

**European Association for Theatre Culture /  
AKT-ZENT International Theatre Centre**  
Artistic Director Prof. Dr. Jurij Alschitz

**The Face of 20th Century Woman  
The Vertical of the Role - a new method of self-preparation  
from rehearsal through to performance**  
Programme Director Christine Schmalor

**Summary**

In methodological terms, this theatre project examined the suitability of a new form of self-preparation for differing European theatre cultures, specifically designed for actors and their preparatory work on a role. Examples were taken from the great female figures of European drama from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and critical analysis of female creations by writers such as Strindberg, Ibsen, Chekhov, Wedekind, Perandello and Lorca helped to investigate the extent of male projections on female potential at the beginning of this new epoch. Actresses in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century sought to detach these women from their original contexts, thereby placing them in a shared new context and one which ultimately led to a questioning of both historical and contemporary European culture. Artistic Director Jurij Alschitz, alongside pedagogues and teaching colleagues at fellow Theatre Centres, have since used these methods for seminar material in various countries throughout the world. The results of the practical research were collated and showcased to the public at festivals and the intention to publish the findings has also now been realized. The actresses themselves came from diverse backgrounds from all over Europe – Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland Iceland, Britain, France, Estonia, and Lithuania.

**Cooperation-partners**

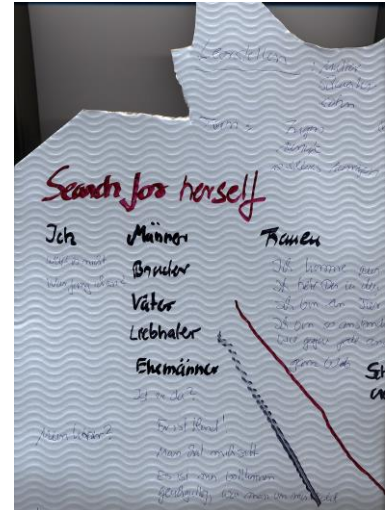
AKT-ZENT International Theatre Centre (GER)  
PROTEI Progetti Teatrali Internazionali (ITA)  
SCUT Skandinaviskt centrum för utforskning av teater (NOR/SWE)  
Teateralliansen (SWE)  
Odsherred Teatercenter (DK)  
Accademia Amiata (ITA)  
Assessorato alla Promozione Culturale Regione Puglia (ITA)

## The Project

**Female figures in European drama were researched in their philosophical dimensions.**

Dramatists such as Strindberg, Ibsen, Chekhov, Wedekind, Pirandello and Lorca were largely responsible for representing the situation of women in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in contemporary theatre. Portrayed by men, their depictions thus embodied both male and female projections, fears and hopes. The active energy bursting forth at the beginning of the new epoch was still being held in check by the chains of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but thoughts and words were in the process of beginning to break these chains. Consequently, the modernity of these figures has not diminished even today.

**The project involved the introduction, exploration and dissemination of a new method** developed by Jurij Alschitz: 'The Vertical of the Role'. This new method was intended to help actors work on their roles independently and to show a way of pursuing their artistic work autonomously, thus opening up the possibility for new professional perspectives to emerge. Still in its development phase, the method was tested in the form of a cultural comparison on an experimental basis, in the hope of ascertaining its immediate suitability for on-stage practice and has been amended accordingly. For the participating actresses, the project was viewed as further training. Training detailed in "The Vertical of the Role" was also presented to beginners in the profession in introductory seminars, with the hope that they would qualify to work together with experienced colleagues in the wider European framework.



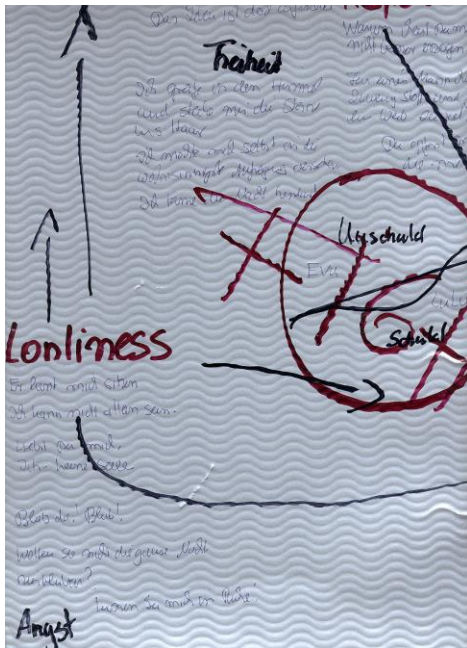
## Introductory Seminars

The main objective was for every individual to work out their own 'Vertical of the Role'. Each actress was asked to remove the text of an assigned role from its original context and, in doing so, the analysis of this pure text began not only to reveal the style of speech, expressive preferences, musicality, or communicative behavior of the figure, but also the principle themes of her philosophical existence, and, last not least, her function as the bearer of ideas. Out of this theatrical experiment and analysis gradually grew self-contained monodramas, involving stories, diaries, letters, notes from the writers' note-books and also other literature - from mythological epics right through to contemporary writing - from handed-down folksong right through to modern music - even dance, or pantomime.

These seminars were conducted both in Berlin and at partner organisations in Stockholm, Udine and Denmark and were all led by Jurij Alschitz and the pedagogues of AKT-ZENT, PROTEI, SCUT.

Each seminar finished with a performance before an invited specialist public and were followed by discussions and reflections on the results so far.

## European Laboratories



On the basis of the results of the preceding steps, actresses were then individually invited to the laboratories – the first of which was held in Tuscani at Academia Amiata and the second in Sannicandro di Bari. These opportunities gave the actresses the chance to develop their monologues in their own space and in different locations at spacious historical castles. It allowed the actresses to fully engage with the great ladies of 20<sup>th</sup> Century world drama and also prompted them toward a personal confrontation with the questions and demands posed to women by society today.

Both laboratories included public recitals, as well as evenings of concerts of European voices and each was concluded with a final performance.

Theatre managers and producers were also invited and several of the monologues which came into being during the project continued their lives later in monodrama

festivals and as parts of various tours.

## Publication

One year later, AKT-ZENT published the first book in its own edition, ARS INCOGNITA, with the title “The Vertical of the Role” by Jurij Alschitz and which has since been translated in to five languages.

