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## **ABSTRACT**

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## **TOWARDS ACTOR TRAINING**

An analysis of the logic of actor training through the trainings of Odin Teatret, the Suzuki  
Method and Viewpoints

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## Rationale for the choice of topic, objectives of the research

In my doctoral thesis I investigate the logic of actor training through a comparative study of three training methods, Odin Teatret, Suzuki, and Viewpoints. The objective of my research is to make the actor training methods comparable in order to reveal the common logic of the trainings.

Paul Allain, Jen Harvie<sup>1</sup> and Frank Camilleri<sup>2</sup> also discuss the training's emergence in the scientific literature. „ There are many books on specific approaches to acting but few about theories of actor training in general or performer training as a whole (...)”<sup>3</sup> – say Allain and Harvie in their work published in 2014. The Hungarian literature on the topic is even more incomplete. In his doctoral thesis, Sebastián Cortés researched physical methods of actor training, including the incorporation of findings from modern cognitive sciences applicable to theatre, his insights as a practical theatre-maker, and his pedagogical experiences. My own research can be seen as a continuation of his work. The starting point of my thesis is where Cortés concluded his: what is the relationship between the education of actors and the practice of training, in what ways is training part of their education, and how does training provide continuity for development through practice?<sup>4</sup>

The word *training*, borrowed from Anglo-Saxon, refers to both (1) a training process in which someone learns something or is taught something, and (2) physical exercises that someone does to get healthy or prepare for a competitive situation.<sup>5</sup> The two functions are often not clearly distinguishable. In Hungarian, the two functions can be described by the words *education* [*képzés*] and the *training* [*edzés*] of sports terminology. However, this does not necessarily imply temporal succession: a learning situation can arise during training, so training does not necessarily involve only the practice and development of skills already learned. According to Hungarian etymology, training is used (1) in sports

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Allain – Jen Harvie, *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance*, London – New York, Routledge, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Camilleri, *Performer Training Reconfigured*, London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney, Methuen Drama, 2020, 13–26.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Allain – Jen Harvie, *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance*, London – New York, Routledge, 2014, 258.

<sup>4</sup> Cortés Sebastián, *A színész teste – A színészképzés fizikai módszerei* (PhD thesis), Budapest, Színház és Filmművészeti Egyetem, 2018, 143–146.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Bullon et. al. (ed.), *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, Essex, Longman, 2003, 1764–1765.

terminology to mean training, and (2) figuratively, to mean preparation, schooling, rehearsal.<sup>6</sup> The functional diversity of the word *training* is wide-ranging.

The training itself, as an ever-evolving practice, is not a constant. Rather, the study of each training session can be seen as a snapshot in perspective, capturing an ever-changing event from a common point of view. My work is thus inherently paradoxical and impossible. I seek to interpret a process defined by subjectivity through objective means, but I do not seek to pretend that my description can be used to define the practice of training as such. I record the current state of the training, reconstruct previous phases and analyze the effects of the training as a logic, framework or *modus vivendi* for a deeper understanding.

In my thesis I discuss the characteristics of training. These include (1) that they are created within a specific space-time framework, defined by a logic of exploration, immersion and experimentation. In my view, the study of modern training practice should focus primarily on group theatres, companies and theatre laboratories where regular practice is given space. Three prominent examples of these, the Odin Teatret, the Suzuki Company of Toga (SCOT) and the SITI Company, are examined in my thesis. My research is more an analysis of the logic of *entraînement* as understood by Josette Féral,<sup>7</sup> so I am not concerned with actor training as a whole, and primarily not with individual techniques, but with the specific, systematized practices of communities, which are not part of institutional education, but rather a field of continuous self- and group training, of staying in training. In my thesis I examine the different definitions of training in group theatre<sup>8</sup> in order to contribute to the clarification of the conceptual framework of training. One of the main questions is what exactly is training, where are its boundaries, and how can training be defined in relation to different methods.

(2) The training sessions are recurrent. Through the work of Frank Camilleri, I examine the repetitive nature of training and its habit-forming effects.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bakos Ferenc (ed.), *Idegen Szavak Szótára*, Budapest, Terra Budapest, 1978, 509.

<sup>7</sup> Josette Féral, „Did you say »training«?”, *Performance Research*, Vol. XIV. No. 2., English trans.: Leslie Wickes, London – New York, Routledge, 2009, (16–25) 23.

<sup>8</sup> Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre – Eugenio Barba and the Odin Teatret*, London, Routledge, 1995, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Camilleri, „»Habitational action«: beyond inner and outer action”, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, Vol. 4. No. 1., London – New York, Routledge, 2013, (30–51).

Frank Camilleri, „On habit and performer training”, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, Vol. 9. No. 1., London – New York, Routledge, 2018, (36–52).

Frank Camilleri, *Performer Training Reconfigured*, London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney, Methuen Drama, 2020.

(3) The trainings establish an ethical framework, a common culture and a *modus vivendi*, a way of life. In the logic of the training, the use of the body, the exercises, the technique itself can be seen as a *modus operandi*, a way of working. Josette Féral argues, with particular attention to Grotowski's practice, that in the various training methods it is often not the nature of the exercises that is the most decisive aspect, but rather the technique itself that transcends itself to become an ethical process, a way of life, a *modus vivendi*. In agreement with Féral, Camilleri argues that the various methods of training/coaching – Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Copeau, Decroux, Grotowski, Lecoq and Barba – act as a kind of “ethical framework”.<sup>10</sup> The ethical concept of training can be interpreted as the culture of the group. In the analytical chapters I will examine in detail the role of training as a *modus vivendi*, as a shared culture of the group.

(4) The framework of the training is body-centred. In my thesis I deal with Phillip Zarrilli's phenomenological concept of the body, the inner aesthetic bodymind as the object of psychophysical trainings.<sup>11</sup> Just as the body is defined in its continuous interaction, and just as the physical body [Körper] ages with the passage of time, so the lived body [Leib] or the perception of the bodymind changes. I examine this process and the constantly changing impact of training in the analytical chapters of my thesis. Camilleri moves away from Zarrilli's “conservative” psychophysical practice towards a post-humanist orientation. Although the phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty and his further reflection includes the relationship between the body and its environment, Camilleri proposes a more radical approach. Camilleri, applying post-phenomenology, including the work of Don Ihde, to theatre, proposes the use of the term bodyworld instead of bodymind.<sup>12</sup> Although my thesis is essentially human-centred, I will try to show the human and non-human relationship in the description of the different training techniques. I take into account the specificity of spaces, their location, the role of objects and clothes – the simplest technology in the sense of Camilleri<sup>13</sup> – in the work. For my part, it is rather a kind of active learning from Camilleri's non-human-centred thinking, the relevance and necessity of which I see as paramount in a 21st century technological/technocratic society.

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<sup>10</sup> Frank Camilleri, „Of Pounds of Flesh and Trojan Horses: Performer training in the twenty-first century”, *Performance Research*, Vol. XIV. No. 2., London – New York, Routledge, 2009, (26–34) 27.

<sup>11</sup> Phillip Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting – An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski*, London és New York, Routledge, 2009, 55.

<sup>12</sup> Frank Camilleri, *Performer Training Reconfigured*, London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney, Methuen Drama, 2020, 57–69.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 33–50.

(5) One of the characteristics of the trainings is that they use techniques of the body, which consist of exercises. In my thesis I will examine which body techniques are used in each training method, what is the source of these techniques, or what specific body techniques have been developed by the creators of the training. In the appendix of my thesis, I describe exercises from the toolkit of each technique, which, with their precise structure, form a kind of framework, a “dramaturgical scaffold”,<sup>14</sup> through which the actor can confront himself/herself and the present moment.

(6) The person who trains and leads the training has a big role to play in its development. The role of the trainer in the training process is a decisive factor, which influences both the motivation of the trainer and the effectiveness of the training, but I consider it an important area of study because of the complexity of the effect. The training or educational environment sets a framework for the role of the leader. The clearest manifestation of this is the leader's title, which can vary from master, to director, to teacher, to training leader. In my thesis, I will include in the analysis of the role and function of the training leader, as well as the trainer's potential for autonomy, the extent of this autonomy and the leader's controlling power.

## Research methods

Following the example of several national and foreign practitioners, I conducted my research according to the hybrid practice of the practitioner-academic model.<sup>15</sup> I have worked simultaneously as a practicing artist, conducting my doctoral research at the Doctoral School of the University of Arts in Târgu Mures and as a teaching assistant at the Hungarian Theatre Department of the Faculty of Theatre and Film of the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. The financial support for my research was provided by the Hungarian Academy of Arts' Research Institute for Art Theory and Methodology, the Studium-Prospero Foundation and my own sources. Because of my financial and time constraints, I focused my research on a comparative analysis of three actor training techniques – the Odin Teatret training, the Suzuki Method of Actor Training, and the Viewpoints and SITI Company's training – which I use to examine training as a logic or

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<sup>14</sup> Eugenio Barba – Nicola Savarese (eds.), *A színész titkos művészete – Színházantropológiai szótár*, Hun. trans.: Rideg Zsófia and Regős János, Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem and L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2020,140.

<sup>15</sup> Frank Camilleri, *Performer Training Reconfigured*, London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney, Methuen Drama, 2020.

The quotations where I do not indicate the Hungarian translator of the English source are my own translations.

modus vivendi, a way of life. My analysis based on the common criteria was inspired, among other things, by the PHILTHER method of theatre history writing and performance reconstruction, which I was introduced to at the Doctoral School.<sup>16</sup> My research was both practical, since I learned the different techniques as an actor, and theoretical, since I worked on the literature background of the methods and techniques in parallel with the practical work. This duality simultaneously defined my professional identity, which was also linked to the transmission of teaching, practices and their contextual background. My research became a practical workshop, as I first worked as a lecturer, then, from 2020, as a teaching assistant at the Babeş-Bolyai University, and at national and international workshops: a total of eighteen workshops in six countries over four years. At the same time, my colleagues and I founded our own company called *A Vadász Esélye* (The Chance of the Hunter), which further expanded the field of practical research, so that training and creation could be carried out side by side, complementing each other within a mostly identical community. The intellectual centre of my research, however, remained the Doctoral School of the University of Arts in Târgu Mures. The continuous support of the Doctoral School and its teachers helped me to summarize the wide-ranging theoretical framework of the research and to test the techniques in experimental workshops. My research is the active reflection of a practitioner theatre-maker on the subject, which, according to the logic of the research, started from a fallacious disposition. I never intended to refute my practical experience, but to support my insights through theory by a proper review of the literature. However, the immersion in research has helped me to rethink my initial claims and to blunt their radical nature. However, my hypotheses are still assumptions that I had already had answers to, so my research was conducted with strong preconceptions. Another self-criticism of my research is that as a practitioner I have a deep emotional attachment to the logic of training, from which I have tried to distance myself during the research, but I am still bound by personal experience of working with training. At the beginning of the analytical chapters, I always outline my personal experience with the technique in question.

My thesis is structured as follows: (1) in the first main chapter, I provide a conceptual clarification and contextual analysis of the training, formulating my questions and hypotheses; (2-4) from the second to the ninth main chapter, I analyze the three techniques mentioned above from a unified perspective; (5) finally, in the fifth main chapter, I

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<sup>16</sup> PHILTHER-módszer honlapja, URL: <http://theatron.hu/ph/projektleiras/>, downloaded on 05. 02. 2022.

summarize the lessons and experiences of the comparative analysis. The analytical criteria were based on simple questions: (1) From where? (2) What? (3) When? (4) For what purpose? (5) How?

(1) Context: I research who created the training and its cultural and historical background. (2) Definitions of training: I am focusing on how each creator defines their own training practice, directly or indirectly. Since in most cases the definition is interpreted by the practitioners in terms of the purpose of the training, this section often includes the functions of training. (3) Training in the relation of time: in these subsections, I will examine training in the context of the practice of the troupe, focusing on the time and agenda of the individual and the group, and the temporal relationship between training and performance. (4) The ideal actor image: since the training definitions state training goals, this defines an ideal actor image towards which the actors strive through training. In this subsection, I explore these linguistically constructed ideal actor ideals. (5) Tools: these subsections are perhaps the most comprehensive. I consider the elements of the performing arts trends used, the use of objects, and the pedagogical structure as the tools of training. Originally, the description of the exercises would have been included in this subsection, but due to the length of my thesis, I have included them in the appendix. In the Tools subsections, I move mainly towards a Camillerian post-psychophysical perspective, where I analyze the training in relation to its specific context. Nonetheless, in Camilleri's terminology, my own thesis can be considered as most human-centred.

## Main findings and results of the thesis

After the contextual introduction of my thesis, I analyzed in detail the training of Odin Teatret, the Suzuki Method and Viewpoints. Based on common analytical criteria, I examined the socio-cultural background, definitions, objectives, temporal specificities and tools of each training.

In order to examine training, it is necessary to focus on the practice of a permanent medium, a group theatre, a company or a theatre laboratory. The practices of the three companies studied have developed in completely different contexts. The practice of Odin Teatret was initially shaped by autodidactic learning and Eugenio Barba's approach, developed under Jerzy Grotowski, and after their move to Holstebro, Barba decided to work in a theatre laboratory due to the conditions and circumstances of the place. As the company did not play every day, their activities were determined by research, didactic

work and regular training. The company started by training together, then the emphasis shifted to individual rhythm and the individualization of training. This has led to a wide and varied range of training exercises for the members of the company. Not all members were permanently committed to training, some stopped for a while and then started again. Training as an event and practice has had a variable place in the history of Odin. The company's professional dialogue with Eastern performing traditions led to research in theatre anthropology. The company researched the principles that define the actor's presence on stage, which form the basis for acting regardless of genre. The focus and tools of research varied from individual to individual. Since the 1970s, the training in the form of *fiskedam* and *væksthus* has remained unchanged, and the teaching activity has also provided scope for further practice. Although the Odin Teatret is based in Europe, the company's identity is imbued with internationalism. Their own practice has constantly evolved, changed and continues to change in relation to international theatrical trends and genres. It cannot therefore be clearly stated that Odin's training tradition is purely European.

Tadashi Suzuki's practice started from similar autodidactic experiments as Barba's. In 1966, Waseda Little Theatre (WLT) opened its own studio theatre, which also provided space for methodological experimentation. Suzuki's interest turned to classical Japanese performance genres after the Théâtre des Nations festival in Paris. Suzuki's method was conceived as a practical critique of the realistic practice of shingeki and the Stanislavsky system, and as a way of developing a common physicality between WLT and SCOT. In addition to Suzuki, the leading actress of his company, Kayoko Shiraishi, played a major role in the creation of the method. Suzuki reworked the tradition, philosophy and practice of Noh and Kabuki, using a phenomenological approach. This resulted in her experimental method, which she codified in 2012. Despite this codification, the details of the training practice continue to change to this day. SCOT training consists of daily practice of the Suzuki Method. The Suzuki Method is based on the Japanese tradition, which the director has reinterpreted to create a system that can be applied by everyone.

Mary Overlie began to develop the system of the Viewpoints from on her individual research in 1976, which she says crystallized for her by 2002.<sup>17</sup> Viewpoints is based on postmodern and neo-avant-garde thought. Overlie investigated the elements that are always present in a theatrical process. Her investigations were informed by her knowledge of

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<sup>17</sup> Mary Overlie, The Six Viewpoints, In: *Training of the American Actor*, ed.: Arthur Bartow, New York, Theatre Communication Group, 2006, (187–221) 220–221.

different dance techniques. Viewpoints is fundamentally a deconstructive, non-hierarchical, minimalist way of thinking, which the trainee can experience through exercises. Overlie's technique has been adopted and extended by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. The two practices have different emphases and terminology. Overlie's practice is more philosophical and diversified, while Bogart and Landau's practice is more pragmatic and goal-oriented. The use of Viewpoints as training can be traced back to the SITI Company, founded by Suzuki and Bogart. The members of the SITI Company identify regular and collective training as an identity-forming element of the company and pursue a non-hierarchical approach to the practice of community creation. Viewpoints' philosophy is informed by the intellectual trends of the second half of the 20th century and the New York cultural milieu. However, a dominant part of this medium was the influence of Oriental thought. Thus, neither the Viewpoints technique nor the training of the SITI Company can be described as a distinctly American practice.

The training of Odin, SCOT and SITI is fundamentally different, but with some similarities. Although, geographically speaking, I have studied the practices of a European-, an Asian- and an American-based company, these practices are not linked to a single culture. It can be said that all the trainings are defined by some form of Oriental thinking. The logic of the trainings is fundamentally determined by the approach of practice and continuous learning, which is part of the Eastern performing tradition. Furthermore, the training is always a kind of melting pot, combining practices, ideas and body techniques from different cultures and techniques according to the needs of a group. In many cases, the technique of the training evolves, changes and develops with the group. The dominant medium is seclusion – not only in Odin and SCOT, but also in the case of OTP Gardzienice, Teatr Laboratorium, the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards –, but other examples can also be observed in the case of SITI. An important difference, however, is that while the training techniques of Odin and SCOT were developed with one group, the SITI Company incorporated training techniques – the Suzuki Method and Viewpoints – from other authors into its own practice.

In defining training, it is important to take into consideration that training is not a method or technique, but an event in which a community operates a method or technique. Defining it is always a highly complex process. In the analysis, it can be seen that the daily communication of the creators with the training has created a multitude of personal and metaphorical definitions. Ian Watson argues that actor training is always about preparing

the performer.<sup>18</sup> This statement is partly true for all three training courses examined. Of course, the trainings always have a role to play in the preparation of the performer and theatre creator, and in their readiness. However, in all three cases, the training had definitions that were not necessarily related to preparation.

According to Barba, the actors (Roberta Carreri, Julia Varley, Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Torgeir Wethal) and the academics (Ian Watson, Adam J. Ledger, Erik Exe Christoffersen, Tatiana Chemi), the Odin training can be defined as (1) a means of learning and common culture, (2) a space of testing and development, (3) a space of regularity and practice, (4) a space of research, (5) a space of individuality and freedom, (6) a space of community, (7) a space of work, (8) an illusion, a dogma, a ghost room.

For the SCOT and Suzuki, the Suzuki method is (1) kunren, a discipline, (2) a test, a measure bar and a diagnosis, (3) a *via negativa*, a tool for elimination, (4) a tool for development, (5) a common language, (6) a field for experimentation, (7) a tool for community cohesion and (8) a matrix.

In Overlie's terminology, Viewpoints is (1) a structure, (2) a space for discovery, exploration and not-knowing, (3) a space of observation and self-disclosure. For Bogart and Landau, the training consists in (1) a philosophy formalized into a technique, (2) a conceptual framework, and (3) points of awareness that the performer uses in his or her work. In the practice of the SITI Company, training functions as (1) a horizontal axis that defines the identity of the company and (2) a non-hierarchical event.

Training as the time of the creative individual was defined in all three cases. During the training, the creative individual was given the opportunity to confront their state on a daily level: to examine how the practices one had previously performed resonated with one's psychophysics in the present moment. The individual is given the opportunity to gauge their current state in relation to the exercises and previous experiences. Training is an ever-changing phenomenon that changes with the body of the practitioner. The technique of the training may be fixed, like the text of a play, but the training itself can only occur in the present moment. The trainee can confront oneself, one's habits and blocks, without the pressure of creation. The training is an active, daily introspection, and therefore a personal and unpredictable process. The actor, as it examines themselves, is in fact preparing themselves to embody it's role as a performer to the fullest, not necessarily at the level of skill training, but according to the *via negativa*, the logic of confrontation, recognition and

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<sup>18</sup> Ian Watson, Introduction, In: *Performer Training – Developments Across Cultures*, ed.: Ian Watson, New York és London, 2001, 1–2.

dismantling. The training event may include the learning of skills, but the real training comes through practice. Because the actor does not have to create something during the training, the training is the individual's luxury time, it's artist-persona-time.

The training was also defined as the group's time for itself. Although the group's collective work can also be observed in rehearsal, its purpose is not primarily that the group members listen to each other, but creation. Listening to each other is a condition of rehearsal. During the training, the group members learn and practice how to exist together: ways of relating to each other, the relationship between the individual and the community, and the management of group dynamics. In all three training sessions analyzed, group members experienced their place in the group as equals. Even in the hierarchical structure of the SCOT and in the Odin system of adoption, the individual is made equal to his peers in the course of training. In training, it is not a matter of who is more experienced or more skilled, but the event of shared participation, of shared struggle, that is central. Training is fundamentally a non-hierarchical space-time in the life of the group. The constant practice approach of the training latently draws attention to the fact that no one is ready, everyone is constantly changing and evolving, so that fixed statuses within the group lose their meaning. There are no protagonists or supporting players among the trainees, only participants. In this way, I believe that the training has a positive effect on group dynamics.

Training is also a daily event in the life of the companies studied, which after a while becomes defined as a daily routine. It can also be such an event for a non-associative community, but it is more difficult to maintain continuity. The event nature of the training serves as a kind of safe point or self-definition for the group. In the midst of stressful situations and events in the life of the company, the training can be a safe point/safe zone (e.g., the conflicts of Odin and Barba) and a self-definition in the sense that the commitment to the training, alongside or instead of the leader, becomes the basis of the group's identity (e.g., the creation of the SITI Company).

Part of the self-definition is that training always captures the chosen culture and ethical framework of a group. The group asserts itself through the exercises, the type of tutoring, the management of space and time and the skills trained. They claim that "we value these things". The focal points may change from group to group and within a group over time (e.g., in the case of Odin, as the emphasis shifts to individual research, or in the case of the Suzuki Method, the emphasis shifts from traditional Japanese performers' physicality to more universal principles that can be applied to all), but the focal points always define the culture of the community. Who defines the culture of the community varies from case to

case: in Odin, initially Barba and then increasingly the actors, in SCOT it is clearly Suzuki, in SITI Company it is the actors from the very beginning. The culture and the ethical framework are very different in many ways, but they are also the same: they accept that performer is a changing being, whose variability can be expressed in terms of development, stagnation or decline. The companies that train opt for progress, even if this often goes hand in hand with wandering, stagnation and despair. So, companies that train represent an approach of struggle and progress.

This approach always involves a review of past patterns and habits. It becomes routine to recognize and avoid the habitual, the “mindlessness”, the “no-mind”, the “unthinkingly” state during work, and to guide the mind precisely.<sup>19</sup> The questioning of habits results in a systematic unhinging: the dangerous existence in the present moment, where the actor's knowledge may not be valid for that day and may not still serve and characterize him or her. In the exploration of training, the creator says yes to exploring unknown inner territories. Exploring these areas is an emotionally difficult and dangerous process, as they threaten the current self-image of the self. In this way, the self-experiences itself not as a unity but as a process, constantly becoming someone else. Living in constant change, the consciousness of the never-ending search can be frightening.

Danger can take many forms in training: in the aforementioned, constant re-formation, in the person of the leader, in the complexity of the exercises (stick exercises), in the risk of injury (acrobatics), etc. The presence of danger fundamentally determines the logic of training. If the training is not “dangerous”, there is nothing to lose, there are no stakes, and it can be reduced to mere repetition. In this sense, danger means pushing the safe physical and psychological limits, but without causing physical or mental injury. During the training, the trainee experiences themselves in extreme conditions, while doing their best to ensure that neither they, nor their peers, nor the space is damaged. Physically, they experience unknown limits (due to the extreme length or difficulty of training), mentally they venture into unknown territory with openness, curiosity and focus. During the performance, the actor experiences stressful situations because they are exposed to the attention and judgement of the audience. In this respect, training is analogous to the encounter with the spectator: the trainer experiences a stressful situation and develops

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<sup>19</sup> Frank Camilleri, „On habit and performer training”, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, Vol. 9. No. 1., London – New York, Routledge, 2018 (36–52), 41.  
Apud: Phillip Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting – An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski*, London – New York, 2009, 30, 90, 103.

coping strategies to remain an active participant in the situation and not be inhibited in their actions or thinking by stress or fear.

Playing with danger and pushing boundaries is a natural part of human learning, of discovering the world and ourselves. Even with unstable motor coordination, a young child will stand upright and try to walk on two feet in space, imitating the behavior of adults, in order to explore the reality around him or her. Optimally, the risk of falling does not limit the child in this process. Later, children's toys also condition them to danger. Many toys create the experience of danger in a safe environment. A swing creates the experience of danger through the sensation of tipping, instability and falling, without the child actually being physically at risk. A similar logic applies to the seesaw, the slide and many other playground toys designed by adults. In this case, the adult creates the safe environment in which the child experiences the danger. These toys are usually associated with a positive sense of discovery and self-promotion. The relationship between the trainer and the trainee is similar in this respect. The trainer creates a safe framework through the rules of the exercises in which the trainee can discover something of himself, the environment, the community or the fictional character along with the experience of danger. This danger, however, is a suspended danger in which the trainee ideally remains physically and psychologically safe. To return to the example, the child is also seeking out novel, unfamiliar and therefore potentially dangerous forms of discovery on their own. This could be climbing a tree, jumping from a high point, jumping into the water, etc. In this case, the form of danger is not restricted and therefore the danger is not suspended. From the actor's point of view, a similar danger may arise from a lack of precise knowledge of the exercises, or from an initial training without a guide. Continuing the line of thought, then, through the joy of childlike discovery and children's play, one conditions oneself to the experience of suspended danger. In this way, the training of the adult actor later on is more a recollection of an earlier state or a breakdown of learned psychic, physical and emotional control than a new mastery of something new.

The role of the trainers can be defined in maintaining the framework of the training. The role of the directors who construct the training technique changes when the trainees enter the practice phase: they move from the role of creating and teaching to that of maintaining and operating the training framework. These roles are often mixed later on: the facilitator may revert to the role of teacher in relation to the new members of the group, or may redefine themselves as the creator of the process when rethinking an exercise. However, during the training, the main task of the trainer is to create a tense atmosphere in which the

precise time and space allow the trainee to self-transcend. In this, the trainer maintains a kind of control, not allowing fatigue or discomfort, whether conscious or unconscious, to reduce the intensity of the exercise. The trainer, in the yogic term, *holds the space* and points out when the actor is not moving within the limits of their current abilities, but becomes permissive with himself or herself.

Furthermore, depending on the group, the training forms a kind of common language in which the creators communicate during the creation process. Through the training, the community thematizes and names the performer's problems, the desired performer qualities or the elements of the work. Through the training, the community explores its own terminology, which varies from group to group, but is often synonymous with the terminology of other groups.

The training, in relation to the performance, is a space to experience the character freely. A common feature of actor training is that the creators integrate the character, text or song, elements of the performances, in some form or other. The encounter between the actor and the role or text is not determined by the logic of the performance or the staging, blocking of the performance, but by the desire to explore and research, which the trainee does through a fixed, constructed or suggested set of tools, through the exercises. The training technique can serve as a toolkit for warming up before the performance. The company may also train before the performance, but this is never equivalent to a warm-up. The training is a space of self-transcendence into which the performer can only enter with a warmed-up physical and mental condition.

The training always defines an ideal actor image, a constructed ideal that carries the qualities that the training is intended to achieve. The ideal actor's image includes the terms towards which the company strives through training. The common term observed is, above all, presence. The concepts of presence are extremely varied, but their common meaning is that the actor becomes interesting in the situation of being watched. A similar concept to presence is engagement, which, although not in the vocabulary of all three trainings, has a general meaning and logic embedded in the thinking about the ideal actor. The state of engagement is equivalent to the actor's total psychophysical focus on the present moment and his ability to respond to new impulses. Reactivity, instinctive reactions, are also a defining element of this thought process. However, when interpreting reactivity, it is important to discuss that the trainer's task is to provide a consistent response to the impulse. What acting teachers often mean by *true, real or honest* reactions can be interpreted as consistent or coherent reactions. The *sincerity* of the actor is difficult to

interpret in the theatre. It is the actor's job not to be honest, or not to live their honesty within the framework of their ordinary/daily self. I can illustrate this by saying that an actor is sincere even when they are in a situation of being watched, experiencing their spasms, being unable to bring their character or their practice to life. In this case his behavior is sincere but not coherent to the moment or the reality of his character. If we interpret sincere or truthful words in terms of coherence, we can better analyze the actor's work. The training trains this logic of coherence through the practice of action-reaction. Furthermore, the term sincerity can be replaced by the term personhood, which is very important in the practice of all three of the training sessions analyzed. The actor can only give coherent reactions through the full involvement and engagement of their bodymind, through their personal experience. Thus, although common, training is a highly individual process.

From the vocabulary of the Odin Teatret, the ideal actor can be constructed as (1) having presence, (2) being reactive and ready, (3) being able to construct a determined body, (4) being persistent, (5) being disciplined and self-disciplined, (6) free, spontaneous, self-definitive, (7) authentic, truthful, natural, (8) anti-routine, exploratory, (9) self-absorbed, able to join in the flow experience, (10) has a “transparent body”, whole,<sup>20</sup> (11) is a team player.

Suzuki describes the ideal actor as (1) free, (2) experiencing wholeness with their body, (3) a creative, independent theatre person, (4) present, seductive, cozening, (5) able to believe, (6) prepared and ready, (7) able to transcend themselves.

Overlie, Bogart and Landau agree that the actor must be (1) conscious, (2) open, (3) responsive, (4) involving, participatory, committed, (5) receptive, (6) resigned. Overlie goes on to describe the ideal actor as an original anarchist who is (1) a researcher and (2) interesting in their own right, without a role. According to Bogart and Landau, the actor must be able to (1) shift, (2) connect to the experience of flow, (3) differentiate, (4) exist in extremity, and (5) employ opposing energies.

The ideal actors of Odin, SCOT and SITI are self-identical in their contradictions: they can control and let go of their bodies, be disciplined and relaxed, work independently and as team players, take up space and give space, exist consciously and instinctively, connect to the experience of flow but retain control, etc. The pairs of opposites go further on and point to the fact that the existence expected of the actor is itself paradoxical, or valid only

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<sup>20</sup> Iben Nagel Rasmussen, *The Blind Horse – Dialogues with Eugenio Barba and Other Writings*, ed.: Adriana Parente La Selva. Hollandia, BoekenGilde, 346 – 347.

in its opposites. If an actor is too disciplined, the trainer will encourage them to let go of control. When too uncontrolled, the emphasis will be on control. When they have both skills, unpredictability and surprise decision making will be the subject of the training. This suggests that the achievement of freedom appears as a unitary concept in actor training. In the present case, freedom means the actor's ability to embody opposing qualities and to vary them creatively without being hindered by mental blocks. The freedom of the actor is also a paradox in itself, since even the most unbound improvisation is determined by principles that the trainee has mastered and follows. In this way, the freedom of the actor is the embodiment of a sense of freedom within limits, which is a quality of living. The actor should live his limitations as giving him the opportunity to fulfil himself. Trainees are constantly searching for their emerging and disappearing experience of freedom within the limits of their practices.

The ideal actor is also persistent and curious, able to perform the same or similar tasks over a long period of time, finding new impulses in the exercises. They are always extreme: not just in the non-ordinary sense, but also in its enhancement. Through their exploratory approach, they strive for constant self-transcendence, able to seek and live the extremes of their non-ordinary existence. Training is thus paradoxical and extreme, creating a situation for the trainee to experience their self-contradictory existence in its extremes.

Training time, like corporeal and performance time, is the continuous present. Although the two training sessions may seem similar, they are inherently different. If, instead of experiencing the present time of the training, the trainee becomes mentally stuck in the past or pensive about the future, the training loses its meaning and the “no-mind”, “mindless” and “habitual” work (Zarrilli) sets in. The present time of training naturally involves the present time and the variability of the body. Through training, the trainee does not primarily want to shape their body, but to live it in its totality. The body is not a means to training, but a surface. During the training, the performer tries to bring their bodymind, or their bodyworld (Camilleri), into the most active state possible, but the limits of their body are an obstacle to this. These limits can be extended to a certain level. With ageing, the physical and mental boundaries may become narrower, but these are not barriers to, but part of the training. Although the ageing of the body cannot be so much thematized in institutional education, which takes place over a limited time frame, in long-term training these phenomena naturally become part of the process. In this respect, training is a medium for honest confrontation: “who am I now?” The experience of ageing, the change of

abilities, as thematized by several Odin actors and Ellen Lauren, gives the actor the opportunity to focus on something else: the qualitative experience of training, rather than the quantitative possession of abilities. It is not a question of what-I-am-not-capable of, but of what-I-am-capable of, and how-I-can-perform that comes into focus. The training of the actor is thus different from the training of the athlete: it is not performance-oriented, but quality-oriented. Therefore, training thematizes change.

The relationship of training to time is also interesting in that it constitutes a kind of differentiated time for the theater company. The company suspends the everyday during the training. The actor strives from their everyday self towards their ideal creative self through the event of the training. In this constant striving, they use their body and nervous system according to different rules, they call their *second nature*<sup>21</sup> into life. Training time is a luxury time because it is not productive, yet it creates a solid basis for the creation of a product by training the individual and the community. Training can save time through the logic that it develops the performer's physical and mental condition, positively promotes group dynamics and creates a common vocabulary, thus not having to cover such a distance between daily and non-daily/extra-daily behavior at the beginning of the rehearsal. At the same time, given the structure of the companies, training can only take place in a time of luxury, when the company does not operate according to the logic of market-oriented performance production. The creation of this luxury time is, in my opinion, a matter of choice, because the “time-wasting” of training and the accelerating effect of training on the rehearsal process can compensate for each other.

The Odin Teatret has constructed its own training using different body techniques: (1) pantomime, physical mimesis, (2) acrobatics, plastic exercises, (3) biomechanics, (4) dance techniques (ballet, candomblé, ballroom dance, capoeira, cabaret dance, modern dance, Latin American dances, etc.) and Oriental performing arts (kathakali, odissi, topeng and legong, noh, kabuki, kyogen), (5) yoga and kalaripayattu, and (6) commedia dell'arte and clowning. Additionally, the training toolkit may include (1) internal image work, and (2) the use of improvisation.

The toolkit of Suzuki's method is primarily drawn from the classical Japanese performance tradition and includes elements of (1) “the invisible body”<sup>22</sup> (breathing, center

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<sup>21</sup> Eugenio Barba, *Papírkenu – Bevezetés a színházi antropológiába*, trans.: Andó Gabriella and Demcsák Katalin, Budapest, Kijárat Kiadó, 2001, 39.

<sup>22</sup> Tadashi Suzuki, *Culture is the Body*, Eng. trans.: Kameron Steele, New York, Theatre Communication Group, 2015, 59–60.

of gravity and animal energy<sup>23</sup>), (2) traditional Japanese body use (counterpoint, conscious use of the lower body and legs, and modified balance position), (3) the neutral mask and (4) the use of internal images, internal vision.

On the basis of the trainings I have studied, I would argue that modern actor trainings do not have their own set of tools. Actor training is merely a temporal and spatial framework, a group commitment to a work ethic and work structure of continuous development. The toolbox of modern actor training is always the use of other body techniques or performance genres: yoga, acrobatics, classical performance genres using the dance-singing-speech trinity (odissi, kathakali, noh, kabuki, Peking opera), various dance techniques, sports and martial arts. The toolsets are always selected by a director, choreographer or trainer to suit the ideal actor's image and the goal to be achieved. In many cases, the training toolkit is created to embody a director's vision, but once developed, it does not only train the actor to achieve that vision. Evidence of this is that training exercises are also used in many other contexts, in the work of other types of companies, or in institutional actor training. The training framework thus creates products and practices that can have a positive impact outside the training logic, thanks to the specificities mentioned above.

However, the practices adopted from other sources were usually based on a different logic. In many cases, the structure of the practice is determined by the development of aesthetic qualities (some dance techniques), the use and practice of a codified system of signs (Far Eastern performing arts), or by results-centeredness (sports and martial arts). Grotowski's relationship with yoga also showed that practices drawn from elsewhere had to be reworked in order to function as training elements appropriate to his own vision as a performer. The desired performer quality then became the focus of the exercise.

As a consequence, the structural design of the reimagined practices is often modelling parts of the rehearsal process or the performance situation. Examples of this include, among others, the relationship of training exercises to danger, the interpretation of the relationship to error, or the exercise of the logic of action-reaction. Through the exercises, the actor deconstructs, maps and partially trains certain elements of the theatrical communication situation. Perhaps this is the way to define how the actor's training differs from other training based on rehearsal: through exercises, they model the thinking of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 103–104.

theatrical situation. This way of thinking is not uniform, of course, but rather diverse, yet there are central elements, listed earlier, which form a common origin in the diversity.

Training exercises can be categorized according to their degree of fixity. (1) Codified: the training exercises, tools and body management are fixed. An example is the Suzuki Method. (2) Variable toolbox: training exercises have a structural basis, but their variation depends on the trainer and improvisation is a significant factor in the training. An example is the Odin Teatret exercise. (3) Improvised: the logic of the exercises is explored more deeply, their elements are thematized, and there are suggested starting points, but the exercises themselves are not fixed. Improvisation forms the basis of the work, as in Viewpoints.

The common toolkit of the trainings is perhaps most evident in their logic, ethical framework and philosophy. The principle of self-transcendence is inherent to theatre. The actor is always a sign of a character, an idea, a being beyond him- or herself on stage. Even when they put *themselves* on stage, they can only be understood as a representation, a sign of themselves. Actor training provides the means and space to practice becoming other, to practice transformation, without having to conform to the audience or the direction.

At the end of my thesis I make suggestions for further research on the topic (analysis of several other trainings with the same methodological research, more organic application of the posthuman approach, investigation of the techniques of cool-down), and I propose the use of the trainings and the results of the thesis in the field of theatre education and institutional application.

## Publications related to the doctoral thesis

I have published a total of nine papers on the subject of this thesis. (1) My first paper was published in 2016 in the journal *Játéktér*. The subject of the paper is a general description of the Suzuki method.<sup>24</sup>

(2) In 2017, I published a paper in the journal *Színház* on systematic training through the Suzuki method. The article addressed the starting point of my doctoral research, the role of training from the perspective of creative work.<sup>25</sup>

(3) In 2018, I studied the integration of the Suzuki method in Hungarian-language higher education in my study published in *Symbolon*, which was the subject of my MA degree in

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<sup>24</sup> Kozma Gábor Viktor, „»Az előadás akkor veszi kezdetét« – A Suzuki-módszerről”, *Játéktér*, Vol. V. No. 3., 2016, (25–31).

<sup>25</sup> Kozma Gábor Viktor, „A rendszeres tréningben hiszek”, *Színház*, Vol. L. No. 7., 2017, (75–80).

pedagogy. In the study, I describe the pedagogical structure of the Suzuki training method, examine its pedagogical benefits based on a questionnaire survey, and recommend options for its application in higher education.<sup>26</sup>

(4) Also in 2018, my presentation in English at the Vanishing Points conference was published in a special issue of *Symbolon*. The topic of this paper was an analytical comparison of the Suzuki method with the thinking of psychological realism.<sup>27</sup>

(5) In 2019, I presented the 2018 biomechanics masterclass led by Vladimir Granov in Budapest and the first Belgrade International Workshop + ChekhovFest in 2019 in the journal *Játéktér*. Participating in the workshops also helped me think about the topic of training.<sup>28</sup>

(6) In 2020, an excerpt from a chapter of my doctoral thesis was published by *Theatron*. In the paper I describe the history of the training of Odin Teatret between 1964 and 1976.<sup>29</sup>

(7-9) In 2021, several parts of the Suzuki Method chapter of my doctoral thesis were published in the journal *Szcenárium*.<sup>30</sup> The last part is currently under publication.

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<sup>26</sup> Kozma Gábor Viktor, „A Suzuki-módszer hazai, felsőoktatási integrálásának elképzelése”, *Symbolon*, Vol. XIX. No. spec., 2018, (109–128).

<sup>27</sup> Kozma Gábor Viktor, „Theatrical Bridge: The Art and Actor Training Method of Tadashi Suzuki From a Hungarian Perspective”, *Symbolon*, Vol. XVII. No. 31., 2018, (104–111).

<sup>28</sup> Kozma Gábor Viktor, „Alternatívák az előadó-művészeti képzésre”, *Játéktér*, Vol. VIII. No. 3., 2019, (17–24).

<sup>29</sup> Kozma Gábor Viktor, „Az Odin Teatret tréningje 1964-től 1976-ig”, *Theatron*, Vol. XIV. No. 2., 2020, (27–47).

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