

Towards the Creative Self Through Bodily Creativity

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Abstract: Expressivity and bodily aesthetics are skills that can be trained individually through the study of formal/social settings. However, this consists of a mechanistic understanding of the type of facial or bodily expression that the individual expresses when subjected to certain emotions, sensations or situations. Therefore, this study looks at the connection between the pure moment when creativity emerges and the transition of expressive and aesthetic elements from a mechanical to an organic format. This training and study of social forms is important for the actor because through it the body trains its motor memory. Thus during the stage act, conscious of the body's capabilities, the actor can allow himself to relinquish conscious control over the way his muscles, bones and joints operate, allowing himself to be captured by the energy and content of the act itself, giving it life and uniqueness through unconscious creativity.

Key words: creativity, body, actor

Creativity is a psychological process that has its roots in both personal and social contexts and "is based on divergent thinking, directed towards generating alternative ways of solving a problematic situation - which is why it is also called divergent cognitive factor - but it cannot be reduced to this form of thinking"¹. It is a concept that has not found a clear definition given the different ways and the multitude of fields in which it is developed. Although the creative process has made its mark in areas such as technology, business, science and even in people's daily lives, it is often associated with art. In psychology, creativity is understood as the individual capacity, which

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¹ Camelia Popa, Adelina Dobrea, *Evaluarea creativității și a intereselor artistice ale elevilor*, UNATC PRESS, 2019, p. 11

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differs according to the uniqueness of each person, to create something innovative, something new. It is therefore an ability that is endowed by birth, and it can be nurtured, understood and diversified.

It was J.P. Guilford who, in 1950, in his speech to the American Psychologists' Association, advocated further study of creativity, and in the 1960s and 1970s, research into creativity reached the point where it was seen as a powerful human aptitude which, beyond the form it can take according to the personality of each individual, became absolutely necessary and sought after in job interviews. In its essence, creativity is what gives us the impetus to throw ourselves into the void, to break through social barriers, and to accept the world in its present version in order to discover new limits, new themes that could be fundamental to the development of the field of activity. "Individual creative abilities are not only the ability to understand a problem, but also the ability to offer original solutions to that problem, solutions that break out of the usual patterns, out of the daily routine, out of the behavioral stereotypes and stereotypes"². These abilities, however, are nurtured by certain characteristics that an individual's personality must possess at a conscious level, here we are referring to the ability to take risks, indifference to social ranking in the work group, ambition. However, all these skills are useless if the occupation is not driven by a sense of pleasure and enjoyment. Creativity is stimulated by the feeling of satisfaction, i.e. by the adrenaline released by our brain. This is the substance that excites the brain to such extreme points that one can forget the whole of one's history. Take bungee jumping or the roller coaster experience: activities designed precisely to put man in situations that the mind cannot perceive as completely possible. So adrenaline is definitely secreted in huge amounts so that the feeling that emerges is that of the ultimate possible moment in life. Indeed, with the constant repetition of activities like this the mind gets used to that amount of adrenaline and manages to return to an objective view of the experience even while it is being undertaken.

Adrenaline is secreted as a result of the feeling of pleasure, and the creative process can only take place under the same conditions. So activation in an area that causes satisfaction is a sure path to the discovery of the creative spirit. This is used today as a form of management. It is said that most

² Camelia Popa, *op.cit.*, p. 12

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successful companies use the criterion of interest over experience. The greatest business men no longer employ persons capable of working in a mechanical way who on the graph can give instant and steady output, but prefer to employ an individual who shows great interest, to invest in educating him, because in a few years, having mastered his craft, he will be a self-rearing pillar, not a self-sufficient one.

Although humanity has discovered the possibilities of evolution through creativity, it is the social factor that in most cases influences this process in a negative direction. "What cannot be disputed is that by saying, doing, thinking anything, as soon as we enter social life, we imitate our neighbor at every moment"³. It is necessary that people show interest in the social framework in which they find themselves. Thus, if people were able to live together in groups in which members, compatible beyond the uniqueness of their personalities, would spur each other on to advance, it would be possible to build the "creative society, based on innovative communities, which determines the stable and sustainable economic growth of a country"⁴.

„In order for the nation to survive, the individual must think creatively."⁵ "Etymologically, the term creativity comes from the Latin word "creare" (to give birth, to create). The term creativity was introduced into psychology by G. Allport in 1937, who showed that the psychic substrate of creativity implies a predisposition of the person towards the new, as well as a certain organization of psychic processes in his personality system. Creativity, considered both as a transformative-constructive dimension/layer of the personality and as a general aptitude, has been defined by Allport as a lifestyle that allows the personality to function fully."⁶

The emergence of creativity, or the „climax" of the artist's life, is the moment of immaculate watershed that the actor tends to find. It is the moment when all the questions are answered, all the blurred images created by the psyche take shape and detachment from the self is achieved for a moment, becoming in reality a pure component of this universe, a flowing and fearless

³ Tarde Gabriel, *Legile sociale*, Ed.Națională, București, 1924, p. 53

⁴ Camelia Popa, *op.cit.*, p. 25

⁵ Landau Erika, *Psihologia creativității*, E.D.P., București 1979, p. 11

⁶ Camelia Popa, *op.cit.*, p.11

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component that feels only the need to unfold and which we can call the creative self. Ease of expression, freedom in the face of the group, confidence and courage are the milestones through which the student must be guided by the teacher in order to unleash his or her so-called creative spirit.

The theme of this paper is creativity because of the complexity of this ability, which needs to be unraveled in order to show itself in its purest and most sincere form. It is true that "observation, attention and concentration, imagination, empathy, sense actualization and conscious sensoriality, spontaneity, memory and affective memory, intuition are all skills specific to the actor's profession that aim to trigger and use creativity effectively"⁷, but beyond a perfect control over them, the actor must also open the spotlight of his attention on external factors that can intoxicate the route to the discovery of the creative self.

Active and constant study of the everyday is the way to prevent most of these external factors. A lively analysis of how individuals go about their activities in both social and intimate settings is necessary to understand the workings of the human psyche and physique. Any human lacking this research will be reduced to primitive impulses, devoid of understanding in many cases. That is why the first thing that the theater pedagogue notices in the student who is required to react alive is his inability to grasp the concept of "alive" in the first phase, an incompetence that evolves from the lack of observational exercise on the outside. The freedom of expression of the individual who is aware that he is being watched is another factor to be considered. The way in which this freedom is manifested differs from person to person according to life experiences, the form of courage developed and the different personalities which form the atmosphere of a working group.

"In everyday life, the sense of touch is used the least, and its role is limited to protecting people from burns or frost. Although it covers the whole body, this shell, this shell of the individual is explored very little by the actor. Through touch the body can be guided through space, to give the dramatic character a chance to appear through the actor's pores"⁸. The body is the filter through which energy flows to the soul before it is perceived by the brain. This

⁷ Darie Bogdana, *Curs de arta actorului. Improvizația*, UNATC PRESS, 2015, p. 111

⁸ Boldășu Romina, *Despre expresivitate corporală în arta actorului*, UNATC PRESS, 2019, p. 64

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is why in most cases, if we let ourselves be free in our existence, our bodily reactions will give us the answer to the most trying situations we may go through. But it is only by eliminating the accumulation of prejudices and parasitic thoughts that we can give the body the confidence to show us the way without the involvement of the conscious mind. A reference to the instinctive connection between the body and outer space is also made by the No theater actor Zeami Motokiyo, who says that , "to become master of his own art, he must go beyond the stage where his acting is a mere imitation of the master's movements and voice; when the role he plays comes from the heart and is flesh from his flesh, the ease and naturalness of the acting will transform him into a true master, and his character will come to life"⁹.

It can therefore be said that the much sought-after creativity is born at the point at which the brain gives up control and allows itself to be guided by the senses specific to the human being (hearing, taste, smell, sight, touch, instinct) giving rise to the creative personality, which in the early days of creativity studies was associated with genius. But today this point has become only a first stage in the pedagogical process, conceived and understood by the teacher to dismantle the student's confusion. This euphoria can, however, cross the threshold of lack of mastery. Thus, the brain has to take back control over the lack of control and learn how to manage the distortions that can arise in the creative process. There is not and never will be a clear recipe that automatically puts the human being in the ideal state to conceive an artistic act. The human being is constantly changing and each individual is changing day by day, changing his or her conceptions, feelings and physique, which alters the individual uniqueness of each person.

"From the point of view of neurology, a *blockage* is considered to be an obstruction that may occur when an impulse passes through a synapse or joint; in the psychology of activity or learning, it is a moment of interruption and impermeability to information caused by overload and emotional shock, and is equivalent to a psychological barrier"¹⁰. When it comes to theater arts education, we can categorize these blocks into two types: internal and external. The first are the blockages that arise because of certain failures that are strictly personal: the inability to remember the text, judgments about the facts and

⁹ Zeami, *Șapte tratate secrete de teatru No*, Nemira, București, 2013, p. 95

¹⁰ Darie Bogdana, *op.cit.*, p. 111

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actions generated on stage or in the work group, etc. These blockages represent a high level of risk because, if they are not externalized through the spoken word or through certain impulsive/vulcan reactions, the agglomeration of inner tensions will turn into hatred, phobias or even depression. The outer blocks are those that arise depending on how each participant assimilates the atmosphere of the tribe. Referring to the acting workshop setting, stirring up the energy of the group due to the diversity of personalities of the members is a very common thing. Everyone wants to be the most appreciated, the most talented, the most recognized for his or her work, but it is precisely this constant thirst for appreciation that prevents the individual from being able to detach himself from the gaze of the others, prevents him from existing freely in front of the crowd. And paradoxically, the freedom to exist within the studio does not come about as a result of escaping the clutches of the feeling of being judged, but vice versa, this feeling disappears once we settle accounts with ourselves, not with outsiders.

The actor's body on stage

Ion Cojar, the professor who initiated the development of theatrical pedagogy in Romania, speaks of the logical mechanism specific to the actor's art that gives rise to the creative process as "another way of being in the world, it means seeing things from the perspective of a specific experience, a belief and mentality that gives them another dimension"¹¹. This way of existing is the definition of the total actor, capable of juggling different types of dramatic characters designed to make the spectator question, and therefore change, the spectator. The aim of the student who aims to become a total actor is to metamorphose the general into the specific. Every man presents in his life various activities which, because of routine, we have come to call commonplace. We have become so accustomed to seeing all around us people walking, laughing, quarreling, children playing, falling and crying that we no longer have the desire to look for what is beyond the mere externalization of certain impulses, we no longer search for its essence and character. But the continual process of observing the world has the purpose of bringing forth in the eyes of the observer the dramatic differences of any action.

¹¹ Ion Cojar, *O poetică a artei actorului*, Editura Paideia, 1998, p. 37

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Once lost in the trance of analysis, all that is necessary is persistence, to the point where it becomes visible that men are „expressing through the body all the changes that take place in the spirit. And the "corporalization", the "physicalization" of all the changes in the spirit constitutes the unmistakable specificity of this art"¹².

Also Ion Cojar makes statements related to the involuntary imagination that every individual possesses and the opening of the creative eye that allows a vision beyond the threshold of imagination and reveals the ability to transform thoughts, feelings and experiences into concrete through the process of "embodiment". He affirms that "if it is possible for all people to imagine, to represent "in the world of their fantasy" images, sensations, states that give them the "illusion of a concrete existence", because they have the ability to imitate feelings and can pre-face themselves, the phenomenon of "incarnating" another person is a performance that can only be achieved by respecting the law of "organic unity between the inner life of the psyche and the outer life of the physical"¹³.

In this art the point of balance between the psychic, the physical and the spiritual is sought. The theatrical phenomenon in the scenic setting cannot be embodied in its exactness because one of these basic pillars is missing. The beginning of the pedagogical process in order for students to discover this point must be based on the study of one of the three units. The educational process in the actor's art of the University of Theater in Bucharest is structured on the understanding, the proper functioning and control of the psyche, but, if the advantages of diversification are taken into account, it can be admitted that a restructuring of the subject matter would be favorable, so that the student would have the opportunity to focus his attention on the body as well. Because "the movement of the human body is our guide on this journey from life to theater"¹⁴.

In the contemporary context, the theatrical space has widened its boundaries from the simple theater stage, rehearsal hall or classroom. Since it is a fact that theater is born where the actor really exists, it follows that today

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 150

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 150

¹⁴ Jaques Lecoq, *Corpul poetic*, Ed. Artspect, 2009, p.28

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theater can come to life even in the most unconventional spaces of everyday life. Because the importance is given by the energy of the actor, the way in which he manages to transform the atmosphere of a space which, without the other components that make up the theatrical performance, can seem bland, lacking consistency.

Starting from the theatrical parameters of *where?* and *where from?* and by means of attention and imagination, the actor manages to increase the range of existential possibilities of a space, because "the outline of my body is a boundary that ordinary spatial relations do not go beyond"¹⁵. It is also imagination that helps us to change the identity of objects, their functions and their attributes, thus creating another world, another space, another time. Thus, a cupboard storing a table can become the throne room of a king, and it is easy for the spectator to fall prey to this spell if the actor himself is the one who truly believes that he is no longer in a cupboard but on his throne. "Space encompasses both the immediate and the potential/metaphysical environment, both dimensions of it are real and we can enter them, we can communicate with them, we can live and be free in them. And the actor has the task of physicalizing potentialities, of making the invisible visible"¹⁶. Every new space comes with its energetic charge and its physical proportions, but the actor through his knowledge of his body's motor skills and his own body's spatialization techniques is able to expand or shrink the scene using his physical and psychic adaptability. "My perception is not a sum of visual, tactile and auditory data; I perceive in a total way, with my whole being. I perceive a unique structure of the work, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once."¹⁷ Being therefore the support of such a concentrated load of energies, the stage or work room must be treated with love and respect. During a commedia dell'arte workshop I attended, the coordinator noticed the mess created by the participants in the room where the workshop was taking place and explained that the stage holds in memory all the physical and emotional baggage that has taken place on its expanse. Thus, if the stage is

¹⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologia Percepției*, Aion, 1999, p. 133

¹⁶ Mihaela Bețiu, *Elemente de analiză a procesului scenic*, UNATC PRESS, 2018, p. 143

¹⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The film and the New Psychology. Sense and Non-sense*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1964, p. 48

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treated with indifference and insolence, the connection between the actor and the space is not realizable.

Through movement, "our body is in the world as the heart is in the body; it keeps the visible spectacle alive, makes life possible and supports it unconditionally, forming a system"¹⁸. Body and stage space influence each other. Both entities of the theatrical performance feed on each other's existence, thus the actor who comes to peace with the stage is allowed to shape it, to preshape the dramatic universe through corporeality. Acting freely and fearlessly, the actor captures the spectator's gaze without having to utter a word. In order to reach this point of harmony with the acting space, the student's first step in this direction is to allow himself to be swallowed by the stage. It is only by taking this risk of losing control in favor of making a pact with the scenic universe that the student will be accepted by the auditorium, rehearsal, etc.

Studies show that the most optimal way to move smoothly through this process of coming to terms is to use a basic stance at the beginning of each practice/rehearsal. The stage is a sacred space that primarily needs stillness, discipline, and respect, so to understand its energy and the student must treat their stage existence with stillness, discipline, and respect. By positioning the legs parallel, shoulder level, with the knees slightly bent, the weight of the body is equally distributed on both supporting pillars of the body. Then, by simply allowing themselves to exist in this position, the theater disciple will begin to really feel the stage. The contact between the feet and the floor becomes a bridge through which the two elements that make up the dramatic act (the actor and the stage) share their energy. By using concentration of attention and observation, the actor adapts to the parameters of any different playing space, finding that peace between himself and the theatrical space. He cannot relate in the same way to the large stage of a national theater as he relates to the stage of an independent theater. The volume of vitality and strength changes and the exact amount imposed by the theater must be found so that the actor creates stage stability and feels comfortable communicating through the word or beyond the word.

The actor's concentration and understanding must not be an "epidermal one, but one in which the nerves, the spine and the brain are engaged: the

¹⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *op.cit.*, p. 203

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nerves, the spine and the brain, since, the actor works in public with the body and 'gives it in public'¹⁹. Once the student understands this connection to be realized, the next step is to maintain it throughout the dramatic act despite the distortions that may arise from the unpredictability of being on stage. In this kind of relationship, even a static position is not free of movement, so it requires the actor's concentration to keep this static alive. However, in a combination of the spatial dimensions in which the actor moves onstage (forward, backward, up, down) with the kinds of effort the actor uses (glides, floats, cuts, kicks, presses, pokes, plucks), the kind of attention of the individual in motion becomes involuntary and unconscious. There is that trance in movement where the psyche becomes an active spectator of the spectacle that the body embodies. The phenomenon of movement does nothing more than manifest, in a clear way, the spatial and temporal involvement. We know a movement and a mover without any awareness of objective positions, without any interpretation, just as we know, in each moment, the place of an event in the density of our past, without evoking it in particular"²⁰.

Creating a relationship between the actor and his perceptions of the world through the medium of motricity is the highlight of this study. Be it abstract or tautological, the movement deployed by the body existing in the stage space aims to create a dramatic situation. Dance theater, "replaces the rhythms of language with the rhythms given by the movements of the body (including the voice), and, like Aristotle, guides the dramatic art out of the psychological implications throughout the actor's training process. (...) when developing kinesthetic awareness, actors do not have to identify with the character or experience an emotion"²¹. The choreographic performance is not drunk on the concreteness of a story presented through speech, so the spectator is subjected to a process of finding himself in the abstract of combinations of movements, whether performed by a single individual or a group. In other words, it is the kind of passion involved in the construction of a dance/movement moment that awakens sensory empathy in the audience's

¹⁹ Eugenio Barba, *Teatru. Singurătate. Meșteșug. Revoltă*, Nemira, București, 2013, p. 48

²⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *op.cit.*, p.311

²¹ Kiki Selioni, *Laban-Aristotle*, Hellinoekdotiki, 2014, p.27

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inner eye, a feeling of identification that in most cases lacks a precise explanation. An embrace in the scenic space can arouse both melancholy and indignation, this difference is created by the life experiences, the emotional state and the way the spectator relates to the performance.

Conclusions

The theater is considered the mirror of life, and the actor must understand both the perspective of the spectator looking in the mirror and that of reflection. In the actor's art, the body can be considered the starting point for discovering the theatrical universe. Action is the actor's main occupation on stage, which is why in moments of confusion he is urged to direct his full attention to a particular object or partner and to act on it, thus anchoring himself in the stage act. This is why "it is really hard (but not impossible) to change the body by thinking. It is easy to change the body by acting directly on it"²².

The empty space is the ideal place in which the actor can discover and develop his capacities of artistic expressivity because, according to Peter Brook, it is , "the place where the visible and the invisible can meet"²³. Here, it is only through the body that the actor can justify the theatrical parameters and the emotions involved, becoming the vector that metamorphoses the simple stage or training room into another world, proposed by the dramatic text or by the depth of imagination. Even if the absence of external elements specific to a theatrical performance is recommended because it facilitates the development of diversity in the way a situation can be approached by the artist, the aesthetic value of the lighting, costumes and scenography cannot be denied. But these are merely artificial factors, used to enhance the process of creating dramatic character.

The understanding and development of physical skills is an absolute necessity in order to assimilate all the steps that need to be taken to become a total actor. It is a component which, once assimilated and integrated into the craftsmanship of the theater artist, will enable him or her to have a sensory

²² Lorna Marshall, *The Body Speaks. Performance and Physical Expression*, Methuen Drama, 2018, p. 138

²³ Peter Brook, *Spațiu gol*, Nemira, București, 2014, p. 10

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vision of everyday situations and of the whole ensemble that makes up the theatrical performance. At the same time, a good understanding of the physical possibilities and a good training of bodily expressivity allows the actor to discover his or her own way of functioning. "It is only when we know well what we are and what we are not, that we overcome the danger of extraneous judgments, which can push us either towards conceit through praise or cowardice through underestimation."²⁴

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²⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *Scrieri estetice*, Univers, București, 1981, p. 8