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**METHODIKA 2001**  
**ENERGY AND THEATRE**

Report by Martha Vestin  
and Grete Sneltvedt



Dramatiska Institutet  
Enheten för Konstnärligt Utvecklingsarbete

# **METHODIKA**

2nd International  
Festival of Methods in Theatre Training  
21–27 juli 2001 Gripsholms folkhögskola

## **COOPERATIVE PARTNERS**

DRAMATISKA INSTITUTET  
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PROTEI PROGETTI TEATRALI INTERNAZIONALI, ROME  
SCUT SKANDINAVISKT CENTRUM FÖR UTFORSKNING AV TEATER, STOCKHOLM/OSLO  
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# ENERGY AND THEATRE

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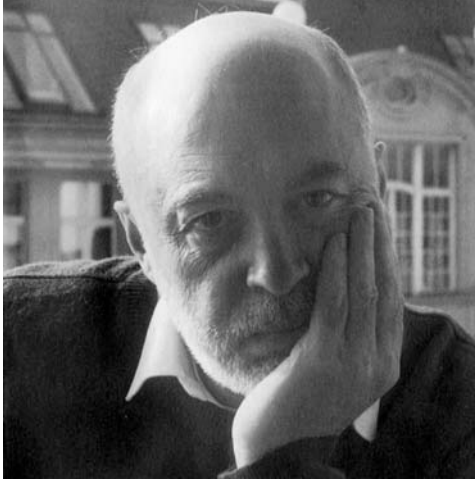
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*Jurij Alschitz*

# **WELCOME SPEECH**

## **JURIJ ALSCHITZ**

artistic director of Methodica

Dear friends,

I would like to welcome and thank you for coming to our festival. It shows that theatre pedagogues are still interested in meeting each other. It makes me happy because usually people in our profession are solitaries. That is why it is so useful and important for our souls to get together. But our meetings are not just heart warming ones – they are the gatherings of professionals and therefore, the main purpose of our communication is knowledge about theatre and our profession. The festival is organised by our colleagues – pedagogues, directors, and actors from Sweden and other countries. They have done it with generous spirits, in hope that it is interesting and enriching for all of us to meet. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for their work.

Our festival is not a big one, but I would like it to remind you of the large and crowded gathering at the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece with its principle that there was no other profit but knowledge – some people showed what they were doing, why and how, others watched it, in order to judge themselves and correct their lives. To our gathering pedagogues from different countries have arrived in Sweden, there are hundreds of learners behind them – that means we are thousands.

Looking at the number of teachers who have arrived I am glad to have a good and large company in my desire to know more about our profession. We even could not accept all applicants because of our limited possibilities, but still I know that a vast number of teachers are not really interested in meeting colleagues and learning something new. Maybe they already know everything (in this case I am very glad for them) or maybe they have lost any interest in learning. They just teach others and might have forgotten that to teach and to learn is an indivisible

process. Maybe they are afraid to change their point of view. But let me ensure them, don't be afraid of not knowing something but be afraid of not learning. In any case, either one of these reasons contributes to the unhealthy state of affairs in theatre education. At this moment, when things are not going so well in our profession, when ambitions and proprietary interests often become more important than the pursuit we serve, it is equally important for teachers, directors, and actors to meet. One cannot find the way out alone even though many believe they can.

There are many problems in theatre education, one cannot enumerate all of them, but they all have the same origin – acute deficiency of knowledge. Nowadays theatre schools require knowledge of the highest standard. It is only thanks to knowledge that education for theatre as well as in the theatre itself can become real art.

There is no time to correct the situation. The demands on theatre pedagogy change rapidly before our eyes. The achievement of the talent and inspiration of selected stars yesterday, becomes today a standard requirement of the first-year student at theatre schools. A teacher who feels all right today is inevitably behind tomorrow. In this respect theatre can be compared to sports – today hundreds of sportsmen can beat a world record which yesterday seemed fantastic. We must go on, or better yet, we should always be a step ahead. We cannot stop in our profession – even if we are tired and do not want to continue. K. Stanislavsky said that one must re-learn every five years, but very few theatre teachers follow this advice. Only continuous learning and experimenting are guarantees for a long and productive artistic life. There is no alternative.

It is time to understand that the main duty of a teacher is to teach himself first, and only then to teach others. We must take care of ourselves and strive towards a School of thought and knowledge, in constant rejuvenation, and our festival may show the path. We are responsible for preserving and developing theatre education as art and science – as it was thought by the great pedagogues of the past. We all want to see the School as a living and powerful organism, and as it happens, aspiration for power and knowledge coincide.

# **METHODIKA**

## **ORGANISATION**

METHODIKA is an international festival. Its aim is to bring forward and publicise research into various methods of training for the theatre. It is a festival for actors, directors, teachers, drama students and other students of the theatre.

The first festival was held in Milan in November 1999. Its theme was »Ensemble and Personality«. It was initiated by Jurij Alschitz and the network European Association for Theatre Culture (EATC). Over 60 participants from all over Europe worked with the following teachers:

Frantisek Veres – Sweden, Felix Müller – Germany, Virgilio Sieni – Italy and from Russia the very skilful and popular Oleg Koudriachov.

METHODIKA aims to hold a regular biennial international festival in which the level of research into teaching in the theatre is illuminated and enhanced.

### **Instigators and Organisation**

After the success of the first METHODIKA in Milan it was clear to the EATC that this was an event that should recur. The network has three participant organisations:

SCUT – Skandinaviskt Centrum för Utforskning av Teater, Stockholm/Oslo.

AKT-ZENT – International Theatre Centre, Berlin.

PROTEI – Progette Teatrali Internazionali, Rome.

SCUT, through Camilla van der Meer (Swe) and Grete Snelvedt (Nor) took the initiative to plan METHODIKA II. Preparations for the event took two years. Those who were active in realising the

event worked almost entirely without reimbursement.

Juij Alschitz, artistic leader for EATC, SCUT, AKT-ZENT and PROTEI, has been the driving force behind the project. Thanks to his many years of work in Sweden, SCUT was quickly able to establish intimate co-operation with Martha Vestin at Dramatiska Institutet and with Suzanne Osten. Through Martha Vestin, SCUT collaborated with Mälardalens Högskola and Göran Malmberg, responsible for its new theatre programme. The actress, Camilla van der Meer, commenced work with applications and contacts in Sweden. Later Annabelle Rice, the director, undertook responsibility for the artistic arrangements and evening events during METHODIKA II. Grete Sneltevedt head of SCUT Norway had overall responsibility for the programme, and work allocation.

Once the theme, »Energy«, was chosen, Jurij Alschitz selected and engaged the teachers. After a long process of elimination and negotiation, four teachers were chosen: AnneLise Gabold – Denmark, Gregory Hlady – Canada, Gabriel Vacis – Italy and Anatoly Vasiliev – Russia.

Mälardalens Högskola did the layout and printing of the programme and the first brochures were sent out in February 2001 to trades unions, organisations, schools, etc. Over 3 000 copies were distributed and yet not everyone who might be interested was reached. Applications arrived in small numbers initially but in an increasing stream right up to the opening date.

The event was located at Gripsholms Folkhögskola, beautifully situated beside Gripsholms Slott on the banks of Lake Mälaren. Here there was all the accommodation required and the degree of isolation desired for an intensive full-time group experience.

Towards the end of the preparation period Camilla van der Meer became ill and Lena Linner, a student at Mälardalens Högskola took over many of her responsibilities. Grete Sneltevedt



was Head of Administration. Four students from Mälardalens Högskola acted as assistants to the appointed teachers. Annabelle Rice was responsible for the evening programmes. Christine Schmalor, from AKT-ZENT Berlin, came with Jurij Alschitz to help us.

SCUT Norway runs a project for further education called »Nordisk Teaterakademi«. Participants in that project were responsible for the documentation and presentation of the teachers. This material, on video and tape recordings, has been adapted by Grete Sneltvedt and Martha Vestin for this report.

Those taking part came from 14 countries. There were 68 active participants – actors, directors and teachers of theatre art, of all ages from 20 to 60 years old. It was fruitful and rewarding that the participants had such varied experiences and backgrounds. Apart from these there were 4 assistants, 12 observers and 9 team members. There were also many guests who visited the seminar for one or more days.

The Education Committee of ITI (International Theatre Institute) arranged a board meeting at METHODIKA. Members of the board were able to follow the event and METHODIKA participants gained an insight into the committee work of the ITI.

*Grete Sneltvedt*

# POINTS OF DEPARTURE

## MARTHA VESTIN

The four invited pedagogues, treated the issue of energy very differently, both in their practical work and in theory. There was, however, important common ground. All four addressed theatre forms beyond psychological realism and the individually orientated epic. They were concerned with various ways of going beyond the private. By certain forms of training or ritual they sought to »empty« the actor to make possible a transcendence and a transference of energy. Three of the teachers – Gabold, Hlady and Vassiliev – worked with a strong focus on the »vertical concentration« of the actor. That is, the actor's contact with the floor, the ground, the earth and his or her upward endeavour. The principle was, however, expressed in quite different terminology and exercises.

But what is meant by »energy« in reference to the theatre? The four teachers gave their answers not only in conversation and in question and answer sessions but above all through their practical work. One evening was spent discussing energy with invited guests, another was devoted to a jazz concert. Suzanne Osten held an evening workshop and two Italian actors, who had worked with Jurij Alshitz, gave a performance based on Plato's Dialogues.

It must be recognised that the seminar was not about the content of the performances, nor about which texts the teachers found most interesting, although participants raised such questions. Only one of the teachers at the seminar, Gregory Hlady, worked with a specific theme. The final work demonstrations, after the four working sessions, was not directed at artistic value but rather it aimed to show how to work to gain access to energy.



*Anne-Lise Gabold*

# **ANNE-LISE GABOLD**

## **SUMMARY BY MARTHA VESTIN**

Anne-lise Gabold began with a short presentation of her work with the Suzuki method for actors. It is based on principles, which are 800 years old. According to these principles, an actor must be able to control and use five elements simultaneously. These are, control of the body, breathing, voice, psyche and the canalisation and use of energy. All the exercises include these five elements.

Gabold maintains that action is a transformation of energy. The actor must be able to manage energy consciously, and this requires will power and practice. She suggests that energy is transformation – change from one stage, or form to another. She draws a parallel with a fire hose. The water pressure in the hose must be high in order to push the water up to the fifth floor and she compares this with the force in ritual or classical drama. If, for example there is a hole in the hose, the pressure drops and perhaps the water only reaches the first floor – equivalent to the energy required on small stages or film sets. The hole in the hose may correspond to loss of concentration or leaking feelings. The training is intended to focus and amplify energy to a higher level of being – energy that may be accumulated in the body and then aimed at a specific target.

The exercises consisted of very precise and demanding movements put together in series. Most exercises included a very special stamping technique, which involved stamping on the floor with great force and control, either on the spot or with lateral movement. Although it was apparent that it would take time to perfect the technique and understand its inner meaning, it was surprising to see what results were achieved in five days. The workshop was very structured. Every day the exercises were repeated meticulously. Gradually the standard was raised with the introduction of complex series or variations. During the last two days participants interacted more with each other. The form

was strict but basically the activities dealt with mental processes, inner life... energy.

Towards the end of the workshop the participants were seen to glow with energy.

For voice training a short text from Shakespeare's Macbeth was memorised. During the exercises, and in the most difficult physical postures, participants were required to seek ways of freely giving voice to the text.

# **ANNE-LISE GABOLD**

## **PRESENTATION**

»During the last 20 years of working as an actor and acting teacher, I have acquired some important acting techniques offered on a global basis. In addition to my own training, I have participated in method development and learned to teach the techniques. I use this knowledge in my work as an instructor. The method of T. Suzuki contains certain exercises that seek to focus on the energy of the actor, in order for the theatre to regain what he calls »the whole of the human body«.

T. Suzuki's »Training Method for Actors« is based upon 800 year-old exercises for actors. All the exercises contain the five elements an actor in classic drama should be able to control simultaneously at a high level.

These five elements are: Body control, Breath, Voice, Psychology, and how to channel and lead the individual energy in the body.

I see T. Suzuki's »Training Method for Actors« as an important part in the development of methods of today offered to the actor based on psychology and other science, analogous to what is happening in the schooling of musicians and sportsmen.

People can therefore in each of their fields develop knowledge and reach further than would have been possible earlier.

The actors of today are met with widely varying demands, which in no way can be compared to the requirements demanded of their colleges from earlier times.

### **Energy?**

To transform something rough to something finer? From oil to refined petroleum? A fire hose has to reach up to the fourth level of water pressure, compare this to the strength of classic theatre, if there are holes in the hose you loose the pressure and can only reach the first level, equivalent to a level which would be well suited for small stages and for film.

To concentrate and collect energy which is otherwise spread – the flight of the thought and leaking emotions – to a presence, an energy which is collected in the body and then directed towards a goal – that is what my training aims for.

During the last almost twenty years I have in between my work as an actor and acting teacher amassed some important acting techniques, which I use in my work with actors. I collect elements from old eastern wisdom and from the western knowledge.

The exercises we will work with during the four or five days we have, seek to put emphasis on sharpening the attention and sensitivity to the actor's own latent energy and perception of the collective energy of the group.

The exercises can make the actor control his physical instrument, with a specific understanding of how he can channel the energy in the body and reach a visual power on stage, and release a creative energy which is used to find the nature of the character from a new platform.

It creates strong actors, who are physically strong, who have a powerful focus of concentration and energy.

The actor learns how to use the energy in the body to free his voice and how to create a very strong, vital contact with the onlookers, so that the audience receives this energy and power from the actor.

# THE EXERCISES

## REPORTED BY ANNIKA B. LEWIS

The Exercises were: Introduction through a »simple« exercise: where we were sitting in a simple position and should work with directing our focus, keeping the attention: move the focus through your right arm and then your right leg. After that your left arm and then your left leg. Your spine and then your pelvis. (Keep the Attention!)

Standing position with parallel legs as broad as your hips and find the centre weight. Focus with the eyes some where in the »horizon«:

- move/lend to the right – left – back – forward
- go slowly down, with your arms hanging to the sides of the body and the hands slightly closed as you are carrying a bucket in each hand. Going down the hands slides on the front of your thigh/legs. And go up again.
- with different speeds and with text

### **The 3 basics**

1) To the sides:

Stand with straight legs and the feet as a V (the heels together and the toes pointing out slightly to the sides). The arms hanging to the sides of the body with the hands slightly closed as you're carrying a bucket in each hand.

- Right leg up to the side – stomp down to the side – glide in/collect the left leg – go up – the same to the other side.

2 a) to the front:

Stand with slightly bent legs and the feet parallel together. The arms as before:

- Lift the right leg up to the front – stomp down to the front (not too big steps!) – the same with the left leg – go up on toes – go down – and all over again...



b) To the back:

From the front position just change the weight back: and do the same as to the front but backwards...

3) Stamping:

Stand with bent legs and feet as a V:

– Lift right leg and knee to the side and foot high and find the position and balance – stomp down the foot right besides the standing leg/foot – shift foot and so on...

### **Sitting rolling down**

Sit on the floor:

– Sitting with crossed legs – role slowly down vertebra by vertebra until lying down on back – role slowly up again

– With different speeds on 8 – 6 – 4 – 2

– And lying on the back take the text from Macbeth together

### **The three sitting positions**

Sit on the floor with knees close to stomach, arms around knees and head down to the knees:

– On a sign: lift head and feet up keep the balance sitting only on the sitting–bones – and back – next: legs out straight forward and arms/hands on the side of the body – and back – next: legs out to the side with straight legs as a V and arms on the side of the body – and back – and so on...

– Repeat with the text in the positions (of tension!)

### **Slow »Ten Teq Ten«**

Two rows/lines standing against and facing each other (focus with the eyes somewhere in the »horizon«!):

– slowly walk towards each other – meet in the middle facing each other

– with sticks to find the way of walking: 2 by 2 first stick on the back walking forwards – then stick on the belly walking backwards (remember the vertical line up and down!)

– Slowly walk forward with straight legs and role over the feet from heel to toes – go »through«/between each other – walk to

the end – turn – find a gesture with your arms that express your »inner music« (not a posture!) – and walk forward to the end – stop – go backwards with a new gesture – to the end – stop – walk forward with eyes closed...

### **Stamping Yakuhachi; Stamping the Graves**

In two groups of 5:

Start standing in positions (arms to the side with hands like carrying buckets and feet parallel and slightly bent legs) in a circle:

– stomp to the music with high knees and slowly going forward keeping the centre and the level of the body (not up and down!) – one turn in the circle, than: – keep stamping and go out in different directions – gather to the back in a row facing the front – with the music: one, two, three and four (with an end-stomp!) – collapse down to the floor and lie down (try to control your breath!) – let the music (the Japanese flute: shakuhachi ) awake and fill you – Image: you lay frozen in a glacier and slowly the ice melt and use the theme: death – alive, cold – warm – and come slowly up with control from the pelvis and continuously moving, without stopping: go slowly forward to the front (with the »sunshine« and even more light, but not romantic! Feel the wind...)

The process of fighting going to zero and from there to something new, different, alive...

### **Agiteqaten; Standing windmill**

Standing in position with parallel feet and legs straight as a »tree«. (Focus with the eyes!) Arms out like wings moving as a »windmill«: to the sides and front but not behind the head and the back:

When music comes work with the arms straight and as fast as possible – freeze – with the music: soft: slow arms – with the music (fast!) as fast as possible arms – Stop with arms out –stay, prolonging and then take the arms slowly down like »pressing the air or like in water...«

## **Standing Statues**

Stand with legs broad and »sit down« (like sumo-fighters) keep the weight on legs (don't relax down!) and arms resting on the knees:

– on the signal: go up and up on toes find a position (like a statue) – and on signal down in »sitting« position again – and so on. Changes comes from the pelvic region/ the centre...

Then »small changes«: go up find a position and from there change only the head and eyes/focus – and so on...

Come down by: let go left arm – right arm – head and neck – go down sitting...

## **Sitting Statues**

As standing statues but sitting on the floor. The starting position is with arms and legs up sitting on the sitting-bones – change on the sign...

– End up lying on the floor in »death position«

Ending exercise:

Slowly walk around the room:

– slowly steps forward – breathing in on/through right foot and out on left foot – and so on...

# SELECTED COMMENTS FROM THE TAPES ANNE-LISE GABOLD

## Introduction

Why do we want to study energy? It's because everything that is done in us and in the whole world is done through transformation of energy. Most of the time we have no idea that that is what we are doing any more than a child learning to walk realises that it is learning to use energy. But there are processes that can be directed intentionally if only one understands how to work with energies. Energies is only powers which have to be exercised and this requires a will to exercise them.

So during the next few days we will work with the actors »engine motor« through simple exercises that gives the sense of an inner sensibility towards your centre of gravity and the basic sense of stability as a necessary tool for the rest of time. In these simple exercises we are going to work with two kinds of energies, the most important; physical outbursts of energy, stopping energy. And the corresponding inner attentiveness, sensitivity, which is another kind of energy than the physical. There is something or somebody out there, or we place somebody out there, because only when we have a focus there is reality. Otherwise we could easily end up with narcissism.

## **Some comments by A-L during the first exercise of side stamp**

You have to decide who is leading this action. These exercises are so good in testing this. Again, the focus, you have somebody out there to fight with in order to achieve this aim. If we loose the attention, then we'll only go for the form, but the thing is to be present all the time. The good thing with this is that this is a sort of test where you can see how your inner control functions. It's not the form, but still we need very small strict forms in order

to collide with it inside so that we can see what's the difference between thinking what we can do and what we can actually do. Keep the energy, don't let it go out. It's like when you stop in front of the red light the motor is still running. Be as tigers who can jump in all directions. If I come and press you in the front now try to be sure that I would not turn you over. Imagine that I press you from the front, then from the back, from the right and from the left. Can you sense it?

### **During the first exercise of front stamp**

How can we measure energy and what is energy? Who is directing it? How does it look? When you have pressed your feet down, established the fundament of basic stability, which means that the feet are on the right spot, under your centre of gravity, immediately you'll become so present that one looks at you. Because then there is some energy that goes towards the audience. The exercises might sound ridiculous but they are good because it tells you about your inner situation, the actors engine. And somebody sees my work while I'm doing it and how I'm doing it.

### **First time back stamp**

You have to know who is in power. Be quick as a snake. Be forcefull in your decisions. Balance on the front foot. Here you can stand for a 100 years without moving, like the big masks looking out at the sea. The balance in-between as if you are hanging. Then balance on the back foot. Vibrate all sorts of energies; attentive and conscious about where I am. This is not empty exercises, it is actors exercises and you always have to have the focus on an image.

### **Sitting, rolling down exercise and first time using the text from Macbeth**

Space is a changeable unit. From the navel and down you are under the law of gravity and from the navel and up your direction is the universe. Try to turn your attention inwardly so that you can sense your inner climate.

Then try to whisper the first lines of the text. Find each other, project the text up in the air, as if the air is saying the text. Try to make the effort to be one breath so that you are one speaking corpus. You should be so prepared that if I bang my stick you should jump two meters up in the air.

There is a big difference between the daily life person and the one that wish to work. Work with the sweetness of exploring.

### **»The three sitting positions« with Macbeth text**

Be sure that your face is totally vertical looking at the horizon. Let the wind blow in your faces. The voice springs from the centre of gravity in the pelvic region and what you can do now is intentionally to speak loud and to project to your focus. Don't do the exercise without seeing how the tension is creeping in and up - keep it down under the navel. Even if you shake and swing fight to keep it down there. Let your voice out as if you are standing in front of the sea and you are alone and you are screaming - really let it out. At least try to see that the voice is coming from the whole of your body. It should pour out of your body and especially from your lower part. In the back of your lower body is the seed.

### **»Slow Ten Teqe Ten« Slow motion walk with music**

Working with this method goes on for 3 to 4 years and when we work just a few days it's barely a taste. As we study energy together, there are some explanations that has to be given prematurely.

Let the music be absorbed inside you as if your walk identically with this music. Don't forget your focus, you are walking towards something. Turn around as if you make friction with the air. It is the vertical axes that are turning around. Whatever movement we make on stage, what ever style we're working with, it's where we want to go that is driving our body. It is not the body in it self. Try to find this acting point.

The alphabet of the actors can be used in surrealistic plays when actors have been thought to play in other tempi than the

naturalistic psychological ones. Not like actors who are playing psychological and almost have the centre of gravity in the psychological and are playing with the head and emotion instead of insisting that the human animal is there. So these are just tools for actors.

### **Stamping Yakuhachi; Stamping the Graves**

In Japan they were stamping on the tombs of their ancestors graves in order to contact them and continue an unfinished discussion, or to take the energy of the ancestors to use it for something, or to bang on the evil spirits. They wanted to take the energy from the ancestors and then use it for something.

We have enormous potential as human beings and we are not using it because we haven't learned how to. Or we are not allowed to because it is dangerous. How can we mirror the inner turmoil of a person if we haven't tasted the blood on your own tongue. Not only feelings, the whole breath based on tensions from controlling and keeping down. So we are stamping to relieve more of the treasures we are carrying and not using.

Feel the vibration of the floor: up and then down. There is no other movement. Keep it down without pushing up. Keep the same speed, the same energy and the same level. What kind and what quantity and intensity of energy is needed in the work? Through making this exercise this is what we are studying; quality, intensity and quantity.

### **Second day**

What we are trying to find during these days are the inner sensibility towards the centre of gravity and the stability in combination with a clear focus. So you must always cultivate a sense of a focus outside yourself, towards which you are showing your work, you will always be seen. It is your own satellite that's out there. All the exercises are constructed in such a way that they will reveal for us all the habits we have, and to what degree we have our body, our breath, our voice, our psychology under control and how we can deal with the amount of energy needed and that is very different from person to person. In classical sports

one can clearly see that the know how of how to spend the energy is needed.

All these exercises are a kind of tests because you will get to know what you have to work on. We all have small unconscious habits and we have to control them so that we can be good instrumentalists. We have to break it or make use of it, so that it is not using us and disturbing our work.

### **Tenketaken (windmill)**

Your body is one, it's like a tree, one piece. The only thing that moves are two branches. You makes arabesques as quick as you can and the faster you work the better you can understand where the control station is. In this exercise one is really confronted with where the centre of gravity is and also our psychology and with something that one doesn't really like, because in this work there will come a psychological reaction on the speed of the work. It's just habits but even so a lot of energy is needed to sustain the habits.

### **Tenkataten**

(fast and slow walk, with sticks connecting couples)

The music is inside you and you come alive in the room. Remember that you are still the one in command and you must use the help and accept that the other is pressing you and not pressing against. It is a delicate balance so try to sense the real co-operation. You penetrate the other with your focus, you look into the others eyes and through them into the horizon. You have a personal meeting and you have the objectivity of the horizon at the same time. Try to find the secret way of walking that changes the room.

The Three basics again with text; to shout means to project your voice to the focus. The same level and the same speed because it is basic and not artistic, it's not meaning. It's the stream of the sound of your voice. When the text is finished the movement is finished - combine the two. The voice is like a river; the sound is like a river and the words are like the stones that



the water is passing by. (We need the floating.) The text has to be part of your body. The voice has to meet the other. Use your aggression. Don't be afraid to sound in the room, be raw in the beginning, just get it out. The voice comes from where you have the tension and you have to release the tension so that you can jump from the true, from where the voice originates from.

Try to feel what it means that the sound is coming from the whole of your body.

While walking: Where am I at this moment? What's going on in my head? Observe the tension inside. Is there a lot of thinking going on? Thoughts are only a part of you. Try to observe the emotional climate is inside of you and try to be sensitive to what's going on. The emotions are only a part of you. Check your focus, what are you looking at? Are there any tensions in your body? The body is only part of you. Try to sense your feet while walking. Walk very slow but still floating. Be sure that you have a good breathing body. Take in the air through the nose and let it out. Work with two directions. The exercises are done in order to make the fundament strong, to awaken an inner sensibility towards your centre of gravity and stability in with the concentration and your focus on the horizon.

### **Sitting exercise**

Find the stability in the pelvic region. Remember the picture of the princess and the prince in the boat with the parasol enjoying when the others are making the rowing work. Rowing is from the navel and down, the rest should be sweet enjoyment. Go.

### **Standing statues**

What we are working with is how to have the bodily stability and the inner sensibility of a centre of gravity and when that is established one can begin to put the artistic thing on it. One thing is to educate the body to be able to carry the vision and the desire we have but if we have no stability the desire becomes unstructured and we disturb our own images by not knowing what is my instrument. It deals with the art and the craft of acting and also

what is needed for the classical theatre. Because in this theatre we have to carry such big text amounts, that have to be shot out from a platform of energy without losing the refinement not to become shouting theatre. This is what we often experience because the standard of the classical theatre as craftsmanship is less and less thought of.

### **Walking in pairs with sticks**

See if you can conquer the reaction of a heavy fatigue inside, see if you can find the will, if you can turn on another accumulator, because on the 3rd day the body reacts. Try to welcome this heavy burden of the tiredness in your body. Try to see further with the fresh eye of the child.

It's a very dramatic moment when somebody is pressing a stick towards you and you are pressing that person backwards. It gives a dramatic possibility as long as you keep remembering what you are basically working with. You should make your imagination play as much as possible, its part of the exercise. Never make exercises without pictures and images. Remember that you look at the horizon through the eyes of the others so that you don't get fixed in psychological looking.

The music is there to stimulate the inner sensibility and at the same time you are doing a physically demanding conscious work. It's there to inspire and when you are acting it is exactly the same melody that you are carrying inside.

Through the education of the basics we are trying to get the stability and when you begin to have this stability, strength and persistence, as you can see in the stamping, I just put a on little more and that is exactly what the audience should not see at the end. Large roles needs the capacity to run long without having breath problems. So Suzuki makes us see who is ready to play the role, because often the physical amount of energy and the quality of the inner alphabet working on the basic of raw energy, is not ready. We can see it. It's very visible with the clas-

sical theatre that the standards are given. When we are disappointed it's because something is missing. In football there are certain standards for being able to play and you can immediately see it if a player is not ready. The same goes for opera and classical ballet, the standards are clear because you cannot do without them. In acting, realistic and naturalistic drama have taken away something that is in between our personal habits and something bigger.

#### **4th day**

What we have done are only prerequisites for the rest of the method. You have so far only learned some exercises but no method and the exercises are clearly connected with energy which is the capital of this course. Normally we never teach the method like this.

#### **Voice Exercises...**

The projection of voice is a big chapter of it's own. To be able to do serious work you should have had the text for a long time before we began to work. But even if it is not on the same level as your physical activity, you should try to work on it. Remember that your voice has reached your focus. When you hear that your voice is getting up high and your breath is high and you have no bodily sensitivity from where your voice comes, try feel the sensitivity of your body and from where the sound should originate. If you hear it coming from another part, then try to see if you can find your voice in another place in your body.

Could you hear that your voice was creeping out and you took your resonance very high. You cannot contact the powerful voice that is coming from the whole of our bodies if you still are not sure of where your stability is, because if one is not stable– it's like jumping from a boat up to the bridge – it means when you have found your stability, then you can jump from it. From the point of view of the voice. But try again to find that the voice is originating down here and that it resonates in the whole of your body. Try to find what the difference is between speaking loud

and speaking with a strong intensity.

### **Towards the end**

Try also to see what are my habits as an actor. What does it mean to be in a naturalistic style, what does it mean to go more on energies, physical energy where on you put your artistic work. As another style, that's what is interesting, like different painters; Kandinskij, Rembrandt – you have different ways of painting. Our time needs actors with different tools.

I don't know if you have this feeling but the energy have been rising from day 1–3 and now it starts to descend because it's been such a big effort and it is impossible to push it further. We are just on the turningpoint when we use the same effort but it's not as peaking as it was because we are going to land soon. One thing is exhaustion because you have been working very hard, but now you really have to go the last bit of the way, like the mountaineers – and this is a super effort and what does that mean?

We will see what we can do, because you shouldn't be pressed anymore than you have already been – at the same time it is good; the consciousness, try to be observant rather than to fall asleep. Try to keep the focus strong. What is will? What is to go against this descending line? Which sort of energy do we have to awake in order to lift? So we try to lift to the demonstration tomorrow. It's another kind of energy. And partly it is to be conscious about that we are tired and then you have to listen more to your own body.

We have double focus, we have what we are trying to find out about the actual exercise and the other parallel focus is to know that somebody is watching me. And I'm showing my work to Gods, to Dyonyosos, the cosmic eye or your own satellite when you are looking at yourself. That means that you are involved in this but maybe we should strengthen the sensibility of being seen. The communication could maybe give us energy and that there is something larger than us. So this training is also open-

ing the doors in different ways and everything is fine.

The text from Macbeth:

*Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle  
Life is but a walking shadow.*



*Walking in pairs with sticks*



*Sitting statues*

# COMMENTS ON ANNE-LISE GABOLD'S WORKSHOP

## Comments by participant Annika B Lewis

The workshop consisted of different exercises from the Suzuki technique chosen of Anne-Lise regarding to the theme; energy and theatre.

We started immediately »on the floor« without any big theoretical introduction or explanation. This was in the line of the method, where the philosophical aspect and the physical action are very close to each other. The mental process through the physical action.

The exercises consisted of some very precise and physical demanding and strong movements, put together as series.

My experience was that the training made a difference very fast. Joining the training you could really feel and experience the energy and the power of it. Though you understood that this technique, as all other techniques, demanded training and knowledge impossible to reach in only a week of training. This was a technique with very precise, strong and powerful movements, that demands a precision that you only can reach through training and practice.

Nevertheless I experienced the awakening up of energies and the possibilities of directing the energy, in a very physical and concrete way. From the outside it was also obvious to see the surprisingly strong results of the training. From the outside it could look like strong »forma«, but it was about finding an inner structure – life.

And we understood that the importance was not if we succeeded to do the exercises or the form perfect or not. But it was the experience through the process.

Practising Suzuki was also getting in contact with Japanese (eastern) culture, way and style. And in this case: sweetness and strength in the same time.

This is a technique of transformation; that through the exercises you take away physical and mental blocks and habits that limits you and you open your senses and awareness for creating space – space for energy. And when we are talking about energy here, it is not only on a personal level, but also aiming a »higher« level. An abstract level, where the unknown, ideas and a possible God exists.

In the exercises we also got introduced to the voice training using a piece of text from Shakespeare's Macbeth. The connection to the text went mainly through the action of the movements, creating a strong physical tension and using the voice coming from the centre / pelvic part. Creating a physical fundament for the voice.

Anne-Lise succeeded to, through her humbleness, sweetness and professionalism, establish a very good working atmosphere with lots of concentration, humour, respect and commitment in the group.

Experience the Suzuki method for the first time, I got very »touched« by it. I got lots of inspiration, images and energy. And I also know that this was not the last time I practised the Suzuki method.

»Energy is gravity and stability«

»To transform the personal energy to a field, to touch, a higher potential of oneself.«

### **Comments by participant Idalotta Backmann**

For me the only teacher of the four I would call a pedagogue was Anne-Lise Gabold, Danish actress and teacher of the Tadashi Suzuki method. She was clear, demanding and supportive and guided her students through the physically exhausting training with warmth but a firm enough hand to take people past their limits and find that they are »stronger than their bodies«. The training is constantly about raising energy, controlling it and connecting the inner and outer charge.

Five days is a short time to give actors a good idea of a complicated and demanding technique, but it is possible to get a hunch, a flavour of it. Anne-Lise herself says the relationship between energy and the Suzuki-method lies in how the method reveals the actor's resources, her potential. In other words that the method opens up the possibility for accessing unknown powers, to go further physically, to deepen your concentration and strengthen your will. To do what you previously thought you could not.

The training puts the actor to the test. Initially it may seem the test is only of physical nature, but as Anne-Lise made clear the first day, rather it is about leaving cumbersome baggage behind, bad habits in thinking and moving.

### **Comments by participant Hedda Sjögren, actress**

It was a way to find a kind of energized rest. Like an animal ready to attack, but without wasting energy on any kind of tension. A possibility to peel away what is private. And perhaps it was where we all met each other during these days: in our fight to overcome obstacles within ourselves, and every now and then in a state of total presence and freedom for our souls. To have a sensation of what it might be like to have full access to your potential. Oh yeah!

What then do you do in the training? Among other things you stomp on the graves of your ancestors. Gravity pulls you towards the ground, towards death, and the soul wants to be liberated out into cosmos. That is the predicament for us earthly creatures. But, paradoxically, in order to be liberated out into cosmos we have to be firmly attached to the ground and dare to meet our past – and this is not possible if you are out of balance!



# GREGORY HLADY

## SUMMARY M.V.

Hlady began his workshop with quite a long introduction in which he described his work and set out what he wanted to concentrate on in the workshop.

The theme is linked to a short story by Gogol, *The Terrible Vengeance*. Hlady is interested in this magical saga because it offers the opportunity of reawakening ancestors. He wanted to try ways of doing this, practically, during the workshop. He aimed to enter unknown territory, the world of dreams, and he warned against the application of logic. He was going to work with different levels of consciousness. He prefers the term presence to the term action and the term force to the term energy. He also intended to do a lot of work on breathing.

He urged participants to trust the exercises, to do them without reserve and without interrupting the process to ask questions. He affirmed that the answers come from inside, not at once, but after doing the exercises for some time. During exercise sessions there would be freedom to experiment, to make mistakes. He welcomed this. Making mistakes is the way to learn...

»Knowledge must be stolen«.

»We shall explore non verbal territory, go outside the boundaries of language and logic.«

The form of the workshop developed into a demonstration of treading unknown territory. Hlady's own energy and enthusiasm filled the room and inspired the participants, who threw themselves into the exercises unquestioningly. Force and energy took precedence over precision. Participants were allowed to work in their own way. Hlady often demonstrated a more advanced variant of an exercise to show how far one could go. Participants had to push themselves to aim at the impossible. At the same

time he warned them not to go too far, not to become hysterical, but always see themselves objectively. Certain basic elements recurred in the various exercises, for example the work on breathing. This focused, above all, on breathing in which fills the body with energy. In the middle of the air intake the breath was blocked, in the throat's chakra, and then it continued accompanied by a sound. This was used with increasing intensity during the workshop and seemed to be able to lead to a state of trance.

The term »spiral« was used to describe motion anti-clockwise when breathing in and clockwise when breathing out. The concept »shadow« or »double« refers to an imaginary mirror image under one's feet with which one could communicate. One could dissolve into one's »double« letting it take in all weight. Working with this idea gave participants increased energy which was quite tangible. Hlady calls gravity »the hidden force«. However the »shadow« has humour, it can laugh and joke, like a demonic alter ego. Many exercises have associations to bird behaviour. One gathers strength from below while breathing in, then one flies up fluttering and making bird sounds.

Hlady also explores unknown territory in the work with breathing. We should see our voices as something outside the body, which can fly freely in the room. He wants to break up language, to »scandalise« it by talking gibberish, for example, or seeking other frequencies for the voice such as overtone singing. Participants also learned a short text in an unknown archaic language, which was used in the exercises.

A recurring feature of the workshop was dealing with mistakes and fear – how to say yes to mistakes and how to define and make friends with one's fears.

»Everything belongs, it is all included.«

Towards the end of the workshop Hlady worked with a large group on the reawakening of forefathers. A participant played dead and the group sang laments and called upon the dead, who finally rose again.

# GREGORY HLADY PRESENTATION

Ukrainian Pilgrimage (Group Training) is an exploration of the ancient traditions of Ukraine and their relation to the performer's creative act. Director Gregory Hlady with a selected group of performers, of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds proposes to discover together certain elements of Ukraine's traditional arts: the history, the magic stories, the songs and epic »Dumy«, the social and religious wisdom of the Ukrainian people.

From Montreal (where he now lives), to the home of his youth (and hearth) in Ukraine, Gregory Hlady is widely regarded to be among the most exceptional and innovative talents of today's theatre and film world. He is the creator and artistic director of the Ukrainian Pilgrimage Project, the result of his more than twenty-five years of exploration and experience as an actor and director.

Hlady's research of his Ukrainian and Christian ancestry began while he was still a teenager. Frequent visits to the Library of History in Kiev complemented by (banned) underground publications, cultivated equally his own Catholic faith and a consuming fascination with the invisible world of the early Christian mystics and philosophers, and their counterparts in the world's other religions. Gregory's work is promoting the necessity for actors to transcend the limitations of the stage and to strive for higher motives: the theatre as a place of provocation, a challenge that the actor sets for himself and also, indirectly, other people.

Central to Gregory's intention is a combination of techniques unique to each performer's needs, which invite the individual to exceed self-imposed physical and psychological limitations, in order to create performances which are intimate, revealing, and most importantly, repeatable. In this language of Poor Theatre,

The Holy Actor, The Theatre's New Testament, Hlady identified a kindred spirit and a source of inspiration for his own methodology.

The intention of the Ukrainian Pilgrimage Group Training is to initiate for each performer a relationship to particular elements, a song, a personal ritual, through daily practice. To try to understand the actions of another by discovering in oneself the same human potential, and to verify the objective impact of these elements on the individual who practices them, daily. Following Mr Hlady's methodology, the goal of the Ukrainian Pilgrimage project is two-fold:

1. For the performers, the possibility to awaken in ourselves a vital connection with our ancestors, by exploring their knowledge and experiences through our performer's craft. As well, the opportunity to train in the technical elements of performing arts: narrative, song and chant, physical actions (analogous to the work of Les Kurbas and Grotowski) and the techniques developed by Mr. Hlady in his research.
2. For Gregory Hlady, the opportunity to use an interested group of actors to investigate certain objective elements of Ukraine's' ritual arts, how these elements work upon the body, the heart and the head of the performers.

For the following Group Training in Stockholm, Gregory has chosen for a source of inspiration Mykola Gogol's magic tale »The terrible vengeance«.

Gregory Hlady is a graduate of the Kiev Karpenko-Karyi Theatre Institute, and a former member of the School of Dramatic Arts (Anatoly Vasiliev, artistic director). He has cultivated a profound and lasting personal research into his Ukrainian origins. His methodology is based on movement and sound; the activation of the performer's impulses through various physical and vocal exercises, which can serve to initiate a kind of inner transfor-

mation (Peretvorenia) in the actor. The performer works to be truthful in this search, never to seek to »impress« with power or skill, but to invite the audience to share in a very real search. Through attention and care, actor and witness can discover together »the voice of a loved one »in an old song, or the »movement of a child« within the simple rhythm of a dance.

Participants in Mr. Hlady's workshop should be having, not only a specific interest and curiosity but also the artistic desire and determination needed for a work based on rigor and precision.

The rudimentary technical aspects of Gregory's »Ukrainian Pilgrimage Group Training« are the following:

contacting yourself: the fundamental principles of body-being:

relaxing, limbering, sensing wholeness

The here and now

Moving and sounding from centre

The energy in space

The energy in time

Grounding

contacting your environment

The breathing body

Vibration of the voice

Awareness of space and reacting to its constituent elements

Improvisation: the impulses / the vigilant mind

The body as the teacher

Interest versus fear

Mistakes

The don't know mind

Non-verbal communication

contacting each other

Bodily gesture

Vocal gesture

Learning ancient songs: Lament; Dumy; Secret Songs

»The Terrible Vengeance«: Search for a precise line and a logic of impulses and physical actions: The Score

Music as a vehicle

Montage of physical actions with regard to the magic tale of Gogol

The process of action

Non-action

Peretvorenia (Transformation)

Gregory will be using the English translation of the Terrible Vengeance that is available in few versions. The authentic Ukrainian texts / Dumy, Lament, Secret Songs / will be supplied by Gregory on the location during the first working meeting.



*Gregory Hlady*

# **MEETING WITH GREGORY HLADY**

## SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOP AND COMMENT BY PARTICIPANT MICHAELA HENNING

*Instead of listing the exercises, our reporter has chosen to give a much more personal account of the workshop. This in itself has a lot to say about Gregory Hlady's work. M.V*

How do you put into words what you experience in your body, in your mind or even in your spirit? How do you explain an encounter with the unknown? How do you define a training method or acting philosophy in as few words as possible? A difficult task. Nevertheless, I will try to summarise my impressions of four inspiring days with Gregory Hlady at Methodika 2001.

My meeting with the Ukrainian-Canadian actor and director was a veritable journey. What is that sticks in my mind from this encounter? What was Gregory Hladys message and what essential elements of his training did he focus on?

Gregory Hlady is a genuine actor and has a very powerful presence. During our working sessions he excelled in the same way as a shaman. I think almost everyone was swept away by his energetic presence. He expressed his ideas very directly and openheartedly with a strong devotion to his métier. By sharing things this way and by demonstrating a clear desire to communicate, he established a warm and close relationship with the group with which he was working.

Gregory Hlady believes that the first thing you have to consider on stage is that you are a breathing body in contact with heaven and earth, and that this relates to gravity. Working on ones

breathing is essential. The breathing body is much stronger than any muscular activity. If we become aware of and master the power of our breathing, we can become more powerful.

In his acting training, Gregory Hlady uses many powerful exercises involving breathing and blocking breathing. He brought our attention to the third chakra, called vishuta, the energy-point which is connected to breathing and which also has to do with expression.

When confronting being on stage or doing exercises, you should include everything, even what you regard as mistakes, what you consider good or bad, wrong or right etc. You should face and accept what is without any judgement. Just look for what can give you energy.

If judgement or stage-fright overwhelms you, be a friend to this feeling of fear. Personalise your Demon. Talk to it, play with it and have fun with it! It's a strong source of energy on stage.

Gregory Hlady introduced a very simple and wonderful exercise: Begin every sentence by saying: »I'm afraid of...« Pronouncing out loud what you fear in front of your colleagues while standing in the middle of a circle creates a lot of positive energy. It also diminishes the power of fear.

You realise that there is nothing you have to fear from being on stage. It's enough for you to be yourself. You, as a tool, with your perfection's and imperfections, are your best friend. You become reconciled with your weaknesses and see them as a source for your acting.

Gregory Hlady also worked a lot on what he called the »double«. The »double« is your own reflection - a reflection you can actually place wherever you wish. Gregory placed it mainly in the ground, and used it while working with breathing exercises.

Having a »double« provides you with support and energy in



every situation on stage. It helps you to have a distance to yourself. You can use your »double« however you wish. You can argue with him/her, blame him/her, have fun with him/her etc. And everything that you like or don't like you can project on you him/her. Working with your »double« inevitably places you in a playing position.

Gregory Hlady stressed the connection with the unknown. By this he means that as an actor you should continuously question the unknown, and in time the answers will come. Gregory Hlady himself is preoccupied with rituals and dreams. It's important to find a way of stretching your limits, to set foot on territories where you perhaps do not feel comfortable in the first place. By way of example, Gregory Hlady demonstrated this in an exercise, by trying to enter non-verbal territories.

One last thing he focused on in his work was the importance of having a connection with your ancestors. They can be a very powerful and wonderful source for your acting and for your artistic and personal life. Ancient songs and praying are vehicles that allow your unconsciousness to travel in time, to gain contact with the past, the present and the future, to liberate you from normal boundaries. It can set your mind and creativity free.

»FAST FOOD HLADY« - The main emphasis of his work:

- \* THEATRE IS ABOUT HAVING FAITH
- \* «THE BREATHING BODY» IN CONNECTION WITH HEAVEN AND EARTH
- \* BE A FRIEND WITH YOUR FEAR ON STAGE
- \* WORKING WITH »YOUR DOUBLE«, YOUR REFLECTION
- \* CONNECTION WITH THE UNKNOWN
- \* CONNECTION WITH ONES ANCESTORS



*Hlady with participants*

# SELECTED COMMENTS FROM THE TAPES GREGORY HLADY

*The very length of the tapes from Hladys workshop shows that he speaks much more than any of the other teachers. He speaks almost continuously, mixing sounds, song, gibberish, demonstrations of breath-techniques and movements etc. The transcripts can of course not render the impression of the intensity and suggestive power in this.*

Very much in our exercises, that I will introduce today, will be plunging into something that is really touching this obscure territory. I'm looking for the instrument, I'm looking for something that we can catch, we can grasp in our hands. How we can work with our instrument, how we can work with ourselves as being real. Being passionate, being efficient not just dreaming and discussing but having a firm vision, a real vision of things and put it on the stage. This is very much work with our consciousness, it's very much suggestions, it's spiritual work, it's inner work, it's not abstract but concrete work.

We are exploring the action. Some times when we watch someone on the stage who is not doing anything, not moving, just sitting, we are trapped at watching him and we don't know why his presence is so powerful. There is some kind of secret of the presence. So I prefer the term of presence to action. Presence for lets say being. And this phenomenon of being, being present here and now, this is my preoccupation.

Then I'm exploring what I should do with this horizontal space, this floor, with this attachment with the ground, the gravity that is always pressing me to the ground. Let's say I'll be doing gymnastics, I'll be working on my body, I will work out on my flexibility, coherence, some connections of movements. Then I know

and everybody knows that there exists respiration, breathing, so it's evident that work on breathing will be more efficient than work just on body. Actually working on body is not enough if it's without breathing. We have to master respiration, because breathing is extension of our existence. It is much more subtle, it is reaching very deeply into something that is not visible . So the work on breathing should become very materialistic and very practical.

I think each exercise, each little action that we are doing, each motion that we will be trying, it's a challenge, it's giving room for experiment, it's giving room for trying things and maybe mistakes. I welcome making mistakes very much. Usually we are making some discoveries when we are making mistakes. In order to get knowledge you have to steal it, you have to break the law. You have to steal it. Try to understand it in a real way, what it means to steal the knowledge, to go into something obscure, to go out of logic, go out of law.

We'll be trying to go and touch the borders and the boundaries of the language and logical speech. We'll be trying to explore non-verbal territory.

While you are breathing in our exercises, inhalation, taking in the air will be stressed, will be like a heavy akt-zent. We will keep big attention on inhalation. Usually for the expression we use exhalation, usually when we are expiring we are saying some words, but in those exercises we will be paying bigger attention to inhalation. And this inhalation will be enriching our body with prana, with energy .

Imagine that you are on the surface of the mirror and there is a reflection of yourself underneath. This reflection is like myself and I'm bargaining with this double that is underneath. Detach from yourself, be in touch with this reflection underneath and give more power to this reflection than to yourself.

You are on the mirror and there is a big circulation of energy. Your body is just the medium, the transportation of this power. The power is bigger than us, the power is spread much further than we can spread with our flesh.

Respiration is stronger than muscles .You have to get more and more familiar with the breathing respirational body because this body, if you master it, it's yourself, still yourself and you will not loose it. It can give you lightness, it can enrich your physical range, your scale of movement, you become lighter, you walk differently, you radiate differently. The moment we catch this respiration, this power and we inhale, we are filling up. Try to imagine how you can go further, further, further... and try to expire when you reach the limit of expiration, try to go deeper. This moment when you expire deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper.. this moment is very precious. Then suddenly when you reach this impossible limit, when you expired totally, try to feel explosion. There is explosion underneath. Try to keep the objective eye. It's also very important in our practice not to get lost inside yourself. Try every time to keep some objective vision of yourself. And this vision should be very sober, like an observer – so take it easy and don't take it too seriously.

The feeling when you touch the floor and you feel that it's not only you who are pushing the floor but the floor is pushing you. It's not only you who are in this room, you are perceiving this room and the room is perceiving you. It's not only you who are listening to this room, but the room is listening to you. This has to become really relative in your perception and eventually the miracle arrives when it is transformed. Because energy is transformation .

We feel the presence of each other, we have to send good vibration, we have to feel good together, we have to be very friendly towards each other. It's like a natural environment, very agreeable, very friendly towards each other. It has to be a good deal of humour in this.

The sensation of the contact with the floor and pushing the floor, imagine that we can smile with the knees, we can smile with the feet, we can smile with the touch of floor. This sensation of touching the floor and pushing the floor it's a smile. Actually it's the double that is smiling. The double is very humorous, he is often joking, he is having fun, you have to steal energy, you have to trick him, like an alter ego that is devilish or demonic, this is an incredible gift given to us by God. That we can give it out to him what we don't like in ourselves. We can always think that we are having negative aspects of ourselves, we can bargain with the devil, with this double, we can stay free and we can get some new fresh energy that is totally different. We cannot get rid of gravity, the gravity is always with you, it's you fathom, you have to deal with this. Gravity have to be personalised to be dealt with, and it's not only this obscure vision, it's yourself. ..

I try to go into some twilight zone where there is hidden meaning and there suddenly I'm deliberately going to obscurity and deliberately taking the risk. And I want to encourage you to this non-questioning approach to get into unknown territory.

I'm challenging the boundaries of the language. I try to shake up the language, to scandalise the language, to make crises of the language and then it gives some kind of explosion, confusion and in that way I'm working on my consciousness. Of course logic is a good thing, like when you keep a structure, but you have to hold the structure and be very sure of it. Your body is like the animal that has to be trained for doing the same thing, to discipline. But for getting intelligent information you have to go into obscurity.

So I encourage you and I want to push you towards this exploration of unknown things moving towards high's, towards depths, eternity, infinity. And the exercises we did in the first part of our work were designed to get in terms with your body to channel this energy using your body. You have to get familiar with high frequency energy that is absolutely necessary for playing for

example Greek tragedy or Shakespeare in a real way .Modern actors have no instrument to meet this challenge. So we have to prepare the instrument for these high frequencies, it's such a powerful electricity that our organism is to weak to meet, it's just burning out. I also want to encourage you to explore of the limits of your voice. When we are reaching these high frequencies, these high sounds, we are closer to some mysteries. It is a secret language.

The position we should take as performers is to be ready and to confront this unknown without being disturbed by not knowing the answer. The purpose with these encounters with the unknown is to get familiar with it, let it be, let it coexist with what we are. That means that we are not denying the unknown, we are not hiding from the unknown, we are just openly confronting it, recognising it and the point is that we have to include it in our being. It is of crucial importance to include everything. There is no negative no positive, everything is playing the game.

Each time we are doing exercises your mind is working actively, it's actively engaged into analysing how it works. And when it's finished, it still works in you. Because the body while doing these simple actions is memorising, registering what it is doing, it's kind of memorising by heart and this memory remains and it will put it in a good place in the future. Just be patient...

To be tensed and relaxed at the same time. More relaxed than tense .What is energy? Energy is not tension, energy is relaxation. And if you tense yourself you block energy. It's a false energy. If you relax yourself you relieve energy and energy passes through you.

It's not me that are pushing and touching my double, it's my double pushing me and sometimes my double is taking more tension and more weight and importance than my actual body. Concentrate on this skill.

You are part of the whole. You have to really be full. This is up to you. I can only indicate the direction, to push you and encourage to continue this exploration. It's up to you, it's your individual work. You have to be familiar with confusion. Something that I really cherish in my practise and it's dealing with chaos. Dealing with spontaneity. How we obtain energy, borrowing it from there. Be humble. When you do the job and try to take the unknown without knowing absolutely what the answer is. The more you give, the deeper you'll get. And you will never have garanty, it's always danger.

The game is the situation when we need to explore the unknown. So it's a really tricky game. This game requires your incredible capacity, patience, tolerance, humility and readiness to everything. Say to yourself: I know nothing and I accept it - I accept the fact of not knowing. The fact of not knowing is actually having a direction. And when I start exploring the phenomenon of unknown, this chaos, this tricky stuff, where I'm full of cliché, then I'm projecting not knowing what, I'm projecting it forward and actually projection of myself not knowing what. It requires from you to take a risk and it seems like it is not easy, it is not easy for everybody, it is not easy for me either and every time when I do that I don't know what I will do and I try to have fun from this not knowing.

This is really the ultimate acting situation. How to get in touch, how to include every aspect of our presence because we are exploring the phenomena of presence, being on stage. We are protecting ourselves and hiding into things that we know and we are desperately trying to repeat what we know. We are confronting stage-fright, a very powerful part of ourselves; this fear. So what should we do? Yes, the easiest way is protecting ourselves, knowing the text, knowing the action and everything that we do. But this way we are becoming craftsmen, we are fine, we are actors, like everybody and there are million actors like that. How to become a unique personality, how to attend this charismatic emanation. In order to have this quality of this mystery, unpredictability, some kind of including unknown things, we have



to open instead of hiding. And exposing insecurity and exposing your fear in front of everybody gives energy!

And I love watching actors who deal with their difficulties. Because the actor who is prepared and just repeating their preparations is less interesting than the actor who is entering the unknown. And you have to confront this situation alone.

Actually what it means to confront unknown, to confront this obscure, chaotic situation. I ask questions, I'm trying to formulate these questions while we are doing improvisation. What would it feel like if I was more tolerating in the situation of not knowing. If I was subtle, if I was more soft... Then the next trap in the situation. When you ask the question you have to be patient because the answer never arrives right away. Usual mistake and situation for actors, we want the answer too fast. If we're patient this answer might arrive, if the answer does not arrive, we are still confronting the same unknown territory. What would I feel like if I was... more generous, loving, patient, heavier, lighter?

It's like a muscle exercise, we have to train this muscle of unknown, we have to get accustomed to this. Don't hide yourself, just go and act. It requires a big deal of participation so in order to be efficient in this you have first of all to include everything – here and now. You have to include »what happens happens« without judgement, without interpretation, without being confused,- you include everything as it is. Then everything is here and you'll deal with this landscape and then there is a danger and adventure is interesting. When we have a danger, why not, why should we not try to get into it and find the more interesting field instead of getting frustrated. So this is a real opportunity to exercise the situation.

If I could see the energy I would see a clear impulse down, whether you move forward or upwards. Everything is having a base in the ground. Why such a strong insistence on keeping the contact with the ground? It's because it is a natural law.

There is gravity. And our biggest friend in movement is the earth, the planet, the globe. We have to rely on a bigger mass. We can move and we can transform this contact with gravity into horizontality or upwards and we should rely on the connection with the earth. If we develop this capacity to transform gravity into movement forward this is an ultimate transformation. The power is not a physical force. The most efficient power is when we don't use muscles. When we are completely transparent and when we let out the energy. The real energy is not physical stuff, it is to know how to use this intrinsic quality of the connection with the earth and how it's transforming. The energy is where your concentration is going. How does energy appear? You will never have energy if you don't have concentration.

Use confusion as a demon instead of getting depressed and speak and bargain with the confusion. Without knowing the answer. I don't want to go into psychodrama. There is some imperative in us that is stopping us from going into too much obscurity and I think that this imperative is very powerful. We should be exploring obscurity knowing that there are some places we should not go. There is something in us as human beings that will not let us go there. There is a field that we can explore much more without going into danger

I borrowed something from shamanism, from tanfe-yoga, from Christian practices and from before Christianity arrived in Ukraine and I found that it was possible to combine them.

*During the work with a song of lament he is teaching everybody.*

The sonoric travel is very important. It's not enough to be self-contained in yourself, you have to have the object far away. As far as ancestors. And when we are speaking about this cosmic dimension of human being it's the distance between the cradle and grave, birth and death, and it incorporates the whole circle. And while we are singing we are still in this distance. We are situated somewhere in the middle, in between those poles. Always related to the cradle and not knowing when the burial will arrive.

We don't know, this is forbidden knowledge.

Our art is not about happiness. Actors are inevitably touching danger, even if they play comedies. Without it it is not interesting. I'm terribly bored with the conventional theatre. What makes sense for me with staying in the theatre and do real things is this possibility to touch danger. It's a hazardous game.

Then how do I work with this song? I try to visualise someone first in the world who sung this song, who felt this sensation and had the urge to express it. And it came out from this human being. So I consider him as my ancestor. What is important if you go deeper into this we are losing boundaries, cultures are not valuable. Here we are all the same. The mythological perspective unifies. I try to identify the person who sung and I try to communicate with this person. So this person is on the other pole of this scale. I'm sitting here and the object of my communication is in time and space very remote, breaking the limits of time and space, getting in touch with the man in prison. His sensation was 12 million years ago. His perspective is deeper than mine and I cannot go that far. He codified the song, made the combination of songs and this melody and it is existing and vibrating. You have to open yourself to be able to lament freely. Don't block your lamentation.

All we do is like a dream theatre. I'm rushing you to give you some vision of the result, but it all concerns N. Gogol's story »The terrible vengeance« and it is connected with dead ancestors.

*The whole group works on the theme of the short story, reviving a dead ancestor.*

What is the creation of the show? Every time we invent things how does it arrive? We are always confronting unknown and in order to become active and efficient in the way to find ideas we have to ask questions to the unknown. We were arriving at the limits of the language, you were inventing language, you felt confused, felt mixed up, then we understood that it was impossible

to create without obscurity. We have to include this moment into our being.

Now I'm speaking about »Terrible vengeance« and I'm preoccupied by this side of the story. All the associations that I'm excited about, the image of someone who is dead and who is coming back. It talks to me and tells me something essential about the way we lead our lives and that we are missing something essential. We appreciate things when it's too late. This part of reflection is very rich and profound. The image is; what it is to die. We cannot create in empty space in a vacuum. You have to develop a passion, and desire to explore something.

# COMMENTS ON GREGORY HLADYS WORKSHOP

## Comments by participant **la Lotta Backman**

The group I actively worked in was that of the Ukrainian actor Gregory Hlady who had worked with Vasiliev as his main actor until he »jumped off« some twelve years ago and now he lives in Montreal. Gregory is a person I would call a true fire-soul, totally passionate for his call, full of energy and humour. His passion is to learn to master gravity, to fly, levitate, and to be in contact with the ancestors, preferably resurrect the dead. He brought a story by the Ukrainian author Mykola Gogol and an old Ukrainian song. These we were to work on. But first we were to master gravity and to extend our body awareness into our surrounding energy bodies. We worked on giving our weight and problems to our shadow, our double under our feet, and liberate our feet to smile. We worked on stepping in and out of our energy that surrounds us. Most of all we worked on a breathing system, which is impossible to explain in writing, but has to do with locking the breath at the throat chakra and by relaxation turning the flow of air so the inbreath »explodes« and tricks gravity. I have never met exercises like these anywhere and I found them extremely effective for energising, relaxing, singing and getting close to the sensation of flying.

The main obstacle for the performer is to overcome fear and the best way to constantly challenge our limitations is to keep stepping into the unknown. Gregory's impressive way to constantly put himself into the unknown is to rise his energy through his breathing exercises and to speak with rising intensity so you might say he reasons himself into an altered state of consciousness and then lets the moment guide him. It is an enormous privilege to be in the here and now! Reduce the constant flow of past and future concerns and dare to be, free, in the moment. Through cutting breath we can edit time. We trained to

step into the circle and express anything that came to our mind, to give words to fear and allow ourselves to not know. Listen to the sensation!

There is an undertone in Gregory's presence, which could be likened to that of the Tibetan Lamas - laughter is always present, just behind the corner, and bubbles up anytime. His attitude is one of a child who is carrying a secret, full of wonder, and having fun is just as essential as tapping into the energy and wisdom of the ancestors, or challenging gravity.

Everything is energy and vibration, but for the artist central key words are faith, attention, patience and discipline. Keep your attention on your greater goal and you will obtain energy! There is no time for being half asleep - our spiritual level must be high!

Personally I like to call it intention. Be passionate about your purpose, be generous, long to emerge with your mission and you will tap into your way of making the invisible visible.

### **Comments by participant Chili Turell**

We followed him on his charismatic journey – for that is what it was: a journey into the unknown. A journey into chaos. Into the core of human existence. Gregory's message became still more clear: get to know yourself on the highest and lowest levels. This is the starting point of everything, in life as well as theatre.

I think we were all a bit confused and bedazzled. Personally, I have never experienced anything like it. There seemed to be neither structure nor method. On the other hand, there was an overwhelmingly fruitful mixture of human insight, ecstatic work with body and voice, a conglomerate of an individual's deeply personal work with himself in various connections. The result was a burning, intense message about going your own ways toward your personal nucleus, and about making your own decisions without any fear of consequences. Gregory was clearly inspired by harmonic chanting, Shaman rituals and Buddhist philosophy. He was evidently close to his Ukrainian roots and referred to these in ways that sometimes made it hard for us to follow him.

He kept fantasising about 'a dead father who returns after 12 years' – inspired by his beloved Gogol, the author of »Dead Souls«.

### **Comments by observer Hedda Sjögren**

This very theme (ancestor's graves) recurred in the workshop led by the Russian émigré Gregory Hlady. He is an actor and pedagogue living in Canada with a presence and a built, which most likely have brought herds of women to a swoon. More interesting than his sex appeal, however, was his class. It was a performance by a master. Hlady has studied the Russian and Siberian folk and shaman traditions focusing on lamenting songs and birth rites. Many of the exercises build on complicated breathing structures, or like Gregory put it in his juicy Russian accent:

*You maaast maaaster ze crazy horse of yourrr rrespiration! or You maaast listen to yourrr pain! or Earrrier, sooner or later you haaave to confrront ze impossibility of beinggg on ze stage!.*

He strew aphorisms, sweated gallons and showed us with his enormous energy and knowledge, that most of us only have taken the first step in the climb towards profound acting and in order to get all the way you have to work and work harder and work more.



*Gabriele Vacis during song exercise*



# **GABRIELE VACIS**

## **SUMMARY BY M.V**

The reporters' presentation of Vacis' work is more comprehensive than that of the other teachers because there are few useable comments recorded on the tapes. His instructions were generally communicated wordlessly or with very few words by himself or his assistant Barbara who demonstrated corrections.

Vacis followed the same basic schedule for the four days of the workshop – exercises in walking, isolation of parts of the body, singing.

To the onlooker the work he led seemed simple. Participants walked back and forth in line, eight steps, turn and so on. However his demands for precision and silence caused many to lose balance, get out of step and turn in the wrong direction. Gradually the exercise developed, allowing individuals to make small »excursions« such as an extra turn or sidestep and then return to the line, in step. On the last day voice and text were included in the exercises – in a variety of rhythm, tone and volume.

Even in the work with parts of the body, which began quite mechanically, variations were eventually permitted.

The voice group training started with efforts to sing one note in tune, to maintain free breathing and to achieve resonance in the body. Bodies were to be flexible and in movement, but without dancing or exaggeration. When the group was near to achieving this – there was always someone who had difficulty in staying in tune – Vacis began to sing solo over the group's drone. Gradually others tried to sing solo and the single note drone of the group was enhanced to a chord.

As I understood it, the exercise was a cleansing process, intended to shed all superfluity, all show of individual virtuosity... all show... Only when he had attained a naked clarity and sensitivity in the group was he willing to go further. However, working with a very uneven group it was difficult to achieve clarity and precision in four days. Despite this he pushed on to some extent and his assistant Barbara demonstrated more advanced exercises.

The comments of the observers reflect the discussion provoked by Vacis' method. He corrected the participants often and when they did not understand what they had done wrong, he would mimic and exaggerate their faults. Language problems made communication especially difficult. I thought that many participants were so afraid to make mistakes that they fumbled and stumbled just because of their fear, while others were irritated and became rebellious. But there were some who felt not at all threatened and experienced Vacis' mimicking as a quick and simple form of communication.

According to Vacis, energy is a subtle and concentrated effort to oppose the continuous disintegration of the universe.

»Try to grasp life, and when you have caught a small part of it try to let it expand and give it plenty of space.«

# **GABRIELE VACIS**

## **PRESENTATION**

Gabriele Vacis has started his carrier with an education in architecture and organized urban environmental projects for his native town, Settimo Torinese. His feeling for space and locations led him to various projects that connect environment and the art of acting. His method of teaching and directing has been developed by receiving inspiration from different locations. He still believes that the actor is the centre of all theatrical expression, and therefore prefers a personal training, with exercises based on the teachings of Grotowsky and Vasiliev.

Since the 1970's, he has held a large number of laboratories. His training uses such diverse elements as theatre-dance, physical training in the ensemble as well as chorus and song. The actor learns to understand himself as an instrument especially well with the use of the voice. From singing he transcends to a monologue or dialogue. This kind of work influences how the actor uses the words and the text, and in this way, he becomes his own dramatic adviser.

As one of the founders of the "Laboratorio Teatro Settimo", Gabriele Vacis has staged several performances that have been presented at various festivals in Italy and abroad (Salzburg, Madrid, Hamburg, Barcelona, Melbourne etc.). Gabriele Vacis won a number of prizes for his productions and artistically work such as the Ubu or the National Critics Award.

Further, he has taken the initiative to establish and has directed several theatre festivals in Italia from 1982 to 1989. He has lead seminars for directors' and coordinated acting courses at Scuola d'Arte Drammatica Paolo Grassi in Milan. He has taught reading and storytelling techniques at Scuola Holden in Turin and held conferences and seminars at universities in Turin, Bologna, Milano, Urbino, Naples, Rome, Madrid, Melbourne, Barcelona and Cagliari.



*Vacis' assistant Barbara during »8 step« exercise*

# THE WORK OF GABRIELE VACIS

## DOCUMENTATION BY ADRIAN MATTISKE AND ANNIKA STRØHM

### **The Aim**

to train an ensemble to work extremely precisely together with movement and voice while also having the ability to break away and perform individually outside of the ensemble and to precisely rejoin the ensemble.

The three main elements that are used;

- tone
- rhythm
- volume

All three are connected to the work with body and voice.

### **The Exercises**

»Common breathing«

*Movement:*

The group was asked to stand in a line across the room and to walk 8 steps forward, turn and walk 8 steps back. This is called a »round«. The exercise is then repeated. »8 steps only but they must be precise as the rules are precise.«

The group had problems with the turn and with body blockages which were worked on by Gabriele and his assistant, Barbara, nonverbal and with out discussion from the participants. It was then easy for Gabriele to point out when blockages reappeared.

An interesting moment is when everybody turns, the balance is lost. The centre has to be in focus as well as the energy used while walking, thinking of how the feet, legs and the rest of the body are working. The task is quite easy, but turns out to be more difficult and advanced because people tend to do it the complicated way. The task is only to walk, nothing else; 8 steps from one point to another where the aim is to come back to the

same point. This marching is a time and a place to understand how to walk, where to look and where you want to look. It has to be done precise and as silent as possible. Listen to the silence before beginning and keep this silence within you all the time. Otherwise, after short time you will start hearing a lot of noise which will in the end destroy your concentration. It is important to be empty and without tension from the beginning.

An aim with this work is to keep the silence even when the rhythm etc. is changing. This is a way of leading the energy and to create a container of energy.

### **Points to consider:**

- \* your centre should lead you
- \* concentrate on something when traveling in both directions- 8 steps to decide what to watch and 8 steps to understand what you are watching. Being outside and not inside of your self and thereby functioning as an ensemble member.
- \* turning: keep your equilibrium, don't anticipated or pre-empt the turn.  
The turn is the turn. You go forward until you go backwards. The rhythm is to remain the same.
- \* common breathing: using the same air and silence and energy, being individual but belonging to the ensemble.
- \* rhythm forward should be the same as the rhythm backwards
- \* look and listen: probably the most important point as it is fundamental in all of the steps in this exercise and the following vocal exercises. Feel what you hear and see what you see.
- \* The foot which is number eight should be pointing in the forward direction before it is turned to go backwards.  
Tone of the movement: body or muscle tone; smaller steps means smaller muscle tone and vise-versa.

Volume of the movement: is evoked by the direction of the concentration and to evoke you need silence which is difficult when walking.

Rhythm of the movement: is decided by the group and can be changed but the original rhythm is always there to come back to. 8 steps: can be broken by direction and rhythm.

### **Vocals:**

The group was called into a circle to search for a common tone. With this common tone as basis, a point of starting, each student could sing a song or improvise a melody. And all the time with focus on the body in movement and without tension. Important was to find the breathing in the body, thinking of the upper part as an empty place where the tone could find its room, using also physical resistance outside by placing a hand on each others back or stomach.

### **Points to consider:**

- \* Look and listen.
- \* Choose the moment when to start. »It is a time and a place. At this place there is everything. The place of listening.«
- \* Breath-in using your lower diaphragm then breath-out with a tone, only one tone. This tone should be natural not forced and should be felt as a vibration in your chest and your back. It should not be nasal or throaty. The body should be free and not »locked« and the tone must be full.
- \* If your aparat is blocked you cannot increase the volume. When there is movement it is then possible to increase volume and play with the pitch.
- \* When we have the tone for the ensemble many things are possible; harmonies, folding bass, and if we get lost we can always come back to the tone.
- \* With the right intentions it never finishes.
- \* The problems with the voice are the same as for the body.

This exercise was combined with the chosen text, where the students could play and search for a melody of their line while the others supported with a common voice. The common voice creates a room and atmosphere in which each one listens to and it gives an impulse to sing alone. The group creates a place for

one of them to act out. Important is to think that you do not choose the tone, but the tone chooses you.

### **Incorporating Vocals and Movement**

Starting with the walking and then finding a tone and continuing the rhythm of the walking while working with the rhythms of the voice.

#### **Points to consider:**

- \* Inhale at different times not on the eight count. Common breathing does not mean that every body breathes at the same time. This results in the vocals having a hole in them.

#### **Introducing text to Vocals and Movement:**

By introducing text to the 8-step exercise, the students were asked to choose a sentence with 8 syllables and to say it while walking. First time they were to do it as neutral as possible, later they could start to play with tone, volume and rhythm. Always walking in group, they were forced to listen to each other and adjust to the tone, volume and rhythm of the group. Together they create a composition. The work on tone, volume and rhythm in the text, they searched to find unusual combinations in order to fight the clichés, such as fast rhythm with high volume, and slow rhythm with low volume. The students started walking and from the silence they found a common tone and continued with their text. Finally they ended together in silence.

#### **Decomposition of Body (Isolation):**

This is the part of the method which enables the individuals of the ensemble to express themselves individually.

Head

side to side

around in a circle

forwards and backwards - using the energy line

up and down

Use the four main directions with different rhythm and tone.



You must know which direction you are going. If you stop go back to the starting position. Keep your eyes open as you need to know where you are looking. Explore the maximum possible movement. Use a full-stop at the end of a movement

### **Shoulders**

- \* first feel the shoulders potential for movement
- \* use a full stop
- \* different rhythm and tone
- \* explore the possibilities
- \* use both shoulders

### **Chest**

- \* maximum extension of movement
- \* other muscles should be relaxed

### **Hips**

- \* as for the others
- \* use all the directions

### **Stepping and Moving**

\* Use one foot as a compass while the other changes direction.

- \* Change the rhythm and tone before we work on the volume.
- \* Making a phrase; take 3 steps and then fix the centre again.

As the vocal work comes from the outside so does the movement work and therefore we must concentrate on something outside or the movement will only be in a small circle around us.

It is necessary to take our time - use the full-stop and the concentration point to experience the feeling, even when it is only a second.

Isolation work is developed in relation to the notions of rhythm, volume and tone. This is important in the research of body movement. These principles are connected with tension, speed and quality of the movement.

These steps with different rhythm, volume and tone are developed into the 8-steps exercise. It can be described as an improvisation inside a structured pattern of walking.

# GABRIELE VACIS

## ON ENERGY

»Once I heard Jerzy Grotowski lecture about entropy. Entropy is »waste«, it is use of energy for free. That is the closest definition of energy I ever heard. Grotowky gave name to something that I call »descending«. In Physics it is named Entropy, in everyday language it is inertia. We must not forget the “law of the descent« Grotowski said. By this he gave name to something I recognised in the work.

I felt in the work, that I was continuously fighting against the tendency of actors, to »fall«. Rehearsals are continuously “falling – wasting«. You discover something and it seems right, then you try to repeat it, and it is never like what it was a second ago. The discovery, that moment, has already “fallen«, as Grotowski use to say, it is as if we find something very thin.

That is the right word, Thin. What we find during rehearsals is always thin, not unstable, approximately or uncertain. No, it is exactly thin. Something you cannot easily see, because it does exist in other areas of the brain, which we do not so often visit. And when you see it, it is more like a thin paper – sheet seen from the side. When you see the side of a paper, you always want to turn it, to read the paper. But in order to read, you have to turn the paper with the front-page towards you. The action of turning it is extremely heavy, even though the sheet is so light. It requires a lot of energy. The action - to read a paper as many times as possible – makes it impossible to read!

If we discover something thin, Grotowski said, it needs the effort of watching over it. This effort makes us tired because people wants to make things easier, so the tendency is to dissolve that thin thing we found under the weight of distraction. The effort of “watching over« makes us tired but without it everything becomes a soup, everything loses its specificity.

And when Grotowski says soup - once more he picked the right word - that »soup« has that mysterious tendency to »descent« the voice of an actor, the rhythm, the prolonging of feelings, to anticipate reactions.

The physical cosmos is entropic, Grotowski says. It was born along with the big bang. When universe was born, 15 milliards years ago there was an enormous explosion, and we are still exploding. We are like the ashes from an erupting volcano, the lava exist for a while and then starts the process of falling. Our universe is a fragment of this eternal falling that started 15 milliards years ago

Who knows if this definition is right. Thinking of the work in theatre, this might be true for everything. The decent is constant. The universe entropic. But the exceptional in this ongoing »descent« is, that an opposite currency is being created, an upstream river. We have to navigate in this river, because this is where life is being created. And we should not be too concerned with the forces that are constantly pulling us down but strive to swim upwards in the river towards that thin complexity. It takes strength.

I don't like to talk about energy. It is an overused word and it is associated with quantity and losing control. If I am to say something here it is: »searching to catch the life, and when we are able to hang a fragment make it longer in the time, give it space. And this is the important thing, to catch a fragment and make it last, to give the moment space.«

# COMMENTS ON GABRIELE VACIS' WORKSHOP

## **Comment from observer/reporter Annika Strøhm:**

After having watched this work for 4 days as a presentation of a method of working with actors on the theme »energy«, I ask myself if this can be defined as a method. I have the impression that it is more a way of finding a basic starting point from which one can begin to work with a method. It was difficult to understand the essence of a method.

## **Comment from observer/reporter Adrian Matthiske**

I am not sure whether to call this a method or training, mainly because the training is so apparent in the actual performance – as was seen in the film that was shown. Maybe it is both and the distinction between the two will appear after more work. (I think this can be said for all the teachers/directors that we saw)

It does have very strong qualities and after the second day I was able to ascertain in which direction Gabriele was going and what could be achieved with this training/method. It is very precise which gives it an extremely regimented feeling but the paradox becomes apparent with the individual work. At this point all organized form disappears.

For me, this is the powerful element of his work; chaos/control always changing.

As this training/method is precise it was very challenging for Gabriele to work with the material he had as he had to bring the whole group up to level before he could really start to work with his training/method in any substantial or individual way. This was obvious with the willing to accept something new and people not being able to work, or recognize systems. I was, once again, very thankful for my work with Jurij as it has made it far easier for myself and our group to recognize and work within systems. After saying that, I would be very interested to see what our group could achieve from one week with Gabriele.

Gabriele also caused some controversy due to his technique of correcting; saying »No« and mimicking those he was correcting. I had no problems with his technique of correction. To say »no«, as I have been told, takes away creativity. This maybe so in some circumstances but not in this case as he was working the group in a very precise direction which meant that he had to firstly get the group to level before their creativity then could be tapped. Very simple rules but very precise. To say »No« is not a crime, we have experienced that with Jurij who has adapted the »Not« to his advantage to avoid individuals from dragging the group off-course, away from the already agreed rules.

As Gabriele was not working in his language, I would say that his mimicking was very valuable and the way in which he and Barbara used this was powerful and done with total caring. When he mimicked he wore the mask of the fool which radiated with utter warmth without any malice. He was able to communicate without a language which meant that he was not disturbing the concentration of the others while he made corrections and there I do have the impression that this is his way of teaching and that it has nothing to do with any language problem. Part of his teaching is, after all, look and listen.

### **Vacis – comment by observer Ida Lotta Backmann**

The two classes I saw led by Gabriele Vacis were almost identical. This Italian director also had a very authoritarian way to teach. The students stand side by side at the back wall. One starts marching eight steps forward, turn, and eight back, not allowing the turn to disrupt the energy or rhythm. The next hooks on until the whole group moves as one line. After about fifteen minutes of this monotonous precise action some small variations are introduced, a halfturn on the third step, humming a tone or speaking an eight-syllable line (each having brought their own), always all together. If someone does a mistake signor Vacis makes them feel really bad, often by repeating in caricature manner the mistake and the personal habitus of the student. Also Vacis has an assistant who does a lot of the work and she helps the students in different ways while the master seems

to have mocking and irritating the students as his method. The other half of his class consists of singing in group, with intense listening and both improvising, »jamming« and singing existing songs. When the maestro does not like what he hears he says »No No No« and looks like he is suffering tremendously. From time to time the group sounds very good.

I found the line exercise good and also the singing in group is a good exercise, but the pedagogic method of mocking and teasing the students, also while singing, combined with the attitude that asking or commenting is not allowed, I was rather provoked by.

### **Comments on Vacis by Lena Linner, who worked as assistant to Vacis.**

He trains actors' instruments to develop and enhance consciousness in action. When an actor prepares and undertakes a task, he can do it best, not by use of intellect, but by being open, that is to say, with enhanced impulse-sensitivity and a readiness that does not require strain. What is sought is "the flow«, the opposite of effort, energy.

There are several senses in play and many languages with which to communicate a message, for example hearing and sight reinforced by the memories of other senses.

What is required of those who work on stage is a strong presence and high intensity. In communication with an audience, movement is necessary, as, sometimes, is speech.

As I understand the work we did with Vacis, the aim was to get participants to dump their pretences and hang-ups and abandon themselves to a cleaner inner energy. Thus one might ascend to a state where one is no longer governed by fear and vanity but gains contact with the inner flow. The access to this flow lies in the balance between listening, hearing, taking in and giving out. And in being in this enhanced state without fastening in the outer self.

To achieve this, one disciplines the body in a rhythmic exercise

– in this case eight paces and a turn.

This is then developed with movements within or deviating from the base rhythm but always returning to it. Barbara, who has practised for several years showed us total freedom, a couple of times, when she improvised inside the eight given beats – total freedom in the flow under full control.

The exercise is done in a group. Everyone accepts the same rhythm and the awareness that this demands causes the individual to forget self. So that he or she, in common flow with others, can express his or her own impulses.

Vacis' disciplined, structured form has its virtues. It is a unique art form, although a rather manly construct.

The second part of the work was with sound – the inner voice in song, Gregorian chants. The work was basically the same training in balance between listening and giving out. You may not sing so loud that you cannot hear the others in the group or you will loose contact. In your search for balance you forget self and reach a higher level. You abandon protective shields and attitudes and become simpler and more open on the stage – more open and more sensitive. It makes possible the expression of passion in governable forms in which you may give and receive responses in a more total and metaphysical presence.

Some participants experienced difficulty in physical contact with Vacis and his focus on the attitudes we cling to, like friends behind whom we hide. He dragged them out and mimicked them, clarifying them by exaggeration. It took my breath away the first time I saw it, but on reflection I thought it was quite brave. It requires courage and self-knowledge to know what one is dealing with and what one may provoke in order to inspire self-awareness and, it is to be hoped, to liberate. I do not know why some participants reacted so strongly. Perhaps they were nervous about the state of their own masks. Perhaps the boundary of personal integrity was touched – or was it Swedish timidity?





*Anatoly Vasiliev*

# **ANATOLY VASILIEV**

## **SUMMARY BY M.V.**

Vasiliev's work followed the same routine for each of the workshop's four days. First there was a half-hour warm-up for various parts of the body, concentrating on breathing, ground contact and verticality. This was followed by voice training, in which participants sat on chairs, feet planted firmly on the floor with straight backs and eyes glued to a fixed point in the distance. It seemed to me to be inspired by oriental artistic discipline where the novice must practice concentration and humility without trying to understand or take any initiative – understanding coming later. The main exercise was, having collected one's thoughts, to utter a syllable – most often »ya« or »yo« – in one of three ways: exclamation, narration or statement. The intonation of exclamation was likened to a rising slope, that of narration to level ground and that of statement was like a downward slope. By thinking in these terms the sound is changed. The participants listened to Vassiliev's assistant Maria's sounds and then tried to do likewise, first in chorus and then individually. They were never told whether they had succeeded or not, but they were sometimes asked to try again. The activity seemed very meditative. It focused as much on thinking in the right way, or visualising the right »picture« of the sound, as it focused on actual voice technique as it is commonly understood. The sound was to be thought of as something outside oneself in the room, or as ball thrown in the air, or a ray of light directed at a goal. The sound was to run along a horizontal line to a point on the wall, at the same time as one imagined one of the three intonations. The combined effect of this would give the sound a special quality.

Maria gave several demonstrations in which she moved in complicated patterns – *katas* –, that seemed to come from eastern fighting techniques – *wushu*. At the same time she uttered single syllables in a very powerful, half singing, metallic sounding voice. Finally we heard her recite a text in the same manner.

Vasiliev conducted the exercises through his assistant Maria. He hardly ever moved himself. He sat apart from the group, listening intently to the sounds. At question times he often seemed to disapprove of the questions, answering them on a higher level. This combined with language problems (the interpreter did not always understand what she was trying to translate) meant that much of what was said was difficult to grasp.

As I understood it, the philosophy is somewhat similar to a Zen Buddhist technique. One empties the body and lets the sound occur outside oneself. Vassiliev is not interested in psychological theatre. He needs a »whole« and extraordinary voice suitable for metaphysical theatre. He needs »whole« figures without psychological complications. He said, for example:

»Long sentences are difficult to hold together. Actors try to hold the sentence together by line of thought. This is not necessary. One should just pronounce the connecting words in a forward direction.«

He also talked about reciting poetry. His idea, which was illustrated on the blackboard and demonstrated in a recitation by Maria, was that one must think from the end - invest in the conclusion right from the start. He also said that there were two territories – a known physical world and an unknown metaphysical world. He compared this to a house with two floors without a stair between them. One had to find a technique to bridge the gap - walking would not do.

He wanted to make theatre with strong poles, which are not found in the psychological but in the metaphorical plot. As examples he cited the Greeks, Shakespeare and Molière as »mystery plays«. Theatre is mission.

»The light from the church shall go through the theatre to the people.«

# ANATOLY VASILIEV

## PRESENTATION

»When an actor speaks with a hard inflection the words seem to drop down. The hard, pulsating sound of the attacking word all but physically »punches« a channel, making the channel transparent, as it sinks into the earth. When an actor follows the rule of inversion (or that which Stanislavsky calls »perspective« but which, in the theory of playing structures, is defined as »inverted perspective«) then this inversion, i.e. the inverted projection of the event's image - opens a channel upwards, creating a vertical, becoming a kind of Jacob's Ladder. In this way the channel opens up totally from top to bottom. We have always used both these techniques in attempting to achieve this transparency and so break through - up to the metaphysical heights«.

Anatoly Vasiliev is the director of the Theatre »School of Dramatic Art« in Moscow. The theatre was officially established on 24 February 1987 with the premiere of Pirandello's »Six Characters in Search of an Author«, although the theatre had previously existed for some time before. The theatre has toured around the world and Vasiliev's productions are well known and have been of great importance to the renewing of the theatre language.

As director, teacher and above all, as artist he has been awarded with numerous prizes; such as the State Premium for »The Creation the »School of Dramatic Art«. Author of several books on theatre theory

*Assistant: Maria Zaykova*

*Actress at the theatre »School of Dramatic Arts« and former student of Anatoly Vasiliev.*



*Demonstration by Maria Zaykova (Vasilev first from the right).*

# **DOCUMENTATION OF THE WORK OF ANATOLY VASILJEV**

## **EVA DONS AND ALICJA ZIOLKO**

Four days of workshop with Anatoly Vasiljev was an interesting meeting with a man who has been developing his own theatre called the Theatre School of Dramatic Art. The name says a lot about his view on our work, we are constantly in a learning process dealing with art. The theatre was developed as a reaction towards the theatre of the seventies in Russia. Vasiljev wanted change on stage, to get away from all the suffering. He called the theatre of that period for fight-theatre, and he wanted to play, not to fight. It has been a long research. Reality is not necessarily the best for the stage. They started to find out other ways of acting and began looking into the dialogues of Plato and at poetry. Then the development of the three intonations started as the method of the training. This was linked to eastern technique and ritual fundament. Then they met the Wuscho technique and other Chinese techniques, which functioned very well together.

The aim for these days in Methodika was to give an introduction of the way Vasiljev works concerning energy. I will give my impression of this work and explain it the way I understood it. I must say that of course four days is a short time to learn a method that you spend at least three years of training just to be able to use properly. But I will try to do my best.

Vasiljev wanted to show how the voice is the most important tool we have concerning physical energy.

Verbal voice training is based on vowels. To use the whole voice we need to use all the vowels. The consonants function as a door opener for the vowels.

The vowels are delivering the message, the information.

The vowels are as the body carrying clothes.

The vowels are the basic like the river carrying the information.

The consonant stops the river and the flow of the water.

## **A firm voice in a relaxed body**

We only worked with the voice training during these days because of the short time.

But the sound of course is always working in relationship with the movements.

The word has a direction in the horizontal line. (To talk is not to take a shower)

Intonation is an important quality for the language.

Conversation is not theatre. A good actor has a good intonation and this corresponds with good theatre.

The sound has three different directions related to the thought. The meaning is carried by the intonation. When the melody is missing you will not be understood. Song is built on vowels in the melody. The intonation carries the meaning.

Theatre is not only about how people are doing. Human beings can express the world, God, Space. Our aim in the theatre is to express more than every day life and every day conversation. Even to express something more than human quality is the aim for the theatre.

What ways do we have? There are three channels for an actor:

- Psychological channel
- Verbal channel
- Physical-channel

Which one do you prefer? The verbal channel is the most important for the theatre.

The direction of the sound will change according to the thought. There are three different ways:

- 1) THE EXCLAMATION
- 2) THE NARRATION
- 3) THE STATEMENT

In the eastern countries they have kept more of the ritual technique than we have in the west. You find the traditions in the bysantic choirs and in the Russian orthodox tradition. It is important to know what kind of theatre we want to work with. To tell

about people for people we do not need the theatre. We can develop ourselves that is all.

In the metaphysical theatre we can work with new meanings and new intonations.

Physical movement and speech can be contradictions. It is easy to illustrate the meaning. The problem is not to do the same but to express something else with the body than the meaning. We can develop this to more complex expressions.

### **The sound**

The text is literature, but theatre interprets text in various levels. We have to work on the sound: consonants and vowels together. According to Stanislavskij we define action to our profession of the theatre. What is dead is not action or acting. Life is movement. Action is quality. We send the sound in the horizontal line and we can decide the speed, which again gives the volume. The limit is where the daily life conversation starts.

Platon symposium: What is sound?

Did we get all possible sounds at the same time from the very beginning?

### **The exercises we did**

First we had a half an hour warm up based on the Chinese Wushu. The aim here is to soften the limbs and the bones. The problems are in the breath. We must have the breath in the centre: the diaphragm. Open up the breath and warm up the body for the voice work so that the body is smooth and relaxed while working.

After this, sit down on a chair.

Check all the joints in the back from the lower part an up.

Have a candle on top of your head.

Look through the wall in front of you.

The sound is in front of you.

Make the sound and shape a room to place it. The sound is not the problem but where you place it. You make the room through the sound. You are empty. The sound feels like you lack sound within yourself. You are empty. Voice work needs empti-



ness. The sound is in front of you. It flies like a ball that is thrown. You don't look at the ball but at the point where you are throwing it. You see it in your thought. Be aware of the speed. Not the loudness but the speed. These three intonations also are important in the order they are said. The statement is the last one because it is based on the two before. We will first work on single sounds made of one consonant and a vowel put together, one for each intonation, ja! ja! ja!, then double: ja! ja! ja! ja! ja! ja!. Then tripple the aim is whole words

Start by making a sound.

How to deliver the sound? (Many years of learning)

How to set the sound free (To liberate the sound)

A sound from a free body, without body and without face.

Tragedy without tears, tragedy in the body is emptiness.

The body must be calm and steady. First you have to organize the room then you can organize the sound. Then you can structure the energy.

(Doubt is good in a regular play but not in a tragedy.)

You pass the sound forward and then back again. You direct the sound.

The human being cannot reach the dimension of the tragedy. The tragedy is something more, a higher category.

Ideas are more than man. To prevent yourself from falling down you must up. A long sentence can for instant have three parts. It must be told without interruptions. It can be difficult to do. That is why we need the technique. The sound in the second part must be moved towards the first part.

We need feelings and understanding, but this is not enough.

Energy is not power but something that opens up for power. We need to find the polar points. This will give you movement. The process starts when you have this polarity; the contradiction.

We must find the contradiction to show the action. To deliver a sound it must have room/space. If you take the end towards the beginning of the story you can make this room or space for the energy. This is a matter of working with analyses and thoughts in the delivering of the text.

# **ANATOLY VASILIEV**

## **SELECTED COMMENTS**

### **FROM THE TAPES**

We will only speak about the verbal part of the actors work and not about performing art as a whole. We will also narrow the speech problem, and just concentrate on the words and then we can narrow it further down to the syllables. There are several syllables in one word. We take one part and we can narrow it and we can see that each part consists of consonants and vowel. So now we take this one word. Do you know that words consists of sounds? Good. Do you know that sounds are divided into two sounds; consonants and vowels? Do you know that the vowels are the fundamental sounds? And the vowels are like a stream, a river. It stops sometimes because of the consonants. Exactly like the river is carrying a boat, the vowels are carrying the meaning, the information.

A narrow sound demands concentration.

Together with Maria you send sounds along three vectors/intonations.

Why does she do this?

Because when you talk in everyday life with everyday intonation, there is a special melody of the speech. You can for example imitate the intonation of a language even if you don't speak the language. The intonation has an important quality for the language. We can say that the intonation is the means of communication. People often believe that the words carries the meaning by itself. It is a paradox in the languages. I would say that it is enough to sing to be understood. Some languages have kept a richer intonation. It's always a problem for a language when the intonation is assimilated. This is what I mean when I speak about the everyday language. The theatre speech and the everyday speech is not the same. It has to do with different qualities. In the whole history of theatre the intonation has been different

except for the style of naturalism. The conversational intonation was theatricalised by actors. Conversational speech + theatre and illusion of conversation.

What are the basics, the fundamentals of the intonation that we hear in the theatre? Pathetic intonation, exclamation, narrative intonation. Most actors can create good illusions, they can use narrational intonation very well. This is the fundamental intonation in the theatre today. It corresponds with the intonation of conversation.

That's why Maria was working with you on these three intonations in the training. This is the hard intonation or a hard sound. Now why? I have told that in order to be understood we must think, that's why we'll continue thinking. The most important is to be a carrier of meaning. That's why I was talking about the vowels because when you are singing/thinking you are doing so through vowels. You combine words with the melody and the intonation is carrying the meaning. That's why when we are talking, like I'm doing now, we create through the intonation the meaning of the speech and that's how we communicate. In theatre you should not always express the usual (normal/ordinary) quality of the habitual, this is done for people and to tell about people. You can say that theatre is created by people and is done for people and it tells about people. But I don't completely agree. Theatre doesn't only tell us about ordinary life of people. We can use the ancient ideas of the theatre that tells not only about people but also about the world. To express the meaning of the quality of cosmos is also the force of the theatre. You can express it with the help of the people but it has to be done in a certain way.

If we are talking with the everyday intonation then we express something that has to do with everyday people and if we want to express something higher, we have to change the intonation. Why? I want to express something that is not just about the quality of people but in this intonation of the river we can develop. Here is the intonation of the river and here is the boat and here is the quality of the Gods.

If in the metaphysical dramas by Goethe, Byron, Pushkin, Shakespeare etc. you play only with conversational intonation, you can just tell about people in the dramas and nothing more, it limits. In order to express the meaning of metaphysical dramas you have to speak in a different way. This is a hard intonation and I prefer it.

There is a meaning inside the words. With the use of the hard sound the words will be liberated from the limited meaning of everyday conversation.

How do the Buddhists perform their religious acts – Buddhist mysteries? They make use of chanting. These mysteries are not written for an everyday kind of speech. The misunderstanding comes from the illusion of the realistic film. Sofokles did not use this concept, nor did Shakespeare. This creates a serious problem for the modern theatre and for the actors profession. What is the main channel that you use? I know three: Psychological channel, the verbal channel and the physical channel. An actor expresses himself and the role through these three channels. I think that the verbal channel is the most important for theatre drama. If we speak about movement, voice moves us too and the same with feelings.

What theatre should we deal with? What should theatre tell about? It can tell us about people. The use of the voice is connected to the culture we live in; the more »civilised« country the worse the sound. The training that we are going to show you can explain you how to open a sound. If you deal with a metaphysical drama, tragedy and not everyday theatre you will get another opportunity thanks to the strength. Because your voice is strong. If you use a new intonation you can express a new content, a new meaning. You have to change. Metaphysical meaning can only be expressed with metaphysical sounds.

The breathing is very important because it has to do directly with energy. You have to prepare your body to be able to create

the vertical axes. You need to be very flexible. This training prepares you body so that the sounds can sound from it.

The problem of sitting and talking and to move and to talk is another problem. If you move, it is much easier to talk, if the physical movement is illustrated by the verbal one, it's easier. But the problem is not to do the same thing, but to separate them. So we make one movement and the movement will illustrate your speech, but separate. It's not that you are moving and speaking the same way, but the sound has to go in the same direction as your movements on the horizontal line. It's a problem for the actors; when he's sitting it's easy to play, when he's walking it's a bit more difficult because the movement and the speaking are in contradiction with each other. Of course we can solve this problem, but it is more difficult.

Give birth to the sound and then to yourself in the space.  
Register.

1. In the beginning of the training the actors should give birth to a sound in the space.
2. And then give birth to yourself in the space.
3. Then you need to define your register of your speech level. In the beginning you just take a tone or try to say a word in your thought, by doing this you are defining how high the tone is. When you have found it you start creating a trinity of intonations.

The intonation (vector) has to do with the melody, higher or lower and this is something you do in your thought. It is a task you give to your thought and it has to do just with melody. If you speak about attack (direction) it has nothing to do with melody. It is the law of energy. It means that you are doing two tasks at the same time. You do something to send or put forward the sound intensity. But there is also a kind of law which you hear as something higher. As a result you get a sound that is unknown

to you, a result of the two tasks. We don't know how it sounds.

When you send the tone along the attack axes, and you use the vector/intonation of a melodic pattern down, sound is falling down – you don't do anything else- As a result something else works. This is the intonation of the statement. It's unknown and a sound of these two components. It's a kind of ritual intonation. It cannot become a result. If you have made a shamanistic practice, you can notice this moment when another kind of sound is born. Gives birth to a new space on stage and you start to play in a new territory.

Your sound has to with your perception. The techniques takes us into another territory. If we shall speak about two territories then the physical space is the space of our presence. The borders between these two territories is a gap, so you have to build a bridge or jump.

This is a channel and it is blocked, that's why nothing can get through it. With technique you can remove the blocking and make it empty. There is no other way. We can understand but there is no way through. Concentration of attention. Everything exists in this other space, energy, meaning that can't get through us because of barrier's. When we start working with the highest drama that does not speak about the human being but about problems outside the human being, then we must use all forces which exists outside in the space because we are part of the space. All this meaning, feeling etc. everything starts getting through us.

How to combine with the need to tell a story? If we think of myth it is always very simple stories, and also the Bible, and Shakespeare. The story is simple if you take it as such but because it is a parable the meaning of the stories are complicated and in order to tell these stories there is another technique, another style, a narrative style.

At the present moment we have a complicated story and myth and we are in between and we cannot choose. What are we

interested in, is it just myths or is the complicated narration? This makes us learn two sides. If we use the techniques for narration we cannot use the metaphysics. And with another technique you cannot have a direction. That's why in my practice I use both. And I also teach actors to use both. I use them side by side or depending on what we are working with.

Now I will tell you which technique we use for poetry.

1. Pulse; I'll show now, it's like heart beat, it's rhythmic quality, a constant pulse.
2. Beats,
3. Accent; the strong beat which is put in the centre of the line, this strong beat at the beginning of the line and here the strong beat is in the middle of the line. A complimentary strong beat.
4. Vectors (the way it is transmitted); you work with these during the training with Maria.(the three intonations) This or that way, all of these. Inside a sound you use a vector. The words consists of sound . It is the direction of the energy in the space.
5. Inversion; the most complicated one. In poetical language the most important devise is to change the blocks of words. In the prosaic text you have the narrative story. For the poetry the same text will be represented in a different way. The same text in poetry will be put in different ways. I mean meanings, blocks, images. Poetry has a different order. To change meaning, notions, images. In Russian everything can change places. The inversion happens all the time in Russian. It mostly has to do with images.

The actor needs the poetry, he needs the problem. He's understanding it intellectual but he has to transform his thought into theatre language, everything which is very rare. The same thing is with prosaic texts like Dostojevskij. These are very complicated texts because the inversion is very developed. This means that the actor who is at the beginning of the first line, should already be present in the end. How can he do it? You do

it with the help of these techniques.

This inversion – the compositional order which leads to synthesis, this is the highest ability where everything comes together. This is not only true for the words and the text but also for the composition. Because the dramatic dialogue consist of composition of elements and you can do the same thing with it. This is most difficult stage of the actor and it gives most results because it gives strong energy. Because here the seeds are hidden and when you change things it comes out and the actor does not need to do anything other than to be able to express.

You have to make it very simple; how the whole influences you and not how the whole is influenced by you.



# COMMENTS ON ANATOLY VASILIEV'S WORKSHOP

## Comment by Ida-Lotta Backmann

The big guru – the mysterious master - remained unreachable for most participants. I observed two sessions with him, being identical in setup. Vasiliev sits at the wall with his eyes closed. His assistant and former student actress Maria Zaykova in karate suit leads a 45 min physical training with movements and breathings many of which I recognize from martial arts warm-ups. The instructions are extremely formal and are given through a translator. No comments given however astray the students might be. The movements are difficult and require a lot of concentration. The students are totally sweaty after the session and are asked to take chairs and to sit in a square formation. Maria has a different chair but sits as part of the square. Vasiliev remains outside, by the wall, eyes closed. I heard by his ex-actor that he works as a director also with eyes closed and concentrates on hearing. While the warm students sit with straight backs on the front part of their chairs staring into the horizon and get cold Maria performs a 30 minute demonstration of impressive voice – movement mastering. Vasiliev says with dry voice for example »ja« and Maria sitting still produces three times »ja« on slightly varying pitch, a clear and strong sound so dynamic it could break the windows. After some of those she gets new orders from the master and performing different long and difficult series of martial arts movements produces the same »jaí« variations with the same intensity as sitting. New orders and Maria continues with her karate(?) series and recites long monologues with the same smattering intonation. Now the students get to try, first all at once and then individually one or two times the »ja« sounding. No comments or help. Then the master says he will give a lecture and however hard we all try to get the message it remains a mystery for me what the famous

master has to offer. It has to do with placing the voice outside in front of your mouth and visualising arrows in different directions in order to give what you have to say a spiritual connection. After the master's lecture the class is over.

It was difficult to get inspired by the militant pedagogy of this master although his exemplary student, the humble and powerful Maria proved that the method leads to extraordinary strength in the voice, precision and concentration.

### **Comments by Hedda Sjögren, actor**

Anatoly Vasiliev's teaching was, if possible more minimalist. Vasiliev is a living guru, without a doubt. A Russian with folksy vest, big beard and pony tail, he sat silent in the background with half-closed eyes. His assistant, Maria Zaykova – perhaps related to one of the ladies in Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, her voice deep, her body slight and clothed in white aikido gear and remarkable grace – led the warm-up with the group and taught the exercises guided by monosyllabic directives from the master.

The exercises can be described as similar to those of Zen Buddhism – a sort of group meditation, during which certain sounds are emitted by the group or an individual. A balancing act on the boundary between the metaphysical and the incomprehensible – like all great art.

## EVENING PROGRAMMES

### **Sat. 07 21**

Inauguration festivities with fire show and music.

Artists: Augusto Cabrera with Commedia Gillet and Vladimir Dikanski with fellow musicians.

### **Sun. 07 22**

Evening discussion on energy

Moderator: actor/director Etienne

The panel: choreographer Christina Caprioli, literature researcher Karin Grels, author/therapist Michael Mellows and director/researcher Lennart Kollberg.

#### **Etienne Glaser:**

Today I heard two teachers saying that they felt uneasy using the word energy because it was such a misused word and they did not see it right. And tonight we have four guests who will give four very different perspectives on the concept of energy and I think that this uneasy feeling must come from some thought that there is a correct way of seeing what energy is or defining energy. But I'm sure that when we leave tonight all of you will share my view that there is no such common way of defining energy or looking at energy. It will prove that there are very different perspectives on that concept.

Shortly I'd like to introduce our four panel members;

Christina Caprioli; is one of Sweden's most able choreographers, she is now preparing a performance that will have premiere on August 10th. Karin Grels; is a researching student at University of Stockholm in the department of »Slavonic« languages and literature, then there is a fellow from England, Michael Mellows, who is dealing with people in crises, trying to help young and elderly people who have problems.

Lennart Kollberg, was a theatre director until some years ago when he felt enough is enough, and he left directing and immediate work with theatre and went to Greece, and since then he has been researching and studying ancient Greek drama.

### **Michael Mellows**

*Mellows is an author and lyricist and was mentoring Consultant to the London International Festival of Theatre. He has worked with a number of theatre companies including Black Mime, and members of the RSC. He also works with teachers, managers, teams, groups and families helping them to explore and express their unique, vast, and often untapped potential.*

I'm very interested in the whole idea of power. The people that I work with are reclaiming their power. I want to use the word power because often people who live with victim consciousness believe that other people have power and misuse it and use them and that therefore power itself is bad. What I want them to do is to say that I have the right to have power and that power might come from confidence, from articulation, from experience, from authority, it doesn't matter what. What I want is that people reclaim or rediscover a sense of self that is powerful.

Many people may not know what behaviour would make a difference in their environment, but the skills are necessary. To oversimplify I think in terms of head, hearth and gut; thinking, feeling and behaving, and I think that it almost doesn't matter which one we address first because the others will change.

And there is one other level above which is spirit or energy or attitude, and I believe that the energy has to be channelled through one of two things. We will act out of love or fear and that energy flows down through all the rest. If we love we will treat each other with respect and dignity as if we are in it together, the relationship, the job, the film etc. But if I'm afraid of you the way I relate to you will be based on fear. I will treat myself in the place of a victim.

We've come to believe very early in life that what we have to do is to please others and that is internalised as five internal messages which compel our behaviour, and those messages are 1 try hard, 2 hurry up, 3 be perfect, 4 be strong and 5 I must please you – by trying hard to be perfect, strong, and hurrying up.

We take on roles and those are the three roles that we take on; one is victim, the second is rescuer and the third is persecutor.

Moment by moment we are making three decisions, mostly unconscious. The first decision we make is what we choose to focus our attention on; we then decide what meaning to give it, because we give meaning to the world we live in. And have we decided what to focus attention on and the meaning we give it, we then decide what action we are going to take on. To meet or go away from, to grow or not to grow, to be close or not to be.

But the effect of change at the level of spirit relationship and identity and change will evolve us as human beings.

### **Karin Grels**

I want to speak about energy in relationship with literature and especially in connection with Russian modernists. When I was asked the question whether I would come or not, my first thought was speak about Russian modernists and the extremely dynamic situation around 1910 and compare that to the total lack of energy in Russia in the 1930ties. Because I think it is a striking difference between those two periods. Within Russian semiotics and structuralism theory some scientists keep looking at culture, at human personality and at art as dynamic systems, which I think intriguing because such a dynamic system is a system that is able to survive and to communicate. Looking at Russian artists and Russian art and Russian culture as such systems, communicating with each other in time, we see that the interchange and communication between them causes a lot of ener-

gy. In reaction to this the Russian formalists said that art has nothing to do with literature or with communication. But this did not survive for so long and people studying literature decided to look at how such structures interact with each other. And if we look at the 1930ies it is quite obvious, that the structures of art and culture were under extremely lot of pressure and this made the situation completely different from 1910. The political situation in the Soviet Union made it difficult for arts to live and develop.

In this situation two of the most brilliant literary manifestos were written, one by Boris Pasternak and one by Marina Tsvetajeva »Art in the Light of Consciousness« and both these manifests or esthetical programs, written under strong pressure, say that; »Art is nothing but the answer to destruction.« Both of them had different strategies for saying this, they refused to say what was expected from them and said what they wanted to say in their own way and they managed that.

In the 40ties Russian art got even more stifled and under the extreme situation that occurred in Leningrad in 1940 during the siege. The German blockaded the city for 900 days and 2 millions or the third of the population starved or froze to death. And in the frozen closed city one of the structuralists, the most famous writer lived, namely Lydia Ginsburg. She created what I call the »Black Crystal« of art, which in English it called »The Blockade Diary«. This text was created and existed under circumstances where communication was totally impossible. This is the situation where the means of communication with others are closed, there is no possibility to print, or even talk with anyone and art has the answers. She said/wrote that in such situation writing becomes the way of surviving. So self-reflection in Leningrad in the 1940ties was the only possible way even if there was no communication. I believe that this is the essence of literature.

## **Lennart Kollberg**

### **Dionysus and the Theatrical Energy**

Energy is indestructible. You must learn how to control it, when you have started the process, and you must take the ethic responsibility of its consequences.

The Greek word for actor is Ethopios, which means »ethic creator«. Ancient Greek Dramas had ethic messages hidden in the mythical form.

The Ancient Greek drama was part of the Democratic process and the energy process inside. Drama, as well as the process inside Democracy, lives in the struggle/the competition between opposite attitudes – agon in Greek. (Protagonist, means »first competitor«).

Dionysus is called »the god of the divided self«. He is sweet and cruel, female and masculine. He is the symbol of the dialectical being, and therefore he is the God of Drama. At his side of the temple in Delphi it is written »Gnothy Seauton« which means »Know Yourself« – motto of the dramatic art.

But – You will find theatrical energy not only in drama and democracy. You will find it in fascistic and fundamental movements. That energy takes away the stereo-sight, which is the main point of dialectical drama.

The one-eyed being derives his energy out of his idealism. The dialectical being derives his energy out of his fight with his doubts, his anguish and his scepticism, and he must be brave enough to accept the consequences he will find. (Like Oedipus)

The theatrical energy of Drama is derived out of the struggle between antagonists – which is the fight inside your own divided self.

Catharsis; it comes from anagnorisis; which means recognition, and when you recognise yourself in a play you get Catharsis.

## **Christina Caprioli**

The energy of the dance is nothing at all that we create or consume, it is not ours, it is not we, and it is the energy. It is something that we eventually and hopefully take part of or get hold of, and that we need to live inside of for a while, on very irregular terms.

In the arts we might speak of a particular act of will. If there is an act of will involved in the practice of art, that will might be »to stop wanting to possess.« It seems to me right. I have to speak from my white western cultural heritage, where we seem to have this idea that energy is produced and is aimed and directed. It is also effort and promise, fulfilment of the promise of the effort. But I know this of the dance and dance as an artistic expression, that it really only happens when it's not aimed at, when it's left free to act on an emptied soul.

The nature of the body wants to save energy in all its activities. We are built this way. And it's survival tactics of the body using minimum effort for our actions. But dance is not like that, dance is not natural, dance needs to be continuously constructed and therefore needs to be inside a mobilised field of energy. It sort of creates itself. I would like to believe that when dance is at its best it is a conglomeration of energy. Unregulated energy and yet very outspoken as measurable, visible, practical movement. I also think that dance, the way we work with the body and the idea of movement is trying to become independent from the given rules usually from habits.

Again the economy of the habitual behaviour is utilitarian; you save energy to do things that gives you a result and in dance you do the opposite. You do all the things that have no immediate purpose in terms of survival and it also works against the whole system of codes and signs that we live by, with, against and for. There is nothing wrong with codified signs. I just think that the way we live and the way we communicate through codes is now emptied the source, reproduced effects. We never really care for



experiencing or reproducing the sources. In the dance we now try to construct sources for movement.

I'm also very much against this idea of energy understood as productivity and quantity. I want to believe that energy is quality and differentiation. And that there is something about these moments of producing inventions and producing quality that has to do with fearlessness because you don't know the outcome. You're always putting yourself at risk for whatever outcome will come. It is also a challenging situation for a human being of feeling alive.

I would like to speak about time. For the experience of energy in dance, the relation of time and space might be interchanged. Generally speaking we measure time through space. For us white westerners the idea of time comes from first having a space and the time is the measure of what it takes to come from this side to the other. But when energy is involved and dancer is dancing, space is no longer first, it is time. Time will be the one that is, IS. And it contains all the points of space and it contains itself in motion. Chronology is no longer important. Generally speaking you see dance on stage and you think it has a lot to do with moving in space. But I want to believe that dance actually moves in time. Space is created by the usage of time, by being in the time. So that it might be that time is energy.

And one more thing; the body, I would like to say that it is absolutely necessary for the body to enter energy, enter the dancing time, and to work very consciously, methodically and with an enormous commitment with technique, finding a control, and at the same time be unconscious. It is the most difficult thing but it is possible. I use to say to my dancers that they should be happy if they experience it once in their lifetime. Energy as ideas and impressions. So I think it is a moment of unconsciousness and incredible control.

**Etienne:** We can all hear that there are two poles here. One is control, power and the other is let it go, no control and this is the field where it takes place and it is of course a fine paradox to hear the choreographer talking about dance and saying things like »Let go of control«. She must mean something very specific, something, which also actors know, that within something controlled – let go. And what is energy? We don't actually speak of anything containing energy. We speak about giving out energy or receiving energy.

**Annelise:** In the old days you had to wind your watch with your hand, so you put some energy into winding your clock and it functioned. And in order to boil eggs you need to have some boiling water a certain degree. Energy is a power has to be exercised. You cannot boil eggs with the flame of a match. Well that's the quantity but not the quantity. You cannot melt iron by putting it in boiling water. You need another intensity. At a certain time we are tired and we need to wind up. Two kinds of energies are not the same. You drop tired but you have no more tears. So even an emotion has a certain energy, which could be used up. So in all this how do we gather the right kind of energy? The right amount and the right intensity to keep burning.

**Rene Hainaux:** I try to have energy on stage because it is my job. Energy for me is the capacity to be stronger but I do not know how to reinforce this energy. I have no trick for that. It's coming abruptly from somewhere, but for sure the audience appreciate to find that you have energy on stage. Action is a way to have this kind of energy.

**Lennart:** Yes it's action but where does this energy come from? I'm going to quote two of my friends Aristotle's and Aristofanes. For it is an instinct of human beings from childhood to engage in mimesis, indeed this distinguishes us from other animals. Man is the most mimetic of all and it is through mimesis he develops his earliest understanding. Mimesis means imitate, shape and create a character. It's in all forms of art. The

opposite is diegesis, which means relate, retell, narrate, report and describe in words. Theatre is a combination of mimesis and diegesis. We are curious cruel people and we are wonderful human beings kind at the same time. And there is a God called Dionysus who is called the god of the divided self. He is the god of theatre. Because in theatre we show the fight between ourselves, our bad and good sides. Theatre derives out of the rituals for Dionysus in Eleusis.

**Suzanne Osten:** The theatre has one more aspect related to energy – it is the flow. We all know what the creative flow is; when you forget time, doing something difficult and complicated and having the knowledge to do it.

### **Mon. 07 23**

#### **Jazz concert + lecture about the work on energy and music.**

#### **Nisse Sandström**

Nisse Sandström is a painter and jazz musician. He has taught jazz at the Music Conservatory of Stockholm and has through the years played with many Swedish and American jazz musicians, among them Eje Thelin, Red Mitchell, Howard McGee, Idrees Suliman, Slide Hampton, Roffe Ericson and Cornelis Vreeswijk. Swedish public television has made a documentary on his work, where he plays with the pianist Horace Parlan. Nils has illustrated the book »Stockholms hjärta« by Nils Erik Landell and he has shown his art in galleries in Sweden and Norway.

**Tue. 07 24**

**Workshop on childhood and energy  
To meet the energy of childhood  
and create revolt, by Suzanne Osten**

In January of this year my students were given the task to spend time at day-care centres to study small children in the ages of four to six years old, and then to create theatre for them during the month of May. During these weeks my students were hit by euphoria, depression of different kinds, rage and sometimes big explosions of joie de vivre. Their bodies changed, they spoke differently.

The performance they made for their audience of small children ended up lasting several hours and included drama, melodrama, dream play and post-modern farce; it included play sessions, pauses for eating, dialogues and comfort.

The conclusions I draw from the young artists' interaction with the energy of youth are manifold:

The grand resources we are born with are compressed in different stages of our social upbringing on our road to becoming a citizen, and it is more or less of no consequence whether you are born in Bali or in Sweden. The process of becoming a part of society is the big resistance which moulds us into grown ups. Channels energy. Our »pure«, easily perceived feelings goes underground and mix with each other, are covered by each other like subterranean water streams (become »subtext« - »don't show anger openly«, or »show sorrow«, »be nice«, »be woman«, »be man«). And meeting the adult culture of upbringing created in my students a strong feeling of protest. The young artists, who probably »looked down upon« its short audience to begin with, began to identify with the children and felt in themselves the enormous feelings of bound energy being challenged in this kindergarten world.

It was for example difficult to see the care takers and take a stance in reference to the kind but oppressing grown up role they have towards the playing, creative child.

The act of creating was always interrupted without respect for where the creator was.

The grown ups tried continuously to put a lid on the energy of the children, something which became screamingly clear to the art students. At the same time as the demands on the students from the children challenged the rigidity in themselves. Soon a role was created in relation to a »too demanding« child.

My students had many fantasies about the children. The children would never get enough, the children didn't know their limits, and they (the students) were left to be gobbled by a child. I encouraged the students to abandon rationality and sense and give themselves over to horror and negative feelings in our talks during this period.

The students also defended themselves against the teachers at the day care centres, but understood them, unfortunately often better, because they too felt the demands from the children on feelings and involvement was demanding and »endless«.

There is an obscure guilt hovering over not being able to give more to the child. The child whose hunger cannot be appeased, and the abandoned child is the phantom of the grown up. And of his or her experience.

The children in the day-care structure tried to solve the given circumstances – availability of grown ups – with different strategies. The children fought with each other, secluded each other, manipulated. Some children in each day care were completely silent. Powerlessness created opposing energies. By then creating something for the children and by listening to them as audience, the students were able to solve their conflicts, by on the one hand wanting to work with and for them, and by on the other hand realizing they themselves had been brought up and left this

intensive and creative time behind. What could be kept?

Working with childhood has informed me in my way of looking at theatre and energy. This is what we will be looking at.

*Suzanne Osten*  
*President of Methodika*

**Wed. 07 25**

**Hippias & Socrates By Plato**

**Created by Gianpiero Borgia and Christian Di Domenico  
protei progetti teatrali internazionali**

»Once upon a time there were two runners. One was good and the other bad. The good one ran well and quick, the bad one slowly and poorly. If both ran slowly and badly, it means that the first did it purposely and the second not. Who was the good one?

Through the practice of judgment, I decide any moment if it is better or worse to eat, to get umbrella, to sleep, to phone, to lie. If it is better theatre or cinema, Al Pacino or Robert De Niro. Without this instrument it is impossible to make any decision. Trough this instrument how is it possible to avoid mistake?

Hippias from Elide makes the judgement, being his best skill. Plato organizes a confrontation between him and Socrates. The great philosopher applies Hippias' way of judging on to ethic categories, which opens up for an enormous amount of funny or dangerous paradoxes.

We started to work on Hippias minor in 1999 during a class of »School after Theatre«, a Jurij Alschitz post educational project. We have found possible connections with work of Beckett and of the metaphysical Italian painter Giorgio De Chirico. An exercise on the art of this dialogue is transforming it self in a performance inspired by these artists.«

# THE ENERGY OF THEATRE SPACE

BY JURI ALSCHITZ

Everything around us, including ourselves, is nurtured by the energy of other things. Energy from the sun, earth, water, wind, atoms, light, food, muscles, feelings, and ideas – is what gives us life. The winners in life are those who get a maximum of energy with a minimum of effort in the shortest time, those who consume clean products and know how to move from one field of energy to another, those who can save and use effectively.

When I started work as a director in the theatre my job, as a beginner, was to watch the evening performances and note all departures from artistic discipline. In other words, to keep a journal. I did this unwillingly and part of the time I sat and thought about the plans for my own first performance. One time, I was so absorbed in my own thoughts that I did not notice that the performance was over and the auditorium was empty. The stagehands had removed the scenery and gone home. The fireman had turned on the alarm lamp at the entrance and gone to bed. I climbed up onto the stage. It was alive. The rest of the theatre was cold and dead but the stage was living, it was warm. It moved, emitted rustling noises as if someone was walking nervously across it, laughing, crying, breathing noisily... I felt clearly that I was in the centre of new forces that I had known nothing about previously. I was like a stick in the water and waves of the emotions and passions of others were playing with me.

It was difficult to sleep that night. I realised that the stage had told me an important secret, but I did not know what to do with it. Next morning I was the first to arrive at the theatre, but the stage was dead.

Without really understanding the meaning of it all, I decided that my coming performance had to be staged immediately after

another one finished. It was very difficult, but I managed to break administrative routines, change the theatre's repertoire schedule and depart from the traditional performance starting time. I even succeeded in getting the technicians to arrange scenery, lighting, props, costumes etc. so that the change between performances took just a few moments. I did everything to recapture the sensations I felt on that unforgettable night.

The performance was a success from the first minute thanks largely to my adoption of the vampires' first rule – the rule says that we must use the energy already surrounding us. My performance started on the crest of wave left by the preceding performance. Both the stage and the auditorium were already full of energy. It was easy for the actors to act, and the contact with the public, the other actors and the stage was established automatically. Later I understood that the success was due to the correct application of the laws of energy – energy does not disappear, it merely changes form. It means that we can consciously transfer energy to where we need it.

Every morning when I enter the rehearsal room I feel like a stranger. The space, the furniture all its contents – non of these belongs to me, although it is not the first time I have worked there.

»This is not my studio.« I say to myself.

At best, it is no one else's, so that my actors and I can make it our own. We must learn to know and tame the room. We must unite with the energy in the room if we wish to work in it, if it is here that we wish to do something creative. The room may be tired and irritated. It may be asleep and we may have to wake it up. We must talk to it, play with it... leave it alone. But we must maintain good contact with the energy level of the performance area.

It is self-evident that actors must prepare themselves before rehearsals and performances. But the space in which they will act also needs to be prepared. The surroundings, which are to



nourish the actors, must be charged with energy. We must prepare the water in which the fish will swim.

I would like to tell you about an exercise I saw in a ritual theatre in Mexico. It originated in an ancient Aztec custom. Young people would visit the room of a sick person and with energetic movements they imitated the sexual act with separate parts of the room. They fertilised the dead surroundings. They brought it back to life, giving it energy. In this way a powerful force field was created and the sick person regained health much more quickly. The theatre artists performed a similar ritual. They filled the room with energy with the help of special movements, sound and words. This is how they prepared the stage for performance.

Preparation should begin not with the actors, but with the environment in which they will work – water first, fish later. We must accept and respect that all things around us are alive, when we are thinking about energy. This concept gives rise to the following exercise. The actor imagines that everything on the stage is alive – every object, the chair he sits on, the floor he walks on. All things that he has to do with must be treated carefully. He must walk as softly as a cat. He must not sit down or stand up suddenly, and he must be gentle when picking things up or moving them. This exercise can regulate the actor's psychic state and establish a balance between the energy of the actor and the theatre. It builds a creative atmosphere and brings the studio to life for us. Thus we may know the world of objects surrounding us in a new way. The most important effect is that it helps the actor to unite with currents of artistic energy.

We should consider this in more detail. It is generally known that people and their surrounding space constitute a worldwide process of eternal energy transfer. Physics tells us that that all things and people radiate energy. This energy exists in the space around us and is distributed in certain currents. This is reminiscent of a picture showing how air is distributed in the earth's atmosphere, or how water flows in the oceans. A current con-

tains energy of a certain quality and it bears with it certain »artistic forms«. When an actor couples with the energy and »artistic form currents« existing in a room, a closed energy system arises. Contact with these currents enables the actor to draw the »artistic forms« through his being. In this way the actor opens an invisible door to the world of »artistic forms« for the audience too. (Read Plato's dialogue »Ion«).

The rooms, in which we live and work, are permeated with currents of energy. They flow in such a way that eddies occur, like those we see in pictures from space showing the movement of cold and warm air. We must learn to recognise and localise these focuses of energy currents. Every room must have two poles – one positive and one negative. The positive charges when energy is deficient. We need the negative for contrasting impressions, when we need to consider and come to a clear understanding of a given situation. It is used for theatrical fragments with low sound levels – thoughtful monologues.

Exercise: cross the floor of the studio or stage walking in different directions and try to determine where you feel most at home, most comfortable, and where you feel the opposite. Find the places most charged with energy – these are the most active places, which can help performance most. This research, seeking the focuses of the energy currents, must be carried out without haste and preferably several times. Do not rush. Learn the space in which you are going to experience, think and do so much. It is important to find your place there. Animals do this quickly, but it is difficult for humans. Remember, a cat or a dog coming to a new home decides quite quickly and chooses precisely those places that have the most favourable energy for them. They choose them forever – they never change these places.

It is also important to point out that the colour and lighting of a room work as powerful energy sources for the actor. Energy is transformed when colour and light sources are changed. Our

entire thinking processes can be clearer or become totally different if the light source is changed. There is nothing comparable with light waves. The butterfly flies solely because it feeds on the light, until its »rainbow-pollen« is exhausted. The subtlest changes of nuance in hue can change our mood and spark off creative impulses. Colour and light can make our work effective and wholesome.

I would not recommend the pursuit of studies in a room with black walls. The best relationship with light occurs in the morning in a white or pale coloured hall with open windows.

I think that a room embraces the sounds that flow in waves around us. And that they too demand special sensitivity of the actor, a capacity to sense them as sound energy and to find nourishment in them. I recommend an exercise, which trains the ability to listen to music and fill it with energy. The exercise works best with music by the old masters.

Find the position of optimum stereo effect between speakers. Close your eyes. Try to experience the music with your whole body. That's right... the body - low tones in the stomach, pelvis and legs – middle register in the chest – high tones in the head. Make sure that the music »goes« in the whole body. Every part of the body must be occupied by musical energy.

Ten to fifteen minutes will give a powerful charge of energy.

Do not make a mistake that destroys the effect of the exercise – do not dance to the music. Learn to listen only.

The concept »room« is not limited to studio, auditorium or stage, so I can also recommend an exercise, which may be practised outside the theatre. It is also a demonstration of the enormous possibilities of »vampirism« or tapping energy from surrounding space. Choose a large and healthy tree. It is best if you first refer to the »gyroscope« of the Druids to check exactly what your tree is. In any case the tree must inspire your respect.

Press yourself to the tree; squeeze it with your hands. Become one with it. Be part of the tree. This contact couples you with the most forceful movements of the tree's sap. This energy system has many channels and is continuous. It can charge your own energy. 20–30 minutes of this exercise is enough to bring your body's entire energy into balance so that its energy field is re-established. It is as if these tree-trunks cleanse you and give you new vitality. We know, of course, how quickly we are usually filled with energy when we stand beside a powerful torrent. This is also coupling to »outside« energy.

We can absorb energy from everything, even things that are not alive. Energy does not die or disappear; it just changes from one thing to another. Energy is generated on the death of living things – some of it being stored under the earth. Together with water this energy penetrates deep into the ground and is acquired by corresponding minerals. When we find and extract the old minerals they start to spew out the acquired energy into an environment, which is much freer than the earth. Oriental peoples traditionally buried their fallen warriors in mass graves that were covered with earth mounds. The Scythians called these burial mounds “kurgans»; the Mongols called them »batres«. The Japanese had another name for them but the names are not important. They were not only places of mourning but venues for special religious rituals. On these mounds wooden podiums were built – a forerunner of the modern theatre. These places had a special energy field and all kinds of performances took place on them. Naturally, in those days, these performances were interpreted in a different way - as communication with ancestors. But the basic reason for the choice of these places was the concentration of a great deal of energy under the ground. The location of the actor has always been important – between heaven and earth, between the past and the future, between the material and the ethereal. These poles created tension and established a special energy field. The stage was the place where the poles came into contact with each other. The actor was the conductor, the meeting point. It was in places

where there were special concentrations of energy that churches and cathedrals were built in Russia and Europe. It was solely the energy of a place that determined whether or not a room for communication with the Deity was to be located there.

The actor who has learnt to locate positions where optimum energy is gathered, who can build and prepare the energy environment for his work, who can connect to large energy systems, such an actor accomplishes unique results. I would like to point out that my short notes and examples touch upon only a small part of the enormous and largely unexplored world of energy. But one can easily imagine what huge possibilities may be opened for actors and directors who take the laws of energy seriously and can apply them in their work. One must believe in the room, and then one must believe in everything said here, and the one who said it.

## GENERAL COMMENTS BY PARTICIPANTS

»I had a fantastic week at »Gripsholm Folkehøgskola« – participating in Methodika`s seminar »Energy in the theatre«. Meeting different pedagoges and colleagues from around the world, the workshops and the debates was a deep and warm inspiration for my further work as an actress. I learned excersises for body and breathing which I already use as warmup in my work. I experienced a courage to continue my work in the theatre. Thanks to all the great people who organized the seminar.

*Birgitte Victoria Svendsen*  
*Actress at Oslo Nye Theatre*

I have been to the theatre seminar of a lifetime this summer in Sweden. It was arranged by the international theatre organisation SCUT under the name Methodika. We were to gather to surmise the subject of energy – what is this phenomenon, where does it come from and how can we use it? How can we catch it, hold on to it and turn it into theatre?

We were 70 people from all over the world, representatives of Russia and USA, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, England, Iceland, Finland, Greenland and of course a large number of people from Norway and Sweden. Actors, directors, pedagogues. Mainly freelancers. Apart from Anne-Lise Gabold who taught the Suzuki method, we were two Danish participants in this overwhelming forum of different languages and cultures. The setting was terrific: across the smooth surface of Lake Maeleren we had a great view of Gripsholm Castle. We were lucky with the weather. The seminar was held in sunshine and the warmth of summer, we could eat our meals and spend our evenings under the open sky. The days could be started with a boating trip to the castle and a swim.

I arrived with very little knowledge of what was going to hap-

pen, which people I was to meet and what Methodika actually was. A week later I possessed a wealth of inspiration and knowledge, together with a fantastic network, the expanse of which is beyond my imagination.

Four different workshops were planned, each with 12 participants and a highly qualified teacher/pedagogue. Anne-Lise Gabold with Suzuki training, the Moscow theatre manager and guru Anatoli Vasiliev with his theoretical and practical methods, the Italian theatre manager and director Gabriele Vacis with his training programme and finally Ukranian-Canadian Gregory Hlady with his training programme, which included, among other things, references to Grotowski.

My name appeared on Hlady's team. (for Chili's comments on Hlady, see Hlady section)

I know that our group has been given something that defies any description. We had gathered to work with energy. During the course of five days we ourselves were transformed into high energy. We were given tools with which to apply this energy to specific purposes. We took a long-term energy home with us.

It was also a great gift to get to see the work of the other three groups. There were thoughts and methods to ponder, exercises so obviously effective that it made our hearts leap. There were visible results from only three days of training, and that in itself can be compared to flying.

On the last afternoon we gathered to put into words what energy was in connection with acting. It was difficult. And yet – we were in the middle of a field of energy consisting of our creative will power. Fifty theatre people from all over the world, along with pedagogues and supervisors of any kind. Everyone desired to approach a definition of the work of an actor. Everyone wanted to know how to integrate, into our work, the energy, the concentration and the training we use every day.

Everything from technique to cosmic legalities was discussed.

The necessity of breaking with old habits, the courage to confront chaos, and, lastly, the fear of the unknown. To dare cross borders and open up for energies far greater than the rational ego of each of us. To dare leap over the edge and attempt to fly. That is the sweet secret: fearlessness. We talked a lot about mental conditions, and about the necessity of spiritual, philosophical and factual knowledge. Theatre people work with mystical, hidden forces, we work in the dark alleys of the mind. We are forced to investigate the unknown, physically as well as mentally. To Gregory's repeated: "Include it all!" I feel inclined to add: "And go for it!"

To me, it was clearly a matter of flow. Balance and joy. On the last day we all agreed that joy is the primary ingredient in any flow of energy. Energy is the natural consequence of joy. The seminar seemed to comprise into a synthesis all that I have been working on for the past several years. In all the techniques demonstrated at the seminar, I saw inspiration from Chi Gong, meditation, Zen Buddhism and shamanism. Training based on the balance between physical work and mental and physical silence as the take-off for the final artistic expression.

Finally, I wish that the life-confirming energies found at Gripsholm this July may spread its vibrations far in the time to come. I also wish that this report may inspire my readers. I thank the many enthusiasts who made this meeting between people possible.

*In deep gratitude*  
*Chili Turèll*  
*Actress, Denmark*



First of all I would like to thank you for the possibility to participate in the Methodica seminar which gave me the opportunity to work with the extraordinary artist Gregory Hlady. This encounter provided me with energy and inspiration and was a deep reminder of the essential aspects of creating performances.

The Methodika seminar was both good and not so good. Gathering almost 100 theatre practitioners - actors, directors, writers and teachers - for six days of practical workshopping, discussions and observing others work around the theme of energy the seminar no doubt became a charger of batteries for everybody. Working every day four hours and observing another group working another four hours was intensive and rewarding.

This seminar was the second Methodica, the first one having been in Italy two years ago. The person behind it is Jurij Alschitz, Russian director and internationally circulating theatre pedagogue. This time he brought his own former teacher Anatoly Vasiliev and the former student of Vasiliev, actor Gregory Hlady to demonstrate their methods, and two other artist/pedagogues.

Attaching the presentations of the four pedagogues I will comment here on my own reflections on their work.

(for Ida Lottas comments on the pedagogues, see their separate sections).

Methods for teaching theatre students were not discussed other than during the breaks in the beautiful surroundings of Gripsholm castle. Most of those I discussed with shared my view on the pedagogues.

Discussions on energy, held in the evenings, expanded in a multitude of directions and no short answers can be dissected stating what energy is, how to get it and how to transmit it. This quest - transforming energy - remains the sacred art of the actor.

*Ida-Lotta Backman*

»Artistic collisions between methods and artists: Methodika sends waves of new impulses into the body of Nordic theatre.

Not since Grotowski and Eugenio Barba launched their ideas and demonstrations in the sixties have I been so provoked and illuminated as by Juri Alschitz and his ideas in Methodica.«

*Suzanne Osten*

»Methodika gathers serious theatre artists to take part in collaborative work and dialogue – an invaluable opportunity in an over-administered, product-fixated European theatre world.«

*Etienne Glaser*



# CONCLUSIONS

## BY MARTHA VESTIN

The energy which, at best, radiates from a theatre performance – this energy that charges both performers and audience, and fortifies us and makes us feel alive and closer to the rest of humanity... what is it?

Is it something to do with the magic genius loci of the venue?

That is: the agreement to meet in just that place, whether it is a theatre, or some other place. Today theatre artists seek to exploit the magic of various venues by using old factory buildings, quarries, basins and so on. In other words places with their own »soul« or energy. Juri Alschitz's contribution deals with this, to a degree.

Is it the content of the theatre performance?

That is: the energy that is generated when a work deals with a subject which is charged, for the audience and the community. »Hot, searing« we say. What is hot is extremely variable. AIDS, women's liberation, refugees, children and parents, or the great universal themes of the Greek tragedies.

Is it a basic consensus of the importance of the theatrical experience?

The energy that may be found in theatre performance as a manifestation, as a political action. The fact of attendance itself is taking a stand, for or against. The energy of an "underground" performance in times of oppression can be very strong, regardless of the artistic quality of the performance.

Is it the style of a theatre performance?

Is energy given out by the artistic combination of stagecraft, a surprising scenography, riveting music, costumes, make-up and lighting used in a strong, new but above all dynamic way? Is it the theatrical expression that makes an audience experience and think in a new way?

Is it the actors' presence and forceful delivery...?

The seminar, above all, came to deal with enhancing the ability of actors to gather, manage, control, use and express energy by various training techniques – or rather by embracing different views of the nature of acting. In the evenings, conversations and other activities (theatre and jazz concert etc) widened the discussion to other artistic areas such as dance, music and literature.

The difficulties of speaking about energy in a concrete and practical way were mirrored in the images used. There was a lot of talk about engines. Is energy the motor itself or the fuel? If it is fuel how does it work? What is the ignition mechanism? Other images were related to food, nutrition or “the inner bird«. Another issue was transformation or transference. An attempt was also made to define the concept of energy by a process of elimination. It is not volume, nor velocity, nor force, nor willpower, although willpower is required to come into contact with energy.

None of the four teachers was interested in psychological role-interpretative theatre forms – those using credibly motivated characters. The seminar did not touch on this. According to what could be understood from their working methods and comments, all of their training techniques were directed towards other forms of theatre.

It is certainly the case that Suzuki training, for example, which is accepted in many Scandinavian theatre schools is useful and provocative for students, whatever they may do afterwards, but the step from this training to a traditional acting class, which may be their next scheduled lesson, is a large one

My conclusion is that the types of training we encountered in the seminar are an introduction for actors to theatre forms where the actors' presence, expressivity and energy are more important than role interpretation.

Despite their differences, something that all four teachers were agreed on was that energy is a force that exists outside us. It is not something that we can create alone. We must come into contact with energy sources and be able to receive energy, or manage it, so as to communicate it to an audience. It was also agreed that it is also necessary to “empty« oneself in order to accommodate the energy. That is, it is necessary to cleanse ourselves of habit, superfluous trivia and physical and mental blockages. Methods of achieving these goals varied widely.

Anatoly Vasiliev, who worked mainly with his special technique of uttering sounds, tones and forces other than those used in everyday conversation, suggested that this technique could help to bridge the gap between the ordinary private world, and the metaphysical. It would help us move in another dimension that is full of energy. This voice technique should be used in ritual, metaphysical drama and it should impart meaning at a higher level than the personal. He talked about the theatre as kind of church. As an observer, one was reminded of Zen and other forms of oriental mental techniques. During the training sessions it was difficult to gain a clear idea of what his goal was. The participants appeared to be practising the first four days of something that might take several years, and there seemed to be no short-cut that would allow a working demonstration that would show more clearly where it all was leading. The technique for “emptying« consisted of a rigorous programme of exercises devoid of any individual creativity. This was followed by disciplined meditation in a sitting position, with eyes focused on a distant point waiting for the voice to speed towards its goal like the arrow from the bow of a Zen archer. Vassiliev’s assistant Maria gave several more advanced demonstrations. They were technically impressive, however control of body and voice, precision and strength are not the same as a flood of “divine« energy. It would have been necessary to see a theatre performance by Vassiliev to fully understand his teaching.

Gabriele Vacis describes energy as catching hold of life. When one has captured a moment of life, one must try to extend it and give it room. He uses the term entropy to characterise the decline of the universe into disorder since the Big Bang. He sees life as a small current running in the opposite direction, upwards rather than downwards, and tells us to try to swim with that current rather than be carried down in the larger tide towards extinction.

As I understand it, the training is largely concerned with cleansing and emptying. In the walking back and forth there was no room for accomplishment, inventiveness or individual creativity. Any sign of individuality was a glaring error that had to be corrected. Only when participants accepted and implemented this discipline, were small variations permitted. It is an exercise in minimalism and I believe that he is out to catch that spark of life that glows for just an instant.

In the voice training the goal was to keep in tune with the group and back up those who sang solo. I gathered that the energy in this work lay in the smallness of scale and of being ready to catch the tension in every small variation. One must resist blockages caused by self-centredness, pretentiousness and stress. Unfortunately Vacis evoked just such blockages among participants by his methods of communication. But in his assistant Barbara's calm, unpretentious yet lively manner, and in her own working demonstrations, her presence and energy were clearly manifest.

Anne-Lise Gabold spoke of two kinds of energy; on one hand an external physical eruption of energy and its control and on the other inner presence and preparedness. In almost every instruction she illustrates the concept energy with images – a car stationary at a red light, its motor running and ready to move off – a tiger ready to leap in any direction. It is transformation that interests her. If energy is present in an actor it can be used in great physical activity or in charged stillness. She returns con-

stantly to the necessity of directing oneself outwards towards an imaginary or a real onlooker.

Her training is so physically demanding that energy, fighting spirit and willpower become very tangible elements and they are quite indispensable to the completion of the exercises. The aim of the exercises is, very clearly, to “empty« and prepare for a free flow of energy. She points out that inner images are vital to every exercise. They must give life and meaning to them, otherwise the exercises are too difficult. At first it was obvious that the participants struggled using all their physical strength and willpower, but towards the end of the workshop observers saw more of energy than effort. Of course the effort was there, but energy had charged the room and effected both participants and onlookers.

The technique is Japanese, but AnneLise proposes it as a tool for all actors. The text she uses and dramatic examples are from Shakespeare. His dramas require energy.

For Gregory Hlady it seems energy is all about 100% presence. By dedicated training we may dare to journey into the unknown and find new resources inside ourselves. His working method is affirmatory. He hardly ever criticised participants, but demanded more and more of them as time went on. The atmosphere became somewhat exalted and it was noticeable that participants extended themselves far beyond their normal limits and abilities. The breathing exercises focused on breathing in (most voice training concentrates on breathing out) which after a while may give rise to a trance like state. However, Hlady advocated control, self-distance and avoidance of hysteria. A disarming humour saves oneself from taking oneself too seriously. The preparatory “emptying« here consists merely of taking a deep breath before stepping onto the exercise floor and being ready for anything. One must lay aside all previous learning and throw oneself wholeheartedly into the exercises with an enthusiastic curiosity like Hlady’s own. A part of Hlady’s energy theory



includes linking oneself with one's forefathers and with the future – or with the cradle and the grave. He also maintains that without contact with dangerous areas, theatre and acting are of no interest. Unlike the other teachers Hlady worked with a dramatic sketch, inspired by a short story by Gogol. In a rather unstructured way the exercises and experiments were brought together in a stage fantasy – a family burial in which the corpse was to be brought back to life by mourning songs.

“Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't» (as Hamlet expresses it).

It must be said that a great deal of energy was generated and used in the work, and participants came out of it bewildered and exhausted. They had only a rather vague understanding of had really happened.

If we liken the workshop to a “swimming school in the energy pool», we might say that Vacis had us swimming with water wings under the strict supervision of the teacher until all our swim-strokes were perfect.

Hlady threw us in at the deep end, forcing us to swim with whatever swim-strokes we could invent.

Vassiliev permitted only certain strokes, but if we learn them well enough, and that might happen after many years, we can not only swim, but fly.

In Gabold's class we practise strokes in an empty pool to give us the idea. Then the pool was gradually filled with water and suddenly we were swimming and the heavy movements became lighter and more meaningful.

This rather disrespectful image says more about teaching methods than how the teachers see energy and acting. However, during the workshop the relationship between teacher and method was the subject of lively discussion. What are the dangers or the virtues of embracing a teacher's methods of bringing forth energy and inspiring participants, rather than considering the content of the teaching. A dynamic character like Hlady can carry a group with him and at worst take dangerous risks (he did

not do so here). On the other hand a reserved and uncommunicative person like Vassiliev can make it almost impossible for participants and observers to understand a method that may be very interesting. For those who were able to see all four teachers at work, it was a very puzzling and provocative experience, which gave a lot of material for thought and discussion. In this kind of discussion all active theatre artists are talking about their own work, even if it is not openly expressed. Where do I stand in all this? How should I position myself on these important issues and what will the consequences be for my work in the theatre?

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Dramatiska Institutet is a university college that offers higher education in theatre, film, radio, television and new media. The programs include script-writing, production and directing, as well as education in a number of other specific functions such as cinematography, editing, sound, make-up and wigs, stage design and puppet theatre. In addition to the 16 full programs there are numerous other longer courses. This gives the school a range that few comparable schools can match.

However, the task of the school is not only to offer professional artistic education, but also to produce knowledge. The artistic research and development is an important and expanding part of the life of the school. As a university college in the artistic field, this process is not limited to the strict forms of academic science. Therefore research at the Dramatiska Institutet is not organized in traditional academic forms but rather strives to offer active artists and professionals an arena for reflection and discussion.

Giving room for critical reflection based on artistic practice is essential for the schools ability to fulfil the task of offering professional education. This consists not merely of the handing over of technical skills, and it is a field that is increasingly open to international collaboration, with schools and practitioners in a number of other countries.

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