



Dr. Jurij Alschitz

The Path to a Holistic Theatre

My new perspective on the educational process is built on the primacy of holistic cognition, reflecting the well-known holistic principle - the priority of the whole in relation to its parts. In Aristotle's "Metaphysics", he writes, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." From a theatrical perspective, there is an overwhelming feeling that the Theatre is not a sum of the performances put on, the roles played, the lectures given, the festivals held... It is something quite different. I instead see the Theatre as something that I have experienced over a long time through practice in close to fifty countries across the globe.

This project is one that is very personal to me. What finally gave me the impulse to form this **holistic theatre** concept is the project which I almost instinctively put forward to the International Theatre Institute ten years ago: the "World Theatre Training Library". This scientific research closely followed by practical activities in various communities for almost eight years has given me a unique insight into little-known manifestations of the Theatre in the most remote corners of the world, where "theatre" is given as a name to things we would have never associated it with. As I have grown older, the satisfying perception of world theatre as a single huge living organism in which I am but a small particle, a grain of sand, has grown with me. The happiness of a true artist does not arise from success, glory, or money, but rather from the sense of belonging to the Eternal.

Pure joy arises from the realisation that **The Theatre** does not merely exist within renowned theatrical trends, traditions,

directions, schools of various concepts and theatrical ensembles that we have been admiring for years, nor within plays that will forever be part of our history along with the outstanding personalities who have created them. The Theatre also lies in the smallest theatres, schools, performances and actors that remain undiscovered. Shakespeare, Molière, Stanislavsky and Pashka Chadin (character from "Seagull") are one Theatre – to which also belong Maya performances, the Eagle dance, and the Jogjakarta puppeteer. "Great" and "small", known and unknown - they all live and work, laugh and cry under the same basic laws and rules of the single Theatre, and will endlessly continue to do so. Because the art of theatre is eternal. The Theatre will forever be you and you will forever be the Theatre.

Why do I write about this for so long? Because studying the life of Sarah Bernard, Garrick, Stanislavsky's system and Grotowski is meaningless without the understanding of what they were truly part of. Engaging oneself in training, putting on performances, role playing, proving the superiority of one method over another is amateurism without experiencing and appreciating the Theatre per se. It is only after having deeply felt a sense of belonging to the Theatre as an eternal entity that the actor will play differently, the director will put on the performance differently, will the student can learn differently. In every role, monologue and scene, the actor will hear and feel the eternity of the Theatre.

It is for this reason that I believe that we need to start teaching the Theatre from the

understanding of the Whole as a basis. There is nothing wrong with debating the efficiency of different methods or the progressiveness of various theatrical systems. But with all our differences and contradictions, we belong to One. Let us build all these theatrical quarrels and discussions on this Unity. Remember Kipling who described the law of the jungle in one phrase: "we are all of the same blood!".

Now let me take you through the method. For the past thirty years, I have been training actors and directors around the world with my exercise "This is my Theatre". Regardless of time or place, my educational projects systematically start from this exercise. It is the seed from which a theatre artist grows, to which he will compare the results of his own work for the rest of his life. Lately, it has come to my attention that any exercise dedicated to unveiling the artistic individuality of the student ("My Theatre", "I see it so", "This is my chaos" etc.) is very useful, but incomplete. What is missing is the holistic concept of theatre education which I am now putting forward: in addition to the definition of "my theatre", I want to introduce the concept of the "entire theatre" with different exercises around this theme. The actor should be regarded as the most important theatrical unit of the Whole, one of the Theatre's atoms or nano particles. Similarly to quantum physics, this particle bears the sign of the whole Theatre whilst simultaneously being its own Theatre. It therefore becomes a Theatre within a Theatre: a micro-space within a macro-space, a micro-theatre within the field of macro-theatre. From this composition arises an inevitable resonance. Looking at the image of theatre within the theatre, it is impossible for the actor

to develop his own micro-theatre without him being closely connected with the macro-theatre. This resonance is necessary. It can be compared to the development of the foetus in the mother's womb. In my analogy, I take for necessary condition that the embryo already knows what life is and its purpose it has when it is born, what it needs to achieve. This knowledge is special; it goes beyond, much like a revelation. It is not even knowledge, but fate, a covenant. A sacred bond with the Theatre. After that, the "new-born" actor will be taught how to walk, to pronounce words, choose the right path, use a mask, build an action, determine the super task, distance himself from the character and hundreds of other useful and useless techniques and systems. But he will only truly be fulfilled if he remains faithful to his Union with the Theatre.

The prophecy of Jeremiah (31. 33-34) "...this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ... says the Lord: I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall no longer teach each other, brother's brother, and say, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord."

This is it! The Law of the Theatre must be enclosed within the hearts of actors! Do not teach methods and systems from the start, but write the Covenant in their hearts so that they feel that they are people of the Theatre.

This is not an easy task! Such a programme to teach a holistic theatre will take research, tests and worldwide cooperation.

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