



**European Association for Theatre Culture /
AKT-ZENT International Theatre Centre**

Artistic Director: Prof. Dr. Jurij Alschitz

The New Face of the Acting Teacher

A European -Mexican theatre research project for innovative training practice 2012-2014

Programme Director: Christine Schmalor

PARTNERS

1. Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico / CUT
2. Schloss Bröllin e. V. International Art Research Location (Germany)
3. La Corte Ospitale (Italy)
4. Arterie - Centro Interculturale per le ricerche teatrali (Italy)
5. Koïnè langages transartistiques (France)
6. Cyprus Centre of the International Theatre Institute (Cyprus)

For the final conference:

ARTA Association de Recherche des Traditions de l'Acteur

Labex ARTS H2H - laboratoire d'excellence des arts et médiations humaine

Université Paris 8

Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique (CNSAD)

Further Mexican co-operation partners

1. Escuela Nacional de Arte Teatral
2. Centro Mexicano del Instituto Internacional del Teatro
3. Universidad Autónoma de Cd. Juárez
4. Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
5. Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León
6. Centro Universitario de Arte Arquitectura y Diseño (CUAAD) de la Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara
7. Centro de las Artes de San Agustín Oaxaca
8. Escuela Superior de Artes de Yucatán
9. Catedra Bergman (UNAM)



THE IDEA

TRAINING

The idea behind the whole project was to instigate an innovation of the conception of 'Training' as an all-encompassing tool for intercultural artistic creation and production. 'Training' itself was therefore defined as:

1. Training as a method of education.
2. Training as a way for preparing and analysing the role.
3. Training as a method to prepare and create a performance.
4. Training as a way of artistic life.

This concept not only included the idea of life-long learning, but also a certain philosophical understanding of the artist and his/her profession; a new understanding which in turn, opens up a new perspective on training itself. Far beyond the simple acquisition of skills and the development of physical fitness, specific training for drama theatre was shown to reveal a new language at play in intercultural communication, serving a primary role in creating a theatre language appropriate for the 21st Century.

Theatre artists who work in an international context have demonstrated time and time again that exercises can explain much more than words and their translations. With exercises one can build ensembles, convey ideas and create meaning on stage. But the field for this wonderful tool was left unexplored.

Who could create alternative trainings? Who might have the possibility to develop new exercises? Who could pass on such knowledge to the next generation?



ACTING TEACHERS

AKT-ZENT's research led to the conclusion that the teacher should hold the highest position in theatre. The role of the teacher is one of the most complicated and most responsible professions one could imagine. Teaching should be considered not simply as the conveyance of objective knowledge, it is the shaping of personality – intellect, emotions, psyche, the soul and, as a consequence, is one of the most beautiful and most delicate professions.

However, a clear or defined image of the acting teacher does not exist. In this context, only a few drama schools have even begun to use methodological profiles. Artistic freedom, plurality, chaos – all of these forms co-exist today and whilst academies and teachers were often well aware of this situation, we inevitably started to ask: why was there no education, no qualification and no curriculum for acting teachers?

TRAINING THEATRE TEACHERS

Education and training must then be considered as the fundament of culture and the key to any forms of cultural development and innovation. Consequently, teachers ought to be viewed as those responsible for the face of the next generation.

It was unanimously agreed that teachers need training themselves, otherwise they are condemned to repeat their own teachings and inevitably stay in the conservative mind-set of past generations.

In 1999, Dr. Jurij Alschitz postulated the thesis, "Train the Trainers in Theatre", during the 1st World Conference for Directors of Higher Education Theatre Institutions / ITI UNESCO Chair in Sinaia (Romania). As such, "Train the Trainers" has now become one of the most important and commonly used phrases in the Performing Arts over the last twenty years. It was at the Romanian Conference that this first initiative was implemented, in an effort to create an international course of studies for theatre teachers, however, the time was not yet ready.

In the same year, Dr. Jurij Alschitz also founded the world's first international festival focussing predominantly on the interchange of theatre trainings. This highly acclaimed 'METHODIKA' festival is now held biannually in different *locations across Europe and focusses on varying themes each year*. Furthermore, the format of 'Methodika' has since been used as a blueprint model for subsequent festivals in Europe and Latin America etc.

Since these early initiatives, AKT-ZENT has developed a growing interest in teacher training. This understanding of teacher training and varying professional development formats has emerged not only from European models, but also from Latin American, Arabic and African teachings as well.

The **programme to achieve a Master for Theatre Teaching** benefited extensively from AKT-ZENT's research archive (developed over fifteen years), which includes training notes from European laboratories, global seminars for directors and teachers and, of course, the International Directors' and Trainers' colloquium. AKT-ZENT found a highly motivated partner in Mexico, with whom AKT-ZENT implemented the **first worldwide M.A. Programme for Theatre Teaching**.

RESEARCH

Teaching requires continuous research. The Master Programme for theatre teachers was created in order to pass on (predominantly European) knowledge and methodological fundamentals acquired from generations of masters. However, it was also evident that the innovative development of theatre depends entirely on the progress in the field of training methods itself. It was difficult to imagine how the theatre of tomorrow could develop without continuous study or constant research. Therefore, the programme concentrated on the research of new and alternative forms of teaching methodology for the practice of theatre, with the aim to enable students to develop their own unique methods and exercises, in order to unfold the creative dimension of teaching.

It was at this point, that the vital importance of intercultural aspects became clear. So that this complex aspect was sufficiently addressed, the whole project diversified to include laboratories, seminars and field trips throughout different parts of Mexico. The aim of this exploration was to research unknown (and undocumented) practices, rituals of indigenous peoples' and to meet groups already dedicated to exploring their own cultural heritage.

In later **Theatre Training Laboratories** with professional actors, this material was turned into communicable exercises for theatre practice in general.

COMMUNICATION

The most important aspect of the project was to ensure the research results were securely documented for long term usage and remained permanently accessible sources; ready to be continually re-conveyed, re-examined and re-discussed in the future.

In response to this, the acquired knowledge was distributed and shared:-

1. In **open seminars**: research results were communicated to young directors and trainers, who reflected on the findings and developed the material further. In this way, the participation of younger generations in the research was also safeguarded.
2. At **International Theatre Summer Academies**: amongst other activities the research was used to support internships undertaken by the students of M.A. teaching courses on the themes of their theses.
3. In the **publication** of *Training forever!*: in this book, the theatre world received the first practical guide about theatre training methodology and a pedagogical programme for trainers. Techniques outlined in *Training forever!* offered a fundament for continuing work in Mexico and for establishing additional Master Programmes in Europe and world-wide.

PERSPECTIVE

Following the project's conclusion, AKT-ZENT Research Centre of the International Theatre Institute received demands for the development of similar Programmes in Asia and Africa. At the final presentation in Paris, March 2014, a consortium of international Academies was founded to begin preparations for an International Master Programme *Teaching Professional Theatre Practice*.

AKT-ZENT has also developed a new publication project for the International Theatre Institute called "The World Theatre Training Library", which was submitted as a UNESCO project. Over the years, the training exercises collected from several continents was published in 10 Volumes in all UNESCO languages.

THE ACTIVITIES

- I. **Master Programme**: Training of Trainers in Mexico functioned as a pilot project for the establishment of a full scale EU-Mexican Master programme (M.A.) Teaching Acting and Directing. It was conducted in four modules (August 2012 / February 2013 / August 2013 / February 2014) as compressed, month-long semesters. The Master programme had a line-up of twenty four students from ten nations. Each student on the course participated in one of the following initiatives as practice for intercultural dialogue (a prerequisite part of the Master Programme). The final exam took the form of a festival for the public and included presentations at six Mexican Universities.
- II. **Masterclasses of the European Team of Teachers** were held to prepare the artistic and scientific programme practically for the Master Programme in Mexico.
- III. **Theatre Training Laboratories** were held in Germany and Italy. Research on training methods with a special focus on reflecting cultural influences between Europe and Mexico (Latin America). Students held "World Theatre Training Workshops" with young European actors on their themes.
- IV. **Fieldtrips**: In-depth research on ritual practices in Mexico: meeting cultures.
- V. **International Theatre Summer Academy 2013** in Italy: meeting point for young actors, directors, pedagogues, which were held over a three-week period in both years of the project. Experiments were tested and trialled out by the participants under the guidance of the European Team of Teachers.

- VI. **Festival Etica, Masterclass, Workshop, Symposium, October 2013.** With generous support of the small Italian commune Sestola, we were able to invite young actors for a three week workshop: seven M.A. students gave open lectures after one week demonstrating and defending his/her approach and could use this opportunity already as preparatory training for the final exam. A master class held by Dr. Jurij Alschitz and a colloquium on "Ethics and Theatre" completed the programme.
- VII. **Open Seminars** invited actors, directors, teachers to gain insight into the practical work, research and achievements of the programme.
- VIII. The International Directors' and Trainers' Colloquia in January 2014 (Berlin) disclosed new training methods and, as part of the colloquium, Brazilian colleagues also presented their production at AKT-ZENT.
- Together with the Free University Berlin, Institut für Theaterwissenschaften and its International Research Center, »Interweaving Performance Cultures« an international exchange of thoughts, experiences and ideas was conducted about "**The new Face of the Acting Teacher**" at „Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg Platz" with Fellows-in-residence of the International Research Center »Interweaving Performance Cultures«, participants of the International Directors' and Trainers' Colloquium, participants of the first EU-Mexican M.A. Masters Programme for Teaching Theatre and leaders of Berlin's acting academies. The event was open to the public and directors, actors, teachers also participated.
- IX. **Publication of the training handbook "Training forever!" in English and Spanish:** a collection of exercises as tool-book for innovative and alternative theatre training practice.
- X. **Publication of results:** International conference including a master class in Paris celebrating the World Theatre Day on March 27, 2014, was celebrated with the above mentioned partners.

In the opening evening, Dr. Jurij Alschitz presented his Manifesto "The New Face of the Acting Teacher" for the first time in public - proposing new forms and ways for the education in theatre in general and detailing the consequences for teachers specifically.

During this week, parallel meetings were held with experts, specialists, and leaders of academies, who became interested in forming a consortium, with the aim to establish a Joint Degree Master for "Teaching Professional Theatre Practice". A memorandum of understanding was signed by AKT-ZENT (DE) and Estonian Academy of Theatre & Music (EE), Institut del Teatre Barcelona (ES), Université Paris 8 (FR), Kazan State University of Culture and Arts (RU), Orenburg State Institute of Art "Leo and Mstislav Rostropovich" (RU), Rose Bruford College London (UK) and an adjoining partner: Le Quy Duong Centre for Professional Training in Performance, Vietnam.

Later, further institutions have signed from South Korea, National Academy Mongolia, University of Arts and Culture Samara (RU), and Federal University of Kazan (RU).

