

BALÁZS

SIMON

The

9th

sense

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ADDRESSING THE READER

In 2017, we were looking for a title with my friends that best expresses the unique characteristics of the field of knowledge that this book you are holding in your hand attempts to grasp, when suddenly my Norwegian friend, Jarle, quietly said:

‘Then it's the Ninth..?’

‘Ah, yes!’

The well informed minds in our rehearsal room, except for the artist (me), they all understood the grandeur of the idea. Researchers of interoception (man's internal attention to himself) held the eighth place on the ever-expanding list of the various senses. If we are to specify the evolved human capacity to perceive group dynamics, interpersonal and leadership tendencies, it would be the ninth! With some delay though, I understood Jarle's idea too!

At the time, we were to design a hardware-software ensemble that would perceive the dynamics of a theatre group using heart rate measurements. Currently, within the framework of a European adult education platform, RIOTE3¹, we have used heart rate feedback technologies to monitor and improve individual and group activity in participatory theatre groups. The scientific personnel and the purpose of the projects changed slightly since, but the title and the objectives of the programme remained the same.

The ninth sense! I think you can repeat here what it means. I really do not think the reader will know what are the other 7 senses? I am aware from the Wheel of Awareness, but most of the people do not have a clue about the 6, 7, 8

However, I hope you feel that the technology is just another way to focus on our main interest, the functioning of the group, the *communitas*[1] that gives meaning to our humanness. From the United Nations to the classroom, the same set of phenomena determines the happiness of individuals in the context of community. Perhaps you can remind the reader how depressed young people all over the world are, just lacking the experience of the community. The behaviour of the individual constantly rewrites the group process, while the individual adapts its behaviour to the dynamics of the group. Research already knows quite a lot about these processes, but in communities, this ninth sense is, so to speak, underdeveloped; it lacks the basic knowledge and expertise to influence our coexistence as a source of well-being and integration, rather than stress.

¹ Rural Inclusive Theatre Education

I hope this book will reveal to you convincingly why this is interesting, and how it is possible for you, a 21st century human, to take real-time data from your own autonomic nervous system into account when improving your own physical and mental well-being by immersing in rewarding group activities. My only concern now, dear reader, is how you will know that this is all about THEATRE, in many aspects, and in the full sense of the word? Thalia knows a great deal about the ninth sense, being a goddess of a complex creative activity based on the interaction of the individual and the group. She knows, but does not aware that she knows...

If you read this book, you will learn more about psychological, psychophysiological, and anthropological related art, theoretical fields of knowledge in relation to human performativity. If you are a theatre person, you may not have thought that these fields of knowledge play a role in your daily work, or if you did, you may not have known their interrelationships and science. If you come from the world of the humanities, you may have always thought that theatre, in its various forms, could be a subject for scientific study, but you may not have yet come across a study that summarises the relevant knowledge.

I wonder whether this book will succeed in filling some of these gaps. In any case, my excuse is that, although I have been bringing these two disciplines closer together for fifteen years, new perspectives still open up every day; for now, however, I must stop somewhere and summarise all I have found so far in this subject. Please come with me.

Above all, it would be good if we could find a common ground on theatre concepts, psychologists, theatre people, sociologists, community developers, politicians, educators, and all those of you who work, or want to work, with theatre. I will attempt in the first chapter to give you an account of the premises on which the members RIOTE Community value system is based in its theatrical, social, ethical and aesthetic dimensions.

HERE AND NOW

In the middle of the last century, in Wroclaw, a hitherto unparalleled theatre research of scientific value was conducted. It could have been called action research², if the term existed in 1958.

In the model of immersive anthropology, the researcher is positioned in the centre of the researched phenomenon itself and their subjective experiences are set against various systems of criteria. According to Villém Flusser, the researcher approaches the essence of the phenomena, together with his peers. In the research forms of the so called Poor Theatre³ the scientists are the actors, the material is the theatre, rehearsal performance are experiments when the actors are exploring the subject.

Jerzy Grotowski, the director of the Polish Laboratory Theatre (PLT), named the performances resulting from the research as ‘poor’ because the theatrical event was stripped of every accessory of naturalism and spectacle, so that attention could be focused on the essential meaning of theatre, which is the *real-time presence of the actors*.

Grotowski’s work with the PLT actors separated elements that are unique to theatre as a *standalone art form*, eliminating everything not strictly necessary for the achievement of the theatre event. Shortlisting the coefficients of the creative process and that of the performance as a piece of art, consequently they *established a protocol for their practical approach*. They also made recommendations on content: according to their logic, the purpose of theatre could, in no form, be mere entertainment. In their performances they revived the archaic, ritual function of theatre. All this happened during the decades of the advancement of television, from 1959 until 1978, after which the researchers left Poland for good.

I offer to the readers coming from the field of psychology to get acquainted with the results of PLT, since they translate the processes of creation and reception to a concrete language, suitable for scientific dialogue that correlates with the content. To theatre people I recommend (re)reading Grotowski since his thesis limits subjectivity in the interpretation of artistic questions to the greatest possible extent.⁴ The scientific and artistic relevance of the theses of PLT are irrefutable; it was their practical application that made the creation of

² Vilém Flusser: *Gesture*, University of Minnesota Press, London, 2014

³ Reference to the Title of Grotowski’s only book: *Towards a Poor Theatre* (London, Theatre Arts – Routledge, 1968)

⁴ Eugenio Barba: *Kísérletek színháza, The Theatre of Experiments* (Budapest, Magyar Színházművészeti Szövetség kiskönyvtára, 1965)

performances such as *Akropolis*, *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* or *The Constant Prince* possible, bearing evidence of their validity throughout the world.

The laboratory work in theatre relating to Grotowski's artistic quest has continued in the last three decades by several theatre practitioners. For example, the partners of RIOTE3 are directly inspired by the PLT platform: the Italian Teatro Tascabile and the Teatro Nucleo; the German Antagon collective; the Slovenian Kud Ljud; the Romanian Shoshin; the Hungarian Sinum; and the UtcaSzAK are all second- and third-generation apprentices. To different degrees, we all feed on the traditions created. It is in keeping with the spirit of RIOTE, as an adult education programme, to align this book, which synthesises knowledge from several disciplines with Grotowski's way of approaching the world of theatre.

Psychomechanical theatre breviary

Grotowski's work can be divided into two major parts: the first is connected to the performances of PLT, while the second focuses more on the artistic and spiritual path offered in the *theatre training*. It was Eugenio Barba who noted down the dictionary of the work of PLT. Had it been up to Grotowski, the recording of the principles applied during the daily work might never have taken place. In a Socratic fashion he put no emphasis on documentation: principles should remain unwritten and be kept as such. He was systematic in the construction of work but found the engraving of principles deathly. Barba insisted on the indispensability of documentation and the systematising of PLT's principles. He contributed to the foundations of a new discipline, the theatre anthropology, allowing for us, for example, the correspondence with the conceptual framework of modern psychology.

The theatre of revelation		
Principle	Theatre phenomenology	Corresponding psychology concept
Psychomechanics	Theatre is psychomechanical , as mental functioning can be exercised; mechanised.	mindfulness; cognitive integration; autogenic techniques,
Hic et nunc	Theatre is present-focused; it must happen in every detail in the here and now.	mindfulness; temporal integration; flow experience
Presence	Theatre is biological; it raises biological attention, thus it requires body-based presence. Absence dulls the viewer.	mirror neurons (MN); bodily cognition; interoception; wakefulness; default mode network (DMN); vitality affects
Revelation	The stage does not exhibit but reveal.	symbolisation; meta cognition; theory of mind (TOM);
Abandoning the stage of illusion	Stage realism and stage reality are to be distinguished. The task of the actor is not the mere imitation of life.	flow experience; narrative integration;
The truth of the actor	Reality of the actor is a physiological	MN; bodily cognition; TOM;

is not the reality of the play	truth , that may exceed the truth of the narrative and express the archetypal, anthropologic essence of the story	
Coniunctio oppositorum	The principle of stage-polem , is the conscious maintenance of the tension between the formally logical and the extraordinary	flux of integration; adherence; flow;
The dialectic of mockery and apotheosis of the archetype	Constant shifting of viewpoints both in the construction of roles, and in the telling of the story in performance.	cognitive restructuralization; coherent narrative
Art, because it is artificial	Consciousness in composition. The <i>formative</i> actor does not simply play, but also composes the role.	cerebral integration, flow
Multi-layered rehearsal work	For a duration of at least 5-6 months. One phase is the discovery of life; it is the time for “realism”. Exploration, condensation, abstraction of bits of life (кусочек жизни ⁵);	cognitive theory; explicit and implicit memory; creativity; process and domains of integration
Transcending the appearance of life	The actor research independently of any constraints and prior expectations, and free to play with the elements of reality	flow, symbolization
You can't really build a tower without scaffolding	Details that can be left out later have to be elaborated as well, since actions that are simplified do not have a full life.	therapeutic process, coherent narrative
The art of the actor		
Processes temporarily loosened from the control of consciousness in rehearsal and performance work		
Body-memory	The actor's score is revealed movement by movement, developed, recorded, choreographed and then attempted to be brought to life .	cognitive theory; bodily cognition; interoception; coherent narrative, flow
Body-life	The conscious maintenance of the connection between body-life, emotions and thoughts must be trained	integration; flow; mindfulness; self-care; self-acceptance; autogenic techniques;
The source (the core)	'Impulses' are manifested by the body becoming free.	mindfulness; awareness; vitality affects
Confidence in the body	Not relaxation, not comfort, but active attention, and the maintenance of this mindset.	mindfulness; awareness; autogenic techniques;
Spontaneity and discipline	The actor's man is acting, the one who is going through the score .	flow; flux of integration; joint action
The whole body as a resonator	The living connection of body and free and open larynx, flow of sound, stillness of breathing.	autonomic nervous system; polyvagal emotion regulation
The need for a free body capable of all expressions,	Rejection of the idea of the trained super-actor. Physical dexterity, acrobatics in the service of the sacred moment .	flow; integration; joint action
The performance		
The final sacred act	The actor, conscious of his/her everyday <i>fragmentation</i> , attempts to <i>unite</i> . To reveal himself to the spectator in the sacred moment of the performance.	absorption; flow experience; flow of integration
The active spectator	The audience is a participant , a silent	MN; interactional synchrony; joint

⁵ Stanislavsky

	witness to the events. Even if they do not ask for this role, they should not be allowed to hide behind their fourth wall, their spectator status.	action
Revelation of the role	Presenting the composition of the role instead of hiding it.	altered state of consciousness; absorption; adherence
Conscious signalling.	Guiding the viewers' attention through the composition of visual and vocal signals. Study of patterns, and the minimum density of signals. Rhythmic composition of expressive moments.	hypnosis; guided altered state of consciousness; hypnosis induction; interactional synchrony
The montage	The final cut is in the mind of the spectator	narrative integration;
The state of trance	The effect, not that of the actor as a role but that of the actor/shaman as a human being, on the spectator.	altered state of consciousness; hypnotic interaction; hypnotic styles
The art of the director		
The application of the conjunction principle	Conjunction can only be applied from outside	coherent narrative; hypnosis interaction; therapeutic connection
The director is responsible for the actors	Director must provide protection and authentic control for the actor amid processes. Life from stage 'escape' at the slightest anxiety.	polyvagal emotion regulation; secure attachment; joint action
Director helps to find the physical centres of tension	During the rehearsal, learned responses, practised behaviours, stubborn personality traits are blocking the live, direct responses.	flow experience; flow of integration; cognitive therapy; drama therapy; Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy
Research of the source	Director gives personal exercises to set free for impulses, the inner channels of attention.	therapeutic relationship; cognitive therapy; hypnosis interaction; altered state of consciousness
The relaxation point	Helps to recognise obstacles to the flow of life; blocked reactions, psychological inhibitions, frills, etc.	hypnosis interaction; altered state of consciousness; gestalt
Spillover surplus	Director pays attention to the balance of the work, the release of tensions. Creates a liberating atmosphere, later resets the actor recalling the original purpose of the work.	flow experience; flow of integration; joint action; polyvagal emotion regulation
Giving an outer eye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognises false dilemmas. - helps you become aware of unconscious solutions. - helps to filter out self-representation. - fosters individuality. 	therapeutic relationship; cognitive therapy; hypnosis interaction; altered state of consciousness

1. Figure – Psychomechanical Creative Process set of concepts

Strangely, at university, we had hardly heard of the performances of the Theatre of 13 Rows⁶ Nearly twenty years of work and numerous performances have made the PLT deservedly world-famous. Although we received a thorough training as a class of directors at the University of Film and Theatre Arts (SZFE⁷), Grotowski was never mentioned. It was well

⁶ The tiny hall of Polish Laboratory Theatre in the middle of the old town of Wrocław

⁷ Színház- és Filmvészeti Egyetem

into my adulthood that I watched *Acropolis*⁸. I had seen many elaborate performances before, but here something entirely different unfolded. As an adult, I believe that without a recorded score, a whole dimension of the theatre is not revealed. We are perfectly aware of these fundamental laws from the moment of our first theatrical experience as the *Platonic Ideas*⁹ of *Theatre*. But the traumas of socialization and growing up in theatre make us forget them. Why do we ignore these laws?

As a teenager director, dreaming of a truly unconstrained experimental theatre, I pictured actors as liquid particles being shaken up in a massive laboratory flask. Heated by the fire of the director, free valences would come into reaction with one another, releasing energy, forming new compounds and producing bright effects. There would be no need for direction in a usual sense as, within the chemical bonds, *a higher order would manifest* itself. In scenes with fewer actors, I even encouraged an avoidance of recorded scores as I thought it a cowardly practice.

Psychomechanics shook the Hungarian theatre world (too) in the early 70s. Many people came to Wrocław, saw the performances, took part in the training sessions, and the incomparable experience changed their theatre, and world views. But on their return home they (with a few exceptions) necessarily reintegrated into the system of post-Stanislavskianism. Thus became the good old Soviet Realism at the rooms of SZFE, as we used to call it, *Stani-manner*. Still this remarkable man, “Stani”, devoted the last twenty years of his life (under very good circumstances, of course) to research of the *here and now*, focusing on the phenomenon of *physical action*, which was also the cornerstone of Grotowski's late work.

TRANSCENDING TO THE THEATRE OF SOURCES

His trip to India completely changed Grotowski, from a thick-spectacled, disciplined man in a black suit, a pantheist with no restraint proliferated, one who no longer had the strong motivation of staging meticulously precise performances. In this second part of his life, during his voluntary emigration, he tried out several places and possibilities to work in conditions suited to his needs and interests, until he finally united his *inner work* and his theatre research into one geographical point in the Work Centre of Jerzy Grotowski, Pontedera, Tuscany.

⁸ The world-wide successful performance, directed by Jerzy Grotowski, plays Wispiansky's drama with the inhabitants of an imaginary extermination camp.

⁹ According to Plato, souls are guided by Apollo through the perfect, absolute and eternal forms of existence before they are born.

The term ‘inner work’ was used by Stanislavsky to refer to rehearsal and extra-rehearsal activities in which the actor focuses not on the immediate goal of creating the role, but on developing her/his own skills and abilities, primarily, to expand the knowledge of self and strengthen self-control¹⁰. Working on oneself: numerous other schools of psychology, intellectuality also used the term, referring to some technique or practice in which the participant turns his or her attention inwards with the intention of growth.

In Pontedera at the *Work Centre of Jerzy Grotowski*, the emphasis was on inner work, and for a decade they were able to maintain a spiritual quest, the medium for which was theatre¹¹. Church liturgy was rooted in ancient theatre; it is suitable for worship, as typified by the theatrical nature of the mass.¹² As theatre is more alive, it was easy to hijack and compromise. It was in the Renaissance that theatre and church diverged fatally.

The house at Pontedera was not a theatre, it did not hold performances, nor welcomed audiences in the traditional sense of the word. It was a perfectly calm living space with huge, bright halls – no suggestion of theatre - with training taking place during the daytime.

‘The programme of the *theatre of passage* is organised around another axis: the work consciously and deliberately seeks to transcend the horizontal plane with its life energies and its power to become a matter of passage, of *verticality*. When art is a means of passage, it concentrates on details with the same rigour, it needs the same precision as in the performances of the Theatre Laboratory. But beware, this is not a return to theatre as representation, it is exactly the other end of the same chain.’¹³

Secluding the audience was justified, as here the aim of work was the *search for life*: the *source*. "Angels might descend" on Jacob's ladder, or it could so happen that one manages to ascend to them. But if one were to look here for entertainment or seek to criticise, it is all too easy to spoil the ascent. Therefore, the audience had to be excluded so that they would not spit out the pumpkin peel.

Back in the theatre laboratory of the sixties, in the *theatre of revelation*, performance was constructed so that the *montage* (the final cut of the performance) happened in the spectators' mind. There, the actor works with *horizontal signalling*: leading the viewers' attention ties most of the energies. From the mid-seventies onwards, according to the programme called the ‘theatre of sources’, Polish Laboratory Theatre gradually moved away from making performances. They began to run workshops with many curious participants,

¹⁰ K. Sz. Stanislavski: *Életem a művészetben*, My Life in Art (Gondolat 1967 Budapest)

¹¹ Richards, Thomas: *Travailler Avec Grotowski Sur Les Action Physiques*, Actes Sud/ Académie Expérimentale des Teatres 1995 - Grotowski életet utolsó szakaszában Richards lett legközelebbi munkatársa

¹² Mircea Eliade: *Vallási Hiedelmek és eszmék története*, History of Religios Ideas (Osiris, Budapest 2003)

¹³ J. Grotowski: *L'art comme vehicule et le compagnie theatrale* in.: Actes Sud/ Académie Expérimentale des Teatres 1995

mostly in the woods near Wrocław. The main point here was to lead the participants by theatre exercises so that their *inner resource of creativity and energy* flowed together.

“We worked for months and months in the early years, with a small group to the edges, with only a few new participants from outside, and then miraculous things happened. Later, in the light of this experience, we made new variations to accommodate more participants, but when the core group didn't spend enough time in heated work, certain fragments worked well, but it all settled down, became a bit like an emotional soup between people, or moved towards a kind of enthusiasm.”¹⁴

THEATRE OF PASSAGE (THE THEATRE AS VEHICLE)

Gradually from the end of the seventies, in the training work named *Le théâtre comme véhicule*, the *seat of the montage* became solely the actor (l'actuant) in the ancient meaning of the word: the one who is doing. Here the actor is not concerned with whether we understand what she/he is doing. The purpose of the event is intrinsic, the passage, the transcendence of the participant into another state of consciousness, the search for subtle energy and its conveyance into the level of everyday existence. The actor, with techniques and devotion familiar from the theatre of revelation, creates his/her score, but the montage takes place within her/him alone; it is not important that the viewer should put anything together; thus, the signalling turns from horizontal to vertical. The Pontedera practice was the first *participatory theatre* in the full sense of the word, since the results and objectives of *the activity enriched the participants*.

‘Here we are talking about something unknown or, shall we say, forgotten in the contemporary world, about art as a means of passage, about the objectivity of ritual, or ritual art. When I use the term ritual, I am not talking about a ceremony, nor a party, much less an improvisation involving people from outside. And I am not talking about a kind of fusion of ritual forms from different parts of the world. When I refer to ritual, I am talking about its objectivity, that it is an action of body, heart, and head; not a direct result, but a working tool for the actuant. From the technical point of view of the theatre elements of the passage are precisely, almost exactly, as art for revelation.’¹⁵

Selected from hundreds of applicants, candidates were expected to make a commitment of at least one year. All those who were involved in the life of the Work Centre for a significant length of time are still active in some kind of spiritual practice. But I know of no one (though I can hardly know of everyone) who is working as a theatre professional in the repertory system. After all they have been through, they can't just do ‘pro’ theatre.

¹⁴ Grotowski 1995

¹⁵ Grotowski 1995

In Thomas Richards'¹⁶ description, however, the work appeared to be more theatrical than spiritual. Today it would be best described as a mix of integrated therapy and theatre trainings: learning songs from distant lands; using sophisticated body-based techniques to raise the standard of singing and of vocal work; elaborating individual and multi-participant etudes, wording texts; and searching for real life memories to underpin the movements that appear in the etudes etc.

Humility and vulnerability were seen as values in their daily work. A man searching insecurely within is far more sensible, and therefore more valuable, as a vehicle in the theatre than one who demonstrates his skills well.

According to the accounts, Grotowski didn't interfere too much. When he felt that a particular memory was exhausted, he would ask the person to search for a new first-person experience. They scored what they felt was strong enough. The notion of *physical action* makes sense in this context: all this subtle inner work is by no means done in an imaginary realm: each inner moment is matched by a behavioural element, a memory, or a physical action. In this methodological approach, every theatrical building block (thought, inner sentence, feeling or attitude) must have a physical counterpart: these are the elements the *score* is made of, and they are the object of elaboration.

'We work on songs, impulses, movement-forms, and there are also textual motifs. All this with the necessary strict reduction, as long as a precise, rounded, action and action structure is created, as in the performance. Then one may ask, what is the difference between objective ritual and performance? Would the only difference be that no audience is invited? This is a legitimate question. Among other things, the difference is in the location of the assembly (le montage).'

But why shouldn't people, who of course knew why they were coming, or what they were coming for, watch this theatre?

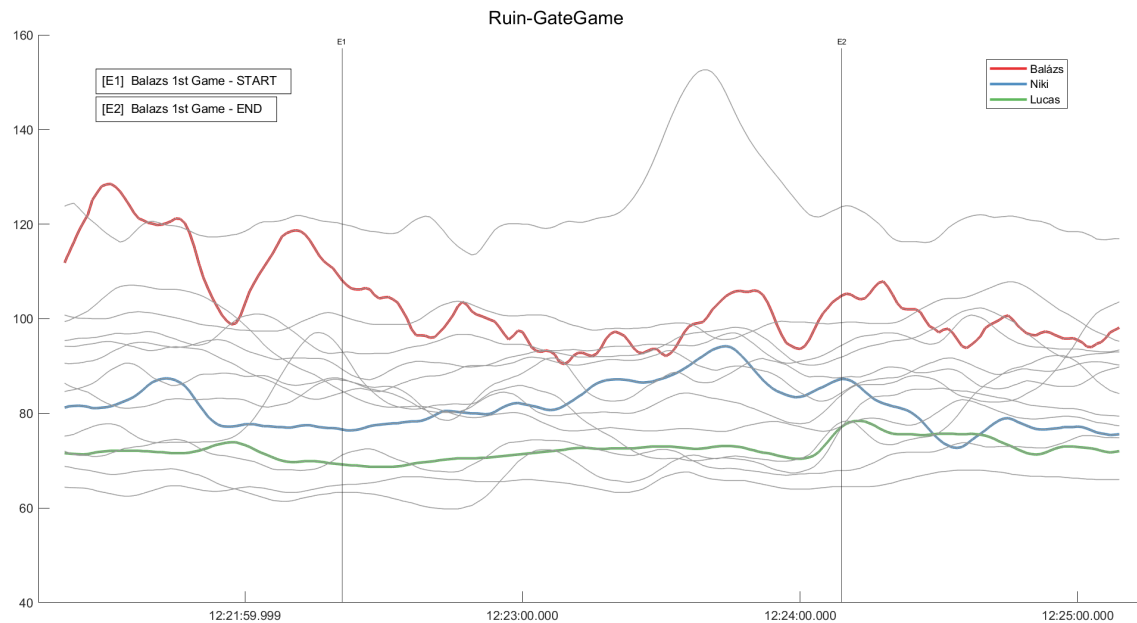
When we go on stage, we often feel naked. In front of the audience, or in front of ourselves, we are physiologically, uncomfortably seen¹⁷. Our heart rate is elevated, and the sympathetic branch of our autonomic nervous system, the accelerator, is highly activated. Although, in a friendly environment, this stays at a lower level, still even among friends we feel, now something is up to us, something is *up now*. It's a visceral feeling, like that of remorse of conscience. This is the uncomfortable feeling for which we get two rewards: the experience of getting through (i.e. something *happening to us*), and the audience's attention and feedback on

¹⁶ Richards1996

¹⁷ SJ Lepore, KA Allen, GW Evans: Social support lowers cardiovascular reactivity to an acute stressor Psychosomatic Medicine November 1993

our success.

2. Figure My excitement before entering into improvisation



This is the other reason for saying goodbye to the audience: It is hard not to expropriate attention: they are watching *me*, *I am* the one who runs this machine, *I get* the glory. Even though we know that we get everything *from somewhere*, the success is still reaped by the 'personality'. The psychological meaning of the word personality is very different from the one used by Grotowski, who refers to something very social. Personality is a means to stay in the saddle; while the silent part - the 'essence' - suffers the selfishness of personality. Personality has no intention of being grateful for the success harvested. Do not tolerate another deity in your heart; there's no need to trigger vanity!

Passage without an audience became the experiment of the Pontedera group. In a tight circle, they attempted the passage every day, giving thanks if they got through and digesting together if refused. They tried to reach the source as *a community*.

'The performance is like a huge elevator, in which the actors are the lift-boys. In this lift, the audience is inside, the performance transports them to another level in the form of an event. If the lift is working, for the spectators it means that the assembly (the montage) is happening. In the case of the art as vehicle, this elevator is as simple as a large plank pulled up by a rope, with the actors themselves, which they use to climb up towards a subtler energy and then descend back down to their instinctive

body. This is the objectivity of the ritual.’¹⁸

What does all this say to a creator seeking the meaning of theatre today? Why, and for whom, do we work? What do we use our expertise for? What is our work, our rehearsal or performance, that is regarded as a passage? To whom are we accountable?

Contrary to the legend, Pontedera received regular visitors, mainly youngsters: art school students and independent theatre groups. These private-public events were intended to showcase the 'technology' of work, yet the professional work presented was driven by a purely spiritual quest. To share the techniques of inner work is the basic gesture of participatory theatre.

PARTICIPATORY TRADITION

Among questions about the role of theatre, motives for the exploitation of the social functions of theatre emerge. This is certainly not new, although it always feels revolutionary.

The RIOTE companies are all, in one way or another, part of the participatory tradition, or perhaps it is not too much to say, a movement. Our work, our goals, and our way of being are all the fruits of the theatrical thinking that began to grow in the 1960s; we are looking for the real possibilities of theatre in society, with a socially sensitive agenda, turning away from the comfort of the theatre hall.

All categorisation is incomplete, but three major branches of theatre outside the field of art for purchase are emerging, all of them *participatory* in nature; the voluntary performers participate not as professionals, but for the intrinsically motivating sake of the activity. One branch grows from the creative practice of professional theatre, using its indigenous processes on multiple levels, such as preparation, rehearsals, performances, and follow up events. This is *applied theatre*. The second, *anthropological theatre*, brings to life the community impact, function and tradition of playing. The third grows from the world of psychology, employing various *therapeutic theatre* methods that use the healing power of theatre. The different styles of drama pedagogy are mostly rooted in this last one: drama, or theatre, in education.¹⁹

The concept of *participatory theatre* is thus used by Grotowski for the first time, although, by definition, any instinctive art form (a nativity play, or a carnival procession) is participatory. In the Grotowski-work, for the first time in the history of the genre, *professional theatre offers its tools to people seeking the possibility of participation, for their inner work*

¹⁸ Grotowski 1995

¹⁹ Saxton&Pendergrasts 2009 Applied Theatre, International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice, Intellect, UK, Bristol

on themselves.

In the *theatre of sources*, as the participatory theatre was called in Wrotzlaw,

‘it is a source of different traditional techniques that precede ramifications, differentiations. At that time, we were working a lot in the open air, looking primarily at what a human being can do in his or her own solitude, how he or she transforms a force and a relationship that *can be named* in a natural environment. The object of perception; the circulation of attention; the grasping of the flow when we are in motion; a living body in a living world; these all became, in some order, the structural words of the work.’²⁰

As participants in the European RIOTE programme presented below, we are directly linked to the Workcentre's research; as professional artists, we search for theatrical forms where both performers and audience are involved in a kind of volunteering, with the primary aim of initiating, experiencing, or reinforcing processes of ‘working on yourself’.

RURAL INCLUSIVE OUTDOOR THEATRE EDUCATION

RIOTE is an adult education programme, to which the book you hold in your hand owes its existence. Our aim with this book is to give devoted people as many tools as possible to initiate participatory theatre projects in their own environment.

The object of the RIOTE work is, firstly, to learn, practise and transmit theatrical techniques; secondly, to create performances of high quality that function as ritual events in open spaces for, and with, the participation of small communities; and thirdly, to provide an organisational and social base for the work. The idea of volunteering persists even if we do all this for a salary, since we are all working in non-structural NGOs, where neither financial abundance nor security of existence are the primary characteristics.

As an equally important set of information, here you find the extracted and organised goals, principles and practices that the seven RIOTE3 groups applied in their participatory theatre programmes in seven European rural areas.

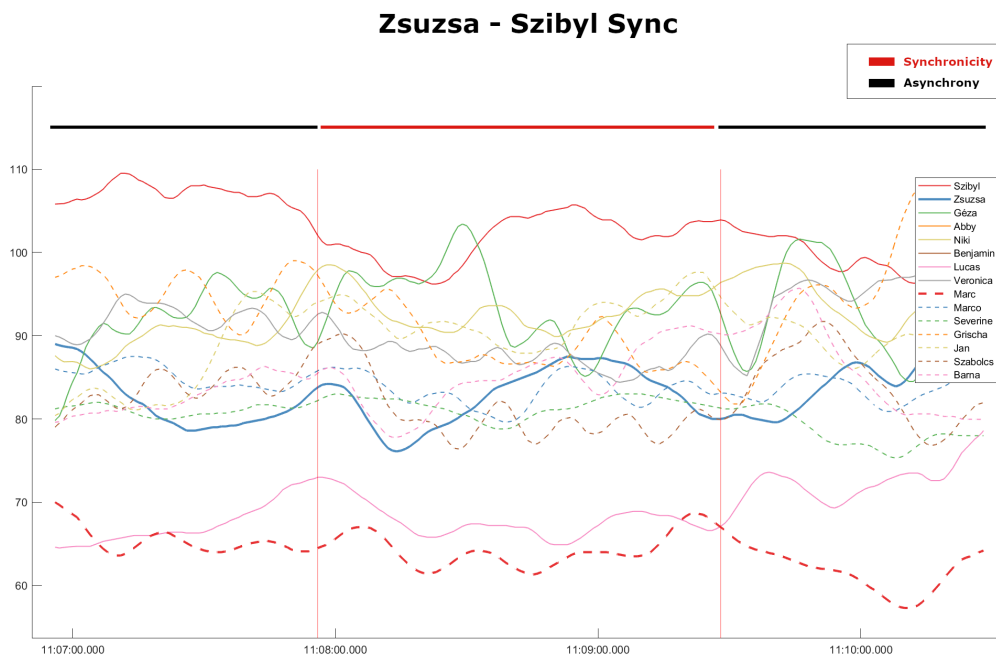
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ftguBIVxgDCQXrZtbrvICCHxabb9_ov/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=112392469567603457508&rtpof=true&sd=true

Participatory theatre, created by theatre professionals, is a new phenomenon and a vertiginous prospect for the spiritual and social development of 21st century people living in isolated circumstances. How does this development take place? There is something comparable in all

²⁰ Grotowski 1995

these practices:

Since theatre is not a concept, but more a series of physical interactions, bodily participation is unavoidable. Moreover, participants are required to willingly bring into play their own psychophysiology with others. Interaction occurs partly, or entirely, outside the domain of consciousness, and as such is difficult to control. Our control function ensures that we have a healthy degree of authority over our own participation in our relationships; we hold back with the simple aim of not being harmed, for example, to allow us the leeway to exit a situation we do not want. Control is crucial in our social interactions, but it is also the reason why we do not benefit from the positive mental and physiological effects of *interaction synchrony*^{s21} and the interpersonal process of *Mindsight*²² in our social relationships.



Primarily this interactional deficit-pit is filled by participatory theatre, offering, even
SEC Figure 1 ARABIC 3. Figure* SEC Figure 1* ARABIC 4. Figure:*
Control - acting individually - acting in unfrustrated manner
 expecting, face-to-face connection and can be described as *concerted collective action (or*
intention to act) of individuals.

Contemporary science offers hope through several findings related to the phenomena of *interactional synchrony* (and many others), that humans, as embedded in secure attachment; can experience social inclusion; the possibility of providing care; affirmation of self-worth; trusting relationships; direct and non-verbal counselling.

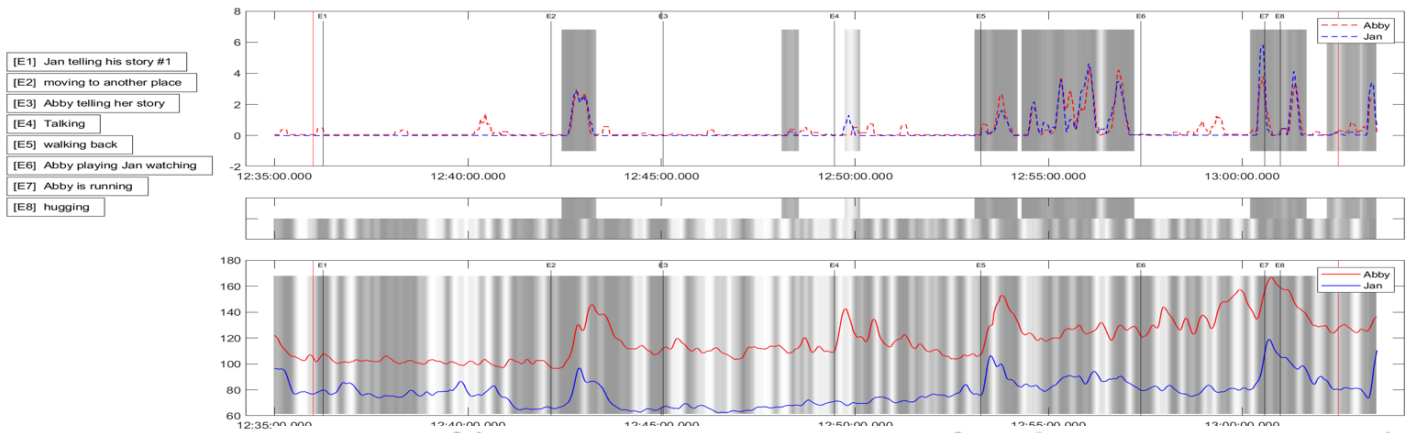
The synchronous, interactional events that take place in a securely attached

21 Varga Katalin: A hipnotikus kapcsolat élmény világa, Phenomenology of Hypnotic experience (Medicina, Budapest 2017)

22 Daniel Siegel: Mindsight, Bantam Books, New York, 2010

relationship, therefore, enable the sharing of individual coping results and difficulties; they provide a reassuring sense that the strategies and solutions to one's own problems are common. You can read more about these later in the study of the phenomenon of hypnosis

Ruins-Pair-03-12



SEQ Figure * ARABIC 5. Figure: Variations of synchrony in participatory theatre training

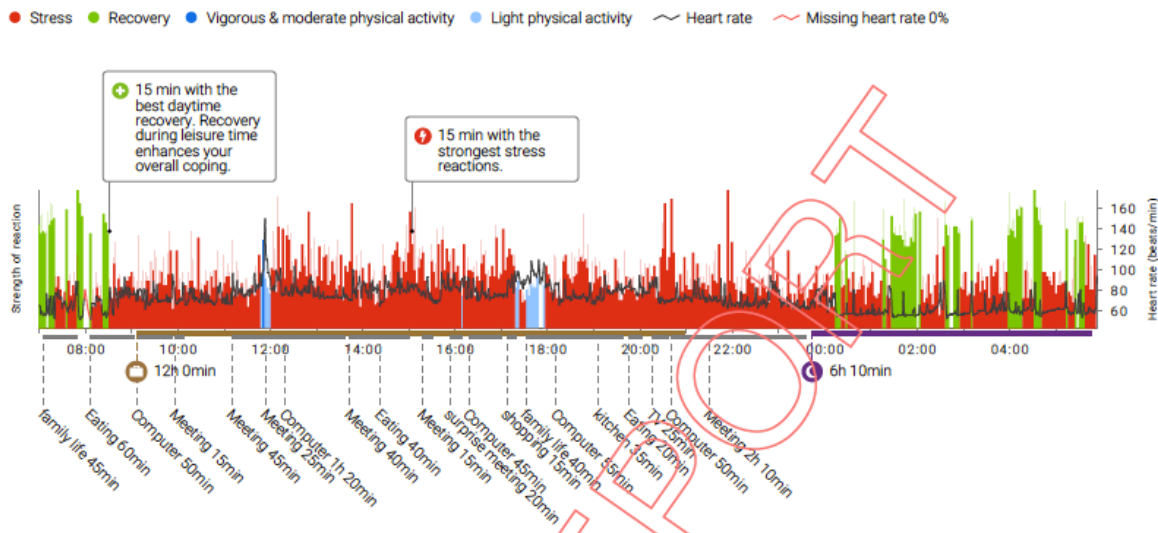
interaction.

The value system that nowadays crystallises around social advocacy and learning methods, focuses on individual success, emphasising the skills that are essential for personal goals and individual well-being. It neglects the skills needed for *being in communitas* and for keeping in sight the shared interests that help to thrive and balance *a group*. Even certain branches of drama in education encourage the success of the individual, through opinion-forming and coping within the group. This is not a moral issue; without the skills needed to function successfully in a group, we stumble around in many social situations without understanding, simply because the required sensitivity and behavioural repertoire is undeveloped.

Almost uniquely in participatory theatre groups, psycho-dynamic, social relation-types of situations can be practised. Development of the RIOTE solutions listed above, have addressed delineated needs in rural settlements, resulting in specific art products with which artists have tried to fill voids in the communities where they have taken up a role. We know ‘a priori’ that these voids (needs) are psychophysiological and psychological in nature, real processes in real life, involving everywhere, everytime a certain degree of *stress*, the main coefficient of our life, to which theatre tries to relate in a substantial, factual, and tangible release. A fundamental proposition of our programme is that these substantive responses trigger tangible positive changes at the level of the body and mind, and therefore their impact must be measurable on individuals and on community as well.

MEASURING QUALITY OF LIFE IN PARTICIPATORY GROUPS IN RURAL EUROPEAN SETTLEMENTS

The stress is easily affirmable by measuring the Heart Rate with light-wear sensors. A comparison between the stress load and the recovery index, readable in the numbers of the Heart Rate Variability, is the best indicator of Well-being.



6. Figure Lifestyle assessment results of the author on a particularly stressful day

We measured the quality of life of members of 9 participatory theatre groups before and 3 groups' as well after their involvement in theatre processes. We aimed to use technology to improve the health awareness of the participants and to help them to promote digital competences, essential in the 21st century. Through analysis of their own biometric data while reading *Firstbeat reports*, a bridge is built between the unconscious inner somatic perception and the higher brain areas, helping You to take a more conscious approach to Your own daily habits. The logging of measurement provide You a direct link between the factors influencing well-being and the actual physical/mental state, thus facilitating life-style revelations.

During the group measurement, we used a device developed for team sport biofeedback, the Polar Team-pro²³. Which enabled us to measure large groups simultaneously over a short period of time. This system is suitable for tracking non-sporting group activities too such as theatre training and rehearsals. Similarly to the Firstbeat, Polar measurements had a very spectacular impact on the group's awareness of alignment and physical synchronicity: the mere practice of measurement drew attention to the occasional changes of group cohesion, its presence or absence, and developed a new type of attention within participants.

These technologies have had an effect, without even beginning to exploit the scientific

²³ <https://www.polar.com/en/b2b/team>

potential of analysing the measurements.

Now we are at a point that we cannot avoid offering you that extensive chapter on the (not always) positive psychology: a pool of knowledge with useful, sometimes inspiring, and, maybe at times, incomprehensible concepts. You will not have to wade through the world of psychology at length. Nor will you be required to take a crash course. Still, the following chapter is not an essay, as having a scientific value. I'll do my best to write as simply as possible; please, take as much as you can bear.

FACTS ABOUT THEATRE

the psychophysiological and behavioural background of the dramatic arts

This textbook is summarising the methods employed and lessons contained within the adult education programme RIOTE3. It builds on the base of a research project, the *Ninth Sense*: an on-going study which has been accumulating knowledge for a decade and a half to be published here.

In the following monographic chapter, I will try to systematise the mostly contemporary psychophysiological and psychological research and theories that have been important for my understanding of theatre (performing arts) at the phenomenological level. For those of you who ponder the future of theatre, I hope to inspire you by introducing this scientific perspective. I have tried to strike a delicate balance between scientific understanding, artistic-philosophical theory and my insights and questions. I have done so because I know, you, inquiring people are not satisfied with a simple description of methods, rather you expect your doubts to be addressed, and you will apply this research to a broader context of meaning when setting your minds to learning.

PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE THEATRE

The creative process of theatre, as a group-based activity, interweaves several psychological phenomena that are not directly visible when the show is performed or received but, nevertheless, are part of the total reality of theatre events. In the participatory forms of theatre employed for therapeutic or developmental use, the positive effects take place in this invisible domain, and the process labelled above as 'creative' is more essential than, even if created, the performance itself. In the world of science, in the last two decades, this positive effect²⁴ has been the subject of interest as much as the interpretation of the classical theatre phenomenon itself. While the latter shortens the lifespan of many theatrical people²⁵, the former develops the external, internal, and social capacities and the mental health of participants²⁶.

My vocation, in both above-mentioned forms, is theatre. I do not have two tracks, nor do I distinguish the differences between multiple processes: inner awareness, connection, interaction (happening), synchronicity, flow, or integration. I am convinced that everyone is supposed to experience theatre as a participant; playing. Currently, theatre for most people is more familiar only from a receptive point of view, or not even that. My aim is to make a convincing case for the general social importance of the performing arts, and I want the basics to be well understood: the psychology and psychophysiology of systems that theatre sets in motion.

²⁴ Goldstein 2012; Celume & Goldstein 2019; Mc Donald & Goldstein 2020; Goldstein & Lerner 2017, Hayford & Kattwinkel, 2018; Lippi, et al. 2016; Mages 2006; Van de Vyver, & Abrams 2018

²⁵ George Davey Smith: Death in Hollywood, National Library of Medicine, 2001

²⁶ Ionnu et al. 2021, Corbett et al., 2019; Corbett et al., 2016b, Guli et al., Omasta 2014, 2013; Goldstein and Winner, 2012; Kempe and Tissot, 2012; Goncu and Perone, Larson & Brown, 2007; 2005; Schmitt, 1981; Rowe et al. 2018

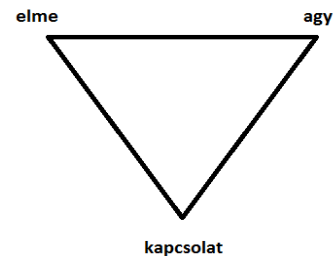
THEATRE AND WELL-BEING

The main reason I frequently refer to Dr Daniel Siegel is that he synthesizes the results of a wealth of contemporary neuroscientific and psychological research. He provides the lay reader with coherent models, powerful symbols, and an easily accessible conceptual schema with which to understand human psychic functioning.

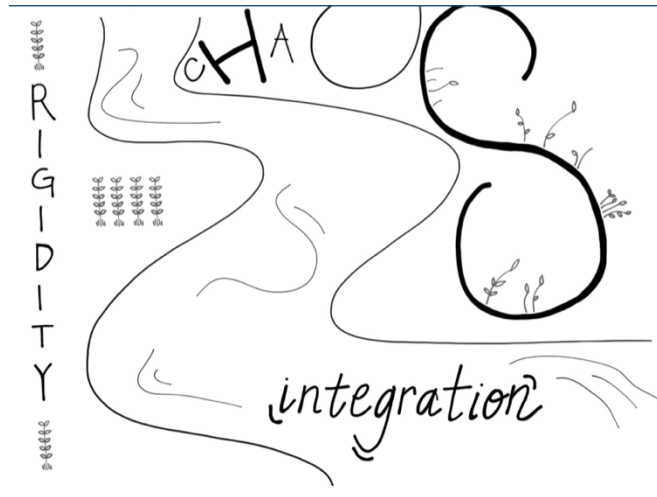
The following glossary of terms from his book *Mindsight* (2010) brings together a range of operational models. It is a worthy counterpart in its idealism to Grotowski's key-concepts, summarised in the previous chapter. Both are representative of the positive branch of psychology which deals, not with disorders, but with systemic potential. I hope that Siegel's models are sufficiently concise and general to enable readers less familiar with the world of psychology, to relate **Your work to Your** own experiences.

Here are a dozen basic concepts and related terms and ideas that form a foundation for our approach of *mindsight*, integration, and well-being.

- Ψ The *Triangle of Well-Being* reveals three aspects of our lives. *Relationships*, *Mind*, and *Brain* form the three mutually influencing points of the Triangle of Well-Being. *Relationships* are how energy and information is shared as we connect and communicate with one another. *Brain* refers to the physical mechanism through which this energy and information flows. *Mind* is a process that regulates the flow of energy and information. Rather than dividing our lives into three separate parts, the Triangle actually represents three dimensions of one system of energy and information flow.
- Ψ *Mindsight* is a process that enables us to monitor and modify the flow of energy and information within the Triangle of Well-Being. The *monitoring* aspect of *mindsight* involves sensing this flow within ourselves—perceiving it in our own nervous systems, which we are calling Brain—and within others through our Relationships, which involve the sharing of energy and information flow through various means of communication. We then can *modify* this flow through awareness and intention, fundamental aspects of our mind, directly shaping the paths that energy and information flow take in our lives.
- Ψ A *system* comprises individual parts that interact with one another. For our human systems, these interactions often involve the *flow of energy and information*. Energy is the physical property enabling us to do something; information is the representation of something other than itself. Words and ideas are examples of units of information we use to communicate with one another. Our relationships involve our connection to other people in pairs, families, groups, schools, communities, and societies.
- Ψ We can define *well-being* as occurring when a system is integrated. *Integration involves the linkage of differentiated parts of a system*. The differentiation of components enables parts to become individuated, attaining specialized functions and retaining their sovereignty to some degree. The linkage of parts involves the functional connection of the differentiated components to one another. Promoting integration involves cultivating both differentiation and linkage. *Mindsight* can be used to intentionally create integration in our lives.
- Ψ When a system is open to outside influences and capable of becoming chaotic, it is called a dynamic, non-linear, complex system. When this type of system is integrated, it moves in a way that is the most flexible and adaptive. We can remember the characteristics of an integrated flow of the system with the acronym *FACES: Flexible, Adaptive, Coherent, Energized, and Stable*.



Ψ The *River of Integration* refers to the movement of a system in which the integrated FACES flow is the central channel and has the quality of harmony. On either side of the River's flow are two banks—chaos and rigidity. We can detect when a system is not integrated, when it is not in a state of harmony and well-being, by its chaotic or rigid characteristics. Recurrent explosions of rage or terror and being taken over by a sense of paralysis or emptiness in life are examples of these chaotic and rigid states outside the River of Integration.

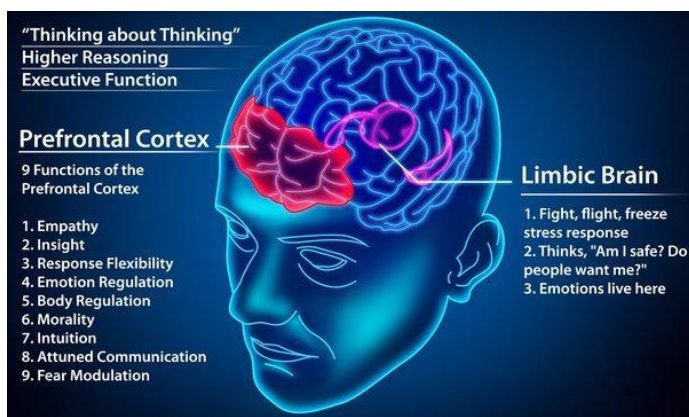


Ψ In this model, eight Domains of Integration can be harnessed to promote well-being. These include consciousness, horizontal, vertical, memory, narrative, state, interpersonal, and temporal integration. As the mind is an embodied and relational process that regulates the flow of energy and information, we can use the intentional focus of our awareness to direct this flow toward integration in both Brain and Relationships. As these domains of integration are cultivated, a ninth domain, transpirational integration, may begin to emerge in which we come to feel that we are a part of a much larger, interconnected whole.

Ψ Integration in relationships involves the attuned communication among people who are honoured for their differences and then linked together to become a “we.” Integration in the brain—what we are using as a term for the extended nervous system distributed throughout the entire body—involves the linkage of separate, differentiated neural areas and their specialized functions to one another. The focus of our attention directs the flow of energy and information through particular neural circuits. In this way we can say that *the mind uses the brain to create itself*. Attention activates specific neural pathways and lays the foundation for changing the connections among those firing neurons by way of a fundamental process called *neuroplasticity*. The function of our mind—the regulation of energy and information flow—can actually change the structure of the brain itself. Mindsight enables us to create neural integration.

Ψ One example of neural integration is revealed in the functions that emerge from a highly integrative area of the brain called the *middle pre-frontal cortex*. Involving specific parts of the prefrontal region located behind the forehead (including the anterior cingulate, orbitofrontal, and the medial and ventrolateral prefrontal zones), the middle prefrontal integrative fibres link the whole cortex, limbic area, brainstem, body proper, and even social systems to one another. The *nine middle prefrontal functions* emerging from this multidimensional neural integration include: 1) body regulation, 2) attuned communication, 3) emotional balance, 4) fear modulation, 5) response flexibility, 6) insight, 7) empathy, 8) morality, and 9) intuition. These functions would top many people's list of a description of well-being. They are also the established outcome and process of the reflective skills of looking inward, and the first eight of this list are proven outcomes of secure parent-child relationships that are filled with love. This list

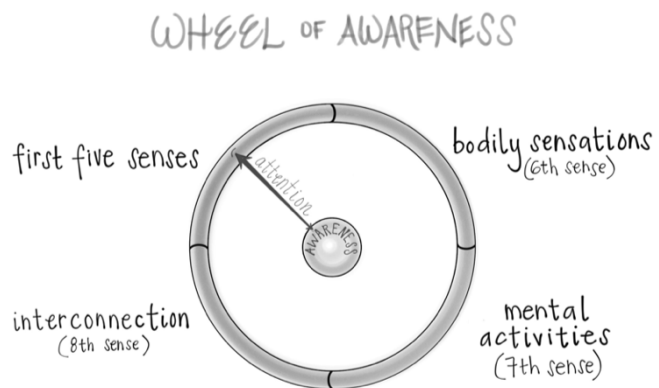
SEQ Figure 1* ARABIC 9. Figure The Prefrontal Cortex and its Functions



exemplifies how integration promotes well-being.

- Ψ Mindsight doesn't just emanate from the middle prefrontal cortex. The reflective practice of focusing internal attention on the mind itself with *openness, observation, and objectivity*—the essentials of a strengthened *mindsight lens*—likely promotes the growth of these integrative middle prefrontal fibres. We use the acronym *SNAG* to denote how we *Stimulate Neuronal Activation and Growth*. This is the foundation of neuroplasticity, of how experiences—including the focus of our attention—transform brain structure. Mindsight SNAGs the brain toward integration, making it possible to intentionally promote linkage and differentiation within the various domains of integration.
- Ψ A *Window of Tolerance* refers to the band of tolerable levels of arousal in which we can attain and remain in an integrated *FACES* flow and live with harmony. Widened Windows create resilience in our lives. If a Window is narrowed, then it becomes more likely for energy and information flow to move outside its boundaries and for our lives to become chaotic or rigid. The integrated states within the Window of Tolerance are our subjective experience of living with a sense of ease and in the harmonious *FACES* flow down the River of Integration. As we *SIFT* the mind—tracking the *Sensations, Images, Feelings, and Thoughts* that dominate our internal world—we can *monitor* energy and information flow moment by moment within our Windows of Tolerance and *modify* our internal state to remain integrated and in a *FACES* flow. Ultimately we can use this monitoring and modifying to change not only our present *state*, but also our long-term *traits* that reveal how our Windows for various feelings or situations can be widened through changes in our brain's dynamic regulatory circuits.

- Ψ The *Wheel of Awareness* is a visual metaphor of the mind. We can stay within the open, receptive *hub* of the Wheel to sense any mental activities emerging from the *rim* without becoming swept up by them. A strengthened hub permits us to widen our Windows of Tolerance as we become more observant, objective, and open and thus attain more resilience in our lives. Mindsight harnesses this important capacity to remain receptive and to be able to monitor the internal world with more clarity and depth. We are then in a position to modify our inner and interpersonal world as we cultivate integration and move our lives toward more compassion, well-being, and health."²⁷



To Siegel's thoughts, I would add one single view, that the processes described as *mindsight*, are perceived in the body. The central gesture highlighted above, the self-perception, is not only the integration of "thoughts" but of actual, real time psychophysical processes.

THE EMBODIED EXPERIENCE

Theatre is a social event, created for the purpose of experiencing the *inner world*: the *emotional, conscious* and *physical* states, *behavioural* and *relational* experiences and the *narrative* of fellow beings. The functions of the human body and mind, the *mirror neuron system*, the *altered state of consciousness, cognitive process, the flow* - and *integrative* - experiences provide the framework for

²⁷ Daniel Siegel: *Mindsight*, Bantam Books, New York, 2010

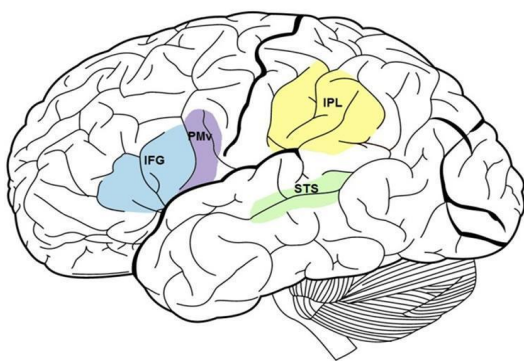
this *social event*.

Psychology encompasses the totality of human functioning. Each sub-field could in fact claim its own definition of the theatrical event as the closest to the matter: mass hypnosis, polyvagal group interaction, bodily-based cognitive experience-ensemble, or intentional synchronisation. Whatever definition you prefer, we cannot omit the fundamental brain structure, the *mirror neuron system*, that has evolved in primates alone.

PREMOTOR AREAS

In the mid-nineties, at the University of Parma, the premotor areas of the frontal lobes (that plan the movements) of monkeys were studied using implanted electrodes. The scientists examined nerve cells one by one and, when the monkey reached for a peanut, a particular electrode fired. This was no surprise: this is what they expected. But what happened next changed what we know about how the mind works. When the monkey simply *looked at* one of the researchers munching on the peanuts, the same neuron fired²⁸ with astonishing intensity.

The researchers later noticed that the imitation of the gesture was not enough to induce an electrical potential. Mirroring only occurred when the observed movement was *goal-centred*, that is, when the monkey actually observed the human eating the food²⁹. The mirror neuron system (MNS), located at the boundary of the left hemisphere's parietal, temporal and frontal lobes³⁰, is only triggered to fire by an action with *real intent*. Mirror neuron cells are multimodal; they associate all forms of information about an object with the object itself. For example, if the shell of a peanut cracks, the cell already fires³¹. However, mirror neurons are not moved by any form of pretense. The MNS, or more recently the 'ideomotor' framework³², has since been identified in humans and is now considered the basis of social behaviour, empathy, theory of mind (TOM)³³ and learning.



Mirroring each other's behaviour happens very quickly, automatically, and continuously. We unwillingly copy each other's patterns of movement, emotional and intentionality 'contour' onto the 44th premotor field, thereby gaining a completely accurate *internal drawing* of fellow humans' intention of action expressed in postures. The contour that emerges in us, prepares us for the expected behaviour of others and helps us to

²⁸ The activity of the nerve cells, the electrical potential induced is the "firing".

²⁹ Umilt'a et al. 2001

³⁰ di Pellegrino et al. 1992; Gallese et al. 1996; Rizzolatti & Craighero 2004

³¹ Keysers et al. 2003, Kohler et al. 2002

³² Iacoboni 2009

³³ see the next chapter

choose the proper communication strategy³⁴.

Our mind uses the same premotor areas of the brain to visualise the movements of others as to plan our own movements, and to *provide feedback* on the movements that have concluded. The mirroring is, like all our other senses, a function. By the simulation we ‘see’ the feelings associated with an action while the corresponding bodily sensations are also evoked in the observer. Whether we allow this process to the level of consciousness or not, we are constantly experiencing the inner world of others in real time.

Vittorio Gallese, the pillar member of the scientists’ team who designed the monkey experiments (inhumane by today’s standards), dedicated a special study to the theatrical implications of MNS. ‘The study of the neural dimension of intersubjectivity, and the key role of simulation mechanisms in this dimension, provides a starting point for an empirically based understanding of the mimetic expressivity of the actor’s presence and the active role of the spectator and, more generally, for thinking about the origins of theatrical practice.’³⁵

According to Gallese’s model, theatre happens when we participate in the behaviour of others as voluntary observers; our bodily simulation awakens a particular state of mind, which is the *intentional synchronisation*. The bodily simulation has a repercussion: the movements of the wilfully observed person can no longer behave in the same way as if no one were watching. They become more conscious or controlled³⁶. Even for the most skilled actor, it is a difficult, if not impossible, task to behave as if no one were watching. This ‘having been seen’ context creates immediate discomfort for most. *We feel it in our bones* that someone is watching.

The precondition of the theatre setting is a kind of consensus, a mutual willingness to mirror, that ‘the actor, obeying the functional rules, becomes another self, realised in another body’³⁷.

To mirror and be mirrored is a responsibility, both because it requires awareness on the behalf of all *participants*, and because nothing can be hidden, since the full spectrum of the body is mirrored. *Mimetic expressivity* could be understood as body-based attention, which is a fundamental question of the actor’s work. ‘MNS, makes an empirically grounded contribution to looking at theatre from a naturalistic, and therefore universal, perspective’³⁸.

MNS’s discovery, that the ‘marked’ gestures are not mirrored equally, calls into question the very basis of common theatrical practice. Still it is a matter of fact that whole audiences applaud (including me) performances that are *by genre* marked, about which every participant on stage is aware and distanced from what he is doing. MNS does not prevent from performing markedly. A lot

³⁴ Rizzolatti & Arbib, 1998

³⁵ Vittorio Gallese: Il corpo teatrale: Mimetismo. Neuron Specchio, Simulazione Incarnata - in. Teatro e Neuroscienze, 36. o. -

³⁶ Gueguen 2011

³⁷ Gallese see above

³⁸ Gallese see above

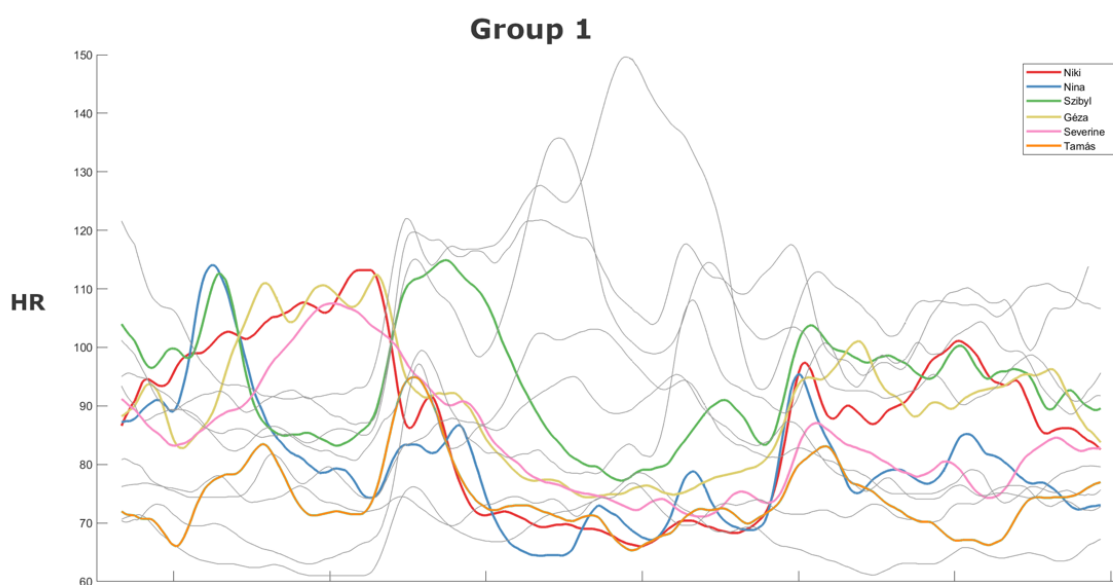
of contradiction emerges: in fact, the phenomenon named ‘emotional contagion’³⁹ uses the ideomotor system to disseminate patterns of non-indigenous or copied behaviour.

MIRRORING AND SYNCHRONICITY

Research has shown that synchronicity is less often a conscious (explicit) and more often an involuntary (implicit) phenomenon. Conscious imitation is followed by a longer-lasting involuntary synchronisation⁴⁰. The same is true of moods and emotions⁴¹; it is difficult to remain independent of templates and patterns that appear in social settings. This is also true of mimicry of goals, attitudes, vocabulary, and of opinion⁴². The sharing of stereotypes and simplified knowledge content, including mimicry of easily readable behaviour, is also favoured over the sharing of specific and complex content.⁴³

Synchronicity can be traced through several psychophysiological processes. Breathing, visceral reactions, galvanic skin reactions and, above all, the synchronisation of the heartbeat precede and constitute the synchronisation of behaviour. The sharing of thoughts and feelings occurs primarily through bodily functions and signs; it then becomes cognizable to the higher brain areas, thanks to cognitive processes⁴⁴.

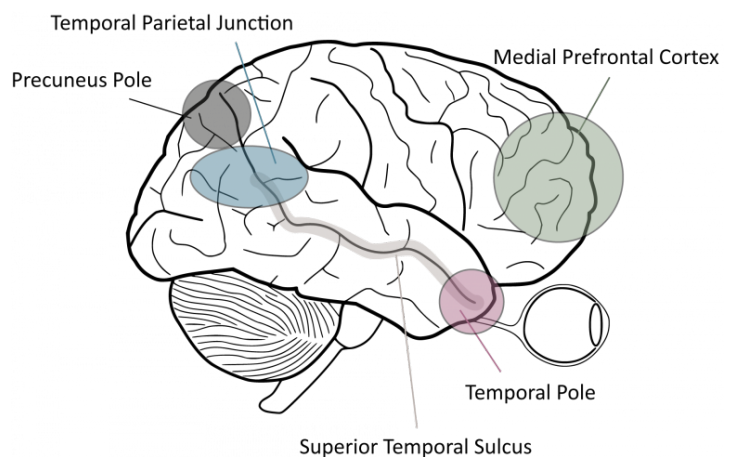
Human life typically takes place in group relations. Why is it so hard to admit that we cannot be free from close interconnectedness with each other? We are constantly and inevitably part of small and large social processes which cannot ask continuously the permission and authority of consciousness. However, consciousness is ‘per naturam’ *individual*, it rarely rises to collective levels, which is perhaps why the public discourse on community is so controversial. Our scientific knowledge also offers a wide range of contradicting interpretations of synchronicity, from the healing interactional⁴⁵ to the contagious behavioural phenomena discussed above. According to the *mindsight theory* it is the *emergence of mindfulness*, that would make the difference, giving behavioral synchronicity a certain added value⁴⁶.



THEORY OF MIND

A whole universe has opened up following Italian neurobiologists' discovery of MNS, tens of thousands of articles cite, interpret, and compile evidence of human emotional, status, or habitus reflection. Although a few years before the discovery of MNS, Baron-Cohen had already hypothesised that the frontal lobe, by means of a 'wiring', enables humans to map each other's minds. This map, called the Theory of Mind (TOM)⁴⁷, what establishes a biological background is MNS's discovery. Science today distinguishes between two types of TOM, one of emotions and the other in the world of thoughts: hot and cold, i.e. emotional and cognitive domains⁴⁸.

The TOM is a process, rich in meta-cognitive elements, in which we synthesise posture and behaviour, as well as the *vitality effects* of fellow bodies⁴⁹, placing them in the context of environment, social dress and age. Either in performance or in rehearsal, TOM is reading the characters. The clearer and more complex a character's 'drawing' is, the less explanation the stage needs. In



training, one of the most common focuses of games and exercises is to strengthen, train and raise awareness of TOM as a very important skill in acting, enabling us to read each other's minds by simulating bodies.

Thalia R. Goldstein and colleagues found signs of increased TOM in young people, in a variety of repeated research situations, following theatre trainings⁵⁰. TOM in these studies can be interpreted as an increased empathy or sensitivity that is formed only when participants sense each other in appropriate conditions. What might these 'appropriate conditions' be?

SAFE SPACE

Being in the community is a challenge. It evokes the traumas and difficulties that we have experienced since childhood, outside or within the family. False TOMs are generated where you are afraid of your peers or want to instil fear in them. To develop, to overcome old difficulties, or to acquire new skills, revealing completely new solutions in rehearsals. We need a stage, where no one have to fear of being

⁴⁷ "Precursors to a theory of mind: Understanding attention in others", in Whiten (ed.), *Natural theories of mind: evolution, development, and simulation of everyday mindreading*, Oxford, UK Cambridge, Massachusetts: B. Blackwell, pp. 233–251,

⁴⁸ Kalbe et al 2007

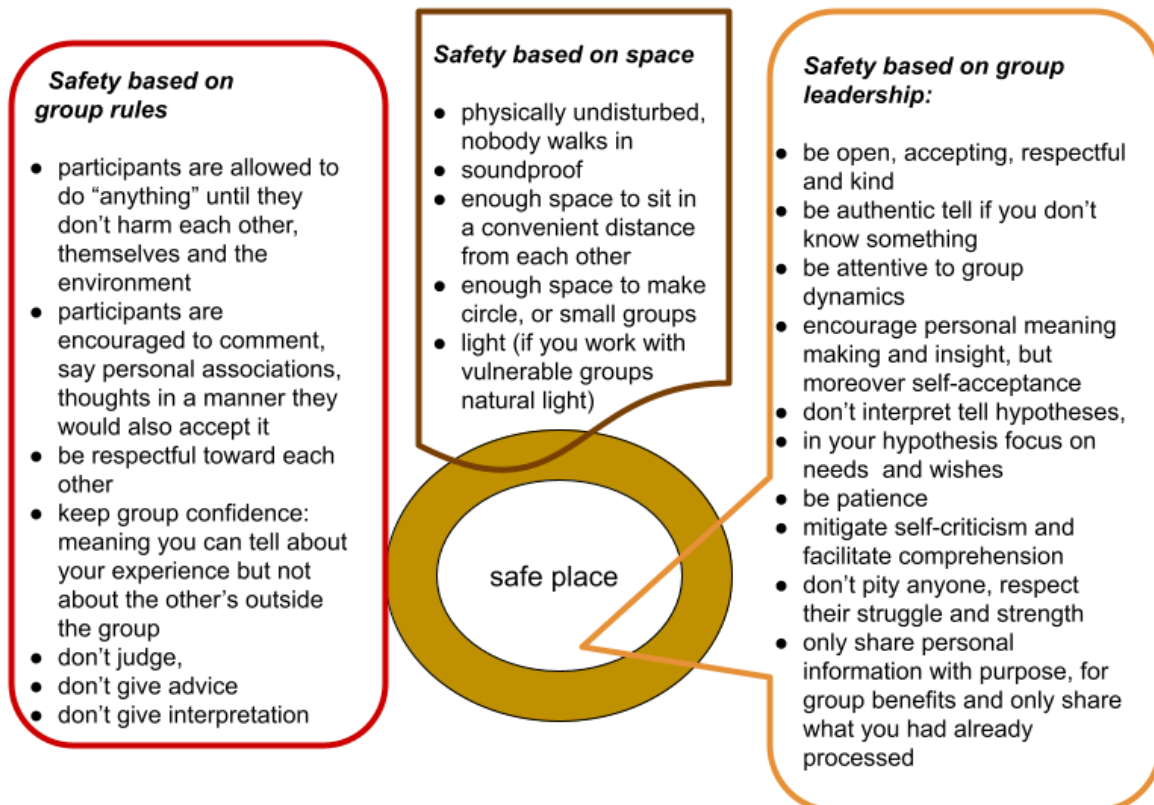
⁴⁹ Stern: A csecsemő személyközi világa The Interpersonal World of the Infant 1997

⁵⁰ Developing Children's Socio-Emotional Competencies Through Drama Pedagogy Training: An Experimental Study on Theory of Mind and Collaborative Behavior, Celume*ab, Goldsteinc, Besançon, Zenasn 2020

hurt because of mistakes or weaknesses: where it is not dangerous just to be spontaneously ourselves.

Being ourselves, or in Winnicott's words to *acquire the experience of becoming real*⁵¹ requires a safe connection. A *safe space* is not about a nice room. It is a well maintained space where one can experience the safety of early relationships. Safe space is an immersion in non-intrusive and non-retaliatory relationships with close and significant others: an 'intermediate' and safe area of experience⁵².

14. Figure: Characteristics of a "Safe Space"⁵³



Márta Merényi MD writes on the significance of safe place in movement therapy:

'In relationship work, we pay attention to our own movements, our intentions and those of the other person at the same time. There is a constant fine tuning. The experience of reciprocity and recognition with the "self-controlled other" is experienced on the move in relationships with partners. The *therapeutic space* of the group is modelling the space of original *secure attachment*⁵⁴. Reflective functioning at bodily level opens the access to experiences and emotions that were previously hidden from oneself⁵⁵.

Her words can be directly adapted to the theatre workshop; I would say that no creativity can emerge if

⁵¹ Winnicott 1965

⁵² Najat Qushua & Teresa Ostler (2018): Creating a safe therapeutic space through naming: psychodynamic work with traditional Arab LGBT clients, Journal of Social Work Practice, DOI: 10.1080/02650533.2018.1478395

⁵³ courtesy of art therapist, Zsuzsanna Valachyné Geréb

⁵⁴ The different levels of attachment security see

⁵⁵ Márta Merényi MD: Mozgás- és táncterápia Movement and Dancethrapy in Pszichoterápia XIII > 2004 February

not in a nurturing environment as described here. ‘The shared experience can create an emotional security that allows for an ever-increasing scope for play’⁵⁶. The ‘therapeutic’ expression is misleading for the theatre people who think they are okay and need no specialist for their work, as they won’t need a safe place to work why all these, they are not that vulnerable. He needs it not so that he won’t get hurt, but so that he can rehearse his best: ‘Thus, implicit memory is activated, i.e. during the movement the person finds an early *block-of-experience*, from which the current *feeling-sensation-experience* gradually emerges as from a background. The retaining fabric of bodily sensations and perceptions is the canvas on which past and present feelings, fantasies, memories, and thoughts can be strung and drawn out. In this *safe play space*, connections can be saturated with meaning, can be *relieved, and reworked* in an increasingly malleable way. Transferred-relations are articulated, and group members can play out and rebuild their most important relational themes with each other and with the leaders’⁵⁷. Is building such a safe play-space for theatre rehearsal an idealistic hope? The adaptation of the theatre work into this aspect directly connects with the understanding of Grotowski on the role of the director.

I would argue that it is both possible and essential to ‘standardise’ similar sensibility-protocols in all environments where people are expected to perform a joint task with a common goal, be it in the arenas of sport, art, education, business, or politics.

WORKING TOGETHER

The discovery of the 44th premotor field led to the suggestion that brain structures for bodily simulation can coordinate more complex interpersonal processes. The tightly interconnected mirror neuron system is not only key to sharing emotion and information, but beyond that, as a characteristic of our species, allows smoother social behaviour; coordinated, cooperative, and complementary actions. Mirror neurons ideally support shared interpersonal activities.⁵⁸ In fact, it can be assumed that mirroring structures are optimised during phylogeny for the purpose of *Joint Actions (JA)*.

JA research reveals mental and neural processes that are the building blocks of all jointly coordinated action. JA, similarly to the TOM, is a distinct field-of-research in the contemporary psychology, that explores JA as a form of social interaction where ‘two or more individuals, by coordinating their actions in space and time, *induce change in the environment*’⁵⁹.

According to Sebanz and Rutgers, the success of joint action depends on the ability to: i) share with the other person our own perspective on the situation; ii) the extent we correctly anticipate the actions of others; and iii) the extent we can incorporate the predicted effects of the actions of others

⁵⁶ Merényi, see above

⁵⁷ Merényi, see above

⁵⁸ Newman-Norlund et al. 2007

⁵⁹ Joint action: bodies and minds moving together Natalie Sebanz, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Psychology Department University of Nijmegen 2006

into our own actions?

The function of joint attention is twofold: i) it provides alignment before the action is initiated, with following the gaze of the other as you look at the table. You are manipulating together; and ii) it provides alignment during joint actions, looking towards the door while you are already carrying the table together.

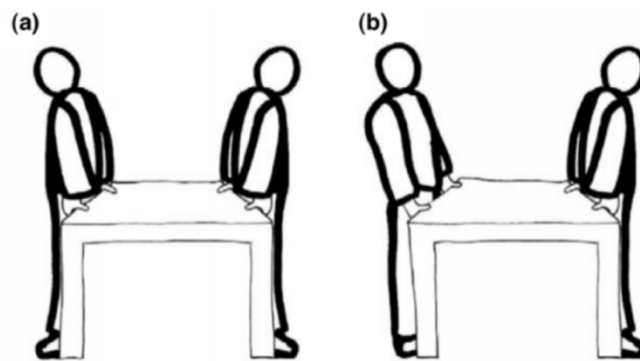


Fig B. Parallel (a) and complementary (b) roles in joint action (Sebanz et al. 2006).

Their research question was ‘how do individuals in practical terms coordinate their actions in situations where verbal communication is difficult or even impossible to achieve?’⁶⁰ So the experiments were going ahead without a word, and their hypothesis, that *JA carries the basic principles of an internally coordinated group function at the neuronal level*, is being tested by using fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging). The result is the structure of JA below:

A.

Joint Attention creates the *perceptual common denominator* that links two, or more, minds to the same reality (e.g. the position of the table in the room; its size; is there anything under or above it?). We have a huge repertoire of cues, such as gaze direction, pointing gestures, and posture, that, when projected onto the premotor fields, show the other *how You see the joint task* at that moment.

B.

Gesture imitation plays a major role in the information-transfer concerning the manipulanda. Gesture imitation should not be understood as a repetition of the other’s action, nor as an actual movement performed, but as *a muscle tone triggered by the premotor fields* as a key component of the *selection process*. For a successful joint action, in addition to the imitative movements (lifting the table together), complementary movements (balancing the table), and opposite movements (one of you tipping the table, the other lifting it) are needed; through ideomotor framework we get to know what the other is up to so that we can add the corresponding complementary movements.

C.

The *common goal representation* suppresses the occasionally inappropriate movements - individual action plans and irrational urges - and adapts the choice to the *common procedural and solution denominator* of the action to be performed together.

D.

⁶⁰ Sebanz & Rutgers: Joint Action

The joint task representation involves the mechanisms of TOM. Observing an action activates motor representations, which helps *to understand the action*. However, we encode an action not only in terms of the visible properties of the movement, but also in *terms of its intentional state*, i.e., the mental and emotional state of the agent.

E.

For successful joint action, we need to be able to 'predict' the consequences of what others are doing and to shape our next step accordingly. To be able to predict, above observing what the others are doing, we also need to know the *stimulus conditions* (whether the table is wet, or whether the sun is shining in the face), to calculate when matter and body meet. Under the appropriate conditions, the mind can do all this in a fraction of a second without difficulty.

F.

Evidence of joint task-representation has also been found in the study of verbally mediated coordination⁶¹. Analysis of gestures during speech suggests that gestures are adjusted in space, *according to where the partner is positioned*.

G.

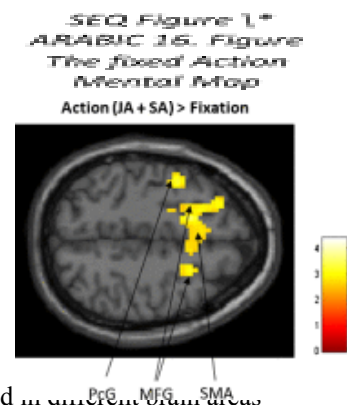
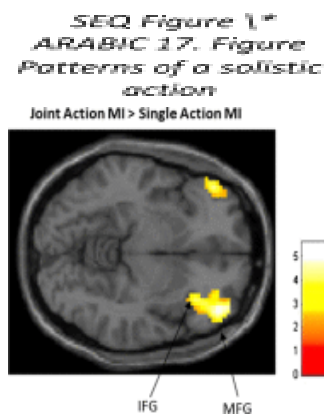
The fact that those who have lost their sense of touch might fail to identify joint task-representation is indicative of the role of sensory perception in task representations.

H.

As children, from one year old, we develop a selective trust of others' solution proposals and imitate a pattern only if we find it to be *the most reasonable*⁶². What do we understand to be the most reasonable? It is dependent on age, social status, physical capacity and cognitive orientation. The person's *perception of action* also determines the intensity with which the premotor field circuits fire. The rate is higher when the observer is an expert on the processes⁶³.

I.

Without gestures, we can be on the same 'field' if we rely on a motor mapping of actions. The task can be clear to everyone and can be solved without confusion if the individual solutions are not blocking them. *Fix'action* is the name given to the type of situation where one executes one's own solution against the motor representation of others.



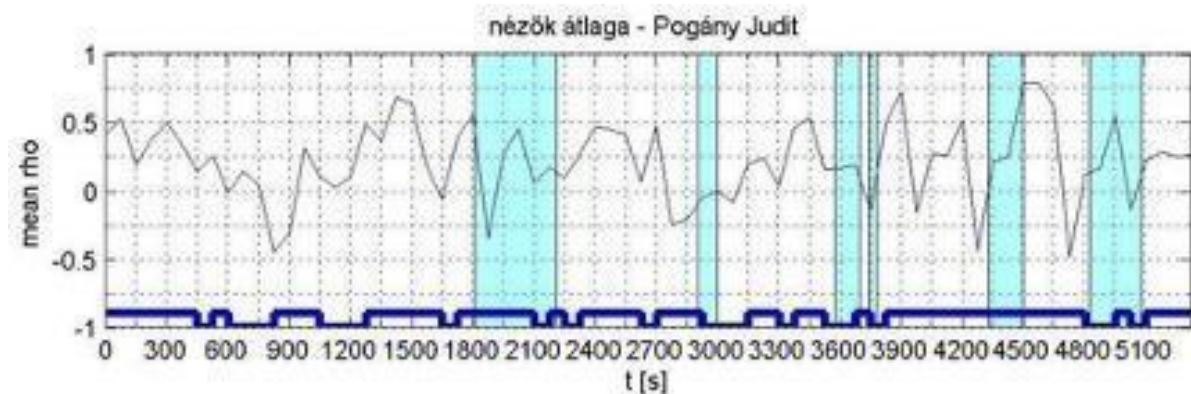
imagery of joint and single actions is represented in different brain areas
..Koschutnigbc, G.R.Müller-Putzac 2016

No action is the schema where one participant passively waits for others to give instructions to solve the task, suppressing the common denominator that naturally arises from one's own motor representation. In *single action*, we assume that we are forced into single (solitary) action planning and directing of non-acting partners⁶⁴.

EVERYDAY ACTION ONSTAGE (AS AN EVIDENCE OF MOTOR REPRESENTATION)

Studying the conditions of JA draws attention to the necessity of respect of bodily realities in the actor's work. Most of a performance is built of actions. As audience members we do not merely visualise; we become adhered⁶⁵. The play is projected onto our motor representation and compared with our own experience. The MNS system automatically matches experience from our own repertoire when observing an action.

If the action on stage is confusing or marked, an interference is generated between the spectator's motor representation and the reality of the play on stage. If an actor takes a suitcase when moving out and it is empty, the audience loses its adherence.



SEQ Figure * ARABIC 18. Figure Significant coherence between the audience and the player of a monodrama

66

In the sample above, in Judit Pogány's monodrama play, precise realistic physical actions are compared to a range of individual experiences, creating a strong coherence between the heartbeat of the spectator and the heartbeat of the performer between 4200 and 4500 s.

INTERPERSONAL RESOURCES

The ability to *integrate a common goal*, as a cornerstone of group cooperation, enables individuals to *rely on the ability of others to act* when planning their own actions. The collective representation of action is shaped not only by what the individual is able to do, but also by what members of the group might be able to do. When we cultivate our environment as members of a group, it is not a private matter, but a function of the group's resource management. The skills of the individual in

⁶⁴ Wriessnegger et. al 2016

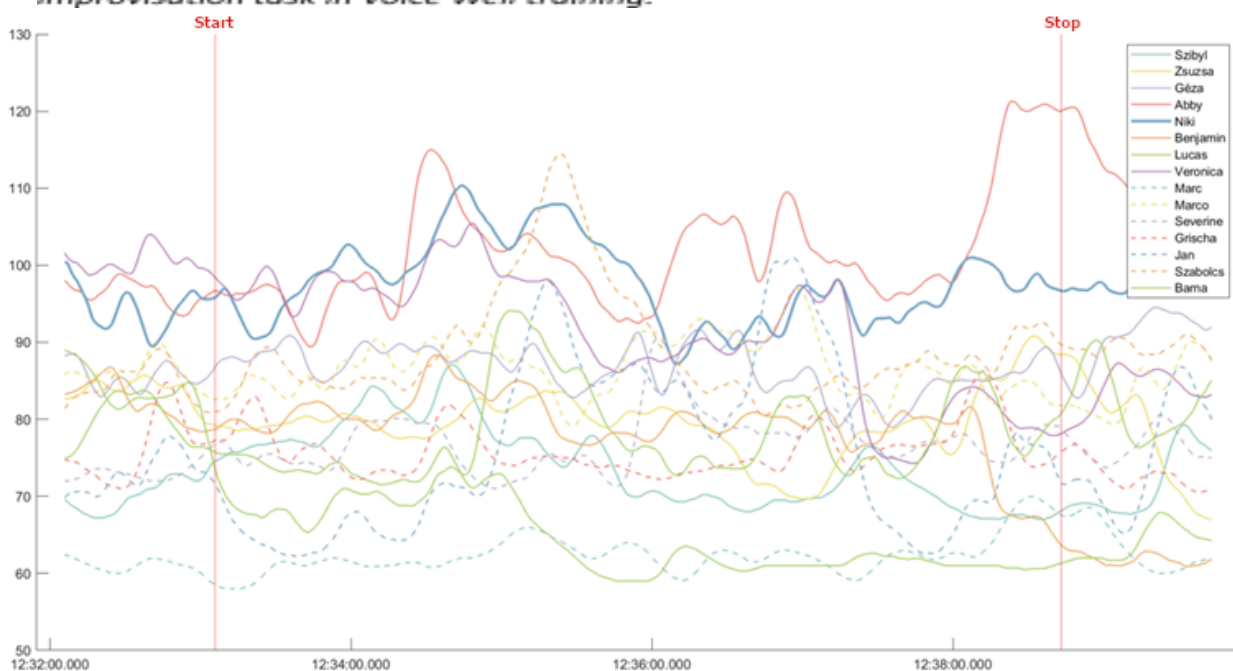
⁶⁵ See adherence in the following chapters

⁶⁶ The chart is the work of Dorottya Bencze

accomplishing common goals are an accessible reality to all members of the group. Feedback on the actions of others is as useful for further planning as feedback on *actions of your own*. The observation of another's mistake elicits similar anger, frustration, and confusion as when the individual makes the mistake himself⁶⁷. The identity of the group, as an extension of our sense of self, transcends the individual. Joint action is when the 'combined result of one's own and others' actions is more important than the result of individual actions'⁶⁸.

The possibility of joint task resolution is available to us by nature. Are you reliant on these structures when it is not a table you are moving from one room to another, but a much more complex system? A particular example of the common goal representation is the open-ended multi participant

SEQ Figure * ARABIC 19. Figure: Participants pursuing an open-ended improvisation task in Voice Well training.



improvisation, where the *common goal* of actors is that the short play shall go in a good direction; this 'good direction' can be described by the criteria of a streamlined system, a continuous, stable, flexible, and flowing process, something living⁶⁹. The task is similar to the research where the common goal was the tonal harmony in musical improvisation⁷⁰.

Research has shown that when a task was presented to a group that was specific to one member, the other group members also activated a representation of that action, simply because they knew each other's task. However, the activation *did not turn into an action* because *it was suppressed*; it was not their task⁷¹.

⁶⁷ Understanding joint action: Current theoretical and empirical approaches, Editorial, Acta Psychologica 215 (2021) 103285

⁶⁸ Sebanz&Rutgers: Joint Action

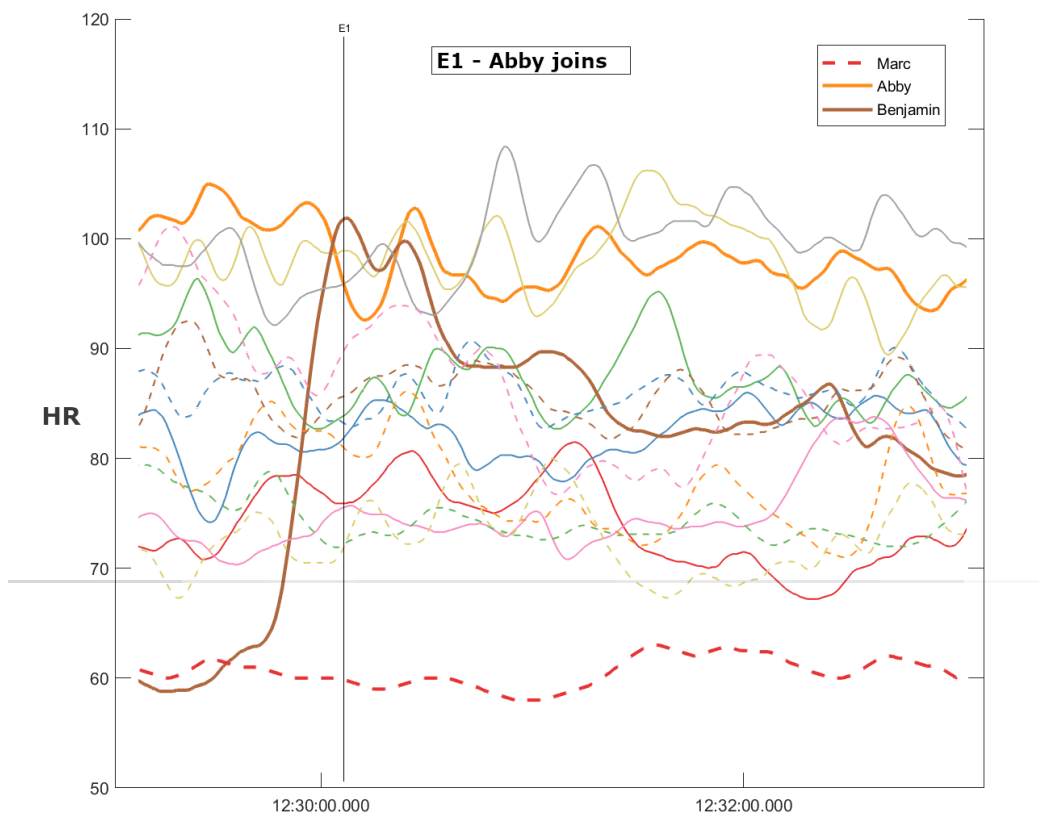
⁶⁹ Flexible, Adaptive, Coherent, Energetic and Stable az áramlatba lendülő rendszer tulajdonságai

⁷⁰ Tonal Emergence: An agent-based model of tonal coordination, D. Setzler, L. Goldstone 2022

⁷¹ Wriessneggerac mf

The JA based on the repertoire of the group (the tribe), so who finds the resource, and who defeats the threat, is irrelevant to survival. From the point of view of improvisation, it is irrelevant who gives the momentum that promotes the system. JA displays the utopian society, and sheds light on the well-known obstacles that restrain JA in real life: a lack of willingness; a resistance to flexibility; a climate of fear and judgement; and the prevalence of individualism.

In group creation, the ‘copyright’ is a shady area. Who has the glory? Research revealed that in interactions where more participants could be the promoter of an action, an experimenter could easily influence the others to attribute to themselves the action that they would never be able to perform alone. A high proportion of participants believed that they had performed actions that were actually performed by an external person involved in the experimental design.⁷² The opposite was also observed when participants attributed the action performed by him/herself to another person⁷³.

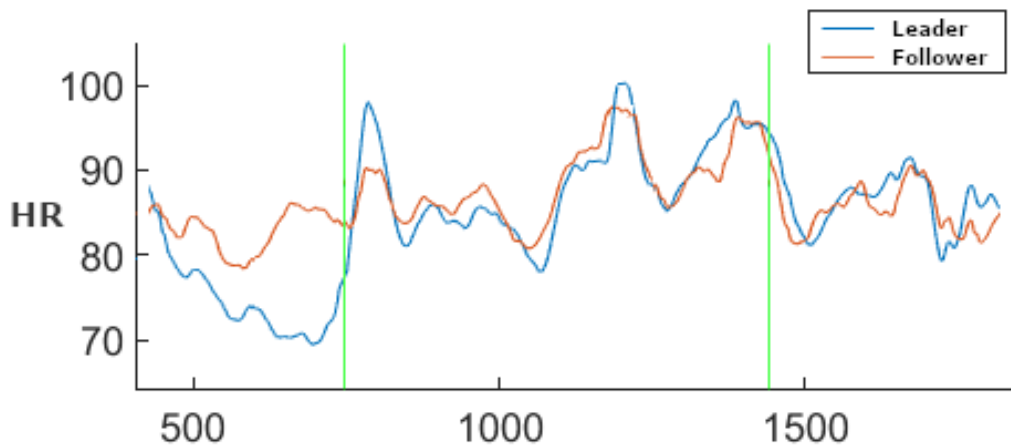


Observing the phenomena of theatre can help to further explore the complex phenomenon of JA. For example, in the rehearsal process of theatre it can be directly observed that if there is no common goal, then action-representations remain individual. In the existence of common goal, the common output is not only mental, but also very often (if not always) body, in the form of a psychophysiological synchronicity.

⁷² Understanding Joint Action, Acta Psychologica 215 (2021) 103285

⁷³ Understanding Joint Action, Acta Psychologica 215 (2021) 103285

21. Figure Dyadic improvisation



Group intelligence is an old empirical fact. When the crowd in a marketplace guessed the live weight of an animal, the average guess was the exact weight of the animal⁷⁴. There are many forms of mental and physical forces more powerful than the individual, but one of the most obvious is the group, which is not a mystical thousand-headed being, but a resource, a support, a coordinate of reference and a primary power above us. It is up to us whether we trust each other's abilities and accurate perceptions of reality, or whether we confuse joint task representation with negative or positive prejudices, our own ideas, and interpersonal games.

WHAT SCIENCE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND ABOUT JOINT ACTION

But what happens between two individuals? How do you come to a common denominator so quickly? Is there a synchronisation between the psychophysiology of the participants? We integrate the fellow actor's movement into our own action plan, even if we did not directly see the movement, but only knew its result⁷⁵!

Motor representation allows individuals to anticipate each other's next move. However, it is not yet clear how we move from copying the actions of others to making the most appropriate complementary gesture at just the right time. 'Obviously, all this cannot be explained simply by sharing representations of a common goal in everyone's brain'⁷⁶.

The division of tasks assigned to a common goal is manifested in the interpersonal space. How? In our improvisations, synchronisation was a joint moment: looking together and/or taking a collective breath.

Although brain activation simultaneity, and breath and heartbeat synchronisation are seen by science, where and how is *complex information shared*? It is as if those who engage in a successful

⁷⁴ Galton, F. (1907). Vox populi. Nature, 75, 450–451

⁷⁵ Understanding Joint Action, Acta Psychologica 215 (2021) 103285

⁷⁶ Sebanz & Rutgers as above

Joint Action synchronise not to each other but to an outer point, axis, or field in a shared space.

Morphogenetic or magnetic field interaction research⁷⁷ sharply divides the scientific community, proving a challenge for the Cartesian researcher to even approach these concepts. If indeed complex information, images, thoughts, and memories are shared and flowing in the interpersonal field, what is the mediating substance?⁷⁸ Which of our organs would send signs and which of our senses would receive them?

REAL, ANALOGICAL OR SYMBOLIC

Why is the physiological impact of a murder behind a door, or a in a bathtub behind a curtain, stronger in the theatre? How and why does the symbolic or metaphorical theatrical mapping correspondence of reality affect us? In the theatre, we are usually afraid of analogical acting, space, objects, and time management that contradict reality we are afraid of breaking the adherence of the audience. Indeed, in one case I see reality and in another I must *interpret* what is happening.

In a performance men made love in a *poetic* form⁷⁹. The actors didn't even touch each other, yet everyone was affected because it all happened 'analogically'. For us spectators, the poesis felt good; we did not have to see that the act is *not happening*. At the end of the Greek tragedy, the bodies were presented between the columns of the thyromatas (the painted palace doors hanging on the back of the antique stage); although the murder was never performed, it was enough for the audience to see the result. The audience could imagine exactly what had happened behind the closed doors. The process of adherence is broken if what is happening immediately before me is easily interpreted as incredible. The situation is similar with verismo, the exaggerated representation of reality: it just jolts the imagination out.

When poets try to refer to the imagination, they often associate a floating image, such as a butterfly. But according to its function, imagination is a concrete and automatic feedback and feed-forward function for survival.⁸⁰ It sums up and completes incoming information, constantly and carefully scanning the world around us, keeping track of what is important for our well-being or survival⁸¹ The imagination, that has evolved to support the safe reproduction and group of the species, becomes a butterfly or an aircrash when it is detached from the real factors that have direct influence.

Whereas the real moves the analogic symbol is created, and intuition is the agent. The creator

⁷⁷Bert Hellinger: The order of Love

⁷⁸ Bert Hellinger - quotation to retrieve

⁷⁹ Bódó and Nagy in the Baál of Schilling

Robert H. Hopcke A Guided Tour of the Collected Works of C. G. Jung (1999) Shambhala London p. 29

⁸⁰ Joel Pearson: The human imagination: the cognitive neuroscience of visual mental imagery *School of Psychology, The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.*

⁸¹ Stephen W. Porges: The Polyvagal Theory: phylogenetic contributions to social behavior, Brain-Body Center, Psychiatric Institute, Department of Psychiatry, University of Illinois at Chicago

and reader are equally the right-brain. But what is the role here of the thought, of cognition, of the left brain?

The distinction between the real and the analogical, or the contextual and the abstract, is illustrated by the different use of symbols of the two cerebral hemispheres. A right-sided kind of symbol, such as a rose, exists at the focal point of an infinite network of connotations that branch out across personal physical, mental, and cultural life experiences. The power of a symbol is in direct proportion to the power of the multiplicity of meanings it conveys, which must remain latent to hold its power. It is like a joke, the explanation of which destroys its meaning⁸².

The left-sided kind of symbol excludes ambiguity; its power lies in its use, in the same way that a red light is a 1:1 mapping of the stop command to the colour red. This type of symbolic operation is the realm of the left, while the first is the realm of the right hemisphere⁸³.

In the theatre, the use of symbols (either right or left hemisphere) as a means of condensation relieves the stage from the detailed representation of reality and transposes the imagination of the recipient into an aesthetic space instead of that of reality. Moreover, the use of symbolic, or analogical, gestures reveal the convention that what we see together is not reality but a man-made artefact.

Jung noticed that nothing penetrates us as deeply as symbol, analogy, and metaphor; they make life's events more comprehensible, generalisable, and meaningful.⁸⁴ Consequently, the encounter with symbols gives us a sense of belonging, of 'we', which is nothing other than the 'transpiratory', 9th domain of integration⁸⁵.

For the integration of symbol, it is not necessary for the viewer to perceive a story as a fictional reality and the characters in it as a 'shared we', but as agents of composition in a work of art. What is described here refers primarily to classical theatrical forms that bring narratives to life and work with the theatrical interpretation of reality. Even if world theatre is increasingly released from the representation of reality, the symbols and analogies are still fuelled by reality. When reality is removed, they fade and lose their vitality. So, it is with the characters on stage; the question 'Who are you?' also applies to the characters in a performance built entirely of abstract elements. If real life does not support the character, similarly to symbols, she/he starts losing vitality.

A quality of being, that is a characteristic of theatre alone, is when the actor maintains a dynamic distance from the role. I think it is natural and necessary to maintain this distance between the theatrical framework and the total experience which, by interrupting the adherence to the character's reality, allows symbolisation and insight into its archetypal meaning (see Grotowski breviary).

⁸²The master and he's emissary 51. Yale university press new haven and London 2009 Iain Mac Gilchrist

⁸³ Gilchrist: The Master...

⁸⁴Robert H. Hopcke A Guided Tour of the Collected Works of C. G. Jung (1999) Shambhala London p. 29

⁸⁵ „Transpirational integration” see Siegel breviary

Perhaps this includes our own experience that, in whatever setting we started a participatory theatre group, the improvisations always reflected the participants' own theatre style. No one improvised for the first approach with cinematic realism, 'minimalism', or simplistic honesty. The style of the theatrical play at first approximation is distanced, stereotypical caricature, which offers a glimpse of the essential truth about archetype in society.

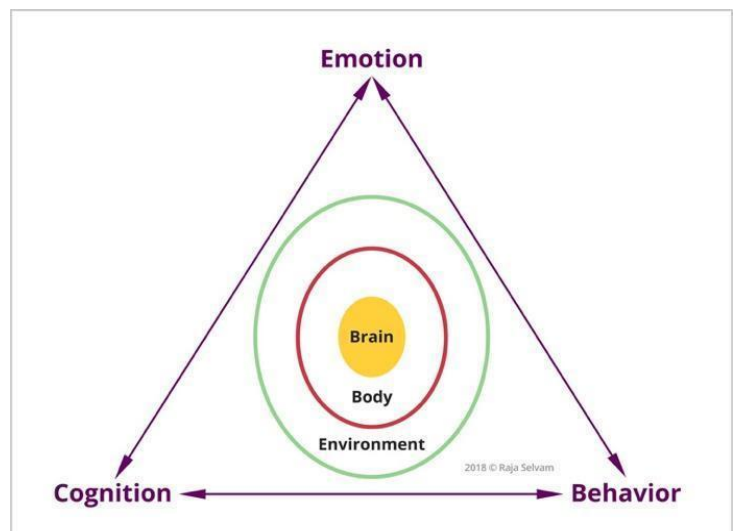
PHYSICAL COGNITION

It follows from the functional specificity of the ideomotor system that the mind - and the nervous system, as an extension of it - recognises non-textual information and signals before the content, based on text and meaning.

Emotional functioning involves physical (visceral and muscular) changes. In all humans, from Papua to Iceland, the same facial muscle combination twitches when experiencing the seven emotions: interest, wonder, happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, and anger. The mechanism also works in reverse, Dr Ekman demonstrating in his experiments, that the taking on of emotive grimaces awakens the visceral entailments of the corresponding emotion. The consciously recorded facial expressions evokes the galvanic skin reflex response of emotion⁸⁶. Ekman's far-reaching discovery makes it likely that an actor with intense physical presence facilitates the cognitive process in the spectator and evokes emotions more so than an actor with less concise body-work. Understanding cognitive functioning is essential to understanding the totality of the theatrical process.

RECOGNISE, REALISE, CHANGE

According to the most widely accepted, 'cognitive' theory, the nervous system and the lower brain areas respond first to stimuli from the outside world and so as from the depth of the body. The higher brain areas only learn about what is happening from the body's reaction. Like in an accident, 'someone' has already pulled the wheel before we realised, we were in trouble. We store several ready-made behavioural responses in our repertoire. We acquire these responses in the early phase of life; by the end of adolescence, *coping patterns* become fixed, allowing us to go through life automatically, without having to come up with a new response to each single challenge.



Embodied Cognition: Cognition, emotion and behavior are all embodied and embedded in the brain, body, as well as the environment. They affect each other but emotion is primary, as emotion is a stronger mediator of cognition and behavior.

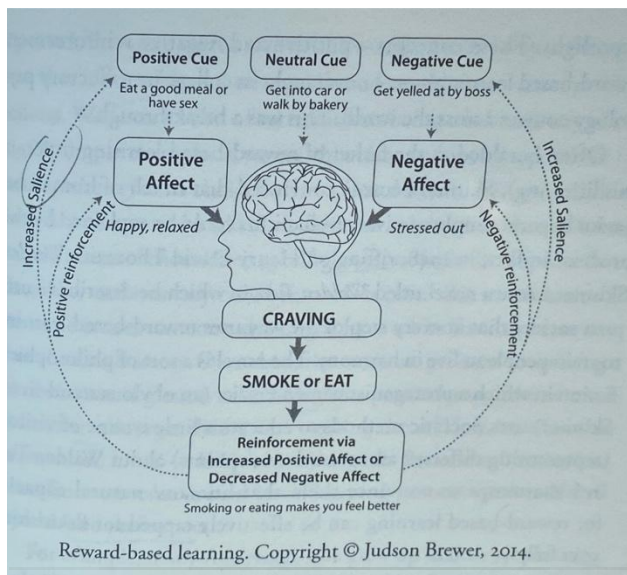
⁸⁶ Paul Ekman: Emotions revealed – Times Books, 2003

The situation is controversial. Our fixed response behaviours won't often provide the optimal coping, we just repeat something that once helped us. Therefore, it often happens that our automatic responses are not appropriate to the specific challenge of life; they don't solve the situation at all, yet are triggered again and again.

Responding to new situations, always with new responses, is tiring meanwhile. Living through a chain of 'autopilot' responses is more in line with the *tendency to use the least energy*, while the command of *live here-and-now*, in a constant conscious presence, cannot be easily sustained.

BEHAVIOURAL ADDICTION

It was nature itself that made us prone to addictive behaviour, in pre-consciousness times. As part of the animal kingdom, we had a great need to 'perform' the patterns of behaviour in a safe and reliable way.



Humans are programmable in their behaviour. Hence the triumph of consumerism in all aspects of our lives. The identification of the reward-based learning system⁸⁷, has scientifically justified the commercialisation of all the props and goods that are deemed necessary to provide comforting behaviours and habits.

Skinner, the father of reward-based learning, sensed the historical importance of his theory, the *behaviourism*, and like so many great idealists, tried to convince the world of the

dizzying prospects of sinister-sounding *behavioural engineering* Skinner dreamed up a small community, the basic unit of a happier humanity, where community members would be raised according to the direction of behaviour-engineers. Programming behaviour is easily controllable, predictable among normal stimuli conditions. The downside of reward-based learning is simply that in early ages we learn everything, which triggers the so-called 'dopaminergic system' in our brains. Thus, in conflicting (conflictual, traumatic, or deprived) situations, when common sense programming is derailed, controversy, defensive, or aggressive behaviour is learned as well. We will cling to these counterproductive reactions similarly to our addictions, since we crave to perform them and be rewarded by a dopamine-flush after having done so. This is behavioural-addiction. Today's scientists, unlike Skinner, are more concerned with how to break free from the merry-go-round of

⁸⁷ Morris, Smith: B.F. Skinner's Contributions to Applied Behavior Analysis, *The Behavior Analyst* 2005, 28, 99-131 No.2

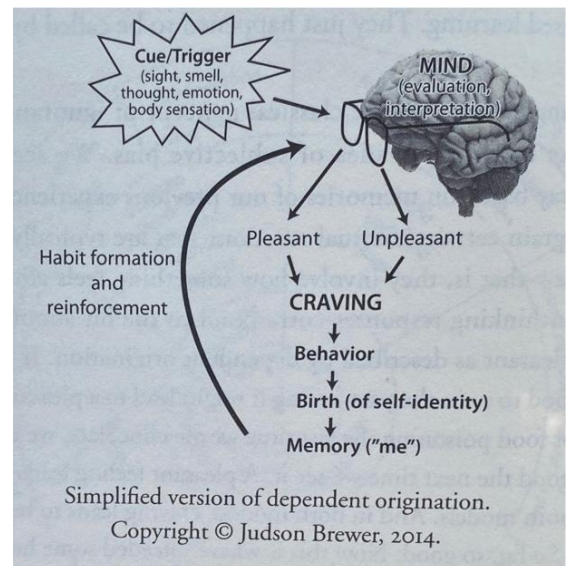
dopamine-rewarded, addictive behaviours than with how to facilitate new ones.⁸⁸

Jon Kabat-Zinn, the creator of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)⁸⁹, and his dedicated disciple Judson Brewer, demonstrate with several impressive results that the most effective method for breaking addictions and reprogramming harmful behaviours, is the mindfulness meditation. A phenomenon that is unique to humans, as one of our most important features, mindful integration provides us with the ability to recognize and modify patterns.

Brewer proves in his seminal book, *The Craving Mind*⁹⁰, that liberation from the compulsion of our own mechanical behaviours can only be gained through the means of insight, self-awareness, and consciousness. Brewer compares behavioural addiction to the important notion in Buddhist tradition of the ‘dependent origination’, which is not to be confused (even if it suggests a link) with original sin. Buddha's key teaching is that the only way out of our hopeless situation is to admit that it is hopeless. And here is the first step of all 12 step therapies where you admit to the group members of

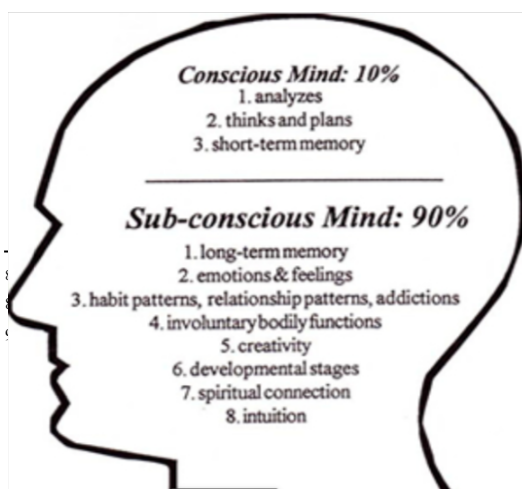
Narcoticists/Alcoholists/Gamers etc Anonymus - strangers,

also self-proclaimed addicts, that your life is *out of control*, and you need external help to cope with your addiction.



The external redemption of the future society by the engineers of the behaviour is not possible. *From original dependence, from destiny of all, only the self-knowledge, acquired through inner work practised in a group, promises the way out.* Even if we are never completely free of our addictions, it is possible to control them by learning about them from peers and to develop new behaviours through various practices. Theatre is a medium, a vehicle, a catalyst, a path, a process, and a community through which operant learning that leads to new behaviours can be achieved.

THEATRE AND COGNITION



Explicit (disclosed or revealed) memories are those from which we have already made meaning and are part of our personal history. Implicit (unexplored) memories are mostly those unprocessed constellations with which we may associate controversial feelings.

m Dell, 1990

Deeply stored life events are just as powerful, perhaps even more powerful, in influencing our behaviour and emotions than those that are conscious. Theatre practice, with special regard to improvisational, non-verbal, imaginative exercises, taps into unexplored memory, uncovering the implicit content that often complicates our everyday lives⁹¹. Theatre does this work, especially when it is coupled with additional cognitive exercises necessary for memory exploration. This mechanism is

*SEQ Figure * ARABIC 25. Figure The Treshold of Consiousness* the basis of the Moreno psychodrama effect, the drama therapy and all other similar techniques. I recall, then I relive it in the play; therapeutic structure helps to reframe, and thereby my relation to it is changed.

What I need to tackle according to my therapeutic needs are not necessarily the memories themselves, but the recurrence of difficult feelings, replaying conflicts, or behavioural disturbances. In the process a new synaptic bond is formed. Thanks to the phenomena of *neuroplasticity*⁹², though, cognitive schemas can be reprogrammed with new learnings, overwritten by new synaptic connections. The phenomenon of neuroplasticity, which has become known in connection with the functional replacement of damaged brain areas, is also effective in this everyday way. As a phenomenon of continuous growth and formation of the brain, neuroplasticity provides us with the ability to form new synaptic connections until the last moment of human life. So, the implicate behaviour transferred to the explicit domain can be linked to prefrontal regions, thus allowing it to be recognised. Importantly, this recognition is significantly reinforced by all verbal reinforcement and narration, thus forming a *coherent narrative*.⁹³

Drama therapy, like other tools, is sought when people are already in distress. However, everyone has childhood traumas: implicit memory clusters that cause problems. Participatory theatre practice offers an opportunity for inner development, particularly for people who have not yet realised that behind the difficulties of their everyday lives lie implicit reactions from the past, which they can resolve by revealing them.

PHYSICAL TRAUMA AND ITS RESOLUTION THROUGH DRAMA

The superstar of tabloid psychology is PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder. The therapeutic effect of theatre games described above tackles mild psychological problems equally familiar to everyone. PTSD, however, is a psychological disorder linked to physical trauma and usually causes more serious problems than a milder anxiety brought on by an unwelcome trigger. Whether it is a bomb going off next to you or the indignity of being held down by your stepfather, the loss of integrity, of control, is the same; whether the outcome is a real physical wound or something that cannot be seen. A single abusive cause can lead to lifelong problems if left unexplored. Our own healthy self-image (our value,

⁹¹ Moreno to retrieve

⁹² Siegel: Developing Mind

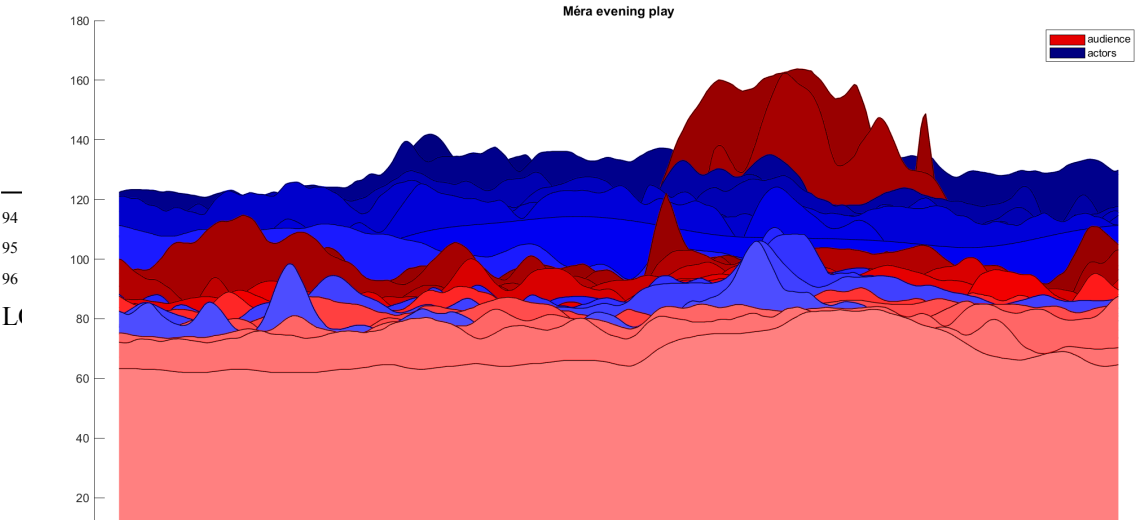
⁹³ see chapter III.

our place, or our right to exist) is also damaged when we are abused. Therefore, conscious acceptance, love, and tenderness towards the self are as important therapeutic tools as the narrative of our grievances⁹⁴.

In various therapy forms, the healing of physical trauma, at the levels of cognitive and somatic wounds of the memory, can begin simultaneously⁹⁵. The introduction of the Integrated Dance and Movement Therapy tools enriches theatre training with a complete dimension, for example, of somatic integration⁹⁶. The IDMT, like theatre, is a powerful culture, seeking its rightful place among the methods (which can be a more widespread application) that lead to physical mental health. My own experience is that when I was trying to pull myself together after a considerable low point, IDMT's exercises helped me to cope with my somatic problems with unparalleled effectiveness. Unlike theatre exercises, IDMT takes the attention to dimensions of experience that are difficult to describe in words. Conditioned by my traumas, my behavioural and somatic problems are activated by my social relationships in everyday life: the crowded bus, the family table, the bureaus, or the class/rehearsal room. These were all key stimuli to me that triggered traumatised behaviours. That's why IDMT's approach is unique; it provides therapeutic attention while keeping you as a key agent in a social relational environment, in a group. In the safety of a therapeutic framework, the traumatised functioning, triggered by the constant peer experience of community, can be calmly elevated from the implicit to the explicit domain. The basic conditions of therapeutic framework: the firm attention provided by double leadership, the safety of connection in a friendly and relaxing environment, are prerequisites of healing. Interestingly, we RIOTE3 partners, when building our participatory theatre training, took *Safe space* requirements fully into account, whether informed by scientific consciousness, ancient wisdom, or instinctual choice.

TRANSFERENCE OF CONTROL

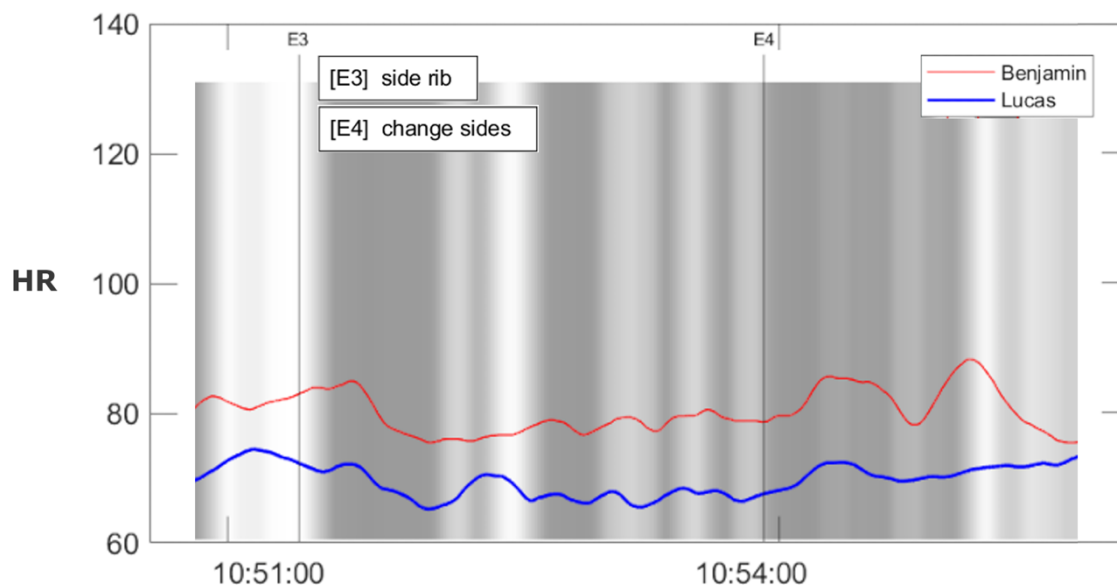
We pay attention: we give something, or we receive something. The English term *pay attention* indicates the tangible, almost material nature of attention. Something in me disappears, 'goes' from me, and I become what I pay attention to. This *something*, which 'passes' from the actors to the audience, is the sight, the sound, the movement, the emotions set by the images seen and unseen. At the other end of the stick, a hundred out of a hundred actors would agree that the viewer's attention is perceptible,



but through which of the senses? They would also confirm the claim that theatre has something to do with mass suggestion. But how does it work?

There are many other areas where we can learn a lot about theatre from *hypnosis research*. The English term *adhesion* or *adherence* captures a phenomenon that is not only known from the film industry. Adherence measures the depth of the hypnotic experience.

Transference of will is part of the hypnotic phenomenon; *psychic control of behaviour*⁹⁷ commissioned from the subject to the hypnotist in the introductory *induction* phase in which the subject becomes ‘controllable’. This enables the suggestions, the so-called c commands, to work. These, in turn, self-reinforcingly increase the degree of control commission, thus making hypnosis a *dynamic relationship*. Explored as a phenomenon, hypnosis is a two-way process, not done by someone with someone, but happening between two. In this close *relationship*, the phenomenon of *interaction synchronicity* (IS)⁹⁸ unfolds. IS refers to the harmonious behaviour and psychophysiology of the participants. It can be: i) the simultaneous movement of limbs; similarly altered bodily position; ii) the synchronised changes of autonomous nervous system, as visceral processes, breathing, or interconnected heart rhythms; or iii) the correspondences of valence/arousal characterised in the electrodermal (skin galvanisation) activity, iv) increase in cortisol level, v) a sign of cerebral connection, the intensifying TOM and the direct sharing of mental contents and feelings should be highlighted as sharing of memories and other complex information too. The importance of IS cannot be overestimated; it is fundamental to our social lives, in mother-child, sibling or friend relationships.



SEQ Figure * ARABIC 27. Figure Phenomenon of Adherence in Couplework

⁹⁷ see description of control in the Here and now chapter

⁹⁸The Interactive Nature Of Hypnosis: Research Evidence For A Social-Psychobiological Model Éva I. Bányaí Department of Experimental Psychology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

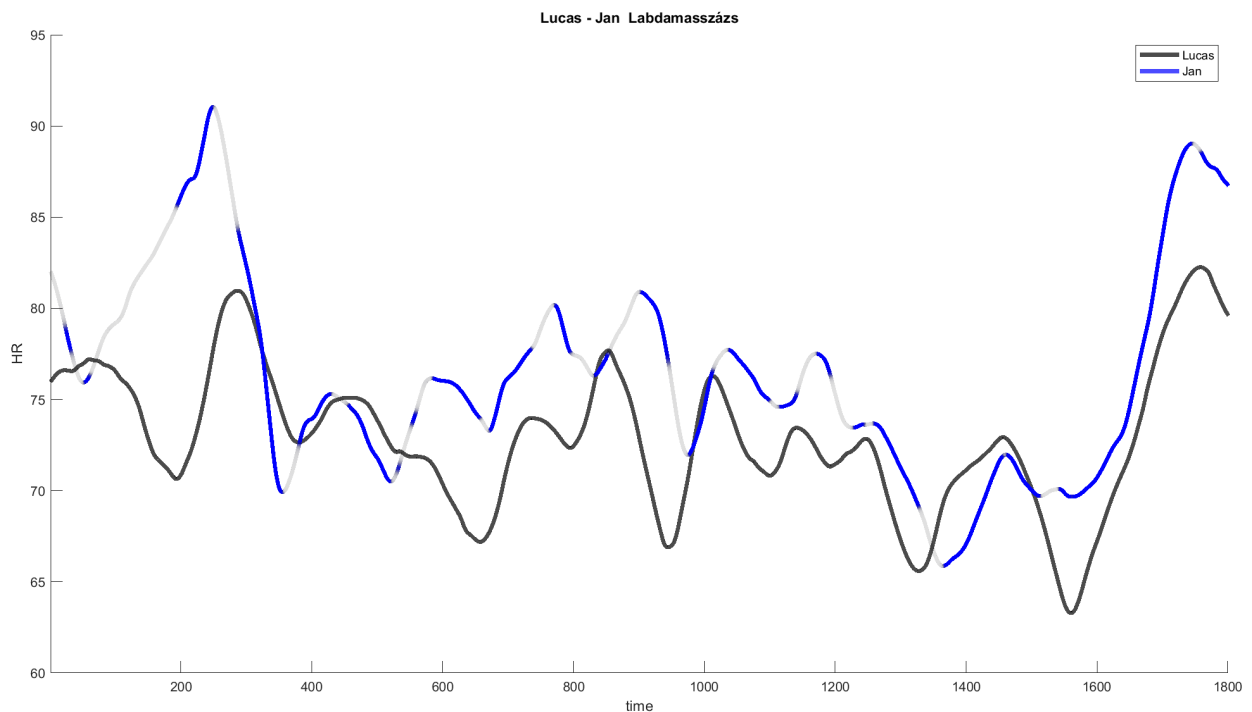
It strengthens bonds by providing mutual trust and acceptance and allows the sharing of intimate experiences that would otherwise make you vulnerable to strangers

My experience is that in every form of theatre IS can be observed. I am convinced that in participatory theatre training IS makes the therapeutic effect, however the underlying multifaceted personal interaction is waiting for research approval, we can see that there is a remarkable degree of synchrony in the theatre trainings.

Éva Bányai et al. first described that

‘rather than limiting our research attention by focusing on either the hypnotist or the hypnotised subject, we should consider the possibility that hypnosis is an event that takes place within the framework of a special relationship between hypnotist and subject, that we should study in itself’⁹⁹.

They state that a more holistic approach is needed to follow the process of hypnosis beyond a section analysis; an approach in which the interactional synchronicity can be followed and observed by empirical means, such as the analysis of a video recording. This holistic approach to research is also possible in theatre. The inferior *subject* and the superior *hypnotist*, a *difference of status* can be heard between in the common speech, just as it is believed that the prerequisite for successful hypnosis is the loss of will, or the submission of the hypnotised. Similarly, it is also common sense thinking about theatre that the audience is a passive includer of the actor’s play, and the actor is the puppet of the



SEQ Figure 1* ARABIC 28. Figure Synchrony in dyadic leader-follower relationship

⁹⁹ Biró Eszter, Magyar Hospice Alapítvány – Bányai Éva, ELTE Affektív Pszichológiai Intézeti Központ: Interakciós szinkronitás hipnózisban. Megbízható-e az egészséges megítélés?

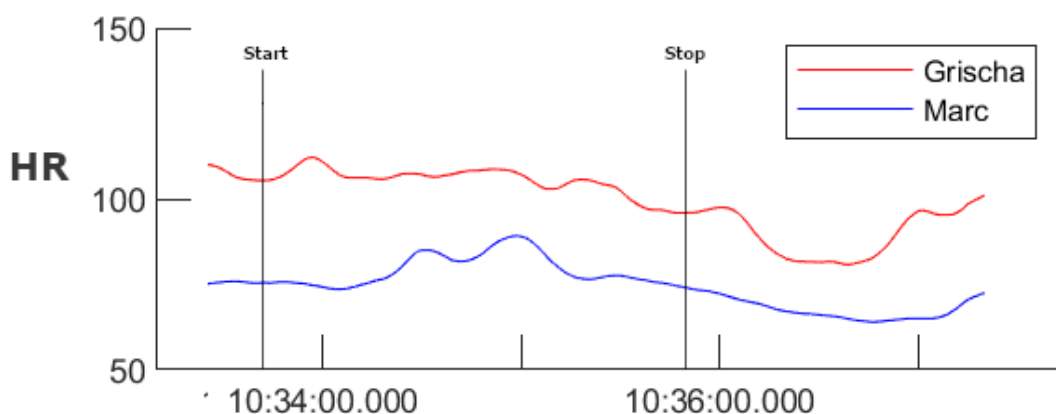
director.

This dynamic is fragile: for me, ideally, the relationships between actor and spectator; actor and actor; director and actor are all *events* in a ‘relational framework’. According to Grotowski, theatre-event is *an interaction* that takes place not in the actor, nor in the spectator, but in the interpersonal space between the two.

In classical theatre, the performance-frame itself is the key stimulus that creates the hypnotic situation: the designation of the space as stage, and the concentration of the actors are all commands. Silence is suggestive; there is no need to speak as the connection is already established. That is, you paid attention. When the interactions begin, the laughter, or the stillness of the audience reinforce the process. Who releases control? In the primary analogy the actor is the hypnotist, and the spectator is the subject. In our research, we have often noticed that the observer or the one in control, is attuned to the heartbeat of the person being observed or controlled.

It is the hypnotist who first tunes in to the hypnotised, and not vice versa. Likewise, I think it is vital for the actor to open up to the audience and the fellow actors for the interactive process to start.

Actors are also familiar with the phenomenon of control. Often this is what prevents them from crossing the threshold into altered states of consciousness. Some actors are unable to give way to their own emotions, fantasies, and inner impulses, or remain open to those coming from their partners. Some great actors have difficulty in freeing themselves in the improvisation or any unknown situations; while others reject viscerally the direct advice of their partner, director, or producer. In all these inner or outer cases, the control causes their difficulties.



29. Figure Dyadic exercise with lower level of synchrony

Hypnosis begins with a relaxing induction process during which critical judgement is suspended. This allows for the elements of behaviour to be separated. What this separation is, and how it works, is the subject of many hypotheses and definitions¹⁰⁰. The essential change occurs somewhere

¹⁰⁰ Varga et al 1999 Hypnotists phenomenology_HYPNOS

in the consciousness: the outside world is removed, the body vanishes, and mental processes are intensified. A *guided, altered state of consciousness* develops in which the word ‘guided’ refers to the trust in a leader who holds the other end of the thread all the time.

Even though there are many coincidences, the phenomena of theatrical and hypnotic adherence should not be identified, and more research should help to better define matches and differences. *Adherence* is the subject of a French research team that is mapping the psychophysiology of the theatrical experience using large equipment¹⁰¹.

ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In the introductory process the audience is distracted from the incoming bodily and social stimuli to allow only the dramatic events, the plot, or in Aristotle's words, the ‘arrangement of events’ to enter their consciousness. This shift, or rather drop of consciousness, has long been recognised in art. Coleridge first proposed the term ‘*willing suspension of disbelief*’ to distinguish the receptive state of consciousness from the ordinary.

Metz-Lutz et al. found psychophysiological evidence that theatre, like hypnosis, induces subtle, temporary changes in the functioning of consciousness. The spectator, in this state, is more prone to empathise with the physical and emotional experiences of the stage character, distinguishing them from the actors *being watched*. The change of perspective allows the viewer to transcend physical reality and to become ‘adhered to’ the story.

The designers of this experiment ignored several important aspects of the theatrical event, such as the direct physical experience, instead they put their subjects in the fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) machine to watch, through a closed-circuit, the actor in the next room performing a Racine monologue. The researchers' vision of theatre is classic: ‘The complex social relationship between actor and the spectator, is usually formed through the *fourth invisible wall*’¹⁰². Accordingly, they are not interested in the interaction with the spectator, nor in the processes that take place inside the actor.

Despite the obstacles, adherence to the story, both at a psychophysiological level and in the functioning of brain structures, is successfully detected in the following ways:

- Ψ a decrease in heart rate (HR);
- Ψ a reduction in dynamic variability (HRV);

¹⁰¹ Marie-Noëlle Metz-Lutz: What physiological changes and cerebral traces tell us about adhesion to fiction during theater-watching? 1 Laboratoire d’Imagerie et Neurosciences Cognitives, FRE 3289 Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Faculté de Médecine, Université de Strasbourg, 2 Équipe de Recherches Théâtrales et Cinématographiques, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, Paris, France*, Yannick Bressan, Nathalie Heider and Héléne Otzenberger, 1

¹⁰² Marie-Noëlle Metz-Lutz: What physiological changes and cerebral traces... as above

- Ψ increased function in the prefrontal lobes (PC) of the left BA47 brain area and the posterior superior temporal sulcus;
- Ψ activation of the left ventral IFG and left pSTS;
- Ψ inactivity of the midline structures, most importantly the praecuneus.

A few words about the brain areas mentioned above. The prefrontal regions (PC) are active in narrative processing, such as deciphering beliefs, feelings, and intentions. The ventral IFG connects textual information with stored knowledge of the real world. The left vIFG, along with the medial prefrontal and temporoparietal lobes, is involved in the formation of the first-person singular perspective. IFG and vIFG areas are of particular importance at mental representations and overlap with other structures that are central to cognitive functioning, namely distinction of self/other and social dialogue.

Suspended midline structures, including the praecuneus area, sort out ‘me-centred’ messages from floods of stimuli, especially from the behaviour of others. It is ‘ME’ awareness: ‘I do it’; ‘it happens to me’; and ‘it is me’. ‘Is this now consistent with what I was/will be?’ Accordingly, the suspension of praecuneus activity has long been considered a property of the hypnotic state, characterised by a slowing of metabolism and a temporary absence of consciousness¹⁰³. The low intensity, or the relaxedness of praecuneus, due to the reduced mode of social contact, is supported by other research¹⁰⁴ too. In the tranquility of the theatre (the fMRI machine), there is nothing to fear from anyone: ‘we are all facing the same direction, I can relax, and I won’t be accosted’. Hypnosis is based on a similar sense of security. In fact, from another angle, we know that the level of praecuneus activity, which is responsible for 35% of total cortical glucose consumption, is directly proportional to the level of consciousness¹⁰⁵.

This brain area is the most important area of a larger brain network of great scientific interest. You may have already noticed in your experience that there is a sharp boundary between the state of consciousness of action and the state of thinking about action. During the latter, we lose our sense of time and all connection with the present moment; we focus only on ourselves, our thoughts, and our associations. Amongst key notions which are indispensable for the development of a new, *mental realism* in acting the most important is the below presented DMN.

DEFAULT MODE NETWORK

The brain structure, also known as the resting or basic functional network¹⁰⁶, is active when we are not looking at the outside world, and a large part of our brain is at wakeful rest. However this state is not

¹⁰³ Faymonville et al., 2006

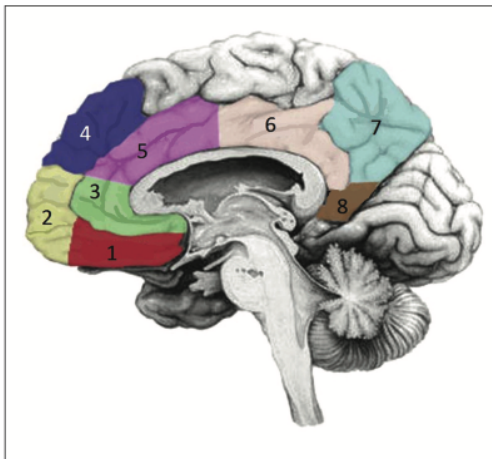
¹⁰⁴ The Precuneus Role in Unattended Third-Person Perspective of Social Interactions, Petrini et al, 2014

¹⁰⁵ Gyulaházi, Varga: A tudat és az agy alapműködési hálózatának kapcsolata, Ideggyogy Sz 2014,67 (1-2)

¹⁰⁶ Raichle et al. 2001

just measured over a long period of time, in minutes, but can be very short, even a moment. Relapse to daydreaming, inner wandering, or following associations are all part of this state. Schools of meditation consider DMN as belonging to the world of thoughts, to be relegated as such. This rigour may ignore the function of DMN.

Perhaps it is a matter of proportion. I often consciously let the DMN come to the fore and enjoy allowing my brain work on the details of tasks, on its own. In this process, it is this ‘on its own’ that is wonderful and reassuring for me. It is wonderful how, in a state of stillness, a solution that I have long been deliberating over, just emerges. The DMN, at the boundary of the conscious and unconscious, is constantly working on external task solutions; comparing a person's past and future with the current situation, it will generate ideas and questions whether asked or not.



1. ábra. A self network (Northoff nyomán). 1. orbitomedialis prefrontális kéreg, 2. ventromedialis prefrontális kéreg, 3. prae-, subgenualis anterior cingularis kéreg, 4. dorsomedialis prefrontális kéreg, 5. supragenualis anterior cingularis kéreg, 6. posterior cingularis kéreg, 7. praecuneus, 8. retrosplenialis kéreg

The *praecuneus*, which is suspended during the adherence, is a prominent active player in the DMN. According to researchers the seat of consciousness would be the midline, or ‘self’ network, extending from the medial frontal lobe to the *praecuneus*¹⁰⁷. When we are faced with tasks outside the self's sphere of interest, or that require our full attention, DMN functioning is markedly reduced. We perform the task with a reduced sense of self-awareness. In the wakeful resting state, the ‘extrinsic’ network, which monitors the external and internal environment, is in counter-phase correlation (working alternately) with the ‘intrinsic’ self-network. Following the execution of the external task, the DMN becomes active again to process and integrate the

knowledge generated concerning the events. The DMN and the memory network have a big overlap: ‘am I used to doing it this way?’; or ‘am I the person who does this kind of thing that way?’. These are the conscious processes of decision preparation, remembering and planning. The DMN is the operational space of consciousness: ‘Consciousness does not actually exist; the *self is the object* of consciousness’¹⁰⁸.

There are two theoretical conceptions of consciousness: one proposes (as in Siegel's model) a top to down, *vertical integration* from the prefrontal cortex, while the other proposes the *emergence of consciousness* as the result of the summation of several lower brain areas. Consciousness is indeed more than what we have learned so far about the DMN. In fact the nine areas of integration recall the functions of consciousness when summarised: 'We are capable of the criteria of appropriate

¹⁰⁷ Gyulaházi & Varga 2014

¹⁰⁸ Gyulaházi & Varga 2014

consciousness functioning to: 1) listen; 2) absorb external and internal stimuli, detect change, and adapt to it; 3) recall and use memories stored in memory; 4) represent time, space, and self; 5) produce and use linguistic symbols; 6) feel; 7) organise our actions according to our intentions and will, to guide our behaviour in an integrated, controlled, coherent way; 8) show purposefulness and flexibility in carrying out a given plan under changing conditions; and 9) indicate metacognition (knowledge and control of self and cognitive processes)¹⁰⁹.

You can denote three sub-systems of the same system: 1) I know what I am; what I do; 2) I know what I am becoming by what I do; and 3) I know what I should be; what I want to be; and what I should do to this end. Conscious, conscientious and conscience; in new Latin languages, the two are, at least formally, barely distinguishable.

Google Scholar throws up a single article on psychology for the search term ‘conscience’ which, although scientific, examines this phenomenon as a moral construct in medical ethics¹¹⁰. I have not come across a single article that examines conscience as a brain structure or mental function.

When I feel uneasy, the flow of the system stops; it gets confused. My conscience, which is not my consciousness as I have come to know it, provides an insight. A stream of awareness reaches to the consciousness, letting me see at once where I stand. Awareness awakens within my consciousness. But it is still not the full functioning of conscience. Sometimes conscience manifests in my body, much below the level of consciousness, at the level of behaviour as a malaise or an unexpected mental change. My conscience is a field within a field: it evaluates, ranks, and classifies what my consciousness is doing without stopping. And yours? How do you experience it? Why this universal phenomenon remains unresearched?

CRITICAL THINKING

Why is this core to all my research of theatre? Evaluation, in the integral meaning of the word embodies what one consider valuable. What I like in rehearsal or in training? Partly it depends on my individual preferences and biases, but I often see my preference transcend the individual level. According to what I know of DMN, which is the consciousness of self, the moments when my appreciation transcends the individual level, simultaneous reactions emerge at the community level, a common consciousness of the performers and the audience is born.

To be researched and continued...(...)

NARRATIVE

According to it's function, the *slightly altered state of consciousness* in theatre-experience separates

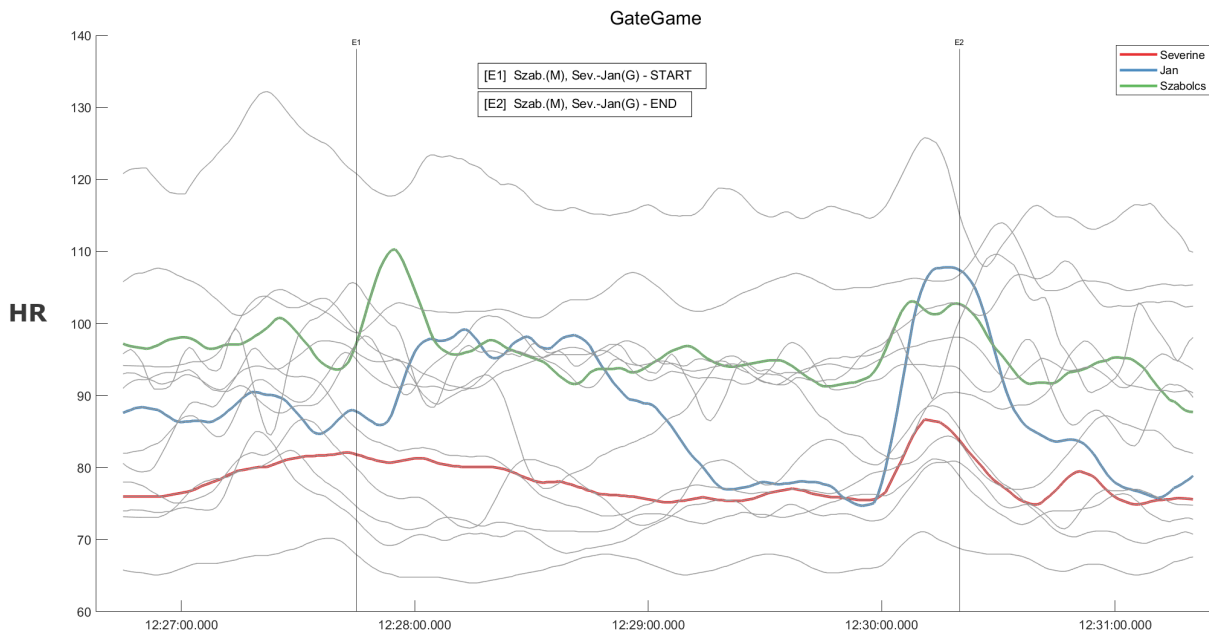
¹⁰⁹ Gyulaházi&Varga 2014

¹¹⁰ Sulmasy, 2008

the continuously recurring elements of reality from the narrative: 1) the constant involuntary input provided by the DMN, by visceral and body sensations and emotional experiences; and 2) external, collateral stimuli not belonging to the story, such as visible theatrical technologies, smells, or the physical presence of fellow spectators.

Does the actor involved in the story not experience something similar? An actor must grapple with the same elements that threaten the credibility of the narrative. The performer is disturbed, aside from all the external disturbing factors, by their own associations and self-messages, and the fragrance of the costume. The actor should narrow down his/her focus to another reality: to the narrative and character in the story or, in the case of non-narrative theatre, to the full reproduction of movement, or constant flow of improvisation.

31. Figure - Altered state of consciousness in acting



‘As the audience connects with the performance, they accept the situation presented as real, the imagined world as it is’¹¹¹. Surrounded by a futuristically buzzing fMRI machine, lying alone, attached to a tiny screen, the theatrical experience still happens.

Adherence to the narrative is not, of course, the only element of the theatrical effect. Other elements can also be a catalyst for engagement: the dynamic-aesthetic qualities of the movement; the person of the actor (his or her physicality, capacity, or reputation); the evaluation of other audience members; the visuals; or the music and the poetry of the text. Performances that aim to reveal a realism (work with external appearances that is meticulously respectful of reality) unwittingly presents two realities at the same time: one is the actual physical reality of the performance, its scenic technologies, its unintentional accidental errors, or its ‘civilities’, as we say in Hungarian theatre. The

¹¹¹ Metz-Lutz: What physiological changes and cerebral traces...

other is the reality of narrative that the performance presents.

Remember? Grotowski, first in the history of the theatre, places the reality of the performance at the centre of the theatrical event. Yet he does not propose the exile of the *reality* of narrative from the theatrical creation. He also affirms that narrative elements of real life alone provide power to the content so that viewer and actor can exercise self-awareness. Theatre offers an opportunity for adding new elements to our repertoire of behaviour and experience, without having to suffer the consequences of real life's crises.

The phenomenon of adherence is a double-edged sword: without it there is no theatre. But, as Brecht recognised, too perfect an engagement 'hypnotises' the spectator and weakens his cognitive functions during the performance. The spectator automatically and instinctively seeks the narrative in performance. Moving towards the state of 'intentional synchronisation', we detach ourselves almost automatically from the information coming through the sensorimotor pathway to get adhered to the events offered in a possibly uninterrupted way. We know the urge that immediately associates all behaviour with the emerging story from children's role-playing ¹¹². The suspension of disbelief is therefore also an urge that wants to sustain itself and therefore by its nature seeks 'sustenance'; it feeds on narrative. On the tram I try at first sight to figure out the situation of a person or analyse a group of people: who is he in a relationship; where do they belong; where are they going; who is the central person; or what is the story of their life? This search for narrative, while indicating towards the 9th sense concept, is the building block of theatre reception too.

Performances without a cohesive narrative have hardship, which is perhaps why they are so compelling when succeed. As they lack a storyline, they must keep the viewer's attention through rhythms, emotions, actions, and fragments of narrative. In genres such as contemporary circus, the ideal playing time is an hour, while a strong story may overarch 6-8 hours of playing time. Similar difficulties are faced by performances that try to appeal only to the intellect or the senses. It is useless to have a brilliant insight or the perfect sensory composition if the experience is only for one of the domains of reception. When the viewer is forced to 'regenerate' the emotional impact, imagine a scenery or to patch up the fragmented story, soon tires of the effort. Because, yes, even as spectator we don't like to try hard; we look for the narrative to do the work for us.

Adherence to a narrative lead to beneficial integration that involves both hemispheres of the brain ¹¹³. The healthier a person is, the more often, the longer, and the more areas of the brain they can integrate. The relationship between narrative and integration helps to broaden our understanding of theatre phenomenology: from adherence, we wake up having a theatrical experience.

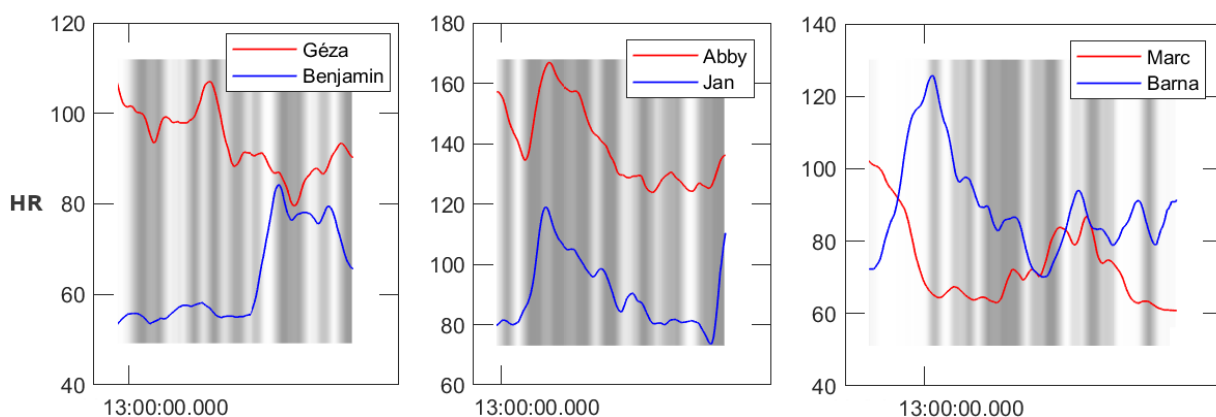
¹¹² Rowe, Salo, Rubin: Do Theatrical Experiences Improve Pretend Play and Cooperation among Preschoolers American Journal of Play, volume 10, number 2

¹¹³ Daniel Siegel: The Developing Mind - How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are – The Guilford Press 2012 NY 364. oldal

SUPER REAL-TIME – THE TOTAL THEATRE

I observed that the actor's peak experience of integration, paradoxically, often occurs outside the narrative at the level of the present stage time. I believe that it is possible to get disjointed from the story in a positive sense as well. The actor who 'switches' to symbolic actions from actions adhered to the narrative, at the moment of joining-out, disconnection, stands before the audience as an admirable being, only to plunge again, together with his audience, into the shared narrative. Similarly, the audience can be momentarily lifted out of adherence by chiselled choreography, physical action with uncertain outcomes (risky circus act), or improvisation. These 'third types' of experience intersect with Grotowski's 'one reality' principle. Is there a value-systemic difference between living through the narrative and exiting from it? 'In the context of living through, the action is not for the purpose of *representation*, i.e., for the actor to imitate being someone else, but for the actor to *live* the character's intention according to an *imagined reality*'¹¹⁴. I believe that one of the most important type of peak experience in theatre relates to the evolution of super present tense moments that break the narrative. The term 'total theatre', coined by Wagner and Craig¹¹⁵, is used in our professional jargon to describe an aesthetic vision that seeks to synthesise theatrical genres.

Reflection on the *theatre as a genre* since Artaud is an indispensable part of the total theatre experiments in the second half of the 20th century. It is not new, however: addressing the audience directly and bringing the evoked relationship throughout the performance is a fundamental professional skill of every fertile theatre culture since the Renaissance; the Elizabethan-Jacobian or Commedia dell'Arte tradition was absolutely interconnected with the audience. The improvisation, the utterance, or the organic incorporation of audience reactions to the performance seems to be more than just sharing a joke: it makes the theatre's present time come alive.



32. Figure Super-present moment at the end of improvisations

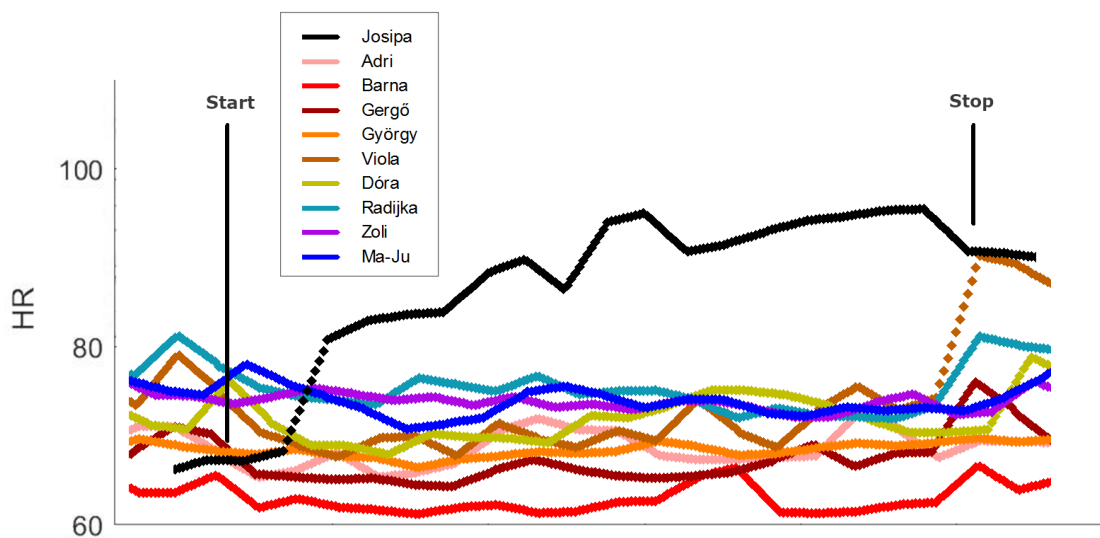
¹¹⁴ Marie-Noëlle Metz-Lutz: What physiological changes and cerebral traces...

¹¹⁵ Peter Brook: The Empty Space

We turn to psychophysiology in search of support for understanding the phenomenon of theatre. The theatre, in the spectator, triggers a series of real-time visceral reactions that relate to the processes that take place in the actors.

HOW THE HEART WORKS IN ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

There is a result of the Metz-Lutz research that is of particular relevance to our own experiments. In the heart rate variability (HRV)¹¹⁶ data, we ourselves experienced similar ‘disappointment’ after our first measurements: ‘We expected ECG data to physiologically correlate with "aesthetic sensations" in the form of dynamic HRV’¹¹⁷. In contrast, a significant reduction in dynamic HRV was consistently



SEQ Figure * ARABIC 33. Figure Occurrence of decreasing HR and narrowing of HRV in the state of adherence

found in the context of adherence! During the theatrical events we also observed an initial HRV contraction with adherence but found that this was not a barrier to subsequent changes. Serious amplitudes of heart rate can occur starting from this narrowed range.

By tracking HRV, we can recognise moments of adherence. What is HRV and what does heart rate provide insight into?

HR, HRV DEFINITIONS AND PHYSIOLOGICAL BASIS

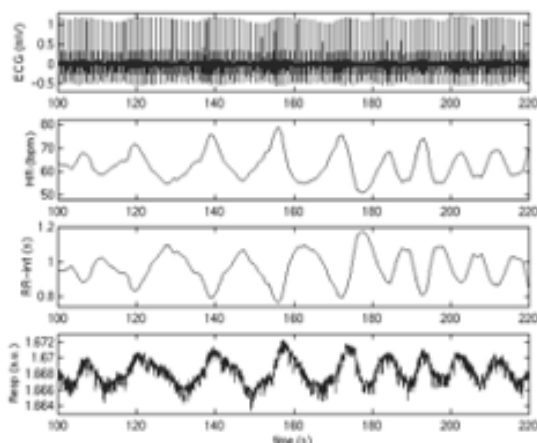
Heart rate, the easiest visceral process to measure, can be used to visualise the sympathetic and parasympathetic changes that accompany emotional and behavioural challenges. Sympathos: sympathy. Parasympathos: fend off sympathy. The sympathy here is not towards another person, but an engagement with problems or events arising in the internal and external environment.

¹¹⁶ see below

¹¹⁷ Marie-Noëlle Metz-Lutz: What physiological changes and cerebral traces...

The cardiac period, or the heart rate (HR), oscillates between variability and regularity, with stress being the main coefficient. Stress, in the language of psychophysiology, is the activation of the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system (ANS), a natural consequence of engagement with problems. Stress is released by the parasympathetic branch of the ANS. Branch? More appropriately, ‘rooted’, as if the nervous system was rooted in the body, keeping it under control.

Under stress, the heart works with a regularly tight rhythm, so to speak, reliably. When the stress subsides and the heart relaxes, the time between successive beats becomes uneven: it can rise above one-second-long intervals.



SEQ Figure * ARABIC 34. Figure Periodical changes of HR in resting state

Heart rate variability (HRV) is the variability over time of the relative length of HR period to each other. HR, the length of the cardiac period, corresponds to the contraction of the ventricle. It is measured by the distance (R-R) of the highest successive wave peaks ('R') and expressed in beats per minute (bpm). HRV is the relative variability of the R-R distances, the reciprocal of the HR. The heart is ‘self-propelled’: when placed in an organ bath, it can function on its own for a time, which is why heart transplantation is possible! A heart

removed from the chest can have a very high rate of 150-240 bpm: this is the so-called sinus rhythm or self-rhythm. This dramatic intensity is regulated by the vagus nerve, which originates from the lower autonomic centres of the spinal cord and higher brain regions to slow down the heartbeat to a third of its normal rate at rest. Everyone has his or her own rhythm character; some people exist at a high frequency at rest (80-90 bpm) and others at a low frequency (60-70) in the middle of a natural disaster. When the body needs to be activated to solve problems, sympathetic stimulation of the sinoatrial node increases the frequency, speeds up heartbeat.

Acceleration strengthens our physical response, preparing us to *fight or flight*. At other times, we react to shocking or dangerous events by ‘freezing’. The physical dangers of our lives today have been replaced mostly by psychological ones (somebody didn’t say ‘hello’ to me), yet the physical response to environmental challenges remains an evolutionary intensity: the heart pumps large amounts of blood to the brain and muscles; breathing speeds up (especially the rate of exhalation); inhalation deepens; and hormones (adrenaline, noradrenaline, ephedrin and epinephrine) are released. The increased oxygen intake changes our cellular metabolism; blood sugar levels rise; our palms sweat; and even our hair stands on end.

Whether we fight, flight, or freeze in fear, stress takes its toll on our bodies. As it is essential

that our energy household is restored following stressful conditions, the parasympathetic branch of the body, which strives for balance, dampens the excess high frequency through the 'vagus nerve brake'. This often does not come easily; although the alert state is reached quickly, it takes much longer to slow down. If the sympathetic activation is persistent, the body remains on alert, unable to alleviate the physiological, mental, and emotional stress; a state of chronic stress subsists. One of the characteristics of long-lasting stress is permanent low HRV. This is associated with poor responsiveness, like a bicycle that can no longer accelerate to a higher gear.

Google Scholar lists 16,400 articles on stress and rare diseases; 17,500 on the relationship between stress and respiratory diseases; 21,000 on the health impact of stress; 56,000 on stress and heart disease; 290,000 on stress and diabetes; and 483 000 on the causal relationship between stress and cancer.

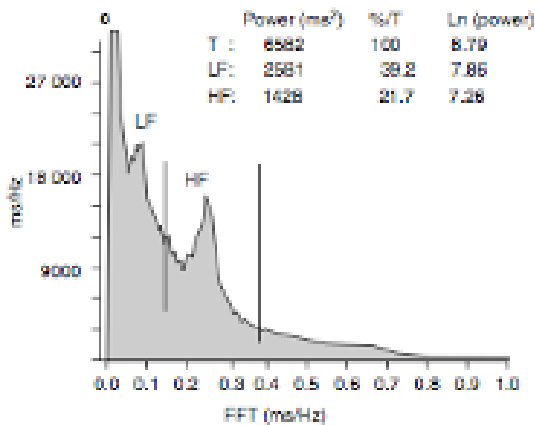
The HRV is, therefore, an indicator of the body's regenerative capacity. By measuring it objectively with biofeedback, stubborn stress can be significantly reduced. Google Scholar lists 12,200 articles on the terms stress and HRV and 16,200 articles on the keywords HRV and health management. In RIOTE3, we have also used highly effective HR and HRV feedback technologies to help identify stress-inducing behaviours and habits, as well as support a conscious attention to eliminate them.

As stress is seen almost as a working tool in the professional theatre environment, it is no wonder that the creative process does not bring the same benefits at this level as it does for non-professional participants. Chronic and untreated stress can reduce the lifespans of these professional thespians, due as much to stress as to the behaviours and addictions used to reduce stress. When a senior RIOTE participant, with 60 years of theatre experience behind him, was asked what kind of research we were involved in, he commented, 'He wants to prove (and he nodded me standing next to him) that theatre is good for health... What can I say, wonderful, but I think making theatre is harmful.'

With this opinion he would not be alone in the pantheon of great theatre-makers. Why is professional theatre sometimes so detrimental to our health? What is lacking for us professional practitioners to live it beneficially? Stress is unavoidable, but how to distinguish between necessary and unnecessary stress, and how to manage its consequences with awareness?

A key to stress reduction is to guarantee a safe environment such as that for IDMT or hypnosis so that interaction synchronicity may thrive. Can you imagine a hypnotist making constantly ironic remarks to the hypnotised, or a movement therapist throwing objects at participants if they do not do what they are asked? Giving each other a right to have difficulties and paying special, tender attention to our respective challenges is the primary condition of effective stress management on and off stage. In theatre work we often synchronize, and do not realize it, the contrary we try to detach from

colleagues, while all the positive effects of synchronicity phenomena are at our disposal.



*SEQ Figure * ARABIC 35. Figure one wave of a heartbeat*

autonomic nervous system, which is apparently due to the rise of the respiratory rate. The LF surge is always with us. The periods start with sympathetic activation, the inhalations become shallower, and the heart accelerates. Then, at the peak of the period, the parasympathetic function ‘wakes up’, vagal rebalancing occurs, and the inhalations become deeper again. VLF is a giant wave observed in the context of the circadian rhythm of the day.

The LF ripple is a periodic process in which interpersonal synchronicity appears. This phenomenon has long been recognised, with Bányai ¹¹⁹ finding an average of four LF synchronisations per minute during hypnosis. The attention of the hypnotist is focused on the subject; therefore, in the LF wave dimension, synchrony would appear.

The phenomenon called phase coherence occurs when the HR changes at the same time. We have seen it on numerous occasions, as heart rates align in theatre training, rehearsal, and performance situations, either during dyadic (pair) or group exercises. The accompanying graphs illustrate training situations where we have attempted to capture the changes that occur with adherence.

36. Figure Convergent changes in HR

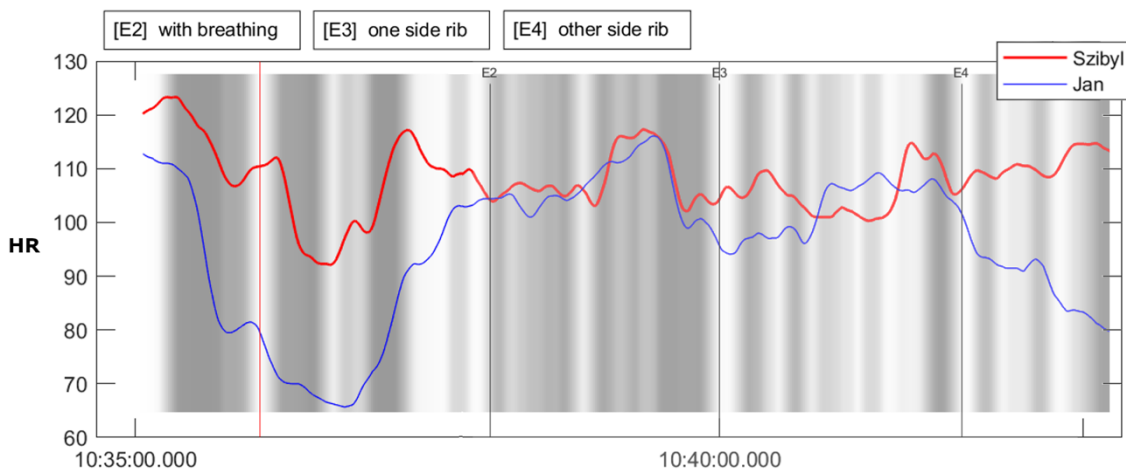
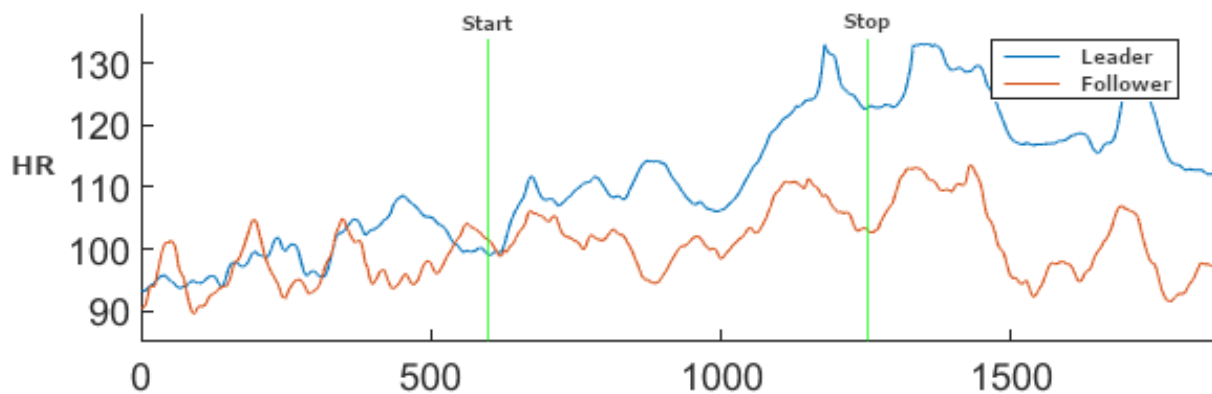
PARALLEL WAVES

Changes in heart function can be broken down into periodic changes: high frequency (HF); low frequency (LF); and very low frequency (VLF) wave components. The short HF waves (0.14 to 0.6 Hz ¹¹⁸) of 2.5 to 7 seconds are associated with inhalations, when the heart pumps blood more intensively. The physiological function of the longer 7-25 second LF waves (0.04-0.15 Hz) have not yet been precisely defined by science. It is certain, though, that an increase in the HF/LF ratio indicates an increase in the sympathetic branch of the

¹¹⁸ The total lifetime of a wave is the period time, the reciprocal of which is the frequency (Hz), which is one second fraction of the total wave period

¹¹⁹ Biró, Bányai: Interakciós Szinkronitás Hipnózisban...

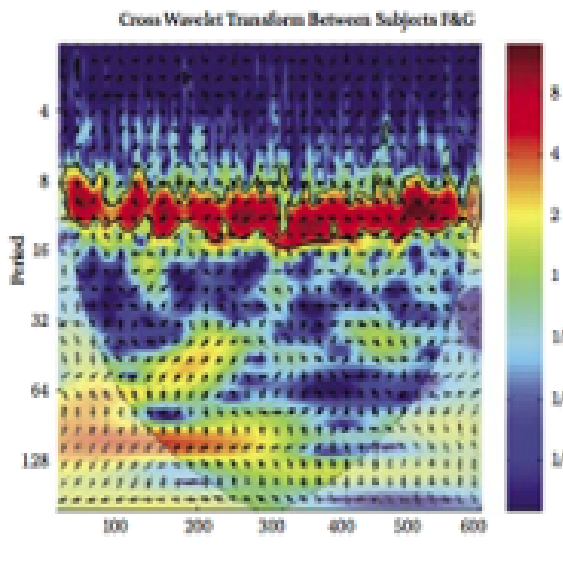
SEQ Figure * ARABIC 37. Figure
Opposite Changes of HR



The Heart Math Institute has made widely discussed progress over the past decades in demonstrating the relationship between effectively regulated HRV and healthy psychophysiology. In their vocabulary, coherent HRV refers to an ordered state in which the body is functioning optimally. The beautiful phase-coherence diagram¹²⁰ shown here is an intellectual patent from the Heart Math Institute¹²¹ that depicts the ‘coherence exercise’ of two experimenters.

¹²⁰ Steven M. Morris, PhD: Achieving collective coherence: group effects on heart rate variability coherence and heart rhythm synchronisation – Alternative Therapies, Jul/Aug 2010, VOL. 16, NO. 4, 62-72

¹²¹ <http://heartmath.co.uk/heartmath-for-me/>



The cross-wavelet transform is a graphical representation of a mathematical process, with the waves broken down into HF, LF and VLF frequency ranges on the vertical axis, and time on the horizontal axis. The colours represent the correlation between the activity of two individuals, using autogenic means to direct their attention mutually to their partner from a direct physical proximity. The blue areas in the figure are uncorrelated ranges and periods; yellow indicates moderate while red indicates intense coherence. In the red LF range above, there was a high degree of coordination over

long periods of time, while there was also a significant degree of coordination in the VLF range.

COHERENCE

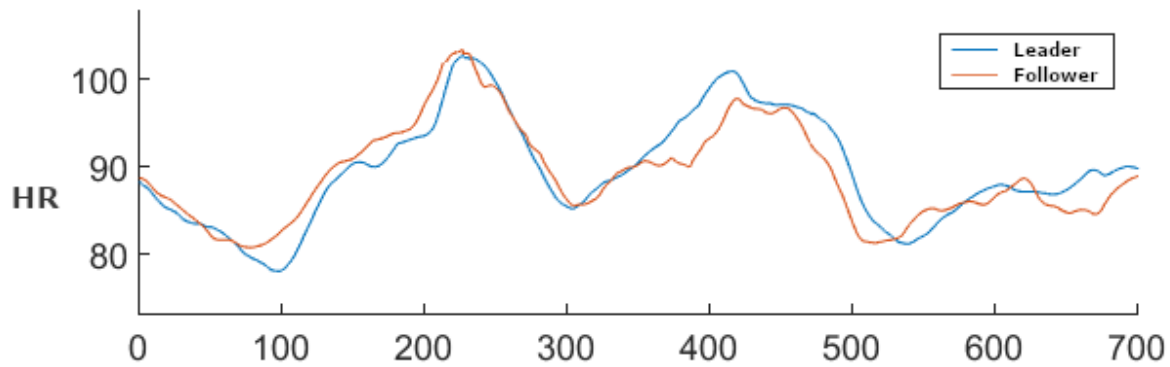
The heart rhythms of two people can fall into phase coherence for a variety of reasons. Physically they move in the same way (e.g. a pair of dancers); their motor patterns will make their heartbeats similar. They experience similar emotions when exposed to an external stimulus (e.g. in a theatre) where the pattern of direct effects causes the similarity. They are performing the same cognitive activity (e.g. they are given the same maths task at the same time) and concentration-stress is the same. The moment of intuition becomes synchronised during a creative activity. Synchronicity occurs through spontaneous mirroring of each other as well. Or, as in the case of the Heart Maths exercise above, consciously initiated synchronicity occurs. Our fullest, non-judgmental attention is turned to the other, as in the above illustration where the participants wanted to be in sync with each other. Types of synchronisations may rarely occur in a pure way, and the concordance of emotions or motor patterns may even cause a type of phase coherence that affects participants in a coherent way, but only at the same time for unrelated reasons.

As a field of research, physiological synchrony (PS) includes any observed interdependence or association between two or more people's physiology. PS is typically defined as an interdependence or association between physiological signals from two or more people. Synchrony, as a phenomenon, is a non-domain-specific construct because its identification is dependent on the procedure used to test it, among other reasons. More general criteria may apply, such as frequency of elements or coincidence in time. For example, coherence analysis assesses cyclical patterns in the frequency criteria¹²², whereas bivariate time-series analysis addresses linear relationships in the time criteria.¹²³

¹²² Henning et al., 2001

¹²³ Levenson & Gottman, 1983

As different analyses of synchrony address different components of data, results can differ substantially. It is therefore important for analyses of PS to match the research question to the methodology because different approaches can alter interpretations and implications of study results. To detect the emergence of synchrony, six key parameters define PS: magnitude, sign, direction, lag, timing, and arousal.¹²⁴



39. *Figure Phase coherence in securely attached couple work*

In the case of synchronisation with HR, we do not yet have templates to disentangle whether subjects were attuned through movement, speech, or elements of behaviour, i.e., mediators; whether synchronisation occurred because of shared mental content; or whether the activity justified phase coherence. We can judge from the patterns in our most recent measurements, whether something happened before, after or in parallel with the same intensity or smaller, in the same, or opposite, phasic direction.

Our own research, presented above, locates a third type of theatrical experience on the plane of the identified psychophysiological variables. We set out to investigate a performance with a clear structure and a strong dramaturgy, where the power of the tale is captivating even for those who know the story.

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Arthur Miller's play is one of the pinnacles of American realism. The production, directed by Pál Mácsai, fully unfolded the psychological processes in a way that focused only on the nodal points of the story, minimising realistic elements. This sedentary style of play favoured the measurements because it ensured that the changes in HR data taken with POLAR sensors were not due to the actors' movements, but to their inner emotional changes.

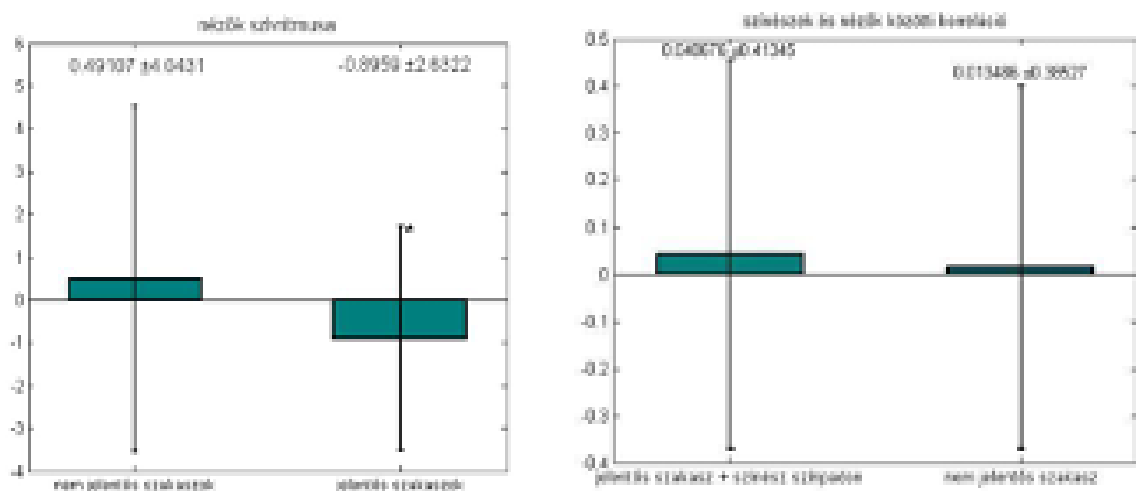
The sample was supplemented by a questionnaire in which, we asked audience members to

¹²⁴ Palumbo et al. 2017

highlight the moments in the play which elicited the strongest theatre experience. Examining the passages considered to be rich in experience, a picture began to emerge that the spectators almost invariably marked the parts where a scene ended and the stage was in transition, with decorations or singing, out of the narrative, as if the way to get to the end of scenes was not considered effective by the audience. Even though *The View* is a performance that is acted with great authenticity and meticulousness, it is fair to assume that it brought spectators into a state of adherence and kept them there for long enough. Most striking was that, at the climax of the story, when the rhythm and staging of the performance was at its most intense, not a single detail was highlighted by the audience. Our assumption was that, beyond the threshold of engagement with the narrative, the audience cognitively did not appreciate the theatrical experience. It is as if in a state of altered consciousness, cognitive functioning is reduced or almost eliminated. Therefore, when they tried to recall the impressions of the play, they were only able to identify points that closed a story unit or prepared another one.

Based on these presumptions, we came up with the idea to look for significant moments of engagement in the minutes before the marked parts. In the attached first figure, we have examined the parts that precede the episodes highlighted. We found that during important scenes of the story, the viewers' heart rate dropped significantly, indicating relevant involvement and emotional impact.

We also found that during these scenes, the correlation between actors and viewers also increased significantly.



40.

Figure "A view from the bridge": a) changes in the coherence between spectators and actors and b) a decrease in the heart rate, both indicative of spectator involvement, at the most significant stages of the unfolding of the story¹²⁵

The coherence between the audience and the actors could almost be taken for granted, but still, it is not. The age-old geneticist Wilson's rightly un-illusory findings are confirmed by a Spanish-Scandinavian study. Comparing studies above and below the role of intentional

¹²⁵ The chart is the work of Dorottya Bencze

synchronisation in the theatre can best be grasped.

VISCERAL CONNECTION

Participants in a fire-walking ritual were studied¹²⁶ using the POLAR-team technology used also by us. The researchers were looking for synchronicity between the fire-walkers and the spectators of the ceremony. Spectators with a personal relationship (friends or relatives) to the fire-walkers were highly correlated, while with those unknown members, had either no relationship or a counter-correlation. The shared experience of a ceremony was not enough to align participants with spectators, although this would have been expected of all. The barefoot stepping on the embers is a powerful event, yet does it trigger adherence? Although the spectators knew that the fire-walkers were stepping on the embers, they didn't feel it? The motor sharing (which we know is automatic) did not provide enough personal attachment to have an impact on a visceral level?

Counter-correlation, which is also a synchronicity phenomenon, can occur when the heartbeat, behavioural changes, or breathing of the connected people consistently appears *in opposite phases*. Maybe this happens when we abstain from experiencing a negative experience or block the transmission of emotions or any other aversions?¹²⁷

Love of fellow humans is not an evident expectation for our species. We consider members of the tribe and everyone else shall be eaten! That why the experience of adherence in the theatre is so special: the willingness to breathe together with a stranger, is the fundament of the spectator's special attitude, the intentional synchrony.

The neural basis of intentional interconnectedness is also developed during the evolution.

The heart rhythms of the fire-walkers during the ritual were much more coherent than their own patterns at rest. *A tűzön járók szívritmusa a rituálé közben, a saját nyugalmi helyzetben mért mintázataikhoz képest, sokkal koherensebb volt.*

POLY-VAGAL THEORY

You could say that the vagus nerves are the soul's strings, the super-fast nerve bundle that connects the brain directly to the heart and dampens the heart's 'own rhythm'. From the perspective of the following theory, theatre can also be called a group polyvagal interaction.

The vagus nerves - because there are two of them - have evolved from two different areas of the brainstem, at different times in evolution, playing different roles in the behaviour regulation.

¹²⁶ Synchronised arousal between performers and related spectators in a fire-walking ritual. Ivana Konvalinkaa et al., 2009

¹²⁷ Brosschota, Thayerb: Heart rate response is longer after negative emotions than after positive emotions International Journal of Psychophysiology 2003

a) The old, unmyelinated, dorsal vagus nerve, controlling the respiratory system, regulates fast sympathetic processes when there is no possibility of avoiding a harmful event, helping to find the behaviour of survival. It produces reactivity, coping and rapid activation¹²⁸.

b) The new myelinated ventral vagus, through the sinus node, controls the heart, regulates our facial muscles, our auditory system, and all the gestures through which we interact with others. As Dr. Stephen Porges' research has shown, the new vagus bundle is of enormous importance in social and empathic processes. It results in a parasympathetic effect, with people becoming mutually relaxed, attentive, sensitive, and receptive.

In addition to controlling the mechanisms of social communication, the 'phylogenetic' system also plays a role in the regulation of internal organs. The concept of phylogenetic order highlights the principle of continuous evolution. The most recently evolved neural pathway responds first *according to the hierarchy of learning*. During our evolution, the nerve fibres of the vagus are organised to control behaviour more perfectly, to involve the visceral areas (metabolism) more extensively. It is as if consciousness is becoming more and more deeply rooted in the body. As evolution is continuous, it is always the latest learning that applies.

Porges explains that the autonomic nervous system of mammals has evolved in two branches to maintain the species, both to help individuals survive and to ensure their social relationships.¹²⁹ The two systems result in three distinct phylogenetically organised behaviours in social interactions: a) communication (facial expressions, vocalisations, and silent attention: 'listening' to each other); b) reactivity (fight-or-flight behaviour); and c) freeze immobility ('playing dead').

When we consider the environment to be safe, we apply the 'vagus brake', thereby promoting social behaviour. When the vagus brake loosens, it gives way to the sympathetic survival modes of functioning and behaviour, thus hindering smooth social interaction.

When you do meditation, with some exaggeration you strengthen the vagal tone. Conscious stimulation of the vagus nerves helps you to shift to a calm and relaxing behaviour by integrating your visceral functioning. The stimulus of vagus is the only consciously applicable aid to adapt more quickly, to connect with, or disconnect from, objects and people.¹³⁰

Social connection is weakened when an individual perceives his or her environment as dangerous. As soon as the sense of safety is lost, the brake is released, and the heartbeat starts to accelerate. When the higher and the lower brain areas are not connected, the processes that regulate behaviour are disabled; someone can behave literally mindlessly, jerked around by fear and reactions.

Calming down can be practised by strengthening the braking system that connects the

¹²⁸ Dr. Stephen Porges: "Why is a body-oriented approach the key?" Webinar, 2014

¹²⁹ Stephen W. Porges: The Polyvagal Theory: phylogenetic contributions to social behaviour Brain-Body Center, Psychiatric Institute, Department of Psychiatry, University of Illinois at Chicago

¹³⁰ Stephen W. Porges: The Polyvagal Theory

brainstem to the upper cortex. The vagus-brake is several hundred times faster than sympathetic activation: the parasympathetic effect takes place within milliseconds, while the sympathetic effect is 3-4 seconds (an icy panic which slowly creeps in). Vagus can directly slowdown in between the two consecutive beats of the heart.

The smile, the open eyes, the relaxed facial features, the calm natural tone of the voice: these are all part of the activation of the ventral vagus. Our engagement in social communication with the brakes on results in a relaxed relationship; interactional synchronicity; secure attachment; responsive behaviour; and non-violent, cooperative communication.

Speech-based exercises develop active upper-brain control of the middle ear muscles, recognised as the gateway to social interaction¹³¹. A basic tool of therapeutic art training is the couple's discussion following pair work. Listening to the partner can play a major role in learning to apply the vagus brake.

The ideal functioning of the new vagus organ requires rest: 1) auditory attention to perceive whether the environment is safe; and 2) acoustic stimuli within the frequency band of human sound, primarily speech, which can habituate the social interaction subsystem of the middle ear. When we remain silent for a while and then address each other in our own lower voices, our social connection and relaxed communication can be trained in this simple way. The theatrical significance and multiple appearance of the vagus-effect cannot be appreciated enough.

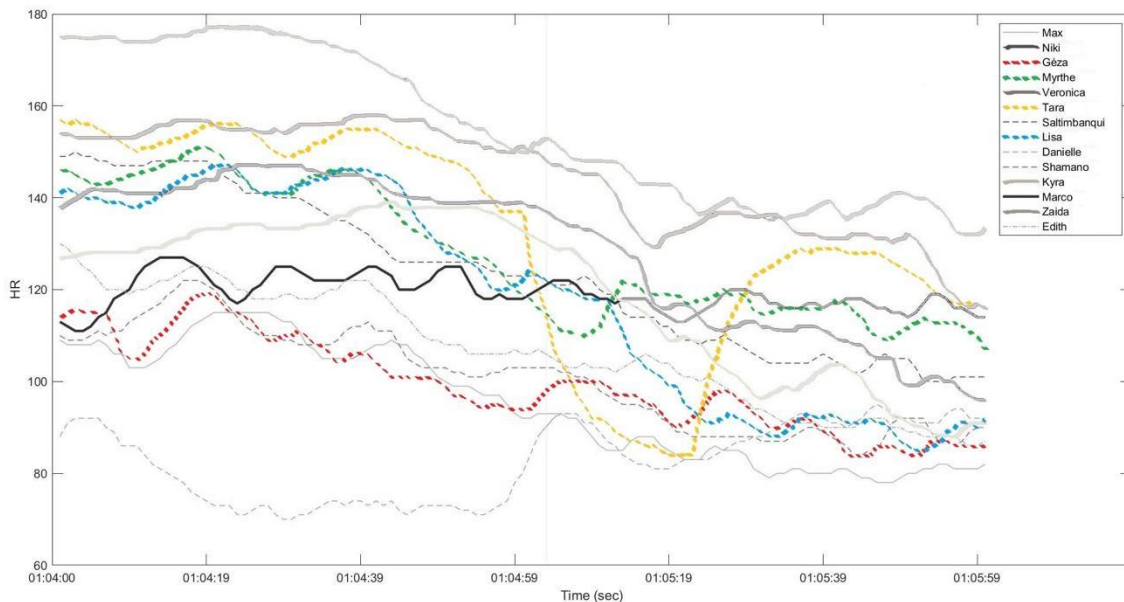
EMOTIONS IN THE THEATRE I.

The actor reaches the heart, breathing through the strings of the vagus. When he arouses emotion, he influences this process: he orders short exhalations along with long inhalations, speeding up his heartbeat and loosening the control of the sinus knot. We often hear that on stage, to achieve the emotion required for a role, the actor breathes extremely hard and pants to speed up the heart; we say the actor is 'whirring'. Some of us spontaneously succeed in direct vagus nerve interoception; we become able to directly moderate and modulate our emotions. Variable HR is generated from the rhythm changes of breathing; if, when possible, we immediately slow down with a long exhalation, we can easily speed up again, like on a bicycle when we shift to a lower gear.

¹³¹ Stephen W. Porges: The Polyvagal Theory

Anyone who wants, for the sake of play, to experience physiologically an extreme emotional state should seek the psychophysiology of relaxation rather than of intensification. A tendency consistent with our experience in life: in great distress, we try to resist the onset of crying with long inhalations. When vagus clusters are stimulated to awaken the desired emotion at a visceral level, in addition to breathing, the simultaneous conscious work of the facial muscles is of paramount importance.

Gestures and grimaces controlled by braking and releasing polyvagal behaviour organisation



are also the basic instrument of theatrical effect¹³². In the process of evolution, to control social contact and interaction through the ventral myelinated vagus, the higher brain areas and the brain stem have become integrated (one might say fused) with the muscles of the face and head and exert direct control above the gestures of the hand. The auditory organs are also directly linked to the vagus brake.

We often hear from audience members that they are annoyed when actors ‘shout’ a lot. This is a valid observation, given that the middle voice keeps the door to the connectedness in the middle ear open. Angry speech closes it. The audience sits with the vagus brakes on in most cases in the serenity of darkness. Not to be afraid of being scared is good. I presume that the viewer's problem is not the shouting but the fact that they are being pushed out of adherence and triggered to feel fear.

Sometimes I take issue with the ‘soft’ theatrical tradition that emerges here, which holds for example the adherence at a constant ideal middle value. Regularities of adherence and vagus are instinctively felt by the theatre creators responsible for box office revenue. For centuries they have built their own unwritten theatrical codes. The logical systems of anthropologically evolved theatre cultures were built from natural experience: how to get the audience to adhere. The real genre split occurred in the 19th century, when the so-called light genre rose with its solely effect-oriented rules of the game, and the power of content was separated from the expediency of style. But what’s the problem with the pleasant middle value, petit-bourgeois theatre? NO problem with it at all.

¹³² Paul Ekman: Emotions revealed

Theatre psychomechanical. The traditional comedy armoury is full of mechanical templates, repetition, rhythm, and energy standards. It's as if there are stimulus buttons that trigger laughter at a push. This can happen in a 'living' manner, but also with dead rhythm. It is easy to distinguish between professional provocation of laughter and live humour.

A daily experience for the theatre-maker is laughter that comes in tight synchronicity with the action as undeniable evidence of flow. This irresistible organic laughter is much harder to elicit reliably than that mechanised one. Surprising laughter immediately 'generates energy', the actor 'absorbs' or 'consumes' it and returns it to the audience in the form of live impulses. The laugh-circle starts, lungs fill, the breathing synchronises, the posture changes; the whole 'psychomechanical' clockwork runs. And then something happens that is not at all mechanical: the moment expands, and the order of the performance is disrupted before our eyes. The actors are given wings by the audience's approval, and we meet in flow or integration for a moment beyond the narrative. Then the 'flow-household' of the stage changes, the synchronisation loosens, the dynamo stops, and the separated reactions come again.

We know all the traditional solutions: the impact elements that can be used to grab the audience and keep them engaged. When I criticise the light genre, I define 'light' as any work that tries to hypnotise its viewers by offering them consumable details, instead of the totality of existence, for whatever important and sacred purpose. Have you noticed that only theatre that strives for wholeness can have an undivided success? If the artist tries to live his life with wakeful awareness, his goals and 'messages' on stage will also speak from the world of wakefulness. The personal values and authenticity of theatre-makers are impressive, whether the output is bold commercial or fragile subjective art. The unwritten laws of theatre are a philosopher's stone for those who struggle to be awake in real life.

Why is it wrong to be shielded from painful experiences?

EMOTIONS IN THE THEATRE II.

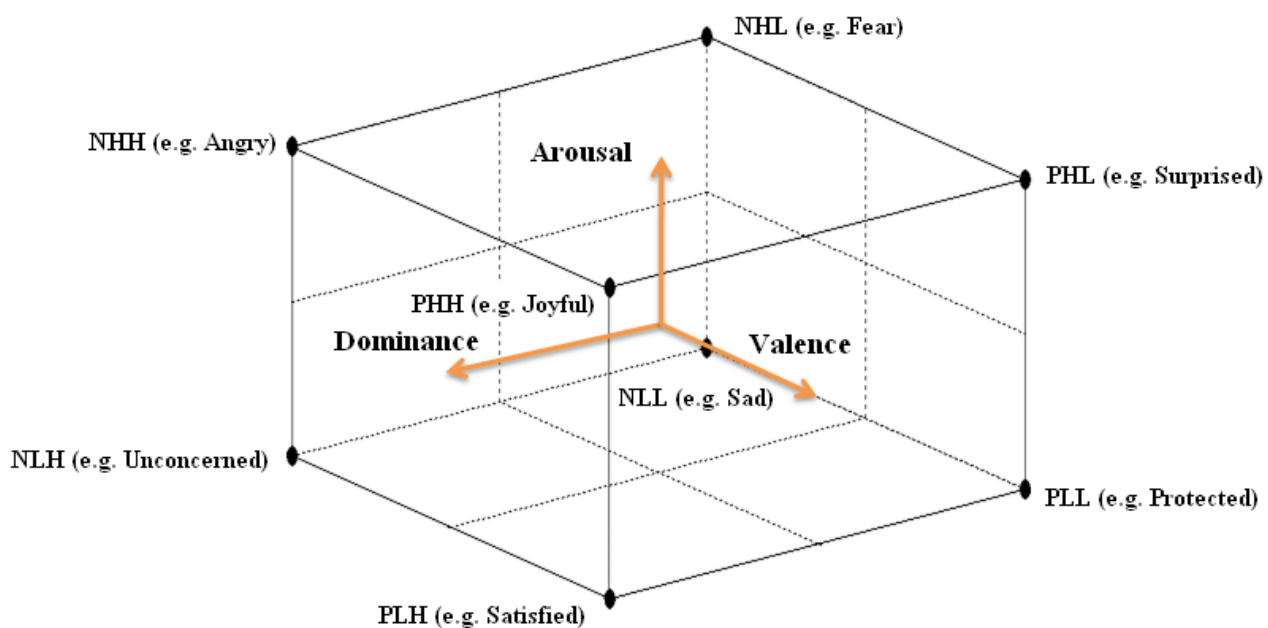
French research¹³³ measures the emotional engagement of spectators during dance and theatre performances, out of context, video-mediated, as solitary recipients, undergoing the Skin-Conductance response (SCR) test. A component of sympathetic activation, or arousal, causes the palms of the hands to sweat so that they can conduct electricity better. SCR is an extremely accurate tool for inferring the impact of a viewer's arousal, or state of excitement. Arousal is one of the three dimensions of emotion, a kind of emotional charge level.

Emotions are often associated with a single direction, positive or negative, although they can

¹³³ Performing Arts May 7–12, 2011 • Vancouver, BC, Canada 1845, Exploring Audience Responses to Performing Arts: Love, Hate, Arousal and Engagement: Celine Latulipe, Erin A. Carroll, Danielle Lottridge

be thought of in several dimensions. Lang suggested that emotions should be measured on two dimensions, one scale is of *valence* and the other of *arousal*¹³⁴. Valence is a positive-negative scale of evaluation, from acceptance to rejection, with markers of HRV, breathing and muscle relaxation. The scale of *arousal* ranges from intense excitement to indifference, with markers SCR and variables indicating sympathetic activation.

In the last decade, the model used to measure emotions dynamically has been supplemented by a third dimension, *dominance*, which refers to the urge to dominate or possess not only in interpersonal but also in internal relations.



42. Figure The three-dimensional model of emotions

Latulip et al. recorded the audience's SCR changes, graphed and copied it together with the audience feedback on the performance video, and then asked the directors and choreographers for a qualitative assessment, using 'self-recording' digital tools (joysticks) to measure engagement levels.

Two groups used their joysticks. The first group marked on a Like/Dislike scale, which gives a broader dimension of information than the arousal scale, as both ends of L/D scale may imply excitement. The second group used the tool on the Emotionally Important/Emotionally Unimportant scale, giving feedback on the emotion elicited, ranging from none to strong.

'The definition of audience engagement that we adopt will influence the choice of technology that measures engagement'¹³⁵. They identified engagement (adherence) with *interest*; it was associated

¹³⁴ Annie Lang, Kulijinder Dhillon & Qingwen Dong The effects of emotional arousal and valence on television viewers' cognitive capacity and memory Journal of Broadcasting 1993

¹³⁵ Latulipe et al.: Love, Hate, Arousal and Engagement

with positive value on the scales. The data showed significant cross correlation with SCR. As a result, the audience SCR was a perfectly sensitive precursor to subjective feedback on the artist on both scales, leading Latulipe et al. to conclude that these two different instruments revealed the same involvement relation in this experimental situation. So, *we like what is emotionally important and find unimportant what we dislike?*

The relationship between science and art is hindered by the fact that the conclusions of science, when written down, seem banal to the artist. And the artist's conclusions seem unsubstantial to the scientist. Here the researchers' preliminary question was: What is evoked when creators see the audience's psychophysiological responses as data? According to the follow-up interviews, the creators politely perceived the objective feedback as a kind of curiosity and did not think that they could obtain answers to fundamental professional questions. To me, this result suggests that there are far more components of engagement than interest.

Theatre-makers regularly ask us, with cultural and moral overtones: why do we need to collect biometric data on actors' work and on audience engagement?

MEASURING THEATRE

Here floats a negative utopian image: a diagram on a digital rehearsal board, on which the results of the evening's performance are analysed by software developed for this purpose. Artist Mr Nihalovich pays a fine of 300 rubles for refusing to correlate with his partner after repeated requests.

When we were looking for theatre partners for our research, many people were reticent; some called the instrumental measurements unnecessary, others an oddity. Somebody said outright that he/she did not want others to know his/her thoughts on stage in front of an audience of thousands.

The question indeed remains: will theatre really be better off if we loot its secrets to prove what wise pragmatic professionals have known and used for two and a half millennia? If we can measure the impact of a performance in the emotional domain (as we can now state), how do we measure the impact of performances that primarily offer an experience for the 'mental' domain?

Can we agree that Artaudian¹³⁶ performances that aim to move the spectator *away from comfort* are a success if we mainly find synchronicity in the realm of counter-correlation?! We hope in the first place, that our research in the field of psychophysiology will inspire a lot of other research and will also contribute to an overall increase in the quality of performances and other theatre-based events. Our results may help to approach a more conscious, maximisation of possibilities when creating a performance or attending a training. We may remove some ballast - long debated questions - and move us up a level to discuss the new questions of a new theatre.

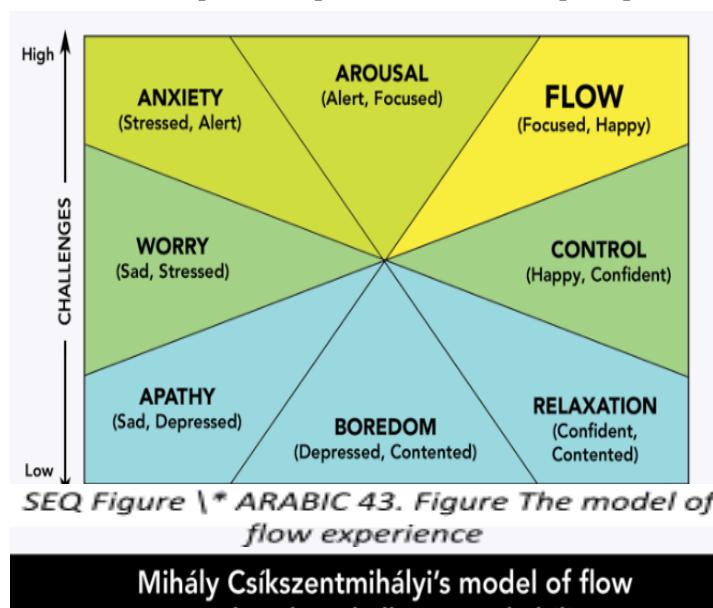
¹³⁶ The prophet of the XX century theatre, creator of the Theatre of Cruelty

We live lives in theatres hoping that *grace* will bring that day. As both participants and audience members, we are driven by the search for grace in theatres. The word 'grace' in theatre lounges has a cynical aura, as if it is beyond our power to make it happen. There is indeed something that is not in our power: this is the trespass, familiar to us from the search of Grotowski and his companions. Events rare, but yet not unknown. Fun, amusement and frivolity can be graceful as well. It is also graceful to get into the flow with our fellow humans. The word 'grace' can be equated with the peak experience of the flow of integration in the dictionary of psychology.

Daniel Siegel and the school of Interpersonal Neurobiology agree that the internal conditions for *integration* can be produced by conscious practice. One of the aims of this book is to explore and demonstrate ways in which the participant, the theatre person, in his or her daily work, can step into the flow of integration and move this probability from the realm of the *accidental* to the realm of the *consciously attainable*. Before we tackle the flow of integration, it is fundamental to introduce another flow phenomenon with a large overlap.

THE STREAM OF ATTENTION

The flow of the perfect experience¹³⁷ rises to a perceptible level when our abilities and the difficulty of



the task ahead are kept in a tight balance within a tolerance range around the mean. Boredom on the right side of the graph, anxiety on the left, slows the participant down; while the flow, this pleasantly altered state of consciousness resulting from the intensity of attention and the continuity of action, moves forward in the middle.

The flow is a threshold phenomenon: high-intensity, sustained attention of the actor, suddenly changes the perception

of the action and the quality of the process in a positive direction. The experience is perfect, and the difficulties are diminished; the sense of achievement of the continuous progress enhances the harmony of the movements and the intrinsic greatness of the activity. Flow is also what I feel when swimming or cooking, while the mental and emotional counterpart of the experiences may be absent; indeed, even my mind may be split. It is enough to move in harmony with attention and get the rewarding feedback, 'it's all because of my attention!' No easier, no harder, the brain bathes itself in hormones as

¹³⁷ Csíkszentmihályi Mihály: Flow, a tökéletes élmény pszichológiája, Flow, the Psychology of the Perfect Experience, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1997

a reward.

Complex and powerful, spiritual, and physical-mental flow experiences exist.

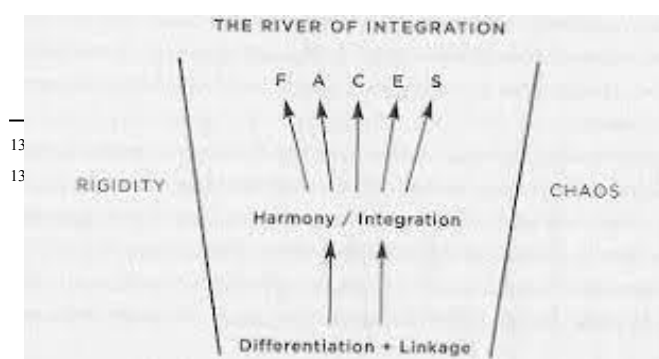
Csikszentmihályi's theory was developed through numerous interviews with climbers, athletes, and artists (especially musicians), who all reported a change of consciousness during the challenges. The flow is reflected in the observer as a pleasant, 'living' impression.

The flow, for the actors, participants, and spectators alike, is a motivating factor when attending theatre events. Echoing Victor Turner's point, it is my experience too at theatre events *in segregated communities*, that the fundamental attraction of the theatre is the need to participate in, or at least reflect upon, the experience of flow. 'In societies before the industrial revolution, ritual could always have a flow quality for total communities. In post-industrial societies, when ritual gave way to individualism and rationalism, the flow experience was pushed mainly into the leisure genres of art, sport, games, pastimes etc'¹³⁸. I have witnessed many times that when individuals have encountered theatre for the first time in their life, at the right time, with the right rhythm, the need for 'intentional synchronisation' has immediately developed. Regardless of age, they were eager to repeat their first theatrical experience. I have also often witnessed the opposite reaction when the teacher herds the youngsters with forced discipline, into the chaotic noise of an already illusory-lost matinee performance.

Participatory theatre training has a particular appeal. Some people are wary, but initial games bring flow for most participants. Playful exercises are effective in loosening control of behaviour and emotions. The community norms are strongly disempowering and, during the training, while *liminal* behaviour¹³⁹ becomes the norm, the rules of the game still provide a democratically malleable, clear framework. Participatory theatre training is built on the optimal premise of flow, in constant flux between chaos and order, boredom and stress.

RIVER OF INTEGRATION

The Flux of Integration is an *event* that covers a larger part of the mind. The human mind, as a dynamic, non-linear, complex system, flows towards ever greater complexity. Greater complexity here means involving more brain areas than can be involved in the flow event. The nine areas are: integration of consciousness; bilateral integration; vertical integration; memory integration; narrative integration; state integration; interpersonal integration; temporal integration; and transpirational integration.



Flow refers to the movement of the system when it has the quality of harmony and

Journal Publications, NYC

occupies the centre of its current, or its riverbed. The acronym 'FACES'¹⁴⁰ refers to the basic qualities of the flow (flexible, adaptive, coherent, energetic, stable). The two banks of the flow are two opposite qualities, as Dr. Siegel describes it: rock walls and swamps, or rigidity and chaos. When the system loses its quality of harmony, the current slows or stops moving towards one edge of the bed. We live most of our lives outside the current, on one bank of the river, in chaotic or rigid states.

I hope you can sense the difference between the flow of perfect experience and the flux of integration. Although there are many overlaps in their movements and qualities, they are almost opposite in what precedes their appearance. While the first is the result of focused attention, the second is the result of a sort of relaxation, an expanding consciousness.

As in everyday life, in the theatre for individuals and communities alike, the flux of integration is the highest level of possible experience. At this point, according to the criteria of the dynamic system, not a single particle of the participant's mind or body is subordinate to any other event; his feelings, thoughts, and movements have the quality of harmony. He is immersed in the event in at least three integrated ways simultaneously: cognitive (conscious), interpersonal (interpersonal), and somatic (bodily). This is what applies to the participants of theatre events; once this happens, it is sufficient for well-being to emerge. Is this true for everyone? I hear from young people living in cities that they don't like the theatre, and even avoid it. They are uncomfortable with the performances their parents take them to, I often can't defend the theatre, I also often feel a sense of discomfort with the artifice, I'm just used to it...

LACK OF FLOW IN THE THEATRICAL EVENT

Peak experiences are rare, and theatre, in the absence of flux or flow, can have a placebo effect. The spectator goes to the theatre with the obvious aim of having a peak experience; it is his or her right to generate an experience according to their expectations. Theatre without integration also evokes from the spectators' minds their own experiences related to the subject; it can ensure *subjective* integration. Two phenomena shall be examined:

1) The flux or flow-equivalent created in the viewer

If the impact falls short of that expected, the mind, craving for the perfect experience fills the gap 'for itself' via cognitively mediated mechanisms, in the same way that participants in alcohol placebo experiments who did not drink alcohol believed that they did and felt under the influence¹⁴¹.

Emotional experiences stored under the influence of narrative are evoked. Although the event on stage

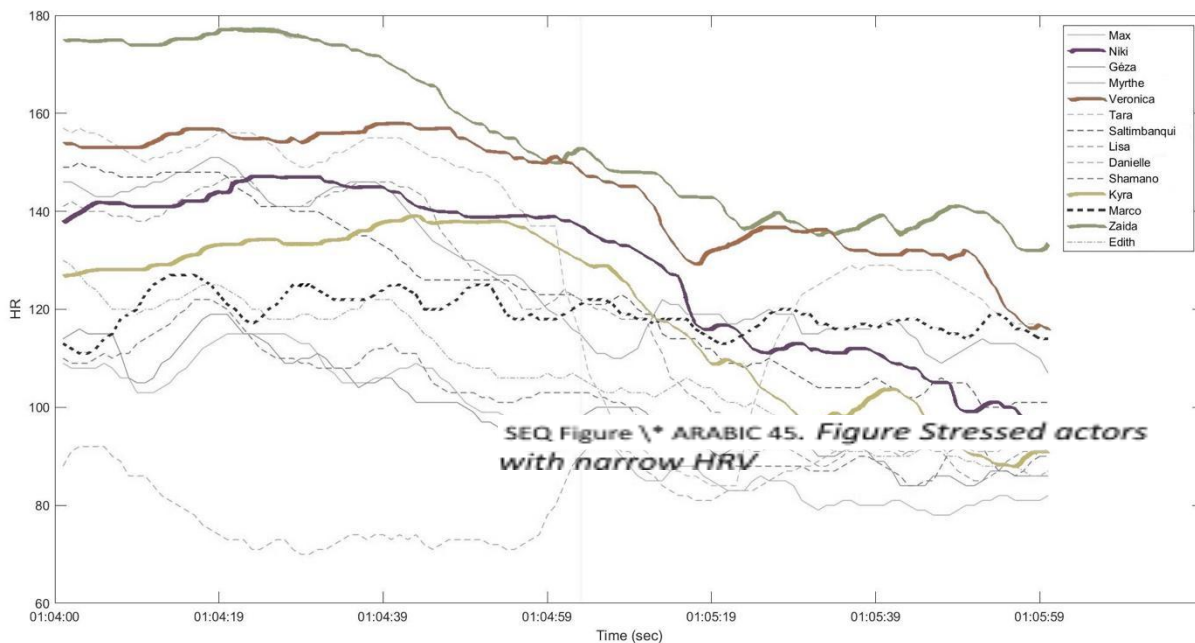
¹⁴⁰ The Developing Mind - How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are – the Guilford Press 2012 NY

¹⁴¹ Cziboly- Bárdos (2003): Placebohatás: az elvárások gyógyító ereje - Placebo Effect: the Healing Power of Expectations <http://www.matud.iif.hu/03jul/003.html>

does not have the properties of a flow or integration, the spectator perceives it as being experienced and seen. This 'private' experience, achieved through projection, is not synchronous with the experience of other co-spectators.

2) The illusory flow

An equivalent experience is also created by the 'artist's mastery of forms': the regularity; the beautiful sets and costumes; the disciplined, organised movements; and the orderly behaviour of the characters. The audience is fascinated by the order, but this can only be maintained by ruthlessly cutting back the wild shoots of *life* because, according to the laws of the flow triggered by the integration event, the system would evolve, redefining the established framework. Systems science also confirms the empirical fact that rigid structure is incapable of integration¹⁴², just as individually decorated, varied play without a common focus moves the system towards chaos.



As with order, continuity has a strong impact. If the adherence is not hampered by dissonant moments, the course of the play can maintain a sense of continuity. These experiences of order and continuity are workflows that can be blocked by the slightest formal error. A theatre professional knows this law and never breaks the continuity of the action on stage unnecessarily. This old rule reiterates the earlier finding that the spectator reacts consciously only to the interruptions at the heightened climax of the play!

The actor's expectation of a performance stems from an inner need like that of the spectator: he himself *wants to adhere and be adhered to* at the same time. The source of his anxiety is how much of the task he will be able to bring to flow and how much to flux? His degree of satisfaction will be the proportion of successful flow or the integration of events. If the flux of integration does not occur, the

¹⁴² Siegel: Mindsight ... as above

actor may generate an experience for himself through the same unconscious, implicit expectations as the spectator. Here, too, we often observe a workflow because of orderliness or continuity: the actor precisely completes a series of tasks, narrates, and sings his role flawlessly. He then feels that he has achieved everything, even though he has not yet fulfilled the most important thing, his actual vocation: to integrate in front of the audience. How would that feel or how would it look if you were truly integrated? What should you do for this purpose?

Often, we directors believe, along with whole companies, that we have made it, achieved that integration; we unconsciously deceive each other, ourselves, and the audience as well. So precious that we are able to lie for it... High expectations show our prehistoric confidence in the theatrical event as a natural source of positive and integrative experiences.

III. FIRST PERSON EXPERIENCE

SCIENCE AND SUBJECTIVITY

The achievement of the *decade of the brain*¹⁴³ is that science is no longer as rigid in the rejection of subjectivity as it was in previous decades. In the 20th century, psychology has transformed from a subjective to an objective science. This has led to unprecedented progress, thanks, in particular, to the imaging techniques that have revolutionised brain research, but also to many other areas such as the lightweight sensors to measure ANS, the hormone analysis, or all digital measures to analyse every single movement of life.

Yet the great fundamental phenomena, so the peak experiences of the theatre remain, by their very nature, remain almost unmeasurable. "Mysterious", "magical", "enchanting"... are the words we use to describe the masterpieces that keep the artistic public but often an entire society in enthusiasm. Numerous unanswered questions remain, such as personal development, the path of talent, or the relationship between society and the artist. Examples and refutations; theories and legends; folk wisdom and scientific methods; biographies and autobiographies: all swirl around here.

To publish my *coherent narrative* (see below), would probably be just as sentimental as that of any artist who, at the end of his life (where hopefully I'm not), self-medicates or for some other sacred or selfish purpose, devotes his precious time to such a spending. And why tell all that in a book that shows you don't at all have to be an artist to enrich your life through art?! But just when I was on the verge of leaving out the following texts from the book, I suddenly saw that I couldn't illuminate some important theatre regularities and psychological concepts without my own example, which only make sense with subjective experience.

So in the following subsections, I will attempt, with the lowest possible sentimentalism - I think today we are aware that emotions are integrative - to make sense of my professional development process in context of my personal changes.

COHERENT NARRATIVE

Coherent narrative¹⁴⁴ can be important for the development of the brain. This mentalization technique proves that you can overcome certain patterns of behaviour if you are able to write

¹⁴³ is the name given by historians of science to the 1990s - referring to the many research results that were produced during this period

¹⁴⁴ Siegel: Mindsight ... as above

down and tell your stories to a trusted person, in a credible way. The stories of your patterns of behaviour, that may be making days difficult, are embedded in the fabric of your lives. The CN is entirely practical, reminiscent of a 12-step therapy written life story sharing. One writes down a life story and persistently shares it with a friend repeatedly, until both feel that a coherent, logical story has been crystallised. The meaning that is made forms a new brain pattern, a new synaptic connection. *Neuroplasticity*¹⁴⁵ allows the prefrontal areas to perform regulatory functions by recognising the (angry, fearful/anxious, indifferent behaviour) patterns of the lower regions and to manage them with new connectivity.

The brain is a self-regenerating organ, capable of forming new bonds until we die. Dr Siegel describes a case¹⁴⁶ where a 92-year-old man makes meaning and recovers his obsessive relationships with his beloved ones. He suggests that writing a CN is more effective when done with a knowledge of the relevant symptoms of the brain and mind. By looking at the visceral and mental processes, the writer of the narrative can better understand the context, the *objective reality* of what has happened.

I won't talk about the family relations of the child and early adolescent Balázs, nor about his school career (it wasn't very bright!). Nor will I use the device of coherent narrative with verbatim credibility. But I will highlight a few details to benefit our topic: the deepening of the relationship between psychology and theatre.

CN I. - GENETICALLY REGULATED MATURATION PROCESS

People often ask me why I have been wandering away from 'staging decent shows in decent theatres?' It's a fact that I have turned away from the professional sphere in the last decade and a half and cultivated my theatre in a field where I am less often caught up with old colleagues. My procrastination is partly due to the healthy functioning of my psychological immune system (PIS)¹⁴⁷ and partly to my research instinct which chases me into situations in which I could solely deal with an unaffected audience and theatre as a purely autotelic¹⁴⁸ activity.

Immediately after graduation, I entered the UFTA¹⁴⁹ (or, in its Hungarian name, well known from its martyrdom, the SZFE), majoring in directing. Yet immature in the strictest

¹⁴⁵ Siegel: Developing Mind see above

¹⁴⁶ Siegel: Mindsight, 102-120

¹⁴⁷ The PIS (Oláh, 2005) optimises and strengthens the interaction processes in the relationship between person and environment that serve to balance them. Attila Oláh, Henriett Nagy, Kinga G. Tóth: Life expectancy and psychological immune competence in different cultures - RAM Verlag - ETC – Empirical Text and Culture Research 4, 2010, 102-108

¹⁴⁸ Csíkszentmihályi 1967 - Autotelic are those activities that awaken the flow when we are creating order out of chaos.

¹⁴⁹ University of Film and Theatre Arts, Budapest, Hungary

scientific sense. Research shows that the neural pathways connecting the frontal areas to the lower brain areas complete their development only after the age of 25. Until then, the connections are still malleable, but when the nerve cells are coated with a substance called myelin¹⁵⁰, the strength of the connections and the power of the pathways get multiplied, thus completing the first crucial stage of personality development.

By the age of 19, as an actor, I was already carrying the traumatic traces of an experience, in which we played adult theatre in a company of teenagers led by an adult director. I applied to UFTA with the revolutionary determination that I would not ‘direct with terror’. For me, this just meant that I wanted to impose my will on the actors ‘kindly’, while the word ‘director’ had an essentially power-related meaning. The just and fair ruler, who must know and explain everything, but in return is entitled to a privileged status for his responsibility and owns the success of the production. At the admission exam I overwhelmed the actors loudly and kindly. The committee could conclude that I had (as they chatted later) ‘played the role of the director well’. This line sheds light on their expectations, in keeping with the status quo of the time, where ‘political totalitarianism found its self-representation in the tyranny of the theatre director and vice versa: the theatre institution of the modern age, looking to the dictatorial establishment as a model for itself’¹⁵¹.

In the first year, I found that I couldn’t figure out how to ‘direct’ beyond the well-established loud and kind role. Amid the high professional and theoretical expectations, I was trying to prove to the ‘myelin-mature’ classmates five to ten years older than me, that I had a rightful place, while I didn’t believe it myself. While they, in agreement with my master, Gábor Székely, with sincere educational intentions using a variety of punitive and rewarding methods, tried to confront my immaturity: ‘You should grow up, Balázs!’

I found myself in a bipolar situation: at the time of admission, I felt like a genius, then for years I felt like a ‘nobody’. A depressive episode developed.

A researcher now highlights fear as the first counter-condition for creativity and learning¹⁵². When one is afraid, the lower limbic areas of the brain dominate and the cortical lobes simply shut down, unable to rationally overcome fear or anger, to function in a coordinated way, and thus to think in a complex way. Apart from the curiosity of Eszter Novák, I received little feedback that I was in my right place at UFTA.

This is why I think it is very important that teachers - not only at the UFTA, but at all

¹⁵⁰ A Critical Period for Social Experience–Dependent Oligodendrocyte Maturation and Myelination - Manabu Makinodan, Kenneth M. Rosen, Susumu Ito, Gabriel Corfas – SCIENCE VOL 337 1357-60 SEPTEMBER 2012

¹⁵¹ András Visky The end of the Main stream, notes on post theatre identity in "What is theatre for"?

¹⁵² Baas et al., 2008.

levels of the education system - have a massive knowledge of mental health, so that they can recognise and help to resolve students' fears. If I had been reassured that I was in the right place and expected to do what would be expected of an adolescent, perhaps I would have been able to make sense of what was happening to me and not have identified so much with my paralysis. As if the word *talent* had become synonymous with the right to life in the classrooms of the UFTA.

THE SECURED ATTACHMENT

Coping, by definition, is a conscious or instinctive effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems, to consciously manage stress and conflict. The most effective coping, a strong and secure personality, which could be the result of secure attachment, could be developed in early childhood. As this is the rarest of all things we can get, the good news is that it can be replenished in adulthood with therapy and as a result of inner work. Siegel describes cases where a single securely attached relationship was enough to restore mental health by providing a sense of right to life for people with mental disorders¹⁵³.

The actors were much closer to me, both in age and sociometry. The liberated Balázs showed up in their company. Some of the positive experiences of acting spilled over into the class, and in my second year I had a few exams that stood up more seriously as theatre. It was the connection that helped.

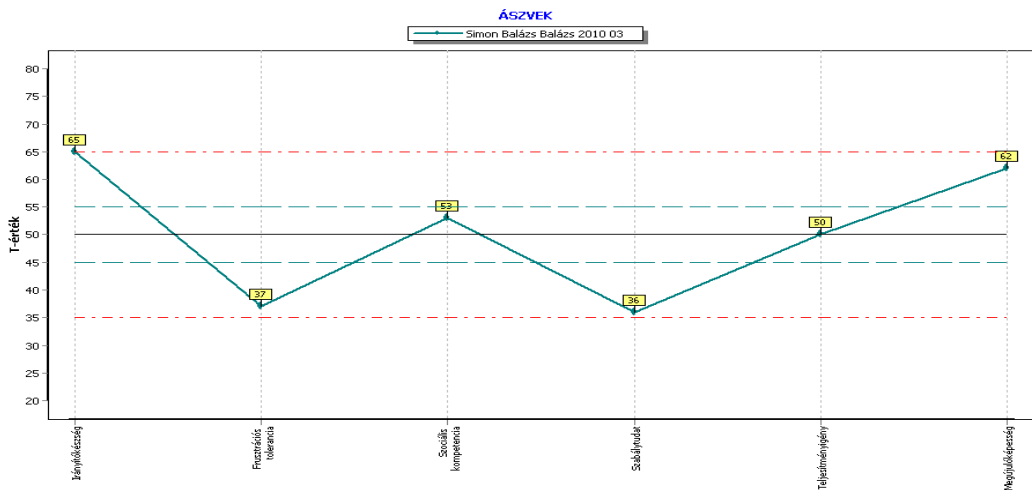
By the middle of the second year, I was almost certain to be dropped out. I was saved by a scene that Zoli Schneider and I and others created together. Zoli was not happy as an acting student either; he preferred to manufacture with wood. We were rehearsing one of the 'lovers' scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and we figured out that we would make a pool. What followed was truly dreamlike: we spent all day splashing around in our own fifth-floor swimming pool; the caretaker convened a daily case management committee over what he thought was a bumpy floor (it didn't leak!), while we both excelled at our work *unnoticed* and our peers soared with us. Peter Brook saw the exam and offered me a job and apprenticeship. In the presence of Brook I could recognise a less power-related manner of rehearsal and I had been assured in my instinctive approaches. Brook was light, disciplined and deep. He could close and open doors in a way that you could feel the creative power of real time decisions. With them, theatre always was a group experience, which I preferred, rather than the solitude of post-soviet masters.

¹⁵³ Siegel: Mindsight 166-190o.

EXTREME SELF-IMAGES

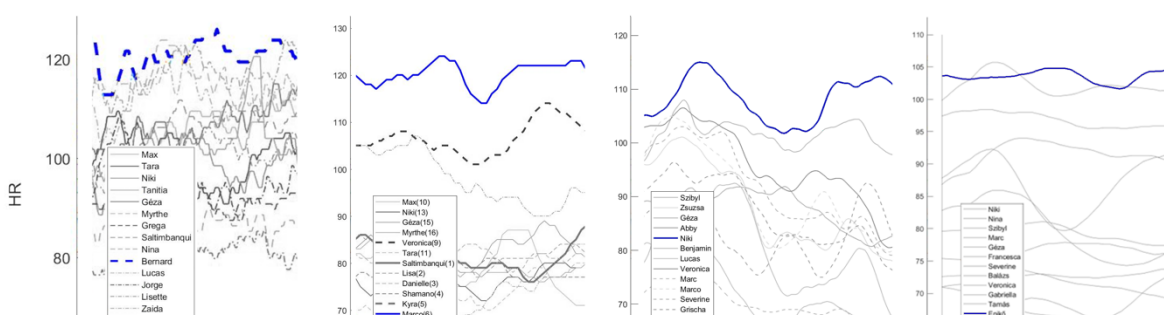
Brooks' appraisal has twisted my status at the UFTA. I was not only saved from the 'horror of drop-out' but I could feel like a genius again. The experience more and more deeply laid the bed for the bipolar tendency that had fully developed by my early thirties. The 'everything works for me' state is altered by collapse without degrees. A theatrical messiah of our time, or a talentless pimp?

I could have been cured, or I would not have been inflicted by the problem, if someone had helped me, to recognise in time, why I shouldn't *identify* with the way others, in my imagination or in reality, judge me. I should have known my personality structure, with all its strengths and weaknesses, early on. I should have known what the low *frustration tolerance* and *rule-following* values meant, and that I could easily change them. And I should have trusted my high values of renewal and management.



46. Figure My personality profile based on the General Organizational and Leadership Skills questionnaire

Many directors suffer from bipolar states of self-esteem. This is why I find my own story typical. The struggles of being a director in the viscerally autocratic Hungarian theatre system reserves similar stressors for us, leaving similar traces on our personalities, however different we are in every other way. What is generally lacking in the UFTA and professional houses, at least the ones I've been working in the 12 of my active years in the Hungarian repertory system, is an objective approach to mental phenomena in the life of theatre. I am referring to the Hungarian system, not that hierarchical and self-confidence problems, paranoid behaviour or self-destructive lifestyles are just dysfunctions of the Hungarian "directorial career model"



Regular psychotherapy or group supervision should be an 'occupational health requirement' for managers and directors as well. The myth of the man-eating giant or the redemptive director holds us all captive and forces all of us working in the different job-posts of the performance industry, especially directors, into a constant, hierarchical self- and public-ranking. Although healthy self-esteem is indeed very important for the director, sensitivity, a poetic, psychological or dramatic sense, and imagination are more important 'directorial virtues' than self-confidence.

I will now continue to tell my personal story - in a way that I intend to remain coherent as a narrative – but from the perspective of another concept.

CN II. NAME IT AND TAME IT!

What we can name is manageable. From the very beginning of my conscious life, I remember some specific feelings that are now being explained.

It has always been the search for 'well-being' (WB), more than friendships, financial security, theatrical-linguistic ambitions, even more than success, that has been the unconscious driving force of my theatrical existence! An uneasy, painful sadness, a feeling of an inner void. Probably familiar to all theatre people, this tormenting longing that appears when the theatre is *not good*. The feeling of well-being is that of harmony, the result of integration of a dynamic, nonlinear system that rises above the level of the 'inner sea' when the subsystems are in balance. In other words, the multivariate system called man, experiences the feeling of WB when, in the flow of integration, his mind and brain unify for short periods of time, becoming one in complexity, only to inevitably break down again into subsystems (brainstem, limbic and prefrontal structures). In the patterns of brain areas involved, no two integrations are the same, but we do perceive something identical, a qualitative change: a higher quality.

We need this fuel of being, if we are short of it, then nothing will be sacred anymore. I often get the feeling that in most areas of life, even behind destructive behaviour, the same craving - hunger - for quality is latent. I have sought out new and abandoned worn institutions; smeared or taken on conflicts; invented or abandoned performance forms; created and abandoned communities to get this hard-to-get drug: the quality.

The longing for well-being stems from our infancy and before. Everyone knows WB from an early age and remains capable of perceiving it. Nature accustoms us to a wonderful

quality of balance and the lack of it haunts us for a lifetime.

From my first experience of preschool poem-recital contests, the only thing that could alleviate my sense of lack was the experience of quality. As a director, I am an ill man when I lack 'true quality' and I feel better when the story is accurate; when the image is dynamic; when the emotion is authentic; when the rhythm is alive; or when the music is strong.

This is an important revelation of Peter Brook's personal experience: 'We live by an intuitive sense of quality, and most of our attitudes and decisions are guided by it. True quality has an objective reality and is governed by precise laws; all phenomena rise and fall, level by level, according to a natural scale of values'¹⁵⁴.

Brook is here referring to Gurdjieff's view, who depicts the universe in a hierarchy of octaves, from the highest frequency creatures' vibrations to the lowest frequency existence of rocks. Between MI and FA and SOL and DO, the vibration stops. In these so-called intervals the waves can be moved along only by an external impulse. Each sound is also the DO of a subsequent octave.

My experience as a child that the perception of quality, like the other senses, can be trained, refined - or even dulled if not trained - is now confirmed by scientific research.¹⁵⁵ Experimental results on the neuroplastic support of conscious self-development help to dispel the mystery surrounding the hierarchical notion of *talent* from a scientific point of view.

The existence of physical skills may be a threshold criterion in music or visual arts, but theatre is different, where the possibilities of the creator are determined by his or her awareness, self-strength and capacity for action. Once again, the chorus of Stanislavsky and Grotowsky from the first chapter resounds: the way to progress as an actor is to work on myself.

Gurdjieff says: 'To be a real actor, one must be a real human. A real human can be an actor, and a real actor can be a real human. Everyone should try to be a real actor. That is a very high goal. All religions, all knowledge aims at being a real actor. But right now everybody is just an actor'¹⁵⁶.

TO BELONG TO A GROUP

Long before I became aware of my current interest in this direction, I had a late adolescent

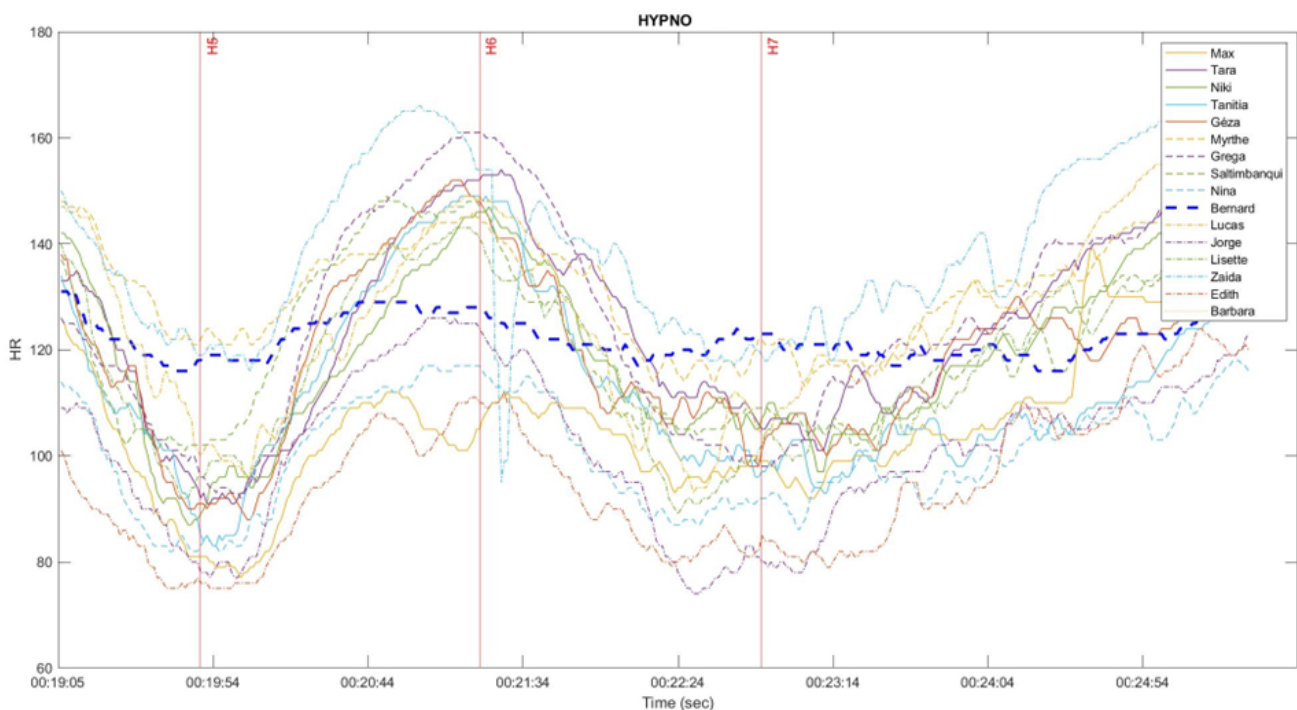
¹⁵⁴ Peter Brook: *The Secret Dimension* excerpt from Needleman/Baker 'Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching' The Continuum International NY. 1998

¹⁵⁵ The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance K. Anders Ericsson, Ralf Th. Krampe, and Clemens Tesch-Römer *Psychologica Review* 1993, Vol. 100. No. 3, 363-4

¹⁵⁶ Gurdjieff *Beszél tanítványainak*, Gurdjieff Talks to his Students - Püski 2010

revelation according to which I put a methodological ‘invention’ at the heart of my theatre work making collaborative work as a requirement for my colleagues. My early experiences of theatrical well-being have been, one by one, as a creative experience shared by several people. Miraculously self-moving scenes, ideas that came out of nowhere and defined whole performances: huge, shared laughs, equality, and no rules. This is how I experienced the joy of creation. I do not deny the role and time of responsible personal decisions in creation while at the core of rehearsals for me only democracy exists. In hypnosis there is a distinction between male and female styles. If we accept the hypothesis that the director is a hypnotist, my way has always been the female way.

I have tried to reconstruct successful creative behaviour and the underlying group dynamics at a completely different moment in another rehearsal period, and this has led to a huge waste of time, which is one of the biggest problems in theatre. This is the nature of coping schemas: our brains, shaped by our experiences, reactivate once-successful strategies stored in the grooves, whether we need to or not. This was the case with the push to collective creation and the equal role of the director in the group.



*SEQ Figure * ARABIC 48. Figure: Orchestrating of a theatre group, the leader (Bernhardt)'s curve is the dashed one in the middle*

If I couldn't be the friend of actors, I would be weakened. I never liked the role of the tough boss, I preferred to play the revolutionary who only shouts when he is proven right, but

the director who games with power for me, was not a good fit. On many occasions I failed to heat up this ideally posited democratic way of working. From a distance it might seem that things were going well. I was working in good places, good jobs; I was succeeding for the most part, I was just more and more confused, deep down.

If the actors in a particular rehearsal stage did not welcome the great deal of equality, I identified them with childhood bullies, and my communication with them consisted of fixed (offensive/defensive) behavioural responses.

How much of a real problem is bullying and over-powering in theatre? Of course it's too widespread¹⁵⁷; - and there is a lot that could be covered here, but I don't want to go into that in detail now. The roles of bully, victim and idle observer are played by every group organised along hierarchical lines, from the Prime Minister's office to the rehearsal room¹⁵⁸. Especially when, like in Hungary, harassment becomes the norm in the public sphere, it is too in schools or in theatres so sensitive to social dynamics.

In working with Roma communities, I have become very sensitive to all forms of harassment, spotting the signs and taking action against it. Lately I had a bitter experience in a repertory theatre where I shouldn't be conducting crusades against bullying instead of directing the play. Now I feel the visceral rejection that I encountered was almost natural. In these theatres, the director's work cannot be therapeutic, even if it is very much needed. Simply because that is not what we are contracted to. There is also a need for leniency towards colleagues working in institutional theatres. They should not be held accountable for the many difficulties that shaped their personalities, yet they try again and again to walk the path of quality, even if this is rarely possible precisely because of the rigid power relatedness of the structure.

I'm sometimes asked what it was about the beginning of the new millennium that turned me against my career in repertory theatres. If I feel like talking, I say 'novelty seeking'¹⁵⁹: I always seek new ground; I love travelling theatres; looted cinemas; mouldy culture houses; rocket silos; fortresses; gyms; meadows; tents; amusement parks; and the direct feedback of an unaffected audience. If I don't feel like talking, I'll diplomatically say, 'I'm embarrassed to know nothing else but the world of the theatre.'

In fact, both are true, but neither is entirely coherent. Between the age of 23 and 34 was the age of constant creation: 11 obscure years and 40 performances. My father's

¹⁵⁷ Stefanie Maiya Lehmann -Celeste Morris Facing (and Fixing) the Problem of Sexual Harassment in Theatre, in Southern Theatre, Fall 2018

¹⁵⁸ *A zaklatás* - Barbara Coloroso: Zaklatók, áldozatok, szemlélők: az iskolai erőszak. Harmat Budapest 2014.

¹⁵⁹ ...the typical living conditions of teenagers...

unexpected death was the shock that helped a very strong feeling of absence to spill over the threshold of my consciousness.

It happened on a Vision Quest¹⁶⁰: I was tying a knots on a long straw to keep from getting lost in the incessant dialogue going on in my mind, when the two ends of the straw came together I suddenly realised with pain that I was surrounded by repetition, and that the barrier to wakefulness was seated in my head; but what it was I had no idea. I found myself in a state of some fundamental underdevelopment. In fact through a narrow gap, I saw some tiny reality: that I lacked control over my own inner life; I lacked knowledge of reality not only outside but also inside.

BELONGING TO A COMMUNITY

From childhood I was accompanied by religious practice. I was baptised by my will at the age of 10. During my primary school years, prayer and immersion in the liturgy meant a lot to me amongst the crazy challenges of everyday life. Then came adolescence, with its unconfessable sins, and the religious search stopped for a dozen of those obscure years. My father, a great fan of Castaneda and Zen, left me many books, and after his death my instinctual tapering continued. Mircea Eliade's extensive parallel analyses of religion, Jung's and Suzuki's writings, all helped to broaden the search. Then, on the kind pressure of none other than Peter Brook, I came to the *Fragments of the Unknown Teaching (in Search of Miraculous)*¹⁶¹. It was the most complex and objective reading of man and his possible 'harmonious evolution' I ever bumped into.

I walked the path of self-knowledge alone and only in my head: readings, texts, discussions, ideas: all in the mind. I ignored Ouspensky's message that to progress I needed to meet others who displayed a more developed awareness, a stronger presence. Although I stuffed myself with spiritual texts, and checked my watch every day, the big cataclysm, the enlightenment, never came. All the heavy reading was in vain, my powers of attention and coordination remained weak, and I could not have stayed still for 10 minutes if I had tried meditation.

Finally, after a familiarly hectic work period, another failure-like-success, I decided to join a community of this unknown teaching.

¹⁶⁰ Indian initiation ritual for a week without food, only water alone in the wilderness.

¹⁶¹ P. D. Ouspensky *Egy ismeretlen tanítás töredékei*, *In the Search of Miraculous* - Püski – új ág, 1996

WORKING ON MYSELF

Through regular meditations, movement exercises¹⁶² meetings, and belonging to the group, I have gradually mastered the practice of observing the processes of my inner world. But just because I began to understand the mechanisms that were happening in and around me did not mean that they had changed.

What was happening within the 'group' was so much more real than I ever experienced. No wonder, then, that I wanted to implement this sense of reality in the theatrical environment immediately, which was usually met with vehement rejection. I didn't listen to my elders who warned me not to agitate for the 'search for truth'; everyone has their own moment when they need inner work. People in the theatre didn't understand where the 'familiar Balázs' had gone. For me it was impossible to get the old theatre/social ways back and see theatre work in a good old professional way. After the initial rapid internal development, my professional life situation began to deteriorate. As my mind expanded, so too did my hubris, leading me into increasingly disastrous situations: for example, regularly herding actors of opposing temperaments together for the purpose of revealing themselves. The increasing confusion resulted in weaker productions. My segregation in the theatre world seemed irreversible.

My mother, whom I must ever thank a lot in crisis situations, regularly sent me the cutting edge of contemporary psychology, the revolutionary works of Ekman, Goleman, Siegel, Amen, Kabat Zinn; they were gathering dust on the shelf. One day, I overcame the rest of my prejudice about the psychological sciences and picked up Goleman's book on destructive emotions¹⁶³. I was stirred by the scientific, practical voice of the new psychology. Again, I suddenly realised that I was in trouble, and would remain in trouble, unless I managed to better understand the dynamics of relationships, of groups - of society - in practice. I decided to study again.

¹⁶² A special form of inner work, one would call it movement meditation, shown at the end of Peter Brook's film Meetings with Remarkable Men. <https://www.gurdjieff.hu/mozgasgyakorlatok>

¹⁶³ Daniel Goleman: Destructive Emotions And How Can We Overcome Them, Bantam Dell NYC 2004

IV. THE EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY

THE ACTOR CITIZEN

I was 35. I wanted to acquire the ability, with scientifically sure tools, to gently control the often seemingly uncontrollable creative group work. To make peak experiences reachable. I saw in science the assurance that, through a conscious approach, the extraordinary closeness that develops in the creative processes of the theatre would become an engine of social development. Although my faith in science has not diminished, after nearly twenty years I can see that my faith in the revolutionary paradigm shift of perspective, was rather an age-symptom, a developmental stage, and not a real possibility. I no longer have my trust, but my hope and my work remain. That art-based society is not just a mirage of redemption, but a real opportunity for a social change of perspective is evident from the fact that it is a vision of too many artists, such as members of theatre groups belonging to the anthropological tradition, including the member organisations of the RIOTE platform. Hippies? If we is, it is still a valid reality, which, as a solid humanism, stays in stark contrast to the pragmatic forces of world organisation, which are concerned solely with material profit. The realisation that the positive fraternal forces that are concentrated in a democratic micro-community will never control the world should not excuse us from further developing fraternity as a form of interpersonal existence, since, even if we cannot eliminate power and money, we are obliged to challenge its monolithic power.

This hope and possibility for social progress, represented by the theatre as a model community, is made tangible by the fifteen years of the Street Theatre Creative Community. The ever-repeated conflicts of interest reveal a possible perspective of democratic micro-communities that set, as a goal, the spiritual growth of members and target groups. Yet they still need to survive in the material world, i.e. live off money and make a living. When we founded Spec.Street, we were driven by our civil inertia, facing deepening social divisions, to find a direct way to reach the audience by combining a suitable form and place.

In 2005, Péter Halász handed over the artistic management of the City Theatre on Kálvária Square, known as the geometric centre of the capital's Harlem district, to István Szalay Szabó for a symbolic one forint (the coin still existed). Szalay planned to address the Roma population of the district in his programme. For this he called me to be his partner; I had local knowledge thanks to my previous work with Halász. I proposed a plan for a community-themed popular theatre production and we set about creating *Nesze! Nesze!*

Nesze! (Puff! Puff! Puff!), a contemporary text-based production on the ‘phenomenon’ of László Vitéz (the Hungarian equivalent of the Punch and Judy-style ‘brawl’ puppet show). The production, which was created in spring 2006, was not without merit, despite a rehearsal period hampered by the state of the building, regular break-in burglaries and a severe lack of funds. But it did not live up to expectations; at least, it failed to attract the district's Roma audience to the theatre.

ATTEMPTS OF FORMING CREATIVE COMMUNITIES I.

The next plan was to use the space in front of the theatre as a meeting point between the audience and the theatre. Knowing from my previous work, *Soldat Pulcinella*, of the impact of Commedia dell'Arte style half masks, we invited Italian teachers (Fuser, Perocco, Rota, Collavino, Branca) to provide masks and expertise and to perform with us. The group of actors, freely organised, threw themselves into the exploration of masked play with great relish. The masked troupe took to the square and, with improvisations inspired by contemporary crime stories, organised a permanent audience of several hundred people over ten consecutive-days. The masks were very well received by the audience, which was of course not only of Roma origin. The premise was true: they meant nothing to them culturally, but the precious pieces of leather shortened the reach-out and helped the storytelling as well as providing an immediate theatrical impact.

We did not stop at the historical archetypes of the masks. We were inspired by medieval characterology and the genre, while approaching the figures in a completely subjective way. The Street Theatre Creative Community, also named the Spec.Street, which was formed with a great inner revelation, held dozens of performances in housing estates and prisons in the autumn of 2007. The work continued into the winter, and an association was founded, in which the non-profit manager Barna Petrányi was already involved. The production *Matt*, which was presented at the Budapest Fringe, was awarded the main prize. But working with the Italian cast-members became untenable in the long run. Our second production, *Mustafa Come Home!*, was created with much controversy, at the Zsámbéki Theatre Base. Although it was taken with the help of the UNDP to the poorest region of Hungary, the Cserehát, the ‘pain of facing reality’, despite the extraordinary experiences, soon tore this first company apart.

SECOND COMMUNITY

In the spring of 2009, we started to organise a new company. With the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of working with masks, we asked actor-director Eleonora Fuser and master mask-maker Stefano Perocco, two people of renown in the world of COMDELLA, to take on the job of creating a performance. Fuser offered to create a performance entitled *Hungary's Heroes*, depicting the controversial figures of Hungarian history. In a workshop group of nearly fifty people, wonderful improvisations resonated the theme energetically. However, the presence of the masters proved to be very limited this time too, and the performance, which was created with many emotive participants of different professional background, did not really become coherent. No one could accommodate and sustain this exaggerated volume of work, which was so different from the usual independent theatre. However, the following company was assembled: Livia Csúz; Eszter Kovács; Krisztián Simó; Balázs Szitás; Gergő Tas; and Péter Lipka.

In the winter of 2010, we organised an open, long-term, masked, street theatre laboratory with Peter Lipka. He led sessions in contact dance, psychodynamic and improvisational training. We explored together the possibilities of adapting masked work and the framework of community creation and, as a side effect, the methods of grass-root democratic decision-making. The five months of training resulted in two performances. The *Prince of No Man's Land* and *Johnny's Last Commission* were masked, improvisational, co-creations, relying heavily on direct contact with the audience.

In the autumn of 2010, *Prince of No Man's* won the award for street theatre performance of the year at the Vidor festival. The company, which consolidated here, has developed the projects of the near future, *The Playground*, which toured 21 Hungarian housing estates, and *The Theatre for Everyone*, which focused on Roma-majority settlements in north of Hungary. The latter had its first non-performance offshoots: skills and community development sessions and theatre kid camps. Peter placed the masks in the psycho-dynamic space; it was then that we discovered that they could have therapeutic significance as projection surfaces.

In the spring of 2011, the event structure, combining the virtues of forum theatre and masked improvisation, *You to Continue!*, was born and became our most performed show alongside *Prince*.

In the autumn of 2011, our applied theatre programme at the Juvenile Prison in Tököl proved to be an eye-opening experience for the company. The double identity disappeared; we

abandoned the idea of being street theatre, going from festival to festival to earn some money to support social challenges. We realised that two profiles required different training. We therefore consciously moved away from the world of street attractions, which remained still dear to my heart, and focused exclusively on apprehending knowledge for the social application of theatre work.

In 2011, we were invited by the staff of a community development project in northern Hungary, *Giving Wings to Pigs*¹⁶⁴, to directly participate in the diagnostic work in the villages. Our work then moved even more towards building relationships post-performance, wherein theatre became a tool for community development. This shift in the approach has now filtered through the company: members who rather saw themselves in the theatre/circus roles have left, while others, who were attracted to the social programme, have emerged.

In 2012, the Theatre for Everyone camp and its presentation at the Sziget Festival, in professional partnership with the Roma Film Academy, attracted the interest of the US Ambassador. A few months later he presented us with the Civil Citizenship Award, one of the most prestigious awards available in the Hungarian civil society today.

2013 was a breakthrough year: our EXCEPT programme was supported by the EACEA; we won two-year TÁMOP funding; and, in 2015, with the support of NCTA, we ran 12 performing arts groups in Borsod County. With around 300 young people, 30 local teachers and volunteers working on a weekly basis, we got as far from being theatre artists, in the traditional sense, as never before.

THIRD COMMUNITY

In 2014, the third company was formed. We developed an applied theatre event for victims of prostitution and those at risk, which, perhaps most effectively, synthesised our improvisational skills and field knowledge as well as the therapeutic pre-considerations of the projective use of commedia masks. The reality of the interview material delivered by Judit Bari was brought into a manageable distance by the masks, offering a kind of cognitive frame for the participating underage prostitutes, enabling them to formulate their own experiences into a coherent narrative. We were joined in our work by psychologist Dr Anna Aczél, who accompanied us as part ‘supervisor’ and part ‘inspirer’ throughout the two years of regular work in closed institutions, especially in the Girls' Educational of Rákospalota and the Fostering Institution in Esztergom. Judit Bari's first play, *The Choir of Disadvantaged Angels*,

¹⁶⁴ http://www.ruralnet.hu/?page_id=247

was an organic continuation of this work and the first performance of the Spec.Street, which was produced classically, in a built theatre in 2015.

Our two works with at-risk young people, the play about them and our theatre group, which had already begun to be called therapy and had been active for three years with the underage students of the Noszlop Rehabilitation Institute for Drug and Alcohol Patients, made us worthy of the Grand Prix of the child protection profession, named after György Ferenczy in 2017.

As a follow-up to our EXCEPT project, we regularly hold a Summer Academy for young Europeans to exchange socially sensitive artistic practices each year.

We created a mini-festival in the poorest settlements of northeast of Hungary, called *Made in Gypsystan Festival*, to showcase the multinational theatre of joy-performances that are born here and the youth performances that are born in our regular camps for Roma youth.

FOURTH COMMUNITY

Through our street theatre, Géza Pintér, invited us to join RIOTE, the European street theatre platform. To this day, this theatrical opening - play training, new knowledge, a bit of freedom from social work - is still very much appreciated. The result of this nostalgic theatrical mode of operation is the performance *The Conference of Birds*, which brings the very subtle theme of spiritual quest to the audience of free spaces at any given time. We yearn for consolidation, but the already established ties and orientations, the network of relationships, the gravity of the programmes we have been involved in so far, no longer allows us to live a completely new identity: a 'petty bourgeois' life in our community space in the Fűszer & Csemege in Budapest.

While our most important fourteen-year-long relationship with the Roma communities of Eastern Hungary has never gained the normative support that would be minimally necessary to run the group systems we have already established and built, we are satisfying the resurgent need of villagers in the Cserehát Region for a theatrical experience by means of witty solutions and tricky project forms. Such is the case with *TeatRom Festival*, which, incidentally, is becoming a brand as one of the rare Roma arts festivals in Europe.

DETOURS

It was for four to five years in the last decade and a half that Spec.Street was perhaps what we had dreamed it to be: a group of artist-teachers that also functioned as a theatre company.

Ideally, our daily practice was theatre in all its forms: work in closed institutions; children's groups in villages; theatre rehearsals and performances; skill sharing training; and our own psychodrama group. I am writing in the past tense because, at the time of writing, there are only two people in the community and the Edenic conditions described above are being replaced by a struggle with the difficulties of Hungarian reality. Everything has changed in the last five years. In the Hungary of the 2020s, the confusion and shrinking of funding opportunities make it impossible to sustain such a specialised dual-identity company. This is simply because some of these activities do not make money and visibility, while others make only a very modest amount. All of them require peace of mind, time and a reliable salary for the membership. The work of the association is now more focused on successfully bringing to life the achievements of the past through single projects. In these occasional settings, we try to restart the stagnant currents with old group members, and of course with new ones, for whom we cannot take long-term financial responsibility, while also continuing to look for theatrical solutions to the problems of Hungarian (European?) Society.

We find that the spiritual and mental state of our society is shockingly storm-worn; there is no cheerfulness, trust and forgiveness. For this to happen, we would need a basic operation, a spread of public thinking and vision based on empathy, which could be awakened in the framework of groups with common interests, but not necessarily with the same values. This empathic way of being is outlined by the 9th sense. This sensibility had to be developed at first place amongst the ever-changing membership of Spec.Street.

THE UNDERDEVELOPED 9TH SENSE

In the 2007 production *Matt*, professionals experimented with a whole new body of knowledge. They saw one thing and I saw another. They saw a theatrical message of a genre in a performance and I saw a community of self-improvement, where participants learn, train, and freely take on as much fieldwork as their lives allow, with subjective responsibility. Later, the challenges of fieldwork have shaped our tools and we have tried to work with high efficiency in a theatrical frontier we have been developing.

Right from the first encounters, it was clear that, in closed social groups, the quality of life they enjoyed while engaging with us became a need. It also started to become clear that this was a two-way addiction; communities we have been in regular contact with over the years had also become indispensable in our lives.

The fact that Spec.Street's social achievements far more outstrip its professional

theatrical acclaim and founding possibilities is testament to the fact that excluded segments of society are starved of theatre. Our time is calling for all those who nurture and share the living artistic qualities in society's underprivileged communities today.

Our language is theatre; I believe in its universal reach and infinite possibilities. I can speak about it, but surely other disciplines and arts can also certainly create the direct connection that is needed, and not only in the margins of society.

‘The planet does not need more successful people. The planet is in desperate need of more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers and all other loving people - it needs people to live in peace in their own place. It needs more people willing to join the struggle with courageous morality to make this land habitable and humane - and these qualities have little to do with success.’¹⁶⁵

His Holiness has hit our most sensitive point. Not if the members of Spec Street would have resigned of success; no, we are just constantly digesting the fact that our activities deserve less of reward and attention in the artists' society. It has always become clear to me during our meetings with the theatre elite - of which I'm a member too - that we have a different hunger; our hunger is refined while Spec.Streets' theatre is a simple meal.

Spec.Street performances should not have often been talked about as a professional end-product. We were a self-taught group, everyone did something a little different from what they did best. Despite fifteen years as a professional director, for example, I was sometimes an amateur actor. I worked on my neglected skills in training and over the last fifteen years in front of others and myself, I have become a reliable, skilfully improvising actor.

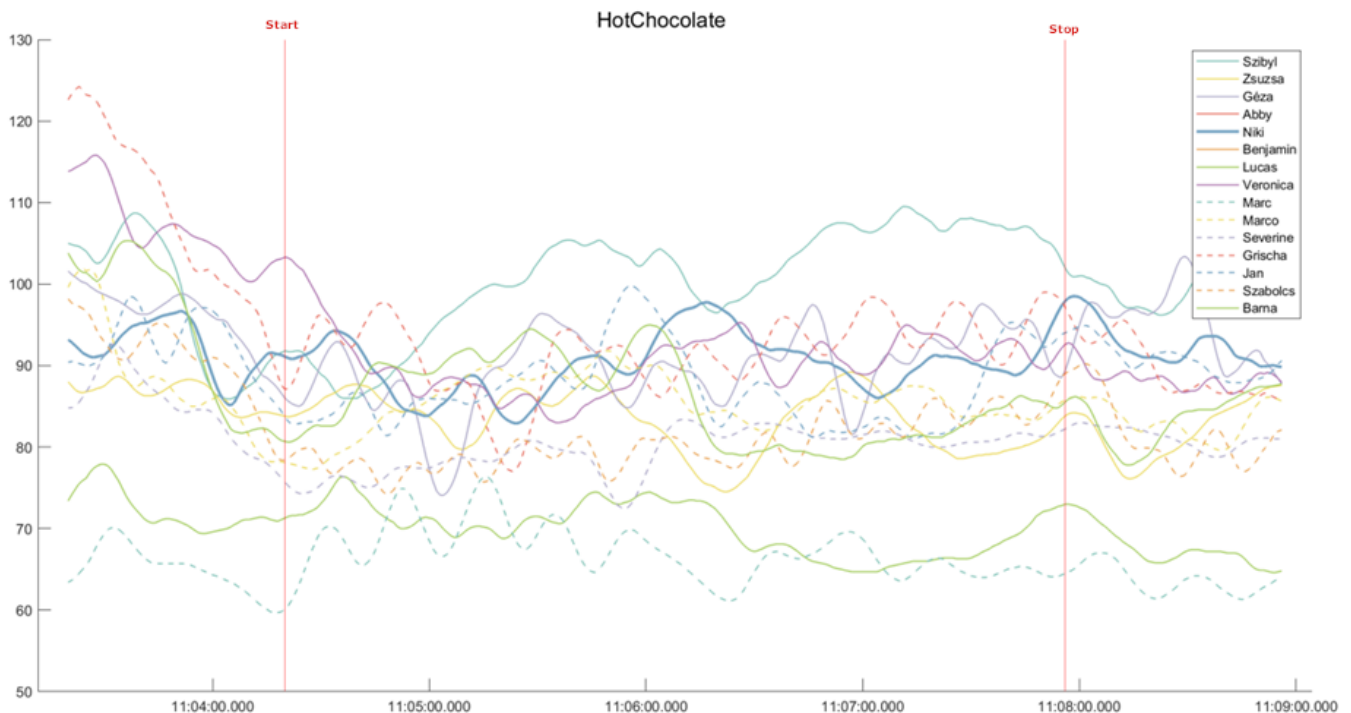
IN THEATRE THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS DEMOCRACY! (?)

From time to time, the Spec.Street troupes have been torn apart by shortcomings in the community management practice procedure. Members were mostly intrigued by their first sight of the way it works, although they must add that they think ‘there is no democracy in theatre’. My answer is ready: in a society where democracy is traditionally ostensible, it is harder to find it in the theatre. In play, the theatre is truly democratic; what surrounds the theatre can be hierarchical, and the theatre as action is phenomenologically free.

The truth is not quite so romantic, although there have been times when we have gone to extremes in two areas of community decision-making: the day-to-day organisational work and the artistic work of the creative community, although the responsibility has always remained mine. Hundreds of strategic flip chart notes preserve our endless conversations, which for many were simply boring. The hierarchical ambitions of the group members were

¹⁶⁵ A Facebook post of Dalai Lama

surreal, while I often ceded neither the directorial nor the managerial helm to the group. These adherences and urges are contrary to everything we have set up as principles. This is the truth



SEQ Figure * ARABIC 49. Figure: Parallel, non-synchronous vocal improvisation about us: the parallel effect of sublime and subpar vectors keeps the pendulum swinging, while we remain in one place. As time passes, we subtly become enriched. In a democratic process, the hierarchical nature of man is constantly questioned, if you like, and controlled by the logic of the fraternal community.

The fact that we are now moving back towards a more single-person responsibility, towards strengthening the role of managers and directors in everyday life and rehearsals, is not a retreat from the original principles. Everyday democracy would require a permanent company to be together daily, and community creation, in the full sense of the word, would require a long period of rehearsal.

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

For its first five heroic years, the Spec.Street was kept alive by the power of my mania, stubbornness being as powerful a motivator as faith. Our untrodden path was a revelation to all the members: the needs of our audiences, later participants, led us to increasingly new event-formulas, to ever more purposeful pedagogical work and, ultimately, to conscious community-development. We had to find out everything, even rediscover what maybe others

in the world at large had already invented elsewhere.

The Roma community of Tomor; the children of the Tatabánya Miners' Settlement or the Calvary Square; the projections of juvenile victims of prostitution or of tough prisoners; and the contemptuous-encouraging smiles of old colleagues: they all gave a different impetus to the wheel of search. We looked first for popular forms - masks, puppetry, physical theatre, clowning and circus - to animate our audiences. From this grew the theatre-pedagogical way that we work. Ours is not a method to be canonised - others will find different means – for it is the gesture of *applied performing art* that can be shared. Connecting with social groups that are excluded or isolated from the arts is a given for any motivated artist. The knowledge that is inherent in theatrical creation is a general human skill - group dynamics; leadership skills and abilities; attentiveness; cooperation; and creativity management - that all artists who create in dance, music and theatre know and practice at a much higher level than is common in any subgroup of society.

In the EXCEPT project, we have made a very promising attempt to render this expertise conscious. Now the RIOTE platform, as an organically organised and sustainable international community, presents an even more complete approach. In the RIOTE 3 programme, members are autonomous theatre groups who address their chosen communities with their own toolbox and wide range of expertise, entirely in their own native language. But there is one thing that it is good to acquire sooner or later if you want to go deep into society, and that is a wetsuit: the psychological and pedagogical protection that makes the dive more relaxed.

For nearly a decade, the geometric centre of our socially engaged work has been the supervision sessions led by child therapist Dr. Ágnes Hódi.

Anyone who undertakes the work of an applied artist must be a practitioner-artist. The joy of lived creation is reflected by participants willingly, even if it is onerous. The most important fuel of our pedagogical results is the developmental power of the personal relationship that is created and shared during the liberated creative work. We are artists with free will here to create this very performance.

We do not represent the responsibility of the state, but our own; we are convinced that what we create is important nourishment for people living with a lot of hurt, anger, or in deep poverty. We are not the people of the KLIKK (Klébersberg Institutional Maintenance Centre, the centralised command system of today's Hungarian Education) or the Family Protection Service; we are not to be feared, nor are we not to be conformed to. Our job is not to judge the social condition of children, although it is our right as citizens to form an opinion on what we

see. That doesn't mean we shouldn't work with institutions, but neither do we have to identify with laws and rules if they are stupid or rigid. We can be far from either side. Unlike schooling, being with us is not in the direct financial interest of families in poverty; in Hungary, those who do not school their children are held accountable by law. Our presence offers an opportunity: if someone feels, come and play with us; if not, it's not a complete sentence. Volunteering solves the notoriously biggest 'targeting' problem of extreme poverty: lack of motivation.

NGO PARLIAMENT

Peter Brook writes to the Teatro Valle theatre squatters:

'In our world where everything is in decline at every level - it is very easy to say that nothing can be done here although that is almost true, is a complete lie. Because however fatal, however dramatically limited the situation, something can be done. That is what you have shown very heroically and courageously in not letting this theatre be wiped off the map and turned into what is the symbol of our times - a supermarket! The way you have done it has highlighted so many things. First and foremost, no matter how fractured and fragmented society may be, small groups can still work together, understand each other and achieve common action. What you have done is entirely positive - I think that only positive things are worthy of our attention today. For us to sit around, scratching our heads and complaining about how much negativity is all around us is too easy and destructive to our environment as well as to ourselves. You did it together, it shows that it is possible to think, work, argue, feel and act together in a group.'

Brook knows such groups in theatre and in spiritual inner work as well. Whatever a group is about, the ninth sense is needed to function. The leaders responsible for groups could rightly be expected to create and keep alive the non-hierarchical, safe climate of creativity. Above all, group members must experience their autonomy and real responsibility. Responsibility and duty are not the same. In autocracy, the individual is excluded from bearing responsibility. The development of individual responsibility requires the responsiveness of the community, so that the citizen can have confidence that his or her actions can have an impact on the directions of the community.

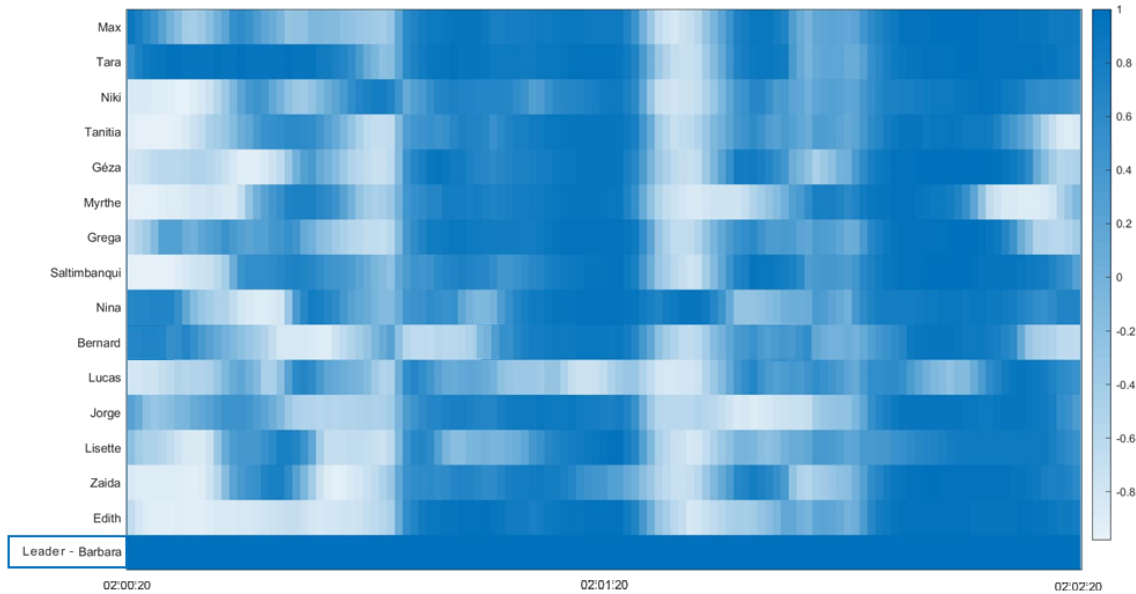
Most of us members of the RIOTE partnership, at almost the same time, in the mid 2000s, came to the same solution: to move away from large social organisations and try to live our art in our immediate environment, in self-organising communities. Working as equals, according to our own expertise and our own vision of the common good; to lead organisations without hierarchy, or at least with an awkward balance between the necessary steps of leadership and the eruptions of power. In the simple truths of personal relationships - in decision-making -, the possibility of the first level of democracy appears. The laws of

integration are also true for a larger system; it is the complementary, persistent balance of diversity that can make a person, a group, or a society, healthy. Diversity is our natural state; we must learn to live in entropy, not to impose order on it by force.

Exclusion, the loud rejection of others' worlds - their stories - is a negative energy in our shared space. We know that negative energies resonate or get stored up. Can we relate to each other in an adult way? First we should exercise silence. And in the silence, deeper changes, a series of inner transformation, 'unlearning' unfold. We need to learn to transpose relational tensions into the field of inner and outer work. This is the group's common-working space defined by the mental health protocol. Can you imagine parliament, for example, operating according to such laws?

The refreshing diversity of real society is represented by the natural range of many NGOs: associations; foundations; cooperatives; clubs; aquatic and theatre companies; local and public interest groups; or political parties. Is it utopian to have representatives of NGOs running the state? In assembly form, mentally healthy groups would retain the environment necessary for secure attachment, for the safe operation of the polyvagal brake.

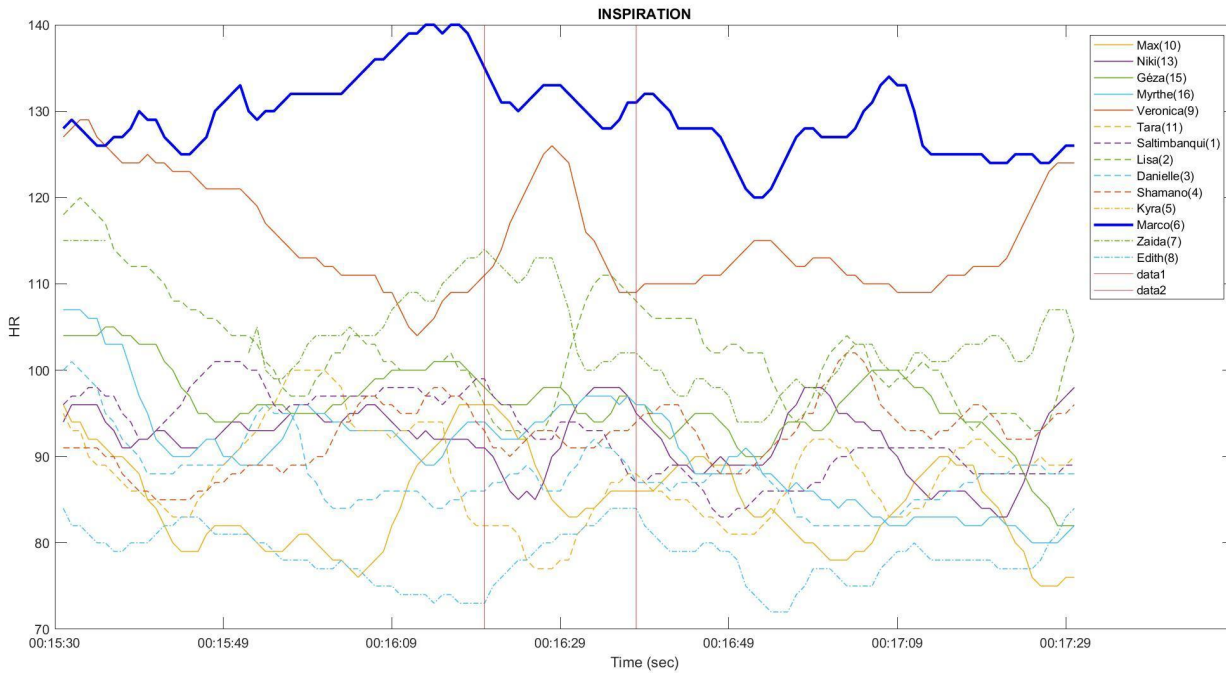
The interpretation of reality by all civil society assembly is much more accurate than that of the current political system. Though we all see the world from one distinct direction - from the right, from the left, from below, from above -, we are not trying to defeat each other's points of view but, according to the protocol of mindsight societies, to integrate them. Shared decision-making requires an enormous amount of patience, as well as trust, not only in each other, but in the fact that a solution will be found. Most leadership conflicts arise from the fact that each group member has a different frame of resilience for safety. Some people want to know all the details of a trip three months in advance, others are OK to be told the night before what the next day's programme will be. Voters are in favour of leaders who put safety before all other considerations. Although there is no argument about the important security of



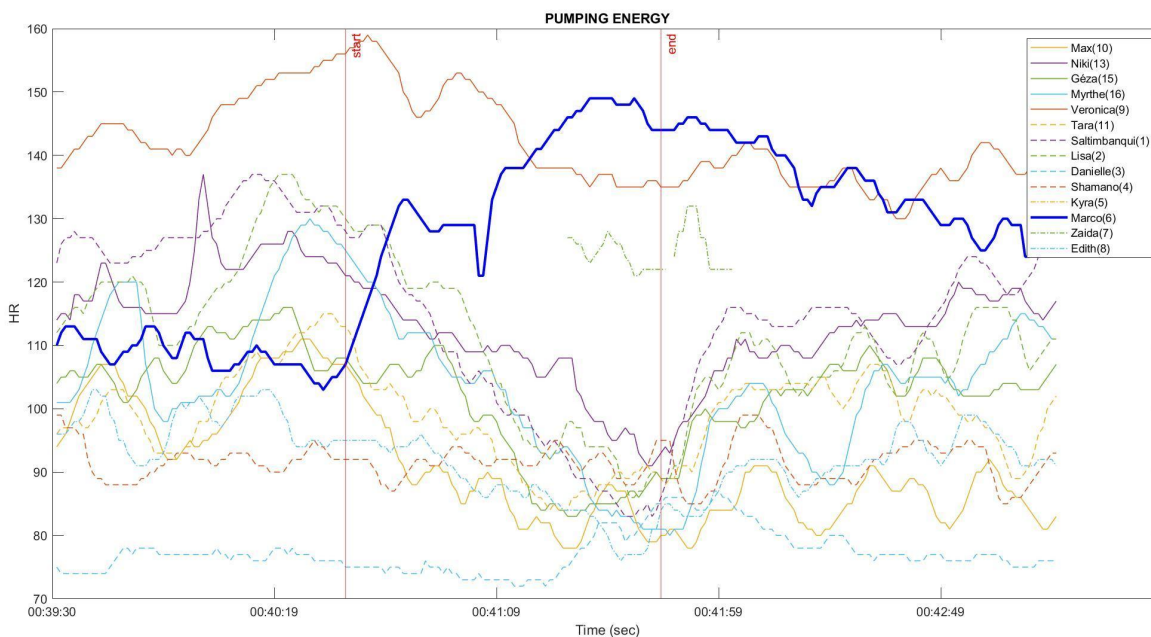
50. Figure: Correlation heat-map with Barbara, the training leader

a healthy and whole life, the problem is that entire societies, and even global systems, are being blackmailed with the notion of safety. Most of the time all other aspects that are considered less important fall victim to this, including real democracy. The individual's degree of personal development must reach higher levels to be able to risk facing unpredictable realities, at the expense of the sense of security.

In civil parliament, this confidence could be displayed; I accept the other person's risk threshold assessment because I know that others are working within, and outwardly, with some scientific means to see the world objectively, not unsettled by superstitions, hysterias, or unfounded common beliefs, and not biased by habits and dusty traditions. This requires, above all, a trust in each other's scientific establishment, respect for the sciences and especially the humanities, and the direct integration of their findings into decision-making.



And all of this, of course, is analogous to the moment of making a performance, when you should not yet start practising what you have, because you still need to search. At such times, one must resist the temptation of safety, but trust that in less time we can elaborate the big result we are searching for. This requires calmness and confidence, not only in the director (of course, that is why this acting leader role is needed), but in the abilities of the other group members and the skills of the whole group. There is trust as well in the sobriety of the director, that he or she will recognise the ultimate moment when the research must be set



SEQ Figure * ARABIC 52. Figure The director's (Marco) flexibility and momentum at critical moments

apart and the group must summarise all we have.