. It’s one of the ways in the profession that helps actors less. It hurts them more than you believe. If I go to produce emotions, I’m lost. I must say that once again it could be like making a film. Of course I have all the

different memories and so on, I can use them. But most actors working that way are creating emotional concerns and so do we—through a different path we have the same danger. That is, we change some of these much more profound personal works after ten years or so. Since we are really starting to produce emotional pictures, repetitions, I can say in front of a person I love, imaginary, “I want to touch your hair.” And I touch her hair. That’s the only thing I as an actor should do. That means, an action or an intentional action. Between these two points, this imaginary point and me, there might be something which is emotional. But the moment I start to think about that or to produce that, then there are clichés. Of course I love her and of course I want to touch her hair. I should not produce these things. I should be in concrete situations on an imaginary level. That’s one possibility. Another possibility is that a situation is created, quite cold. Formal. Then, I can put these other thoughts of these other imaginary situations into it to give it life. And then there are ones that are quite close to the interpretation of a text. But when you go to produce emotion, you do, quite simply mostly just pump yourself up. You have some high-class actors in all the traditional theatres who are doing just that and ten times more. You are afraid, so you run or you hide [he whispers]. You should never think about being afraid. All the reasons are external in combination with you as a complexity. And this complexity should be there and give a result; you cannot think about producing that result. You must just remain alive. React and act. That means that the whole world around you and yourself, with all your senses and political opinions and intellectual laziness and whatever, must be present and defined and that’s why I say I have to bring all these things very slowly, or not necessarily slowly, but they have to be rooted and clear and evaporate and remain the essence.

SB: So you break it down into step by step, even if you don’t have time, separating one step from the next step instead of pushing it all together to create the emotional reaction. You find the step of each intention

TW: I have nothing against the emotional reaction as long as it is an emotional reaction, rather than a result.

SB: Meyerhold was interested in behavioral psychology and William James. And James had this little phrase. “I see the bear. I run away. I am afraid.”—which is different than, “I see the bear. I am afraid. I run away.” That difference I think is captured in some of the things you just said.

TW: Yes. But when you have time in this process, then you see the bear and you remain frozen and you start to cry, “My children, my children, my children.” This was what my father experienced. Coming to a cabin in the woods in Norway he met this completely paralyzed woman. The only thing she said was, “My children, my children, my children.” She had just met a bear. She was not running away. And of course I agree. You run away and you are very afraid. But the possibilities are hundreds. But is there an emotional interpretation. No. It is just to grab the different, nonlinear, not the first, or very often the first . . . I do work like that when we are working on a reproduction, which is in Quotations, which you do when you do faster works, which we do when we make *Theatrum Mundi* or we do the Streetwork; then I would reduce my experience. Then, I can beg with my two hands and turn my head to the right and say, “Respect Father’s will.” And if I have the possibility of doing it ten or twenty times, it will begin to change quite a lot. But it’s not that I sit down and think I could add sweating under the arms or I could add brand new shoes. I get the ideas when they are coming or I’m mumbling very much with my part and the context in the story as it goes. My opinions too. I can literally be against something that is happening on the stage, during rehearsal and that is what I’m telling myself. That thing will surely change during the process of work and become something I accept absolutely. But I can keep my actions as I am doing something, and it’s a very simple motivation for little actions which happen within the main action.

SB: Anatoly Smelianski said that Grotowski and many others have attached a lot of importance to Stanislavski’s work on physical actions. And when you objected to the word emotional reaction I was reminded of what Stanislavski said, or what Toporkov says that he said, “Why do you say emotions. I never said that word.” But Smelianski said that people like Eugenio, people like Grotowski, attach too much importance to this phase in Stanislavski’s life. I balance that with Thomas Richards who says that Grotowski is finishing the work that Stanislavski began but then he died too early.

TW: Fortunately, Grotowski is not finishing it; he is continuing it. One could say, one of the most important things, at least for me, is that Stanislavski or many of the other ones—why they can remain a kind of dialogue partner—is that they never established a method, they never figured out how it is. They’re always moving. And Grotowski moves on. Thomas has to continue to move on. And it might change a little bit. It’s this not reaching a point which

is the most important. If you establish a method and you start, you work for three or four or five years, you become a reproduction of your influences. Your ingredients are defined and there is not a meeting point anymore. In all pedagogical work, at least for me, I never know what I should teach before I bring together a single person for a while, since it is a reaction with them. Of course there might be a lot of basic things which they have slowly learned; that this works or maybe that, so and so and so, but apart from that, everything revolves around being in the situation and understanding it and not having recipes but experience.

SB: Experience is a good word. Stanislavski used the word “*perizhivanie*,” which is translated in American English to *living through*. In the Danish translation of Stanislavski it’s *oplevelser* which is *experience*. Perhaps this is sort of the root of a misunderstanding. But along these lines, many people come to you or Roberta an experience—the workshops. People like me, come and watch rehearsals. I’m curious what do you think that we want from the Odin when we come for these workshops?

TW: I don’t know. The only thing I do—since in our workshops we are working extremely differently—what I do when teaching these last years, after not teaching for long periods—whatever you do, if it is concrete or certain, or specific, it can be learned and then you have something, I suppose. Since this can be reproduced it is a kind of safety, which is good. But then after seeing people repeat results ten, fifteen years later, not moving—so today I try to teach a different way of thinking and not let the technical part of it be so easy or so complex that their heads are exploding, but giving as many key words as possible, which, if they remember three of them five years from now, they can always be used to go out hunting. And that’s a kind of pedagogical paradox when you are doing these short workshops or have these short pedagogical meetings. If I know I will meet with the same people a half a year later or one year later then it’s different. But how do you fight formalism while teaching it? And that’s my main concern. Of course most people who want to make workshops—OK, you have professional workshops—but the other ones want to do that because they have seen the performances. And what they have seen in performance, you can never teach them in a workshop. Not at all, since what they have seen is all the things they didn’t see. I am not afraid at all for instance of words like emotions or experience. *Oplevelsen* is experience, but it has the sound of something that turns on your emotions. I am mixing quite a lot. I do not do all the things I’m saying. And I do a lot of things I say that one should never do. But in a teaching situation, at least with

people who have some traditional experience, the first big work goes on getting these automatisms, the superficials, the soap opera clichés away, and come down to pure action. And it's pure simple action just to move a glass. (He moves his glass). But there is a reason for that; it might be very simple. Or if I want to hide this spot. I move it so that you cannot see it, but I hide this spot on the table. There is a reason. So from that simple base, all this discussion would not bother many of my colleagues and they would not understand what I am speaking about because they have complicated it.

SB: But the battle against the cliché seems to be part of this tradition, and an important part.

TW: Yes, and you cannot do anything else except create new clichés. And all this anti-technique, which is a double check way of thinking, so on and so on, absolutely creates clichés too. So once more, that's where I am at the moment which doesn't mean that I would say the same of the next performance.

SB: I watched Gennady Bogdanov's videotape of Biomechanics and I watched the old films from Russia of the students of Meyerhold doing the Biomechanics. Now, one of the things that was said to me is that the biomechanics are not the biomechanics if you are not perfecting the form. But I also feel that if I am going to work with some of the traditions I want to change the form to serve my actors or to serve my production. Is it important to be faithful to the traditional forms for a long time, or is it better to create your own forms as quickly as possible?

TW: I don't know. I did not see his session in Copenhagen. I saw him a few weeks ago in Italy. And Yes, in these extremely fixed forms these forms the school of understanding dynamic of all actions are hidden. In the short fixed forms, yes, but in between there is a very huge space for improvisation. He is improvising very much, practicing the knowledge he has gotten from the forms. I don't know. I am ignorant, in the sense of how it theatrically has been used. When you see the films and so on, of course these are exercises. That's not what you are supposed to do on the stage. Though in other cases has been done. Some forms, if you do not want to use them at all, if you just want to experience them, then you must learn them completely. I think it would be extremely good to learn real biomechanics or real corporal mime if you want to use it. If you don't want to use it, ah ha, cause it's a huge experience which you incorporate in yourself, an experience which can radiate, eh? Like charisma – then you must learn its purpose.

SB: I agree with you because I watched the brief segment from Meyerhold's production of the *Government Inspector*—Khlestakov, and the way Garin takes the woman's finger in his spoon, kisses the hand, returns the hand and places the spoon on the tray. I can't say this comes from biomechanics, but I can say that it is a form that has some kind of charm to it. It seemed very realistic to me, but I'm guessing it must have come from a certain kind of formal training. If we talk about form and formalism and the first maybe ten or fifteen years of the work at the Odin, your work and your colleagues' work, it seems to me that at the beginning, form and formalism were very important. And it struck me as historically interesting that during the sixties and early seventies, formalism, formality was not popular among people of your or my generation. And so I'm wondering what need was fulfilled by the first maybe ten or fifteen years of work.

TW: No, no, no. I think it's wrong. I think it's wrong. The works we did in the very beginning, I think—I'm just trying to remember when there was a kind of changing point and if its during or after. I think its during *Ashes of Brecht*. Up to then, during the first few performances, we were not formalistic at all. The result is formed. But there does not exist a sort of formal pattern or clear . . . not that it's a clear way of thinking, or not. But there's a clear way of being methodological. It is very artificial in parts – what we then called composed. Very not daily. Very supertheatrical. And formally there is an enormous difference between *Ornitofilene* and *Kaspariana*. There is something which grows though from the very beginning—a kind of vocal strength. The voice is very personal, of course. There might be some song models or emotional effects on the spectators from sound, words, text which could be heard as growing more linear from year to year and from production to production. The form during rehearsals—we form details and so on, but then when you think about what was formed twenty, thirty years ago, compared with what we have done the last ten or fifteen years, it's nothing. Absolutely nothing. Since it was part of the performances, never the full performance, we always had what we called these growing scenes which were based on personal improvisations and then used in the context of something which was not there originally. And they had absolutely a form. But they had a form like a riverbank. There are a lot of changes in how the water flows from day to day. It's ten centimeters lower, or there is a bit more pressure, so on. And we worked on all the details, but we worked them as logical actions. A kind of actor's background was built into it from the very beginning. And I think that I have mostly continued to do that. But on the other hand,

that's what I think when I think about the results. As I told you in the very beginning, you're just taking the actions you have done in the production you have just finished and put them into another one you have just started doing and then after fourteen days, not remembering their origin, since they have become completely illogical and they want to change something in the room this time too. It's just something completely different.

SB: You seem to be saying that there's a moment of transformation, you said in the middle of *Brecht's Ashes*.

TW: I'm not sure I'm right. I think that can be correct, since then we had had quite a lot of new actors. And it started to be a kind of gap of experience between the early and the new. And that made it necessary to work more technically. I think that this happens also more or less around the time when ISTA starts. And Eugenio gets more interested in forms and starts to analyze them more. He starts to see how all forms can be used for nearly everything if you are able to melt them down. We started to find techniques of changing forms, because if you have a form together, that means something the actor is doing, and is always doing and the director learned it just watching the actor, then he can also change it. Eugenio can ask you, just bend your finger three centimeters and it changes the word completely. This fixed form is a tool for collaboration so the actor and the director have something they can form together.

SB: They're both working with the same basic tool which is the fixed form. Each comes at the form.

TW: Yes, yes. This is what we usually can speak about and what is easy to teach, but it's nothing if it's only used for a purpose or many purposes from the director's side. The actors will not be able to break them completely down and let them melt. When you still see the form then the performance is not ready, I think.

SB: There's a whole other level—the idea of secrecy, the idea of things that are invisible, and are sometimes not spoken about. There are things which one doesn't speak about.

TW: Like what?

SB: Like in *Oxyrhincus*, the white figure with the sword, which was played by Christof [Falk, assistant director on *The Gospel According to Oxyrhincus*, 1985]. And one night I went into the workshop when he was working on a pair of roller skates. And I

knew. . .

TW: (Laughter)

SB: The secret! And then the next night we had many guests and I asked Christof about the roller skates and he, bangs on the table and says, Shhhhh! This mustn't be spoken about. These people have not seen the work.

TW: Yes, yes, of course.

SB: And then in Montreal, last September, you spoke about certain habits and customs at the Odin. You said that in the past the habit was not to speak about the work with the other actor for twenty-four hours after the work . . .

TW: No, no. I did not say twenty-four hours, but rather. . . not to speak about the work done inside the room, outside the room, apart from technical things. This room is safe and secure, then you can be as stupid or as personal as you are in private, and nobody will speak about this outside the room. You have the right to be a hundred percent or fifty-five; it depends on how much you have aged. It doesn't happen very much today. We are not working so much in that way. For instance, if actors, after a performance, in conversation start saying, "why did you play it this way?" The energy is still pumping away. You break down a group before it has reached maturity. People start fighting among themselves right away. This is elementary. This must be said when we talk about how to reach age as a theatre group. Or about why a theatre group starts. Or why do most theatres speak themselves to death? But today, it still happens that I hear some of the younger people at the conferences speak together and say things that I would never say. It's stupid. We forgot to tell them. It's the wrong moment and the words are wrong. Just know your anger. Of course it's obvious that you're angry, but you don't have to tell them. I did not say that we did not speak of it or we did not react. But, the makeup, or the veins, or the small internal rules of the game are not so difficult to make, to create. And it changes when the communication within the group changes.

SB: You make it sound as though there are simple ways to keep a group united, and yet there are very few groups that stay together.

TW: There are no methods of practicing these things. And it would also be very difficult to introduce them without a strong center in the group. Of course there is a big difference between

groups who have made their administrative work together and a group where one person does the administrative work. Many of these traps are so easy to avoid. Of course it will happen sooner or later all the same. I can't say a group should live for long, necessarily. It has worked for us since we have formed.

Originally Eugenio made matters of self, different ways of getting completely new inputs and how to develop all our individual interests and moods and desires—and all this returning to the group. But if this doesn't happen, if there is not that kind of centripetal possibility in the group, which becomes important for the center again—if this doesn't exist then the natural life of the group will not be long. Then it lasts seven, sometimes up to ten years, normally five. It's natural.

SB: The language of the Odin has certain terms that other theatres don't use. They may have a different word for it. You have certain words like *sats*, or resistance, or maybe the big word is pre-expressivity. But I hear Eugenio say "*sats*" as a reminder, or "resist, resist, resist." But it seems that some of the language of the Odin comes from discoveries that the actors make, show Eugenio, and which he then incorporates into the language of work.

TW: Yeah, I think so. These are the old words. *Sats* is something—I don't know—that he brought from Poland or that he started to use in Norway since it is a very Norwegian word. Resistance is probably a technical remark. I am sure that is the explanation of it. But there are lots of other ones that worked, but we never have the time any more to meet, to just sit down and speak, and if we do, it is not as professionals. So dialogue very often happens in public meetings, or in work demonstrations, for instance. That is a dialogue, since you always have a reason to say that. I have no desire to explain this to theatre students. There is not one argument which is not addressed to one of my colleagues or Eugenio or to myself to understand. It's interminable. Of course it changes. I could sit down and say "I know so and so," but I do not have these differences. But when there is something I think about in the work of the others or in the words they use, then I can find a definition, then I can make the phrase and make the example because I need this external resistance or reason. In these public meetings we feel quite relaxed and are very often speaking and answering or telling other colleagues; at least I do. But that is quite elementary I think, and normal over all professions. The nice thing is that this style works. We are still listening. Eugenio in a conference can say something which I can pick up and work on. Or I say something and hear him using the same phrase in one of his conferences one week. We are still extremely curious of each

other, knowing each other so well that one could just fall asleep [laughter]. And I can still learn very much from my colleagues. Watching. Watching.

SB: The word restraint comes to mind so often when I think about physical actions. The other day when we were all working on the ISTA mailing, folding and putting everything in the envelopes, you seemed quite frustrated. You looked up from your pile of papers and said “I am so involved in trying to fold it with the least possible motions . . .”

TW: Movements . . . not motions.

SB: “. . . movements that I don’t think I’m getting anything done.” And then in the work demonstration you had the same kind of observation when you asked, “Have you ever thought about how many movements it takes to comb your hair?” Stanislavski [in *Building a Character*] has a whole chapter on restraint. This is very early in his work and one of the points he makes is the more movements you make, the more you create a kind of pollution of the action and the intention.

TW: I call it physical noise.

SB: If you reduce physical noise to what is absolute necessary, then what emerges?

TW: First, what you do will be seen. But this is something that all traditional actors and classical actors know just as well. I think that if you know that you need three and a half steps backwards to sit down in that chair in a not dead that way, your graphical line is clear while you do that. It’s very simple. Very often we have, in how we see ourselves, a mirror that is wrong. You think of this small movement that is very elegant with three fingers as so big and clear but it goes straight into nothing. This is ten centimeters, a circle of eight [demonstrates brush strokes]. If I at the same time do like this with my leg, [he rotates his leg from his hip while remaining seated] that is ten times bigger. I do not remember that I do that since I have other things to do. What the spectator can see is this knee moving up and down. But that is on a large scale. But the strength of the simple act is the strength of string on a violin. It is able to make a tone if you touch it. You don’t necessarily have to do it, but you know the potential is in the violin. And if I think of that fly or that mosquito on my hand, I just can’t take my glasses off. [Tries to remove his glasses without disturbing the mosquito on his hand. It flies away.] I just can’t do anything. It’s

so difficult [laughter]. And it has nothing to do with imitation. It has nothing to do with emotion. It has nothing to do with anything. It's just a clear line and it has no meaning in itself. But it's a huge helper.

SB: I think it's important to ask you about Ryszard Ciésłak , and what if you were to talk to someone like me who never saw his work with Grotowski. Clearly Ciésłak made an impression on you.

TW: It's very difficult for me to speak about him since we became quite good friends. When I saw him the first time when he came to Oslo in sixty-five, we had been working for half a year; that's all. It became a nightmare. It was like . . . I guess I saw *The Dziady*, it was in Polish. It was like he got under my skin but literally, physically. So what I did the next half-year or year or so, without wanting to, I became a kind of parody on the theatre. It was not possible not to do "like" or "as if" [laughter]. And it was fantastic, to see the experience of that performance. And it was with *The Constant Prince* that he came of age. Earlier his part had never been that strong in the group. Even if it sounds banal, his work on *The Constant Prince* and *Apocalypsis* are two of my strongest experiences. And I think it was in the same period he grew enormously as a pedagogue in the sense that through the experience making *The Constant Prince*, he gained a safety, a new understanding of collaboration that reached beyond Grotowski. Then, also his generosity when working with other people was enormous. He could push you to the edge of your capacities and then three more meters. But you always had a safe hand under you. He was so generous while pushing. Then, I did not follow at all everything happening after that theatre period ended. They made a new experience that I don't know. I don't know. I was only twenty-seven. But it surprised me very much, his enormous trust.

SB: Did you see the work that he did in *Mahabarata*?

TW: It's completely absurd. We were close to it ten different places in the world never with the possibility to see it. Very sad.

SB: I want to talk about the idea of energy. I hear words like *radiating, energy, alive, organism*. And I think this can be very confusing. But on the other hand it's good. Are there one or two words that you really like to use when you describe a performance which is ready, is alive the right word for you?

TW: No, no, no. It's extremely simple. All these things are just guns. The form is a gun and until the moment you find the target and you know why, why, why, why you shoot, or want to shoot, or did not shoot. All these things I think one can teach, and learn, and speak about since it is concrete. All the rest, which should be used, is individual and cannot be taught. And until the moment you know why you do each action and why you do not do your action, and all the rest of the background we spoke about before, you can hang the gun on the wall. It's a gun. It's a form. It has a technique. It has a trigger. It has everything. It's nice. It's not dangerous even if you have bullets, even if it is working, it is still not dangerous. But that can be taught. You can even teach people some techniques of hunting, some techniques of how animals are thinking, or reacting, or how wind shifts. But there it stops. At one point or another it stops. And the rest must involve shooting it. And, working together with people for a longer time, you can always develop more and more different directions and can be more and more killings if you have the feeling that they are close to you as you must be to their experiences and needs. You must work carefully since it's not my experience that's important, it's the experience they're going to make that is important. And I can very easily stop the experience they are going to make if I teach them my meanings. But I cannot teach them my needs.

SB: This is the last question. You've done a lot of interviews. Did you ever hope that somebody would ask you a question but they never asked this question? Is there a question you wish somebody would ask?

TW: You know, I like interviews since I have never thought about this gun, but I'll use it many times out of this. It makes you react to the words. But I hate interviews since I do not present, mostly do not present, fixed explanations. I know that they are extremely partial. And I read some of them and I understand absolutely nothing. [Laughter] No. I don't think so. Strangely enough I think it must have to do with all the books Eugenio has been writing and all the quotations and all the background that people want to make us have. They never ask us about good food and fishing. I love good food and fishing.

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