



# The S Word: Stanislavsky's Many Faces – Then and Now

An International Symposium  
6-9 November 2025



L-Università ta' Malta  
School of Performing Arts

Department of  
Theatre Studies

## ***The Stanislavsky Research Centre (Leeds/Malta)***

### **Co-Directors**

Paul Fryer, *Stanislavsky Research Centre, University of Leeds*  
Stefan Aquilina, *University of Malta*

### **Deputy Director**

Jonathan Pitches, *University of Leeds*

### **Advisory Board**

Honorary Patron: Anatoly Smeliansky, *President, Moscow Art Theatre School*  
Marie-Christine Autant-Mathieu, *CNRS, Paris*  
Andrei Malaev-Babel, *FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training, USA*  
Sharon Marie Carnicke, *University of Southern California, USA*  
Kathy Dacre, *Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance*  
Jan Hancil, *Akademie múzických umění, Prague*  
Bella Merlin, *University of California, Riverside, USA*  
Jonathan Pitches, *University of Leeds*  
Laurence Senelick, *Tufts University, USA*  
David Shirley, *Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts/Edith Cowan University*  
Prof. Sergei Tcherkasski, *Russian State Institute of Performing Arts*  
David Chambers, *Yale University*  
Dassia N. Posner, *Northwestern University*  
Siiri Scott, *University of Notre Dame*  
Maria Shevtsova, *Goldsmiths, University of London*  
Evi Stamatiou, *University of East London*

**Welcome to  
The S Word: Stanislavsky's Many Faces – Then and Now**

How time flies! It's been nine years since the first edition of *The S Word* and twelve years since the publication of the first issue of *Stanislavski Studies* – both very important milestones in our work. For our network to have made it this far, extending and thriving all the time, we have of course to thank Paul Fryer for his incessant work and leadership. It was indeed a pleasure for me to convene this edition of *The S Word* with him. We have opted to use as a framing theme the idea of 'Stanislavsky's Many Faces – Then and Now', which has served as very well to attract a fantastically broad range of presentations, papers, and workshops on the various aspects or perspectives on Stanislavsky's work, both as they were developed by him in his various guises of director, actor, pedagogue, scientist, and writer, as well as how we are ourselves interpreting and extending knowledge about his work today. In fact, today we can look forward to a full programme that explores Stanislavsky's work in its endless variety.

On behalf of my colleagues within the Department of Theatre Studies I would like to welcome you all to Malta and to this beautiful building of the UM Valletta Campus. The Campus hosts international conferences, seminars, short courses, and summer schools. It also incorporates the Valletta Campus Theatre, which is home to a lot of the Department's practical work, training, and performances. The Department itself is close to celebrating its 40-year anniversary, while the School of Performing in which it is now incorporated with dance and music was founded in 2012. Throughout these years the Department and School have developed into an international institution with strong links in Europe and outside the continent. It hosts yearly conferences, workshops, and seminars by visiting practitioners and academics from abroad and provides degrees in theatre, dance, and music studies up to doctoral level, including practice research options. May I take this opportunity to invite you to have a look at the Department's website (<https://www.um.edu.mt/performingarts/theatre>) and to get in touch with us to discuss possible collaborations.

Today, however, it is our mutual interest in Stanislavsky that has brought us together. His work remains engaging in its complexity, fascinating in its applicability, and captivating in the questions that it raises. Certainly, the Symposium will raise several such questions and engage us all in possible answers.

The Symposium is supported by Creative Europe, who I would like to thank for their generous sponsorship.

**Prof. Stefan Aquilina**  
**Associate Professor, Theatre Studies**  
**Conference Co-convenor**



**L-Università ta' Malta**  
School of Performing Arts

Department of  
Theatre Studies





## The S Word: Stanislavsky and the Contemporary Theatre

**Welcome to Malta and our 2025 symposium. The S Word** was created in 2015 by Bella Merlin and Paul Fryer as an international collaborative research project exploring the influence and legacy of Konstantin Stanislavsky's work and teaching. We present a major event each year in the form of a symposium, designed to promote the sharing of ideas and the development of new scholarship, with a particular commitment to supporting the link between scholarship and practice.

The inaugural event – **Stanislavski and the Future of Acting** – was held at Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance in the UK in March 2016. Attended by over 100 delegates from all over the world, selected material from the symposium was subsequently published in the Spring 2017 edition of the *Stanislavski Studies* journal (Routledge, Taylor and Francis).

Previous “live in-person” events have included: **Merging Methodologies** (DAMU Theatre Academy in Prague, Czech Republic), **A Practical Acting Laboratory** (The University of California Riverside), **Stanislavski in Context** (The University of Malta), **Beyond Brecht: Contradiction as a Method** (DAMU Theatre Academy, Prague), **Stanislavsky's Last Words** (DAMU, Prague), **Stanislavsky: Director, Trainer, Pedagogue** (University of Athens, Greece) and **Stanislavsky and Place** (Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts). Additionally we present webinars, online and hybrid events.

In 2022, the major book series *Stanislavsky And...* (published by Routledge) was launched and the first five titles, on Pedagogy, Race, Intimacy, Gender and Mindfulness have now been released. The series explores and interrogates Stanislavsky's work and legacy in the context of topics of contemporary significance. Future titles will include, Actor Training for the Screen (due December 2025), Psychology, Shakespeare, Place, Opera, Neurodiversity, Wellbeing and Research Methodology.

**The S Word** is a collaborative partnership – the current partners are London South Bank University, The University of Leeds, The University of California Riverside, DAMU (Czech Republic), Macunaima Theatre School (Sao Paulo, Brazil), The University of Malta, The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (Perth) and The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece).

**The S Word** positively encourages the participation of academics and practitioners, students, teachers and enthusiasts. Material generated by the events will be published on our website, in the journal, *Stanislavski Studies*, and the book series *Stanislavsky And...* If you have an idea for a project or topic that you think might interest us please contact [paul@paulfryer.me.uk](mailto:paul@paulfryer.me.uk).

**Paul Fryer**  
Co-Director, Stanislavsky Research Centre

**THURSDAY      6 NOVEMBER**

**18:15-19:30      Keynote Speaker: VCT**

***The Role of the Subconscious in the Actor's Creative Process: The Influence of the Demidov School of Acting on the Stanislavsky System***

Andrei Malaev-Babel, FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training and International Demidov Association

This keynote explores the decisive influence of Nikolai Demidov on the final evolution of the Stanislavsky System, with particular attention to the role of the actor's subconscious creative process. Now recognized as Stanislavsky's closest collaborator, Demidov departed from the early System's analytical and will-driven foundations, advancing instead a radically different psychotechnique grounded in involuntariness, receptivity, and organic spontaneity. In addition to co-founding the Moscow Art Theatre's Fourth Studio with Stanislavsky, Demidov was appointed the first Head of the Moscow Art Theatre School—further underscoring the significance of his contributions. Stanislavsky himself acknowledged Demidov's impact as the original editor of *An Actor's Work*: 'He gave me valuable guidance, materials, examples; he offered his judgments of the book and revealed errors I had made.' Far from being merely a student, Demidov played a pivotal role in shaping Stanislavsky's final methodological developments.

The keynote traces how Stanislavsky's shift toward Active Analysis and the Method of Physical Actions was informed directly by Demidov's emphasis on bypassing premature analysis and prioritizing subconscious impulses in the actor's process. Drawing on archival sources, pedagogical documentation, and performance records, the presentation positions Demidov's role as central to the 'second birth' of the System during its final decades.

The address not only reframes Demidov within the historical development of the System, but also proposes a contemporary vision for actor training rooted in inner freedom, spontaneity, and the art of living truthfully onstage.

**Andrei Malaev-Babel** is the Director and Head of Acting at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training and the world's leading authority on the Demidov School of Acting. A pioneering scholar-practitioner, he introduced Demidov's legacy to international theatre through ground breaking research, publications, and pedagogy. His books include *The Vakhtangov Sourcebook* and *Yevgeny Vakhtangov: A Critical Portrait*, and he is the editor and translator of *Becoming an Actor-Creator* (Routledge). In recognition of his contribution to global theatre education, he received a Fulbright Specialist Award from the U.S. Department of State in 2023.

Malaev-Babel is the founding head of the International Demidov Association. His directing work has been presented at The Kennedy Center and The National Theater in Washington, D.C., where he served as Producing Artistic Director of the award-winning Stanislavsky Theatre Studio. He was also nominated for the Helen Hayes Award as Outstanding Director.

An internationally sought-after speaker and teacher, he has presented at institutions including Stanford University, the Smithsonian, the Shanghai Theatre Academy, RADA, Polish National Film, Television and Theater School, and the University of Rome. He serves on the advisory board of the Stanislavsky Research Centre (UK) and on the International Scientific Committee of *Arti dello Spettacolo – Performing Arts* (Italy).

**FRIDAY**

**7 NOVEMBER**

**9:00-10:30 Panel Session 1: Room 5**

**On Stanislavsky's Early Acting and Direction Training: Alexander Ostrovsky's Legacy and the Key Influence of Savva Mamontov's Method and Experimentation**

Donatella Gavrilovich, Department of Literary, Philosophical and Art History Studies,  
University of Rome 'Tor Vergata'

My proposal focuses on Stanislavsky's youthful years of training, where I reconstruct the cultural and artistic context that shaped his personality, influenced the theoretical and practical developments of his activity as an actor and director, and inspired the creation of his method as an expressive research and its development until the last days of his life. Cross-referencing data and documents with publications, usually ignored by traditional studies, highlights two cultural matrices at the origin of his youthful theatre education.

The first matrix, supported by historians of theatre and scenography since the 1970s, is that Stanislavsky was trained by Mamontov, and that Mamontov's Private Opera is the direct precursor of the Moscow Art Theatre. In other words, the Moscow Art Theatre continued and developed the innovative experience of the Mamontovians on the dramatic stage. In his diaries and notebooks, as well as his first autobiography (Stanislavsky 1911: 270), Stanislavsky noted and analysed the experience as an actor in Mamontov's productions. The modern conception of theatre direction, the fight against clichés, the expeditions to search for materials, the idea of the artistic collective, the theatre accessible to all, the improvised demonstrations, and the new acting method up to the idea of *slovesnoye deystviye* (verbal action) were all inherited from Mamontov.

The second matrix emerges from my studies on the birth of theatre direction in Russia. I focused on the innovative method of scenic creation, acting, and staging devised by Alexander Ostrovsky for his realist plays at the Maly Theatre in Moscow. This method was appreciated for its novelty and spread by the playwright himself also among university amateur theatre circles. In 1864, Ostrovsky staged his tragedy *Storm* at the Sekretarevsky Drama Theatre, and under his guidance Mamontov made his debut as an actor. From 1879 Stanislavsky with his parents participated in theatrical productions at the Mamontov's artistic circle where the great actors of the Maly theatre also performed. Therefore, there is a common thread that connects Ostrovsky to Mamontov and Stanislavsky.

**Donatella Gavrilovich** is Associate Professor of History of Theatre and Digital Technologies at the University of Rome 'Tor Vergata'. She is a scholar interested in Russian theatre, set design, visual arts, dance of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in the digital cataloguing of theatrical performances. Since 2012 she founded and directed the scientific publishing series entitled *Arti dello Spettacolo/Performing Arts* and, since January 2015, the online journal <http://www.artidellospettacolo-performingarts.com/>. In 2022 she designed and currently directs the IDOS\_ARTS Research Centre (*International Digital Open Space on the Performing and Visual Arts Cultural Heritage*). Gavrilovich won the PRIN 2022 as principal investigator of the "Hypestage" project, funded through the Next Generation EU Programme. She was the coordinator of the International project (2013-2021) between the St. Petersburg State University ITMO (Russia) and the University of Rome "Tor Vergata". In 2016 the Russian-Italian team published a Virtual Museum, dedicated to Vera Komissarzhevskaya. Her most important publications include: *Profumo di Rus'. L'arte del teatro in Russia. Scritti d'artisti, pittori e critici 1860 - 1920*, (1993); *Nel segno del colore e del corpo. Il regista scenografo Aleksandr Golovin* (2011); *Vera Komissarzhevskaja. Una donna 'senza compromesso'. La vita e l'opera dell'attrice russa dal 1899 al 1906* (2015); and *Arts and Dance. Russian and Soviet Choreographers* (2017).

## **Pre-Method Stanislavsky in Hollywood: The System meets the Actorly Virtue of Concentration**

Dan Leberg, University of Groningen

The apocryphal story of Marlon Brando, James Dean, and the first generation of American Method actors introducing Stanislavsky to Hollywood misrepresents the presence of Stanislavsky-based actors in Hollywood before the 1950s. Aline MacMahon was a rising Broadway star who took Richard Boleslavsky's inaugural American course in Stanislavsky's System, months ahead of future Method gurus like Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler. In 1931 – 20 years before the premiere of the film adaptation of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Elia Kazan, 1951) – MacMahon gave arguably the first ever Stanislavsky-based Hollywood performance with her supporting lead role in Mervyn LeRoy's *Five Star Final*. Although the non-Stanislavsky-based performance her co-star, Edward G. Robinson, received most of the critical acclaim for the film's acting, reviewers also lauded MacMahon's work as being (unexpectedly) natural and life-like.

This presentation takes MacMahon and Robinson's scenes together in *Five Star Final* as an opportunity to compare nascent Stanislavsky-based film acting with non-Stanislavsky-based Hollywood acting. The ways in which these different acting styles work together coherently within this film are particularly interesting with the historical hindsight that the 1950s Method acting craze will eventually absorb and eclipse much of classical Hollywood's homegrown acting style. Pre-Stanislavsky Hollywood acting practices generally lacked the type of overarching stylistic ideas and training regimens that Stanislavsky codified within his System. That said, this presentation draws parallels between the emotional and imaginary immersion in Stanislavsky's System and the comparable importance of concentration within pre-Stanislavsky film acting. This presentation is part of a larger project of historicizing embodied cognitive practices across film acting styles and traditions.

**Dan Leberg** is an Assistant Professor of Film and Media Studies at the University of Groningen. His research focusses on the intersection of creative cognition and screen acting practices in film, television, videogame, and puppet-based media production. His recent monograph, *Screen Acting: A Cognitive Approach* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022), frames modern film and television acting practices as solicitations of multiple simultaneous empathetic connections. Prior to his graduate studies, Dan worked as a professional actor in and around his hometown of Toronto, Canada.

## **Stanislavsky as Orthodox Christian, Stanislavsky as Acting Teacher: Belief, both Theatrical and Christian**

Alisa Ballard Lin, Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, Ohio State University

Excellent recent research on Stanislavsky by Maria Shevtsova has demonstrated the significance of his Orthodox faith to the structure of the System. This paper builds on this scholarship to look more closely at how one detail of the System—Stanislavsky’s concept of truth and belief in the actor’s craft—can be read alongside Orthodox theology. The belief that Stanislavsky is so fixated on in his writings, and in his famous “I don’t believe you!” is, I propose, about more than either the suspension of disbelief or being convinced as a spectator in the reality of something you know is not real. Instead, Stanislavsky’s concept of belief is far richer and, properly understood, can offer insights to theatrical practitioners today.

I connect Stanislavsky’s concept of belief to his concept of spirit, which has clear religious undertones, to uncover the implications of tying his concept of belief in the actor to his Christian belief. Both beliefs, I propose, are structured very similarly. The paper will begin by examining segments of *An Actor’s Work* alongside Orthodox theology, including Pavel Florensky’s essays on theatre, in order to show how theological concepts illuminate or resonate with Stanislavsky’s writings on theatrical belief. Then I will examine moments in the records of Stanislavsky’s acting practice, especially from his first decade at the Moscow Art Theatre and from his work at the Opera-Dramatic Studio, to identify how the meeting of Christian and theatrical belief plays out in Stanislavsky’s practice, feeding on each other to create a dynamic performance. I will situate all of this within the social and cultural context of Russian Orthodoxy in Stanislavsky’s time.

**Alisa Ballard Lin** is an assistant professor in the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures at the Ohio State University, with a courtesy appointment in the Department of Theatre, Film, and Media Arts. Her monograph *Theatrical Consciousness: The Actor’s Mind in Russian Modernism* is forthcoming with Northwestern University Press in April 2025. She is an editor of *Stanislavski Studies*.

## **These were not Imaginary Circumstances: ‘The Magical If’ in Portraying Holocaust Survivors**

Anthony Hostetter, Department of Theatre and Dance at Rowan University, Philadelphia, USA

As director and creator of documentary theatre using verbatim testimony of Holocaust survivors, I realize recreating the circumstances of the Holocaust defies imagination. Vivian Patraka pointed out, ‘to say we can “know” or “understand” anything about the events of the Holocaust is problematic, since the material history underlying the term is so grounded in a sense of goneness’. She explained that, ‘[Goneness dictates] the scope of what and who has been violently lost, including succeeding generations that cannot be. Murder and cruelty on a mass scale are what distinguish this goneness from the historian’s problem of documentation and recovery. Goneness is inconceivable but its effects are palpable, particularly in the inevitable desire to articulate, negotiate, mark, and define’. Therefore, asking actors to imagine, ‘what would I do in these circumstances’ becomes problematic given the inconceivability of the Shoah.

Understanding that Holocaust survivor testimony operates more in the realm of memory than history, this presentation explores an approach to performing that involves using ‘postmemories’ instead of relying on given circumstances to perform survivor’s testimony. Miriam Hirsch described ‘postmemory’, as the way Holocaust survivors’ memories can seemingly become actual memories of succeeding generations. The facts of actual events can be overtaken by the memory of narratives and images of people who originally experienced trauma. As Hirsch stated, ‘Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because of its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through representation, projection, and creation – often based on silence rather than speech, on the invisible rather than the visible’. Given the sense of ‘goneness’ associated with the Shoah, this paper explores the process of the transference of survivor memory into performer postmemory.

**Anthony Hostetter** is a professor of theatre in the Department of Theatre and Dance at Rowan University near Philadelphia, USA. He is the creator and director of Holocaust documentary theatre works that incorporate the verbatim testimony of Holocaust survivors, including *Rella*, *Rose*, and *I: Elizabeth Ehrlich Roth's Story of Survival*, *I am Itkolo: The Story of Itka Frajman Zygmuntowicz*, *Try to Survive: Rose Ickowicz Rechnic's Memory of the Holocaust*, and *Girl in a Striped Dress: The Holocaust Story of Rosalie Lebovic Simon* which received their world-premiers at Rowan University on April 27 and 28, 2020. Anthony wrote and directed the 2018 production of *Hell on Earth: Manya Frydman Perel's Shoah Experience*. These plays have been performed in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. He directed his full-length play *Five Survivors Tell the World*, which presented the stories of all five of these survivors in November 2023. Hostetter recently published an article on the subject of creating Holocaust theatre titled, ‘Embodying History: Preserving Memories of Holocaust Survivors Through Performance’ in *Critical Stages/ Scenes Critiques* (<https://www.critical-stages.org/24/embodying-historypreserving-memories-of-holocaust-survivors-through-performance/>). [hostettera@rowan.edu](mailto:hostettera@rowan.edu)

## **9:00-10:30 Panel Session 2: Room 6**

### **To What Extent Do Actors – Being Trained in Stanislavsky’s System – Need to Understand Dramaturgy?**

Julian Jones, Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance, UK

I have just finished conducting another round of auditions for the Acting BA Hons Programme at Rose Bruford. During the interview stage I usually ask the prospective student to give an example of a *story* that has been particularly important for them in some way. I have the impression that, over the years, this question has been met with increasing bafflement – why would I be asking about *stories*? This makes me wonder what has led these young people to apply to a vocational acting course. What excites them about the prospect of becoming an actor? Conversely, most applicants are aware of Stanislavsky and of the fundamentals of the ‘system’. They understand, and value, the pursuit of emotional ‘truth’ – of using the ‘self’ and seeking ‘authenticity’ in their work. *But in the service of what?*

In the second half of the first-year training I take them for one class a week called ‘dramaturgy’. It can prove to be a ‘hard sell’. A shift of focus from them (from self, from personal identity) – from their internal/emotional experience - to *the play*. The precise detail of the text, its themes and discourse, the *story* and its meaning, can seem of secondary importance to the actor’s *lived/living experience* from *moment to moment*. They have become used to creating ‘backstories’ for characters, with a view to constructing three-dimensional human beings. As useful as the focus on emotional truth is, sometimes it can have the, unintentional, effect of *taking them away from the story*, rather than into its thematic heart.

In this paper I would like to explore the place of *story* in a vocational training with Stanislavsky’s ‘system’ at its core. How much do actors in training need to understand dramaturgy? I shall be referring to (amongst others) David Edgar’s *How Plays Work*; James Thomas’ *Script Analysis: For Actors, Directors, and Designers*; and David Chambers *Analysis through Action for Actors and Directors: From Stanislavsky to Contemporary Performance* (with a particular focus on his discussion of Georgii Tovstonogov – perhaps a more dramaturgically inclined interpretation of *Active Analysis* than that of Maria Knebel). I will, of course, also refer to my own experiences during the ‘hard-sell’ of teaching dramaturgy to BA acting students.

**Julian Jones** trained at RADA and worked as an actor in theatre, television and film until 2019. He is a Senior Lecturer in Acting at Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance, where he both teaches and directs. His work with first-year actors is focused on Stanislavsky and Meisner. With second-year actors, he teaches non-naturalistic dramaturgies in Semester 1 and Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama in Semester 2. He also teaches Dramaturgy to L4 and is Contextual Study Coordinator across all three years of the Acting and Actor Musician Programmes. For several years he has – jointly with colleague David Zoob – delivered a workshop on Brecht for the MA Directing course at Birkbeck College and has also run workshops on Brecht and Shakespeare for the East 15 directors’ course. He contributed 50 practical exercises to *The Complete Brecht Toolkit* by Stephen Unwin (NHB). Jones is currently co-editing – with Michaela Antoniou – *Stanislavsky and Emotion: Approaches through Language and Culture* (Routledge). For the past three years he has been working with students on filmed scenes from Shakespeare’s plays for the Cambridge University Press New Shakespeare Edition. Jones has been a visiting lecturer at the University of Malta for several years and is Associate Editor of *Stanislavski Studies*.

## Science and Mystery in the UK Conservatoire

David Jackson, Anglia Ruskin University

A surprisingly common refrain in the history of the UK conservatoire is that ‘acting cannot be taught’. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the founder of RADA, took this view. So did the actors Michael Redgrave and Jane Lapotaire, among many others. Strong objections to this claim have been voiced by Stanislavsky’s near contemporary, the American producer John Belasco, pioneering teacher Harold Lang and Uta Hagen.

In this paper, I develop the terms *Science* and *Mystery* to analyse these binary opposites. The term *Mystery* or *Mysterian* is borrowed from cognitive philosophy. Owen Flanagan uses it for thinkers who accept that the ‘problem of mind’, i.e. how consciousness arises from the brain, is insoluble, because its secrets are beyond human comprehension. Similarly, in the theatre, many practitioners accept there are certain ‘intangibles’, such as charm, inspiration, charisma and the phenomenon of acted emotion. Not only are these ineffable qualities impossible to comprehend, it is actively harmful to study them, as discussion might interfere with the delicate process of activating our powers of unconscious creativity.

*Scientists*, on the other hand, believe that acting is subject to discoverable laws and is no different from, for example, astronomy, pottery or playing the violin. The acting teacher researcher has a duty to nibble away at the intangibles and extend our understanding of acting, so it can be taught more effectively. Stanislavsky is a confirmed Scientist, in this sense. According to Sonia Moore, he considered ‘the widespread opinion that the actor’s work is something mysterious’ is nothing more than a prejudice, ‘an alibi for an actor’s laziness’.

This paper makes a case for a *Scientific* approach to actor pedagogy. It also argues that elements of the 19th century psychology that influenced the evolution of the System is validated by contemporary emotion research. Then and now, there is a profound link between action and emotion.

**David Jackson** is Course Director for BA Acting at Anglia Ruskin University. He recently completed his PhD thesis, entitled ‘To the Unconscious by Conscious Means: Emotion, Science and Mystery in the UK Conservatoire’.

## **Shakespeare through Stanislavsky: A Vocabulary for a Practice-First Pedagogy**

Benjamin Archer, Southampton Solent University

Due to the demands of Shakespeare's verse and prose Stanislavsky's 'system' cannot be directly applied to Shakespeare's texts without modification and adaptation, a conclusion which Stanislavsky ultimately arrived at. Through my Practice as Research, I have developed *The Shakespeare Toolkit*, a character-driven pedagogy for performing Shakespeare's texts. It is comprised of twenty exercises (tools) which adapt aspects of Stanislavsky's 'system', Elizabethan acting practices, and the First Folio editions of the plays. The tools are scaffolded to build characterisation through embodied practice rather than textual dissection to explore the demands of working with verse and prose through a practice-first, character-driven approach to the text.

This paper would contextualise the research and provide a more detailed examination of how principles of Stanislavsky's 'system' were adapted to create a familiar acting vocabulary which facilitates student actors' approach to Shakespeare's text. Focusing on the initial phase or 'tray' of the Toolkit – *The First Encounter* – this paper would explore how learners initially access the text through Stanislavsky-based principles of inner and physical action, with vocal action emerging from these foundations. Thereby prioritising a practice-first engagement with the text, enabling learners to embody the demands of Shakespeare's verse and prose without becoming alienated by complex literary analysis, and their intellectual grappling with the text.

**Benjamin Archer** is a lecturer in Acting and Performance at Southampton Solent University. He worked professionally as an actor for nine years, predominantly in classical theatre, before deciding to pursue a career in academia. His doctoral research led to the development of *The Shakespeare Toolkit*, a character-driven, practice-first pedagogy and rehearsal methodology for performing Shakespeare's plays. This original approach adapts Stanislavsky's 'system', Elizabethan acting practices, and First Folio Technique to facilitate discoveries and responsiveness to the text's demands through embodied practice rather than verbal reasoning.

**9:00-10:30 Panel Session 3: VCT**

**The System as Scaffold: Training Autonomous Actors Through Responsive Pedagogy**  
Siiri Scott, University of Notre Dame

Trained in the early 1990s by master teachers who chose not to name our exercises, I first encountered Stanislavsky's system through repetition, physicality, and discovery. Only later did I recognize that I had been living the work long before I could name it. Today, I continue that lineage with intentional evolution. I teach from a fluid studio model in which Stanislavsky's tools function not as steps in a fixed method, but as a scaffold that supports the growth of responsive, self-directed performers.

Rather than following a prescribed sequence, I guide actors through a layered, intuitive process that invites them to embody principles of the system before naming them. Technique is introduced through lived experience, and only then contextualized through language. This reversal of the traditional scholarly arc allows students to build both physical understanding and intellectual rigor. I reflect on moments when students' growth flourished only after I let go of rigid vocabulary and embraced improvisational sequencing of exercises.

This presentation is a practitioner's reflection on how to train actors for complexity, contradiction, and multiplicity in the twenty-first century. Drawing on scholars such as Bella Merlin, Alison Hodge, and Maria Shevtsova—who re-translates “objective” as “task”—I argue that at times, re-naming is necessary; at others, withholding names opens space for deeper internalization. Both moves reframe Stanislavsky's legacy as a living, responsive practice rather than a doctrinal system.

Stanislavsky then was a radical experimenter. Stanislavsky now must be a responsive framework that evolves with the needs of today's artists. This talk explores how intuitive pedagogy and scholarly integrity can coexist—and how we, as trainers, might guide students from experience into language, rather than the other way around. What does it mean to teach the system in a way that honors its history, respects its complexity, and opens the door for every actor to walk through it fully, authentically, and with agency?

**Siiri Scott** is the Head of Acting and Directing at the University of Notre Dame, as well as a working actor and director. She specializes in actor training, Stanislavsky, and performance pedagogy, with a focus on responsive, inclusive teaching models that prioritize embodied learning and actor agency. She is co-editor of *Stanislavsky and Race: Questioning the System in the 21st Century* (Routledge, 2023) and is working on the forthcoming volume *Stanislavsky and Shakespeare: Speaking to the Two Traditions in the 21st Century*. She serves on the advisory board of the Stanislavsky Research Centre (Leeds/Malta) and regularly works on international plays and projects with a range of theatre companies, engaging deeply with international texts and contemporary performance practices.

## **The Power of Public Solitude: Fostering Inclusion and Diversity in Education**

Markéta Machková, Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy, Academy of Performing Arts in Prague

The concept of public solitude, based on Stanislavsky's exercise of small circles of attention, is paradoxical. How can one be on stage alone, when acting in front of others? The potential of this paradox has been published on recently – me and my colleagues have shown how students-performers develop creative skills via training in the situation of public solitude (Issues 12.1 and 12.2 of *Stanislavski Studies*). In this presentation, I focus on another kind of skills and introduce public solitude as a catalyst of diversity and inclusion in higher education. My observations stem from my practice-led research and pedagogical reflection of the discipline called Dialogical acting with the inner partner(s). In this psychophysical practice, students improvise solo in an empty space, using no props or prepared topics, in front of their mates and teachers (audience). Every participant takes their turn and each one is encouraged to explore their own authentic way of being on stage. The stress being put on the uniqueness of every individual makes the whole group value diversity and perceive it as richness. The fact that all take part in this challenging training together and switch between performing and viewing positions creates a sense of community. Since every participant's uniqueness is necessary to maintain the richness and authenticity of the productions and every viewer's supportive attention is needed for the performer to concentrate, inclusion emerges as a natural feature of the training. Thus, Dialogical acting, practiced in public solitude, brings a sense of community and educates students-performers in living diversity and inclusion – without ever having set these as educational goals.

**Markéta Machková** searches into dialogical approaches in acting, psychology, and education. In her transdisciplinary research, she develops practice-based qualitative methodologies and looks for psychophysical ways to treat, produce, and share knowledge. She has been practicing and teaching 'Dialogical acting with the inner partner(s)' at the Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy (Academy of Performing Arts in Prague) and designed the courses 'Théâtre dialogique et recherche' and 'Les mises en forme du savoir' at the Institute for Psychology and Education at the University of Neuchâtel.

**From Ensemble to Individually Tailored Acting Training Techniques:  
Mediating the Stanislavsky School and Australian Sensitivity in Actor Training**  
Inga Romantsova, Actors Centre, Torrens University, Sydney

This paper presents the first stage of a creative practice research project examining the intersection of Russian acting methodologies — particularly those of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov, and Vakhtangov — with contemporary Australian acting sensibilities. It addresses the following research question: How do Australian acting training practices interact with the legacy of Russian methodologies, and how can this interplay inform the development of actor training programmes that reflect local values while maintaining global relevance?

The study is grounded in the development of a programme designed to expand the knowledge and application of acting methodologies within Australian drama conservatoires, with a specific focus on the evolving practices at the Flinders Drama Centre. It seeks to challenge longstanding misconceptions about Stanislavsky's legacy, such as its perceived alignment with naturalism or reduction to character objectives and emotional memory. By engaging with the complexity of the Russian school, the study highlights how these techniques, when filtered through Australian cultural and environmental contexts, create dynamic, actor-centred approaches that balance ensemble work with individually tailored training.

The findings of this study aim to contribute to a nuanced understanding of how global acting traditions can adapt to and enrich local practices. By exploring the adaptability and depth of the Russian tradition, the research underscores the potential for acting systems to evolve in ways that honour their origins while addressing the unique challenges and opportunities of contemporary Australian theatre education. This paper will provide valuable insights into the transmutation of Russian acting methodologies within a distinct cultural framework, emphasising their capacity for fostering inclusivity, adaptability, and creative freedom.

**Inga Romantsova** is a Siberian/Australian actress and academic. In 2025 she is planning to pursue her PhD at Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia. She holds a MA in Theatre and Film, MPhil in Drama and serves as a lecturer/actor's trainer at the Actors Centre, Torrens University, Sydney. A graduate of the Russian State Institute of Performing Arts in St. Petersburg, she has worked extensively in theatre and films in Australia, including her latest award-winning feature film, *Petrol*. Inga has presented her research at several international conferences, including The S Word symposia, and is a published author in the *Stanislavsky Studies* journal. She has also contributed multiple book chapters in the *Stanislavsky and...* series, commissioned by Routledge. [inga.romantsova@gmail.com](mailto:inga.romantsova@gmail.com)

**10:00-12:00 Workshop 1: SHCR Room, Msida Campus**

**Scaffolding Consent and Intimacy in the Rehearsal Room: A Practical Workshop**

Joelle Ré Arp-Dunham, University of Kansas

*This workshop is for students of the Department of Theatre Studies only.*

Since incorporating consent and intimacy protocols and practices in productions and classrooms in 2017, I have noticed a great disparity in the comfort levels of students with intimate moments. Although some actors enter training programmes or begin rehearsals already open to their partners both emotionally and physically, many others are more closed off, limiting the relationship work they can do in performance. With this in mind and informed by cognitive science principles, I expanded on existing consent and staged intimacy exercises to help actors explore their own boundaries and comfort levels with acting partners in a more progressive, scaffolded manner. It also gives actors tools to bypass the binary ‘yes’ or ‘no’ commonly expressed with consent discussions so that they can remain flexible and creative members of an ensemble without crossing their boundaries. This in turn helps actors feel freer and more emboldened in their choices, ultimately leading to better productions.

***Joelle Ré Arp-Dunham*** is a director, actor, consent and intimacy consultant and choreographer, and educator. Her primary academic research is in how the cognitive sciences may lead to revisions of old and the creation of new pedagogical strategies in directing and acting that help create safer, braver spaces for the entire production team. She currently teaches at Kansas State University and previously served as the Producing Artistic Director of the Circle Ensemble Theatre Company in Athens, Georgia for 8 years. She has directed over 50 productions and acted throughout the US east coast.

**10:30-11:00 Coffee Break**

## **11:00-12:30 Panel Session 4: Room 5**

### **Cultivating Active Analysis**

Tamur Tohver, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Stanislavskian acting emerged from the need for personal qualitative transformation. Thereby, this method is grounded in self-cultivation, making personal growth central to learning his system. Any actor using Stanislavsky's method would likely agree that it enriches them personally.

Although the method was stripped of its spiritual aspects, its core ethical and pedagogical pillars were not only preserved but even reinforced. Stanislavsky saw theatre as a sacred, ennobling ritual with actors and directors as its bearers. While interculturalism sparks debates in contemporary performing arts, his non-dualist character creation method had already contrasted with the Cartesian mindset of Western theatre. His approach to the director as a pedagogue met with resistance from actors at the time, but now, we recognise that a director could benefit from the skills of a personal development coach to become a more effective artist. While his method establishes clear interdisciplinary connections with dramatherapy, psychology, and cognitive sciences, its cross-potential with executive coaching and leadership remains underexplored. This viewpoint calls for reassessing the system: an enriched person creates enhancing art, thus elevating it beyond entertainment.

I am excited to revitalise Active Analysis as a directing technique that fosters more creative freedom, mutual acceptance, and horizontal collaboration between directors and actors. By shifting the focus from the individual to an actor-director dyad, we can unlock the potential for interdependent inspiration and dynamic exchange that Stanislavsky envisioned but never fully articulated as a directing technique. In this context, the director assumes the role of a coach and supporter, rather than merely pursuing personal artistic ambition.

Stanislavsky's foresight lay in connecting contradictory ideas. This inspires me about Stanislavsky — as a director, as a person, as a pioneer, and as someone who constantly overcame obstacles for the sake of a brighter community.

**Tamur Tohver:** I am trained as a director and an actor. I started studying Stanislavskian acting at age seven and now I am fascinated by the creation of perceptual signs in the performing arts. Alongside acting, directing (nearly 90 productions for stage, TV, and radio) and giving workshops internationally for over thirty decades, I have taught performing arts in the UK, the US, and Estonian universities and made productions with my professional international Polygon Theatre Company, broadcasting and film companies. I am the author of the book on audio art *Silent Listening Is Easier* (2003).

My academic-artistic research focuses on actor-director collaboration, self-developmental actor training, cultivating directing, consciousness, and immediate transmission in theatre. I am keen on preventing the blockages in an actor-director dyad and in performer-spectator exchange, thereby increasing participants' experience both on stage and in the audience. I use my interpretation of Stanislavskian heritage and contemporary psychophysical fusion for storytelling in my directing craft, combined with my new development, Zero Zone Praxis (PhD candidate, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK). This leads to a horizontal enriching dyad, enabling us to avoid fear and increase performance to a higher consciousness level.

## Teaching the Method of Action Analysis in Drawing

Nataliia Dniprenko, Cara/British Academy Researchers at Risk Fellow, University for the Creative Arts, Associate Professor of Television Directing at the Kyiv National I. K. Karpenko-Kary Theatre, Cinema and Television University in Ukraine

The Method of Action Analysis is at the core of Stanislavsky's system, yet it remains a source of confusion — even among professionals. This is largely because Stanislavsky never published a dedicated book on the subject. To study his method, one must analyse records of his rehearsals documented in works such as *Stanislavski in Rehearsal: The Final Years* by Vasili Toporkov (1979) and *Stanislavsky Directs* by Nikolai Gorchakov (1954). Extracting the system from comments to actors, material analysis, and discussions with colleagues is a complex and demanding process, which few modern students are able to undertake.

Another way to approach the method is through its key developers — Maria Knebel (*On Active Analysis of the Play and the Role*, 1959), Alexander Palamishev (*Active Analysis of the Play*, 1967), and Georgy Tovstonogov (*On the Director's Profession*, 1980). However, each of them interprets the approach differently, adding to the challenge of understanding it.

The Method of Action Analysis is what distinguishes a professional from an amateur. It provides a precise way to verify whether a text's structure aligns with its dramatic purpose. The method is built around five key elements: the initial event, the event, the main event, **the** through action, and the super-task — all of which form the foundation of a structured dramatic work.

To make these concepts more accessible, the author has developed a **visual approach** to presenting the method. This approach represents all key elements in a structured drawing, offering a clear and intuitive way to grasp the logic of Action Analysis. The visual format not only simplifies the method for students but also extends its application beyond acting, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of an entire work of art.

During the presentation, the author will introduce this visual model, illustrating how the Method of Action Analysis can be understood and applied through drawing.

*Nataliia Dniprenko* is a Ukrainian television director, scholar, and educator. She is a Cara/British Academy Researchers at Risk Fellow at the University for the Creative Arts, United Kingdom, and teaches television directing at the I. K. Karpenko-Karyi Kyiv National University of Theatre, Cinema and Television, Ukraine. She has also worked as a television presenter on the First Channel of Ukrainian Television and as Head of the Communications Department in the Ukrainian Government. Dniprenko has organised festivals and academic conferences, including recent online projects, and has published a journal and more than twenty books on communication as a foundation of democratic institutions in Ukraine. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, she has been based in the United Kingdom. Her research explores online genres as forms of artistic communication in contexts of displacement and war, and she applies both the Method of Active Analysis and her own Method of Positions in creative and scholarly work.

## **Translating Stanislavsky's *An Actor's Work on the Role* – The Greek paradigm**

Michaela Antoniou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

This paper will examine the different translation approaches to Stanislavsky's work, both in Greece and abroad. Starting from the reception of Stanislavsky in Greece, through his translated texts, I will focus mainly on the choices made in the translation of *An Actor's Work on the Role*, which will be published in 2026 by Kardamitsa Publication under my editorship. This is the first time that this book is being translated into Greek, and the first time that a book by Stanislavsky is translated directly from Russian. The paper will explore the specific translation choices, which, on the one hand, were made in conversation with practitioners who studied at GITIS and, on the other, aimed to present thorough and insightful approach to the Russian director's work. Although the paper will focus on the Greek context, it will also give an overview of the translation approach in the European and Anglo-Saxon world.

**Michaela Antoniou** is a practitioner-researcher of directing and actor training, author, and Laboratory Teaching Staff, on acting and directing – theory and praxis – at the Theatre Studies Department of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She has a PhD in Acting and Directing from Goldsmiths, University of London (Supervisor: Professor Maria Shevtsova). She has directed devised theatre pieces, contemporary plays, and dramatic syntheses and has collaborated with theatres and festivals in Greece and abroad. Antoniou has been writing for the stage since 2009 and she has published two novels. She is the artistic director of the Alavastron Action Group since 2021. She has published in academic books and journals. Her forthcoming book *Centrifugal Narratives: Ancient Drama on the Greek Stage* will be published in 2024 by Papazisis Editions. Antoniou is also the Associate Editor of the *Stanislavsky Studies* journal (Taylor & Francis).

**11:00-12:30 Panel Session 5: Room 6**

**From Stage to Studio: Applying Stanislavsky's Acting Principles to Instrumental Music Performance and Pedagogy**

Andrea Johnson, University of Northern Iowa

Konstantin Stanislavsky's enduring influence on the performing arts transcends the boundaries of theatre, resonating profoundly within the realm of music performance and pedagogy. This presentation explores the interdisciplinary application of Stanislavsky's acting System to instrumental music performance, highlighting how core theatrical principles can address common challenges faced by musicians, including performance anxiety, physical tension, interpretative depth, and stage presence.

This session will examine how concepts such as emotion memory, the method of physical actions, public solitude, the illusion of the first time, and others can be adapted to enhance the expressive capabilities of instrumentalists. By fostering a deeper connection between the performer's inner life and outward expression, these methods promote a holistic approach to musical artistry.

This proposal aligns with the symposium's theme, 'Then and Now', by reappraising Stanislavsky's System within a contemporary musical context. It investigates not only the historical intersections between Stanislavsky's work and Russian pianists of the early 20th century but also how these principles can be innovatively integrated into 21st-century instrument learners, supporting performance skills that are widely applicable to their future lives.

Attendees will engage with practical demonstrations of adapted exercises designed to cultivate focus, emotional authenticity, and dynamic stage presence in piano performance. The presentation will conclude with a discussion on the broader implications of interdisciplinary pedagogy, encouraging educators and performers to embrace cross-disciplinary methodologies that enrich both teaching and artistic practice.

**Andrea Johnson** holds the title of Associate Professor of Piano Pedagogy and is the recipient of the Mildred M. Anderegg Distinguished Professorship of Piano at the University of Northern Iowa, School of Music, where she coordinates the undergraduate and graduate piano pedagogy and performance degree programmes. She is an active performer, conference presenter, adjudicator, and author with publications in *Frontiers in Psychology*, *Piano Pedagogy Forum*, *Music Teachers National Association eJournal*, and other peer reviewed forums. Her research interests include interdisciplinary studies in performance, applications of professional acting theory to piano performance, and the effects of aerobic exercise on piano performance outcomes and testing. Johnson holds degrees from the University of Oklahoma, the University of Oregon, and Portland State University.

## **Building Caretakers: Using Stanislavsky-based Acting Exercises to Help Future Doctors Practice Physical Presence and Foster Empathic Indicators in Patient Encounters**

Elisabeth Hostetter, Department of Theatre and Dance, Rowan University, USA

To address patient concerns related to doctors' emotional insensitivity, medical schools in the United States have increasingly turned to academic theatre programmes for curriculum to prepare future doctors for the physical, vocal, and emotional aspects of interpersonal doctor/patient interactions. This presentation explores role-playing and Stanislavsky-based training designed to help graduate medical student embody and "perform" an empathetic demeanour with others. As Stanislavsky's ABC books suggest, roleplaying requires performers to interpret, respond to, and simulate how bodies and voices manifest internal responses like empathy in corporeal and visible terms. Therefore, using established theatre-based pedagogy in medical schools can clinically impact how future doctors discuss, practice, and interpret empathetic response in their medical practice. Actively applied, creative theatre pedagogy also offers side-benefits of allowing medical students to explore their emotional range, to release pent-up feelings about the pressures of medical school, to live in "imaginary circumstances" in preparation for future crisis filled interactions, and to interact with peers in a non-competitive, personal way.

This presentation explores how Stanislavsky's legacy moves beyond his work as a "theatre maker" by offering a case study of the course "Theatre and Role of Role Playing" at Cooper Medical School in New Jersey, which uses Stanislavsky-based pedagogy to achieve the following objectives:

- Practice interpersonal communication skills needed in peer and patient interactions;
- Heighten awareness of non-verbal communication, including gesture and vocal tone/inflection;
- Build awareness of spontaneity and presence as markers of active listening and observation;
- Practice improvisational responses in interpersonal conversation;
- Create a non-competitive, non-judgmental peer ensemble and build trust among colleagues;
- Prepare for mandated "Standard Patient Scenarios" used to evaluate bedside competency;
- Clinically explore how we interpret, project, and embody empathetic indicators.

**Elisabeth Hostetter** is a Full Professor of theatre arts at Rowan. Edwin Mellen Press published her first book, *The Berlin State Theater Under the Nazi Regime*, in 2006. Professional directing and acting projects include *Lend Me a Tenor* (Broadway Pitman); *Love Letters to Stalin* and *Emmy Goring Stands by her Man* (Theater Catalyst); *The Foreigner* and *The Crucible* (Ritz Theatre, Oaklyn, NJ); and *The Women* (The Palmer Project). Her interest in German theatre earned her a National Endowment for the Humanities Award to study Bertolt Brecht in Berlin. She received her Ph.D. in theatre history from the University of Missouri, her M.A. from the University of Texas at Austin, and her B.F.A. from Virginia Commonwealth University.

## **Ungiven Circumstances and the Dramaturgy of Light**

Valentina Tamiolaki, Department of Theatre Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Aesthetic and narrative consistency in the dramaturgy of light are common challenges in postdramatic theatre practice. The main purpose of this paper is to present the findings of a research study on whether and how Stanislavsky's principles can guide lighting designers to organise their thoughts and ideas, especially when they are working on projects that are not text-based. The discussion will focus on Stanislavsky's teachings, but from the viewpoint of a lighting tutor working with students. I will present the research I conducted in an educational setting, working with participants from drama schools and departments of theatre studies in universities. I used specially-designed exercises and questionnaires as tools in workshops and hybrid webinars. Through this process I investigated the effect of Stanislavsky's method on students' work and how his influence still reflects on the development of the future artists' identities. The aim was to indicate whether Stanislavsky's training system is still able to inspire the next generation of theatre practitioners, especially in an era where the dominance of text is constantly challenged. The research results also illustrate the value of Stanislavsky's work when used in different disciplines other than his own. The presentation will end with conclusions on whether lighting designers can use the method to build a narrative in the frame of visual dramaturgy, even when the text is not the starting point of creation.

*Valentina Tamiolaki* is a professional lighting designer and musician whose work explores the dynamic relationship between movement, sound, and light in the performing arts. A graduate of the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (MA Advanced Theatre Practice, University of London), she specialized as a theatre artist in devised, text-based, physical, site-specific, dance, and puppet theatre. She has designed the lighting for many projects in Greece and abroad, seamlessly blending her technical expertise with her artistic vision. Based in Athens, Tamiolaki creates lighting designs that contribute to the dramaturgy and visual identity in all kinds of artistic work. She is currently a PhD candidate at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

## **11:00-11:45 Workshop 2: VCT**

### **The Need for Words: Shakespeare and the Contemporary Performer**

Gerald 'Jay' Paul Skelton, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

The performance of Shakespeare can represent a distinct challenge for actors versed in the naturalistic approach to acting as influenced by Stanislavsky. As John Barton suggests, this tradition is not readily compatible with the language-based tradition of Renaissance players. He subsequently argues that playing Shakespeare constitutes a collision of 'the Two Traditions'. This workshop presentation identifies the 'need for words' - or the impulse to respond to events primarily through language as originally articulated by practitioner Patsy Rodenburg - as the key challenge that contemporary performers confront when approaching Shakespeare. I'll offer one possible way to meet this challenge in rehearsal and performance through a synthesis of Active Analysis, as developed by Stanislavsky and Maria Knebel, and Viewpoints, a technique of movement improvisation originated by Mary Overlie and further adapted by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. The workshop presentation will illustrate how these two techniques might be used together to invite actors to discover the need for words in the twenty-first century.

**Gerald 'Jay' Paul Skelton** is a lecturer on the MA/MFA Actor Training and Coaching programme at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, and has taught at RADA, Rose Bruford, Kingston University, and the University of Notre Dame London. He was Producing Artistic Director of the Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival, the professional theatre in residence at the University of Notre Dame (US) from 2005-2012. He has directed, produced or written over 125 productions in London, Edinburgh, New York, Chicago and Boston. He is the co-editor with Siiri Scott of *Stanislavsky and Race: Questioning the "System" in the 21st Century* published by Routledge in 2023.

### **11:45-12:30 Workshop 3: VCT**

#### **Dialogical Acting (with the Inner Partner)**

Hana Malaníková, Markéta Machková, and Maryana Kozak, Academy of Performing Arts in Prague

We cordially invite you to the workshop on Dialogical Acting (with the Inner Partner) – a practical psychosomatic discipline explored and studied at the Department of Authorial Creation and Pedagogy at DAMU (Theatre Faculty of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague). Founded by Prof. Ivan Vyskočil in the 1960s and developed further until now,

Dialogical Acting is Prof. Vyskočil's elaboration of the creative state (Stanislavsky), inner speech (Vygotski), and the concept of the public solitude (Stanislavsky). The discipline can offer cultivation of self-awareness, authenticity, and the ability to withstand a public situation. It can offer a way to cultivate the ability to act and reflect at the same time (reflection in action and action in reflection) which is helpful in research situations and interactions with other people and in any public situation. Dialogic Acting is an experience of embodied reflection, emphasising play and playfulness as a principle of relating to oneself and the world.

Participants will have the opportunity to practically engage in the workshop and there will be a discussion to provide theoretical background of the discipline and possible applications. As part of this discussion, we would like to present a practise-based research focused on teachers of Dialogical Acting. In the fall of 2023, we observed a closed group of pedagogues, who meet regularly once a week and continuously verify the principles of this specific discipline by practical experimentation. They re-enter the role of learners (seekers, examiners) and do so in front of other colleagues, by giving feedback to each other. The research focuses on how empathising, playful self-reflection develops the pedagogical competencies of those involved.

*Hana Malaníková* searches into dialogical and psychosomatic approaches in acting, clowning, and education. Her work as a health clown has led her to explore humour as a tool for empowering communication in environments generating high levels of stress and hierarchy – such as hospitals or universities. She has been practicing and teaching Dialogical Acting at the Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy (Academy of Performing Arts in Prague) which she currently heads.

*See elsewhere for Markéta Machková's and Maryana Kozak's bionotes.*

### **12:30-13:30 Lunch Break**

### **13:30-15:00 Panel Session 6: Room 5**

#### **Ethics and Practice, or How to Reconcile Teamwork with the Actor's Well-being? Stanislavsky's 'Ethics' in a Polish Context**

Joanna Ostrowska and Juliusz Tyszka, Performance Studies Laboratory, Cultural Studies Institute, Adam Mickiewicz University at Poznań, Poland

Stanislavsky's 'Ethics' was a visionary protest against everyday practice in Russian and European theatre at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. According to this vision, the actor or actress was to be the bearer of beauty and truth, the high, noble embodiment of the human condition. This theme was taken up in Poland by the Warsaw Reduta company (1919-25). The Reduta actors later transferred the basic ethical principles of actor's conduct to the everyday practice of Polish theatres – usually flat, commercialised, artistically banal, ethically ambivalent. The turning point here is the period of World War II and the German occupation of Poland (September 1939-spring 1945, the Soviet occupation of eastern Polish territories between September 1939 and June 1941 is omitted here due to its different specificity). The Nazi occupiers limited Polish theatrical life at that time to primitive entertainment, often downright pornography, which in their opinion should have satisfied the aesthetic needs of the Slavic 'subhumans'. The refusal of most Polish actresses and actors to participate in these practices was highly valued by the enlightened compatriots, while the few who decided to perform in official theatres were considered traitors.

The representatives of the intelligentsia who survived the Nazi and Soviet massacres also appreciated the attitude of Polish actresses and actors during the period of Stalinist terror (1949-1956). At that time, Polish realist classics were cultivated on Polish stages, and the primitivized Stanislavsky's 'system' imposed from above was ignored in every possible way. The actor and actress, as bearers of beauty and truth, with daily access to higher values, became authorities in communist Poland. This attitude of the general public was most visible during the martial law period (December 1981-summer 1983), when the vast majority of people from the theatre community boycotted the state (i.e. the only officially available) media, limiting their performances to both official theatrical stages and 'second circulation' of theatre in Catholic churches and private apartments.

The current situation of Polish actors and actresses is definitely different from that of 1944-89: extreme individualism, free competition on the theatre market, and concern for one's own well-being often clash with the understanding of theatre as a collective art, so obvious to Stanislavsky and repeatedly emphasized in his 'Ethics'. Is it possible to reconcile these two, very different visions of the art of theatre? Will collective art be definitively relegated to the margins of alternative theatre? The coming years should provide a relatively clear answer to these questions.

*Juliusz Tyszka* is a Professor at the Institute of Cultural Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University at Poznań, Poland. He is: the author of 9 books, incl. one published by Routledge, co-author of 1, editor of 8, co-editor of 9, author of over 550 articles, sketches, reports reviews and pamphlets published in 13 countries; contributing editor to *New Theatre Quarterly* (1999-2022); Fulbright visiting scholar at New York University (1992/93, Faculty associate: Richard Schechner); lecturer at Université d'Artois in Arras (2003), Université Rennes 2 – Haute Bretagne (2010), Europäische Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder (2006-24); co-organizer of European Masters in Science of Performative Creativity, coordinated by the University of Malta (2003-14); participant of several international

research programs, incl. 'Dissident Muse. Critical Theatre in Central-Eastern Europe 1945-1989' (1994-95, coordinated by Theater Instituut Nederland); member of the Advisory Board at the Marvin Carlson Center at the Theatre Academy in Shanghai (from 2016); associated member of *Cercle* (Centre de Recherche sur les Cultures et Littératures Européennes) in Nancy 2 – Université de Lorraine (since 2018); translator from English and French.

**Joanna Ostrowska** is a professor at the Cultural Studies Institute, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (Poland). Her main fields of interest are: alternative theatre in Poland and abroad, contemporary theatre as cultural phenomenon, and performances of remembrance. Her articles were published, among others in *New Theatre Quarterly*, *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, and *Kultura Współczesna*. She is co-author of *Sketches on Alternative Theatre* and author of *Theatre can be anywhere: on the concepts of Space and Place in a Theatre* and the only Polish monograph on The Living Theatre. Ostrowska is currently working on a book about theatre and war.

## **The Multifaceted *sverkhzadacha*: Does Stanislavsky Contradict Himself?**

Tomasz Kubikowski, Akademia Teatralna in Warsaw

Undoubtedly, the *sverkhzadacha* (super objective, supertask) is a term at the core of Stanislavsky's teaching. However, as with elated and semi-mystical concepts, its characteristics are elliptic, approximate, and sometimes outwardly contradictory.

In his seminal passages on *Woe from Wit* (*Creating a Role*), we encounter the notion of it being 'something superconscious, ... ineffable,' and shortly thereafter, we are presented with ready, general, and simplistic formulas regarding the supertasks in the specific works of great writers (the same repetitions appear in *An Actor's Work*). These formulas not only conflict with the quoted statement but, more importantly, with Stanislavsky's overall caution against performing 'in general.'

Is it possible to express *sverkhzadacha* in words? And to what extent? Since 'only artists of genius are capable of the emotional experience of a superobjective, the complete absorption into themselves of the soul of the play' and 'actors of lesser talents ... must be satisfied with less,' does any wording not turn *sverkhzadacha* into a cliché, transferring it into the realm of the despised *remeslo*? Indeed, isn't stating like 'the search for God is the supertask in [Dostoyevsky's] work' a supercliché?

Even after we have navigated a passage through this problem, how shall we comprehend this semi-mystical core of the work of art towards which we aim, head, and proceed through our 'throughaction'? Here, at least three distinct interpretations spring to mind. One is 'platonic': identifying the particular, unique idea behind the work. Another is 'Husserlian': gaining insightful access to the particular identity, the *haecceitas* of the work. Yet another is 'cognitivist': aggregating experiences until we construct or synthesise the unique *quale*, an indivisible and indefinable datum of consciousness associated with the same work.

In my paper, I intend to look closer at these significant aporias.

**Tomasz Kubikowski** is a Professor at Akademia Teatralna in Warsaw, Literary Manager of the National Theatre (Teatr Narodowy), and researcher in theatre and performance, critic, essayist, editor, translator. He is the author of six books on performance theory and its applications: *Siedem bytów teatralnych*. (1994), *Reguła Nibelunga*. (2004), *Teatralne doświadczenie Wilhelma Meistra* (2014), *Przeżyć na scenie* (2015), *Zjanie psów* (2019), *An Actor Survives* (2023). Kubikowski is also an Editorial Board Member of *Performer*, Editorial Advisory Board Member on *Stanislavski Studies*, and Contributing Editor on *New Theatre Quarterly*.

**13:30-15:00 Panel Session 7: Room 6**

**‘To Breathe the Role’: From Respiration to Anása —Tempo–Rhythm and Scenic Presence in Stanislavsky**

Panagiota Panagi, Collaborator, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Department of Theatre Studies

This presentation seeks to reappraise Stanislavsky’s system by focusing on the often-neglected role of breath as a generative source of rhythm within the actor’s scenic presence. While breath has traditionally been studied through physiological or vocal approaches, the present study proposes a reconceptualization of breath as a rhythmic structure that organizes both speech and movement on stage. Drawing from an analysis of Stanislavsky’s own writings and archival sources, the study argues that breath is not merely supportive but formative: a temporal and aesthetic unit that connects inner impulse, vocal expression, and physical action. By foregrounding this rhythmic function of breath, the presentation explores how actors develop a ‘rhythmic consciousness’ — an embodied awareness that synchronises thought, emotion, and scenic timing. This concept contributes to a broader understanding of the ‘rhythmic unity’ in Stanislavsky’s thinking, shedding light on an unexplored dimension of his system. The presentation primarily adopts an interdisciplinary methodology, incorporating approaches from voice studies, movement practices, and cognitive performance theory, aiming to bridge Stanislavsky’s legacy with the contemporary needs of performance art. In doing so, it positions breath as a site of creative emergence, not only for the composition of action but also for the very experience of scenic presence — rhythmically structured. The presentation examines how breath enhances the development of a ‘rhythmic consciousness’ — an embodied alertness that synchronises thought, emotion, and scenic time — and how this contributes to the understanding of the ‘rhythmic unity’ that underlies the entire System. Finally, it proposes a re-engagement with Stanislavsky that resists the technicization of the art of acting and repositions breath as a biorhythmic source of creativity, connecting stage action with the lived, human experience of time.

*Panagiota Panagi*, Athens, works as an actress, performer, dramaturg, educator, and in production. Panagi began her theatre studies at the Delos Drama School and continued with masterclasses in Greece and abroad. She trained under Maria Shmaevich (GITIS), Jean-Jacques Lemêtre (Théâtre du Soleil), and has participated in theatre productions and performances in public space. She holds a Master’s degree with distinction in Theatre Studies, specialising in Theatre Dramaturgy, from the Department of Theatre Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Her specialisation focuses on issues of rhythm in stage dramaturgy. She is also a graduate of the Department of Music Studies at the University of Ioannina and worked in secondary education. Panagi has received professional theatre training from the National Theatre of Greece. She has collaborated with the Athens and Epidaurus Festival, the National Theatre of Greece, the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation, the Municipal and Regional Theatre of Ioannina, and the Onassis Stegi. Panagi worked as an assistant director, designed and delivered educational activities for teenagers and young people, and created dramaturgies for performances and public space interventions. Recently, she participated in interdisciplinary research programmes focusing on innovative approaches to the dramaturgy of Ancient Greek Drama. These include the Athens and Epidaurus Festival residency held at the Little Theatre of Epidaurus (2023) under the direction of Argyro Chioti. She also participated in the Greek delegation’s competition section at the Prague Quadrennial with her performance on physical disability. She presented at the conference ‘Expanded Scenography, Performance, and Public Space’, organized by the Department of Theatre Studies at the NKUA and the MA programme ‘Greek and World Theatre: Dramaturgy, Performance and Education’. Her paper, titled ‘Making the Invisible Visible: Please Mind the Gap. A Performance on Physical Disability’, was part of the student competition section representing Greece at the Prague Quadrennial.

## **Stanislavsky and Opera: The Musico-Dramatic Text and the Development of Performance Dramaturgies on the Operatic Stage**

Mario Frendo, Department of Theatre Studies, School of Performing Arts, University of Malta

During a session with opera singers while working on the 1922 staging of *Eugene Onegin*, Stanislavsky addressed the tenor playing Lensky immediately after his first appearance: ‘Why are you making an aria out of that? Why are you trying to show off your voice to us?’ This rather pointed remark was aimed at the tenor’s lack of musico-dramaturgical awareness. It reflects how, from his very first opera production, Stanislavsky was already challenging fundamental aspects of an operatic tradition which in his view required reform. By asserting that opera is not merely about the singer’s voice, Stanislavsky was establishing the foundations of a vision for opera-making framed around the musico-dramatic integrity of a work and the behaviour required by actor-singers to perform that work. The paper will focus on the concept of the musico-dramatic text, a complex textual conception which Stanislavsky considered as foundational to his vision for opera performance. Central to this concept is the relationship between ‘the musical and the vocal’ within the dramaturgical fabric of an opera – a relationship which feeds on how the voice and the music connect in terms of dramaturgical exigences. This relationality underpins the concept of the musico-dramatic text which in turn informs the emergent performance dramaturgies created through collaborative practices. Further to critically unpacking the concept of the musico-dramatic text, the discussion will draw on notes taken by actor-singers who worked with Stanislavsky to examine how he applied this concept to his directorial interventions. Particular attention will be given to direct references made by Stanislavsky to the musical score of the operas he staged, illustrating how his approach was informed by a deep engagement with both the dramatic and musical dimensions of the work.

**Mario Frendo** is Senior Lecturer within the Department of Theatre Studies at the School of Performing Arts, University of Malta. His main area of research is interdisciplinarity in theatre and performance. More specifically he is interested in critical perspectives on opera and contemporary opera-making practices, music-theatre theories and practices, relationships between performance and philosophy particularly Nietzsche’s performative perspectives, and the impacts of musical and oral traditions on the development of ancient Greek tragedy. He has published articles in various performance-related journals including, *Studies in Musical Theatre*, *New Theatre Quarterly*, and *Contemporary Theatre Review* and has contributed to several book chapters related to research in the performing arts.

## **Stanislavsky and the AI Actress: Can Algorithms Replace the Human Soul of Performance?**

Natali Chavez, Film School of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH)

The recent emergence of the ‘AI actress’ has ignited heated debate, raising profound questions about the future of performance and provoking concern from actors and their unions over potential job displacement. These developments bring us back to the fundamentals of acting and ask: What defines an actor – and what separates them from their AI counterpart? This paper addresses these questions through the lens of Stanislavsky’s system: What might Stanislavsky have thought about the AI-generated actor? Stanislavsky argued that authentic performance emerges from an actor’s inner life, emotional truth, and embodied imagination. This inquiry investigates whether algorithms can reach such depth – not only replicating an actor’s craft but also embodying the lived human experience. It explores whether AI-generated performers threaten human artistry, create a new genre of performance, or prove beneficial to scientific fields and research. Rather than framing AI as a threat, this discussion treats the ‘AI actress’ as an opportunity to reaffirm Stanislavsky’s principles, investigate whether technology might approximate human virtues, and consider how virtual actors can be ethically developed to complement rather than threaten human actors – preserving the soul of performance while expanding its possibilities.

*Natali Chavez* is a professional actress and PhD candidate at the Film School of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), specializing in AI in acting and film technology. As a Fulbright Visiting Researcher at the USC Institute for Creative Technologies, she conducted experimental research on actors’ brain activity during performance, with a focus on Stanislavsky’s system of authentic, embodied acting. Her work explores the intersection of performance, emotion, and technology, investigating how AI challenges and redefines the art of acting.

## **13:30-14:15 Workshop 4: VCT**

### **Unlocking ‘The Art in Yourself’: Active Analysis as a Solo Practice in Professional Rehearsal**

Abigail Killeen, Bowdoin College, US

In today’s acting world, no assumptions can be made about the colleagues we’ll work with. It’s common to find ourselves alongside actors from diverse training backgrounds — or none at all. So, how can we, as professionals, apply Stanislavsky’s techniques when we might be the only one in the room fluent in his System? In this workshop, actor and teacher Abigail Killeen will share how she’s used Active Analysis, as taught to her by Sharon Marie Carnicke, in three recent professional projects: a local theatre, a regional theatre, and an Off-Broadway production in New York. Through these case studies and hands-on exercises, participants will see firsthand how Stanislavsky’s System remains invaluable in today’s professional landscape. This session will also offer valuable insights for theatre educators on how to better prepare their students for the demands of the industry.

**Abigail Killeen** is a Professor of Theater at Bowdoin College and an actor and producer dedicated to redefining traditional women’s narratives onstage while empowering women in leadership roles offstage. A highlight of her career is her adaptation of Isak Dinesen’s *Babette’s Feast*, which she conceived, co-produced, and also performed in. It premiered at Portland Stage, transferred Off-Broadway, and was nominated for the Off Broadway Alliance’s “Most Unique Theatrical Experience” Award. As a member of Karin Coonrod’s Compagnia de’ Colombari, Abigail has showcased her versatility in Coonrod’s adaptations of Shakespeare and Flannery O’Connor. Deeply rooted in her New England community, she has performed with Connecticut Free Shakespeare (founding member, eight seasons), Portland Stage, Good Theater, Dramatic Rep, Fenix, and Portland Shakespeare Co. Her recent publications include “The Three Intelligences: A Framework for Inclusivity in the Acting Classroom” in *Ecumenica: Performance and Religion*, Penn State University Press (2022), two contributions to the forthcoming Karin Coonrod’s *Transnational Theatre* (Bloomsbury), and “A Rescue Mission: Reversing the Legacy of Harm in Actor Training”, in the forthcoming *Stanislavsky and Mindfulness: Being in the Moment* (Paul Fryer, series editor, Dawn Ingleson, book editor – Routledge).

### **14:15-15:00 Workshop 5: VCT**

#### **Harmonising Technique and Spirit: A Journey through Demidov's School of Acting and Stanislavsky's System**

Gabriela Curpan, University for the Creative Arts

This workshop aims to illuminate the rich interplay between Nikolai Demidov's innovative acting techniques and Konstantin Stanislavsky's use of elements within the system. Participants will gain insights into how these two influential figures transformed Russian theatre and explore practical applications of their methods. The workshop will delve into the founding principles of Demidov's School of Acting, highlighting its unique emphasis on mindfulness, inner stillness, and working with impulses while using the same elements of Stanislavsky's acting system. Through a series of interactive exercises, discussions, and group activities, participants will learn how to incorporate key aspects of Demidov's yoga-inspired methods into their acting practice while also exploring the core elements of Stanislavsky's system.

*Gabriela Curpan* is an experienced Romanian professional female actor with a distinguished academic background. She earned her PhD from Goldsmiths, University of London, where she explored spiritual methods of preparing actors to reach the creative state on stage as envisioned by Konstantin Stanislavsky. Curpan is a Senior Lecturer and an MA Course Leader in Acting and Performance at the University for the Creative Arts. Her research continues to explore the spiritual aspects of acting preparation, and she has developed a particular interest in the Nikolai Demidov School of Acting. Her work integrates these methodologies to enhance actor training, blending traditional techniques with innovative approaches to actor preparation.

### **15:00-15:30 Coffee Break**

**15:30-16:00 Plenary: VCT**

**Rethinking the Room: Practical Shifts Toward Equity in Actor Training**

Siiri Scott, University of Notre Dame and Gerald 'Jay' Paul Skelton, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

What shifts when race is placed at the centre of actor training? In this conversation-based session, scholar-practitioners Siiri Scott and Jay Skelton draw on insights from their co-edited volume *Stanislavsky and Race* to offer a series of evolving frameworks for equitable, culturally aware rehearsal and classroom practices. Rather than prescribing 'best practices', they share a progression of applied strategies - from inherited habits to intentional redesigns - that reflect their ongoing work in diversifying and decolonizing the 'system'. Framed by real case studies and open dialogue, this session invites fellow practitioners to reflect on how their own training might adapt in response to a more inclusive vision of Stanislavsky.

**Siiri Scott** is the Head of Acting and Directing in the Department of Film, Television, and Theatre at the University of Notre Dame. Now in her 28th year with the department, she teaches advanced acting, voice, dialect, and movement. Siiri is affiliated with Notre Dame's Initiative on Race and Resilience and is a faculty fellow with both the Nanovic Institute for European Studies and the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies. She also serves as a Guest Lecturer and MFA Tutor at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in the United Kingdom. Siiri earned her Master of Fine Arts in Acting from The Theatre School at DePaul. She remains active in theatre as a company member with both Theatre Nohgaku and the Irish Theatre of Chicago. As a producing ensemble member with ITC, she directed the Jeff-nominated production of *My Brilliant Divorce* and, more recently, *The Weir, Pineapple and Molly Sweeney*. She has also produced ITC's tours of those same shows as well as *Mojo Mickybo, Doubt and Dance of Death*. An award-winning audiobook narrator, Siiri has recorded over 125 audiobooks, including *White Torture* by Narges Mohammadi, which won the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize. Her voice work also includes radio, television, internet commercials and e-learning modules. Last summer, Siiri joined the international advisory board of the Stanislavsky Research Centre, based in the UK and Malta. Her first book project, *Stanislavsky and Race: Questioning the 'System' in the 21st Century*, was co-edited with Jay Paul Skelton and published in 2023.

**Gerald 'Jay' Paul Skelton** is a lecturer on the MA/MFA Actor Training and Coaching programme at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, and has taught at RADA, Rose Bruford, Kingston University, and the University of Notre Dame London. He was Producing Artistic Director of the Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival, the professional theatre in residence at the University of Notre Dame (US) from 2005-2012. He has directed, produced or written over 125 productions in London, Edinburgh, New York, Chicago and Boston. He is the co-editor with Siiri Scott of *Stanislavsky and Race: Questioning the 'System' in the 21st Century* published by Routledge in 2023.

**16:00-17:00 Featured Speaker: VCT**

**Contemporary Now/Contemporary Then: ‘New forms are what we need, and if there aren’t any, then we are better off with nothing’ (Konstantin in *The Seagull*, Chekhov)**  
Richard Gough, Centre for Performance Research

A fast-moving exploration of how editors (authors/scholars) of theatre journals and producers (impresarios/ regisseurs) of world theatre promote, engage and amplify the impact of new forms and innovation in theatre practice. This highly illustrated talk will spring from a survey of the first presentations of the Moscow Art Theatre in the USA (1923 & 1924) and the UK (1958 & 1964), considering the risks taken by producers and the reception and analysis advanced by contemporary theatre journals and magazines. Greater generalities will then be drawn from ever-evolving experiments and transitions in performance practice, focusing upon the producer as catalyst and the journal as crucible.

**Richard Gough** is Artistic Director of the Centre for Performance Research (CPR) and Professor of Music & Performance at the University of South Wales, Cardiff, Wales, UK. He has dedicated the last fifty years to developing and exploring interdisciplinary, experimental performance work. As Artistic Director of CPR and its predecessor, Cardiff Laboratory Theatre, he has curated and organised numerous international theatre projects, including conferences, summer schools and workshop festivals, and he has produced nationwide tours of experimental theatre and traditional dance/theatre ensembles from around the world. He has directed over seventy productions, many of which have toured Europe, and he has lectured and led workshops throughout Europe and in China, Japan, USA, Colombia and Brazil. He was the founding President (1997-2001) of Performance Studies international (PSi). He is the General Editor and co-founder of *Performance Research (The Journal of Performance Arts)* published eight issues annually by Routledge, and is the publisher and series editor of Performance Research Books.

**Saturday 8 November**

**9:00-10:15 Keynote Speaker: VCT**

**Stanislavsky from the Outside: Networking and Re-working the Self**

Frank Camilleri, Department of Theatre Studies, School of Performing Arts, University of Malta

The paper presents an outsider's perspective on aspects of Konstantin Stanislavsky's approach, specifically with reference to the fundamental notion of the actor's work on the self. Although not directly influenced by his practice, the author's specialisation in physical theatre was shaped in Stanislavsky's shadow. Accordingly, the paper adopts the ripple effect metaphor to exemplify the impact of Stanislavsky beyond his immediate geographical, historical, and aesthetic circles of influence. Starting off with a personal anecdote by the author about a movement-based exercise, Stanislavsky's work upon the self is identified as a key formative element that is then highlighted in the context of resonances between aesthetic and athletic processes, mainly by the proposal of a *via athletae* (way of the athlete).

Described as a modality of performing that is not based on a specific technique or method but on the qualitative intensity of psychophysical commitment, *via athletae* is manifested through three main characteristics: play, collaborative competitiveness, and pacing. The interplay of aesthetic and athletic dynamics in *via athletae* serves to defamiliarise Stanislavsky's work on the self, which is further problematised by the concept of bodyworld that emphasises the interconnectedness of the performer with the material world. Viewing the self via the 3As of bodyworld (i.e. assemblages, affordances, and actants) leads to the re-reading of Stanislavsky's maxim about self-work as a networking and a re-working of oneself in the context of epistemic actions and secondary tasks (both offering insights on scaffolded intentionality) as well as choking, stage fright, and active distraction.

**Frank Camilleri** is Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Malta, current Head of the Department of Theatre Studies, and Artistic Director of Icarus Performance Project. Camilleri's research interests revolve around the spaces between training and performance processes via the development of technique and improvisatory structures. More recently, he has focused on the concept of 'bodyworld' to highlight human–non-human relationalities in the work of performers. His various publications on performer training, theatre as a laboratory, and practice as research reflect the theatre work he has been developing since 1989. Camilleri is the author of *Performer Training Reconfigured: Post-Psychophysical Perspectives for the Twenty-first Century* (Methuen, 2019) and *Performer Training for Actors and Athletes* (Methuen, 2023). He has co-edited (with Paul Allain) *Milestones in Actor Training* (Routledge, 2025) and is Associate Editor of *Performance Research*, for whom he has co-edited the issues 'On Hybridity' (2020) and 'On Habit' (2023). Earlier this year he was awarded the first edition of the International Prize for Sport and Theatre in Education and Training (University of Urbino, 2025). Camilleri is a long-distance runner.

**10:15-11:00 Coffee Break**

**11:00-12:30 Panel Session 8: Room 5**

**An Actor Creates: The Moscow Kamerny Theatre School**

Dassia N. Posner, Northwestern University

In 1914, director Alexander Tairov and actress Alisa Koonen founded the Moscow Kamerny Theatre to restore the actor's creative centrality to director-led productions. The following year, they opened a training school that ran continuously in varied forms, under various names, until both the theatre and its school were violently liquidated in 1949. This school's inception, which coincided with the early days of the Moscow Art Theatre First Studio and of Meyerhold's Borodinskaia Street Studio, marked the first time in Russian history that an innovative, comprehensive actor training system was directly implemented in all its parent theatre's mainstage productions. Yet the Kamerny's celebratory new acting forms, which centred pantomime, acrobatic grace, improvisation, vocal prowess, and each actor's unique creativity, are almost entirely unknown today. This paper examines the development, philosophy, and curriculum of the Kamerny school, from its 1915 inception to its formalization as the Experimental Theatre Workshops (EKTEMAS) at the MKT in 1923. This school offered a popular, viable alternative to Stanislavsky's early system, which Koonen had rejected when she left the MAT, and to Meyerhold's biomechanics, which Tairov felt did not adequately centre the actor's individuality. My discussion provides unprecedented access to an exciting, implementable creative system that was hugely influential in the 1910s and 20s and could have achieved widespread use today, had it not been repressed.

*Dassia N. Posner* is a theatre historian, translator, dramaturg, and puppeteer and Associate Professor of Theatre and Slavic Languages & Literatures at Northwestern University. Her books include *The Director's Prism: E.T.A. Hoffmann and the Russian Theatrical Avant-Garde* (2016); *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance* (2014, co-edited); *Three Loves for Three Oranges: Gozzi, Meyerhold, Prokofiev* (2021, co-edited), winner of the 2022 American Society for Theatre Research Translation Prize; and *Making Meaning in Puppetry: Materials Practice, Perception* (2025, co-edited). Recent creative work includes production and translation dramaturgy for Chekhov's *Seagull* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company and a co-directed giant puppet spectacle, *The Flight of the Phoenix*. Her newest book project, *The Actor's Revolution: Art and Politics at the Moscow Kamerny Theatre*, reclaims the legacy of this theatre and its founders, Alexander Tairov and Alisa Koonen.

## **Maria Knebel: A Woman at the Crossroads of the Transmission and Transformation of Stanislavsky's Pedagogical Legacy**

Cristiana Minasi, University of Messina

This proposal aims to explore one of the least explored dimensions of Stanislavsky's legacy: that of theatre pedagogy, in its transmission and transformation over time.

The figure of Maria Knebel – actress, director, pedagogue and theorist – represents a crucial and often neglected node in this evolutionary line. Chosen as an object of study because of her central role in the practical and theoretical redefinition of the Stanislavsky system in the second half of the 20th century, Maria Knebel is configured as a point of transition between tradition and contemporary pedagogical research. Maria Knebel did not limit herself to preserving Stanislavsky's ideas, but reactivated them, reinterpreted them, and passed them on to subsequent generations through an autonomous elaboration, which is made explicit in the text *L'analisi della pièce e del ruolo mediante l'azione*, edited by Alessio Bergamo, who is also an active perpetuator of the method through his current directorships.

This lecture proposes to read Maria Knebel by focusing on concepts such as internal action, the emotional logic of the actor, and the atmospheric quality of the scene. In particular, we will reflect on how, in line with the thought of Michail Chekhov (also a student of Stanislavsky), she developed a pedagogical attention to atmospheres, understood as shared fields of perception, capable of orienting scenic creation and actor presence in a dialogue between performing arts, cognitive sciences, aesthetic philosophy, and atmospherology.

Part of the lecture will be devoted to the contemporary reception of this legacy, in particular through the work of Anatolij Vassiliev, who radicalised and deepened the Knebelian approach. This line of transmission found resonance in the project *The Island of Pedagogy*, an international workshop of High Pedagogy of the Scene (2011/2013), in which A. Vassiliev led a group of actresses and actors on a path of advanced research based on the playful and situational structure of Pirandello's plays and novels and Plato's dialogues.

The proposal offers a critical and generative look at Stanislavsky's legacy from a novel, all-female perspective, as part of a dialogue between historical legacy and contemporary application of the system.

**Christiana Minasi** holds PhD in Cognitive Sciences at the University of Messina, where she is an expert in the field of theories and techniques of performance. A graduate of the International School of High Stage Pedagogy directed by A. Vasil'ev, in 2011 she founded the Compagnia Carullo-Minasi, within which she works as a director, actress, playwright. and stage pedagogue, distinguishing herself on the national scene with numerous awards, including Scenario per Ustica 2011. Her various publications include: 'In Search of the Spectator. The Delivery Theatre of the Carullo-Minasi Company for a Performing Curatorship of the City' in *Mimesis Journal* 11, 2/2022; the essay 'Performance, Space, City: Delivery Theatre Experiences During the Covid-19 Pandemic' in *Performing Space*, Nissos, Athens 2023; and the article 'The Extra-Daily in the Daily. The case of the "Stromboli Ecological Theatre Festival 'in the light of the sun and other stars'" for the journal *Mantichora* 3/2013.

## **Stanislavsky and Charles Jehlinger: A Case of Parallel Evolution?**

Eric Hetzler, University of Huddersfield

In an article entitled ‘The American Academy of Dramatic Arts’ from *Films in Review*, Homer Dickens notes that when instructor Charles Jehlinger began teaching there in 1898, ‘the basic teaching concept of the school moved from the mechanical Delsartean diagrams to subjective realism’ which will later be seen as strikingly similar to Stanislavsky’s’. The challenge here is that Jehlinger never published anything about his approach to teaching and he never gave any interviews. There are a few articles and book chapters that talk about his methods but it is mostly anecdotal from actor autobiographies and reports from critics and colleagues discussing his work. All agree that there are parallels with Stanislavsky. But what are they? Can we get a fix on what Jehlinger was teaching and compare it to his contemporary working in Moscow? Did they know of each other and what each was doing?

Utilizing extant material, including notes taken in rehearsals by a former student of Jehlinger as well as memories of his students who gained fame as actors, this paper will attempt to examine where the similarities are and whether we can see a case of parallel evolution driven by the influx of the new psychologically real play texts that needed a new approach to acting that Delsarte’s training could not make adjustments to. And given that Jehlinger is known for having trained Hollywood stars like Spencer Tracy, Hume Cronyn, Kirk Douglas, Rosalind Russell and more, it is well worth examining his teaching to see what discoveries he made at a time when the theatre world was being dazzled by the work of the Moscow Art Theatre.

*Eric Hetzler* is Course Leader for Acting, Performance, and Musical Theatre at the University of Huddersfield. His most recent papers, ‘In Plain Sight: Hidden Stanislavski, Parts 1 and 2’ examined how current acting texts frequently use the works of Stanislavsky without necessarily realising that they are doing so.

## **11:00-12:30 Panel Session 9: Room 6**

### **The System in the Shadow: Performing Shakespeare through Karagöz and Stanislavsky** Burak Urucu, Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa

Karagöz Shadow Theatre is a time-defying traditional Anatolian spectacle art recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Having taken its ultimate distinctive form in the Ottoman period, it carries the cultural DNA of centuries of Anatolian tradition. The plays feature comical exchanges between Karagöz, a straightforward, illiterate but quick-witted commoner, and Hacivat, a more refined and articulate foil to him. The shadows of two-dimensional leather stock characters are cast on a backlit white screen to create a dynamic visual space with improvisation, satire, humor, and ridicule. What happens when this enduring Turkish tradition is blended with the Shakespearean universe? The answer lies in a recent Karagöz shadow play, *Venedikli Tacir* (2024), a striking reimagination of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Co-produced by Öteki Tiyatro and Hayali Tasvir, the play is adapted by Murat Karahüseyinoğlu. In this version, the setting is Istanbul instead of Venice, and Karagöz takes on the role of the protagonist, replacing the original script's peripheral character, Launcelot Gobbo, who is a page to Shylock. Other stock characters include Portia, who is now the daughter of the Venetian Bailo in Istanbul, her Venetian suitor (Antonio), Shylock, Karagöz's wife, the Moroccan prince and two *beberuhis*, the pace-setting comical dwarfs of the Karagöz tradition designed to enhance audience engagement. While puppeteers perform behind the screen, they must constantly adjust their tone of voice, rhetorical style, and expressive decisions to match the diverse characters they embody, often seamlessly switching and recalibrating between multiple personas within a scene. Such a demanding performance requires a powerful psychological, emotional, and vocal connection with the character. This study proposes argumentative space to reconsider the puppeteer's challenging task as a form of emotional incarnation central to Stanislavsky's system. Stanislavsky's incarnation refers to the actor's complete embodiment of the character through voice, emotion, psychology, and physicality, as expressed in the imaginative framework of the 'magic if'. In puppetry, although the puppeteer is not physically seen on stage, he fulfills the Stanislavskian incarnation through vocal transformation, cultural adjustments, and rhythmic manipulation of the puppets. Ultimately, the study also incorporates interviews with the adapter, Karahüseyinoğlu, and the main puppeteer to illustrate further how the concept of incarnation is effectively realised in the performative strategies employed in this unimaginable intersection of Stanislavsky, Karagöz shadow theatre, and Shakespeare, bridging 'then' and 'now' through a continuing dialogue.

**Burak Urucu** is an EFL instructor at Istanbul University–Cerrahpaşa School of Foreign Languages, Turkey. He holds a BA and MA in English Language and Literature and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in the same field at the Istanbul Yeni Yuzyil University. He is a member of the 'Turkish Shakespeares' organization and regularly reviews Shakespearean adaptations on the Turkish stage. His research focuses on Western adaptations and reworkings in Turkish theatre.

## Stanislavsky Albanian-Style

Anxhela Çikopano, Centre of Art Studies, Academy of Sciences of Albania

Albanian theatre began to bloom in the late 1800s, amid the movement for independence from the Ottoman Empire, which Albania achieved in 1912. Banned for centuries under Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman rule (the latter for 500 years), only ancient amphitheater ruins remained as relics of a once-thriving tradition.

Emerging alongside the national awakening, Albanian theatre first took shape in the diaspora, schools, and Catholic education centers. What began as national awareness soon became a deep passion, with growing theater companies and competition among self-taught para-professional actors, playwrights, translators, and adaptors tackling national and everyday themes.

The first formally trained theatre practitioner was Sokrat Mio, who studied music and declamation at the Paris Conservatory and returned to Albania in the mid-1930s. He was familiar with Stanislavsky's methods only through reading, as they were not yet widely adopted by the French actors who trained him.

It was only in 1947, with the arrival of Vladimir Fyodorovich Dudin from the Maly Theatre, that Albanian actors trained in Stanislavsky's method for the first time — briefly, yet marking a key example of Stanislavsky Albanian-style. Then, during Albania's close ties with the USSR (1947–1961), several theatre directing students trained there, primarily in the Stanislavsky method, taught by figures like Nikolai Gorchakov. They also got a taste of the techniques used by Brecht, Vakhtangov, and Meyerhold. Upon returning, they applied their knowledge at the Albanian University of Arts (formerly the High Institute of Arts and Academy of Arts), where the Stanislavsky method remains the foundation for actor and director training. Was it a pure Stanislavsky method, or an adaptation? And what about today — has the method evolved or diverged in any way?

This paper explores the adaptation of the Stanislavsky method in Albanian theatre, particularly as a training approach, both historically and today.

**Anxhela Çikopano** is a researcher in theatre and the history of cinema at the Centre of Art Studies in the Academy of Sciences of Albania, as well as a lecturer in the History of Cinema at the University of Arts in Tirana. She holds a 4-year diploma in Theatre Directing and a PhD in Cultural Anthropology, focusing on Albanian customary laws and theater. Her research centers on socialist and post-socialist theater and cinema in Albania. She has published a monograph titled *Customary Laws in Albanian Drama* and is currently working on a second book about revisionist theatre in communist-era Albania.

## Accessing Active Analysis from Written Sources

Stefan Aquilina, Department of Theatre Studies, School of Performing Arts, University of Malta

A substantial part of our contemporary research about Stanislavsky is now focusing on Active Analysis. The work of Sharon Marie Carnicke, Bella Merlin, Maria Shevtsova, and David Chambers is key to help us unlock Active Analysis in the twenty-first century. As a Stanislavsky scholar I wanted not only to remain abreast but also to contribute to these discussions. However, I had a clear obstacle: different to many of the aforementioned researchers, I have no direct, practical experience of Active Analysis. I did not train in Russia or with some master who could share the technique with me. My background is different, more history- and book-based. This led me to ask the following question: can I access Active Analysis, or at least some of its fundamentals, from written descriptions, sources, and reports on the practice?

My presentation documents an experiment carried out with students at the University of Malta in which I sought to gain a practical understanding of Active Analysis by reading about it. Using this experiment as a case-study, the presentation therefore discusses ways in which a written description of a technique can be translated into embodied work. I certainly was not going to understand fully Active Analysis by reading about it, but I was also interested in the possibilities that this process might offer. Matters of interpretation, especially about *how* one interprets a practice, came to the fore in the experiment, and will be shared during the presentation.

**Stefan Aquilina** is Editor-in-Chief of the *Stanislavski Studies* journal, Co-Director of the Stanislavsky Research Centre (Leeds/Malta), and Associate Professor of Theatre Studies at the School of Performing Arts of the University of Malta. His main research focus is on modern theatre, especially Stanislavsky and Meyerhold, but has a wider interest in devised performances, politics of performance, and reflective teaching. Aquilina's main publications include *Stanislavsky in the World: The System and its Transformations across Continents* (co-edited with Jonathan Pitches, Bloomsbury, 2017); *Modern Theatre in Russia: Tradition Building and Transmission Processes* (Bloomsbury, 2020); *The Routledge Companion to Vsevolod Meyerhold* (co-edited with Jonathan Pitches, 2022); and *Stanislavsky's Use of Improvisation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025).

### **11:00-12:30 Workshop 6: VCT**

#### **The Demidov School in Practice: Unlocking the Actor's Subconscious Creativity**

Andrei Malaev-Babel, FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training and International Demidov Association

This practical workshop offers participants a rare opportunity to explore the Demidov School of Acting—a revolutionary psychotechnique grounded in freedom, organicity, and involuntariness. Developed by Nikolai Demidov, the original Head of the Moscow Art Theatre School, the approach trains actors to relinquish control, access the subconscious, and enter a fluid, authentic creative state in response to imaginary circumstances.

Led by Professor Andrei Malaev-Babel—the leading international authority on Demidov and the head of the movement reviving his school—participants will engage in signature Demidov etudes designed to foster spontaneity, emotional responsiveness, and truthful stage life. The Demidov Organic Technique offers a compelling alternative to traditional methods of actor training: one that removes inner blocks, eliminates contrivance, and restores the actor's direct connection to personal truth.

*See elsewhere for Prof. Malaev-Babel's bionote.*

### **12:30-13:30 Lunch Break**

**13:30-15:00 Publications Panel: VCT**

***Theatrical Consciousness: The Actor's Mind in Russian Modernism***

Alisa Ballard Lin, Ohio State University

In this wide-ranging study, Alisa Ballard Lin argues that Russian theatrical theory and practice contributed to a broad pre- and postrevolutionary discourse about the mind, profoundly reshaping concepts of consciousness, perception, identity, and the constitution of the subject. *Theatrical Consciousness: The Actor's Mind in Russian Modernism* examines efforts in Russian theater—from around the turn of the century through the mid-1930s—to stimulate, train, imagine, and ultimately understand the actor's, as well as the spectator's, mind. Discussing key figures of the period, including Nikolai Evreinov, Konstantin Stanislavsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and Alexander Tairov, Lin identifies an underappreciated dimension of humanism within Russian modernism: a humanism that resisted the pressures of an increasingly technologized, industrialized, and politicized modernity that challenged the place of the human within it.

***The Actor's Revolution: Art and Politics at the Moscow Kamerny Theater***

Dassia N. Posner, Northwestern University

The Moscow Kamerny Theatre was one of the most creative theaters of the twentieth century. It was founded in 1914 by Alexander Tairov, a Jewish director from Ukraine, and Alisa Koonen, a Moscow actress of French-Belgian heritage. By the 1920s, it had become the most famous Soviet theater in the world, renowned for the physical virtuosity of its actors, its choreographic understanding of scenography, and its international artistic diplomacy. Yet the Kamerny is little known outside Russia today, due to the lingering effects of disinformation used to force its closure during Stalin's post-World War II antisemitic purge. *The Actor's Revolution*, the first book-length history of the Kamerny in English, draws from a decade of archival research to present vivid analyses of the theater's illustrious premieres in the artistic and political context of their time. Together, these analyses newly illuminate Tairov and Koonen's revolutionary philosophy, which liberated the actor-creator as a builder of new worlds. The book restores Tairov's legacy as one of the most significant directors of the century and celebrates the imaginative alternative to Stanislavsky's acting system that Koonen exemplified. Engagingly written with a rich array of color illustrations, this timely study will appeal to theater practitioners, students, historians, and all readers interested in the intersection of art, innovation, politics, and legacies of erasure.

***Stanislavsky and Screen Acting***

Evi Stamatiou (co-ed.), University of East London

*Stanislavsky and Screen Actor Training* is a collection of essays mapping the acting field's current engagement with Stanislavsky practices and concepts for training in the screen industries across continents.

This edited volume collates the efforts of teachers of screen acting to identify, investigate, articulate, document, and disseminate Stanislavsky-inspired practical tools for actor training for the screen. Providing reflections from instructors and teachers of acting for the screen, it

interrogates the ways in which the actor's craft affects cinematic processes and experiences through the lens of Stanislavskian methods. Part one looks at the ways in which Stanislavsky's concepts can be applied within the screenacting studio. Then, part two moves on to investigate the process of active analysis within the studio. Part three presents ways in which Stanislavsky's methodologies can be adapted for the screenacting process. Finally, part four looks at Stanislavsky-inspired pedagogical innovations for training screen actors. Support material for this book is available at [www.routledge.com/9781032986081](http://www.routledge.com/9781032986081)

*Stanislavsky And...* is a series of multi-perspectival collections that bring the enduring legacy of Stanislavskian actor training into the spotlight of contemporary performance culture, making them ideal for students, teachers, and scholars of acting, actor training, and directing.

### ***Stanislavsky's Use of Improvisation and Stanislavski Studies***

Stefan Aquilina, Department of Theatre Studies, School of Performing Arts, University of Malta

*Stanislavsky's Use of Improvisation* is the first work that brings together material across Stanislavsky's entire career to survey his use of improvisation. Improvisation was a key concern for Stanislavsky, one that impinged on his acting, directing, and pedagogical work. Consequently, it features in many books on the System, but this study is unique because it focuses explicitly on improvisation and its place in Stanislavsky's development as a theatre-maker. This allows the reader to see how Stanislavsky treated improvisation as a highly mutable practice that was not bound to one particular interpretation, definition, or application. Improvisation will always relate to the present moment in an actor's work, to the here and now; it values aliveness and an engagement with the role. Beyond that, however, Stanislavsky's use of improvisation was a dynamic and expanded one that answered a range of work challenges.

### **15:00-15:30 Coffee Break**

**15:30-17:00 Panel Session 10: Room 5**

**Super-Stanislavsky: On Superconsciousness, Supertasks and Truth from a Semiotic Perspective**

Aleksei Semenenko, Umeå University, Sweden

It is already a cliché that Konstantin Stanislavsky's favourite prefix was 'super' (*sverkh*), expressed in such concepts as superobjective (or supertask), superfantasy, superconsciousness, and even super-superconsciousness. Furthermore, Stanislavsky repeatedly emphasized that the supertask and throughaction were 'the most important things in art' (e.g., Stanislavskii 1953, 687), and that these concepts were directly related to the concept of (histrionic) truth. In its more-than-hundred-year history, Stanislavsky's method as a whole has been subject to various interpretations: psychoanalytical, philosophical, metaphysical, etc., including various studies within the field of semiotics (e.g., Merkoulova 2022, Ostdiek 2012) and cognitive science (e.g., Carnicke 2021). In my paper, I propose a different approach that positions Stanislavsky's ideas in the context of the semiotic thought of the beginning of the twentieth century. This perspective demonstrates a striking congeniality of Stanislavsky's system to both Saussurean and Peircean semiotics and highlights his novel approach to the idea of artistic truth as a dynamic and relational element of the theatrical meaning-generating mechanism.

*Aleksei Semenenko* is associate professor in Russian at the Department of Language Studies at Umeå University. He holds a PhD in Russian Literature from Stockholm University. He is the author of *Russian Translations of Hamlet and Literary Canon Formation* (Stockholm Uni, 2007), *The Texture of Culture: An Introduction to Yuri Lotman's Semiotic Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), and the editor of *Satire and Protest in Putin's Russia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) and *Aksenov and the Environs* (with Lars Kleberg; Södertörn Uni, 2012). He has published works on translation, literature, and semiotics and is currently working on a project on the Soviet myth in Russian culture.

## **Fools at School: Stanislavsky's Masks**

Annelis Kuhlmann, Department of Dramaturgy and Musicology, Aarhus University

In our imagination, we perceive fools in theatrical imageries, theatre plays, and in performativity. Historically, in the Medieval Ages, fools were connected to the Master or to God. Much later, in the mid-19th century, we understand the evidence of the fool becoming connected to psychiatry. Thus, the fool's inner and outer drama takes part in different layers of performance and perception. The diachronic and multidimensional history of fools reveals techniques of masks and faces in theatre and also in the period of Russian/Soviet historical avantgarde. Konstantin Stanislavsky's many faces tell about a practitioner of many masks and faces. His contribution to the history of acting is much broader than the traditional psychological realism as a theatre convention, generally related to the history of the early theatre performances at the Moscow Art Theatre.

In the beginners' school of actor's training, like it has been transformed in Stanislavsky's most substantial volumes, we find a variety of masks – visible and invisible – to deal with not only working on characters. Ways to theatricalise the communication of the actors' training processes as dialogical matters (Bakhtin) resonate with what Erika Fischer-Lichte much later would label the feedback loop.

The legacy of Stanislavsky's techniques equally revitalizes how the diversity of masks and faces emphasizes a methodological approach to the pedagogical poetics, as it was labelled later in the stage director, Anatoly Vasiliev's editing of Maria Knebel's famous books.

My point is that the playful artistic research as formulated in the narratives of Stanislavsky's major books reveal a theatrical world of embodied masks through an extra-daily record of the acknowledgment in the actor's creativity as enhanced learning processes.

*Annelis Kuhlmann* has studied Russian and French languages and literature, followed by an MA and PhD in Dramaturgy, based on theatre studies at Dramaturgy Aarhus University, GITIS, and research in the Stanislavsky Archives. A major interest deals with the stage director's and actor's imagination. She has published broadly in several languages on topics in the field of research on stage directing and on Stanislavsky's works as theatre historiography, mirroring effects in Stanislavsky's "system", and on the actors' terminology. A greater part of her scholarship deals with the artistic work of Eugenio Barba, Odin Teatret, and with archives and historiography of iconic productions in the theatre history of Denmark. Kuhlmann works at the School of Communication and Culture at Aarhus University in Denmark. Publication list:

<https://pure.au.dk/portal/da/persons/dramak%40cc.au.dk/publications/>

## **‘Lures’ of Stanislavsky, ‘Deconservation’ of Moreno, and ‘Dialogical Acting’ of Vyskočil as ways of Awakening the *Creative State***

Martina Musilová, Department of Theatre Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno

One of the fundamental questions of acting is how to keep performance alive when repeated. Acting teachers seek ways to awaken or re-initiate this aliveness, to awaken the *creative state* in the actor. In this paper, I will compare three approaches that differ not only in aesthetics but also in contemporary context and the concept of acting. In his System, Konstantin Stanislavsky juxtaposes theatrical and human clichés vs. experiencing and truthfulness. He offers the actor ‘decoys, magic “ifs”, Given Circumstances, the Supertask, everything that guides the creative process and produces the creative state’. While working at the *Stegreiftheater* (the Theatre of Spontaneity) in Vienna in the early 20th century, Jacob Levy Moreno discovered the opposition of spontaneity vs. cultural conserves. In his later practice in the USA, where he developed psychodrama, he began to use new ways to rediscover spontaneity and spontaneous expression, primarily *warming up* and *deconservation*. Inspired by Stanislavsky and Moreno, Ivan Vyskočil developed the psychosomatic discipline of *Dialogical Acting with the Inner Partner* in the 1970s. In his conception of acting, Vyskočil juxtaposed life and cultural stereotypes, self-alienation vs. spontaneity, and authentically experienced dramatic play. The question remains how different approaches to acting pedagogy can guide an actor in his work without being used as applications of diverse techniques and methods. I believe that Vyskočil’s approach, conceived under the conditions of a totalitarian regime during the so-called Brezhnev stagnation, allows the actor to take responsibility for his creativity, in other words, to be creative about his creativity.

**Martina Musilová** focuses on 20th century acting and the theory and anthropology of acting. She graduated in Theatre Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, where she defended her doctoral dissertation in 2007. During her university studies, Musilová attended courses in Dialogical Acting with the Inner Partner (Academy of Performing Arts, Prague). Since 1999, she has been a teaching assistant of this discipline. Since 2009, she has been working at the Department of Theatre Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno and since 2019 at the Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy. Musilová has been the head of the Institute for Research into and Study of Authorial Acting (both at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague) since 2022. She is the editor of E. Jandl and F. Mayröcker’s *Experimental Plays* and G. Stein’s *To Speak and To Listen*.

**15:30-17:00 Panel Session 11: Room 6**

**The Beautiful Risk of Acting Pedagogy: Stanislavsky, Vyskočil, and Biesta**

Jan Hančil, Academy of Performing Arts in Prague

The paper will explore acting and authorial acting pedagogy in context of the educational philosophy of Gert J.J. Biesta, especially the concept of subjectification of a student.

Biesta's philosophy of education is situated between existential and critical approaches to pedagogy. His own contribution lies in elaborating the concept of subjectification, that is, in emphasising the role of education in the formation of the human being as a subject who is open to the world, responsible to others, and capable of acting autonomously.

He defines three basic dimensions of education: qualification (acquisition of knowledge and skills), socialisation (integration into a cultural and professional community), and subjectification (the process in which the student becomes a 'subject', i.e. an autonomous being capable of responsible action).

In the teaching of acting, qualification and socialisation are inevitable. However, what makes acting an art is precisely the moment of subjectification, when the actor risks his being in relation to the spectator, the text, and the situation. This makes actor's situation truly existential.

Stanislavsky's expression for an existential experience of being here and now is *Ya yesm* and takes its form in Active Analysis. Ivan Vyskočil developed this principle of radical openness in his discipline of dialogical acting with an inner partner, where the actor learns to listen to his own inner impulses, to respond authentically without being afraid of making mistakes.

Biesta calls real education 'the beautiful risk' (*The Beautiful Risk of Education*, 2013). Stanislavsky and Vyskočil similarly argue that acting cannot be learned through imitation of patterns, but that the actor must become the subject of action, radically open to the situation and audience.

**Jan Hančil** was a dramaturge of the National Theatre (1997-2007), Dean of the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (2007-2013), Rector (2013-2021), and Vice-Rector (2021-2024) of the Academy of Performing Arts. He is a member of the Advisory Board of the Stanislavsky Research Center (Leeds/Malta), and collaborated on organising The S Word symposia *Merging Methodologies* (2017), *B. Brecht: Contradictions as a Method* (2019), and *Stanislavsky's Last Words* (2022).

Hančil is a teacher of authorial acting and dramaturgy, Chairman of the Departmental Board of the PhD course in Authorial Acting, its Theory and Psychosomatics, and translator of plays. He published in the fields of drama pedagogy and theatre history and theory, with a focus on the theory and pedagogy of acting. As a translator he has cooperated with various theatres and introduced a number of modern and contemporary British and American playwrights to the Czech theatre.

## **Stanislavsky and Demidov: A Forgotten Encounter**

Gabriela Curpan, University for the Creative Arts

The collaboration between Konstantin Stanislavsky and Nikolai Demidov represents a crucial but often overlooked moment in the evolution of Russian theatre. This paper examines the profound spiritual and artistic dynamics between these two major figures and how their forgotten partnership played a vital role in shaping modern acting and directing practices. While Stanislavsky's contributions to the theatrical world are well-documented, the complementary nature of Demidov's ideas and methods in relation to Stanislavsky's vision remains underexplored.

One significant aspect of their partnership was Demidov's introduction of yoga practices to Stanislavsky. This interaction influenced Stanislavsky's personal approach to acting and contributed to developing the 'system'. Through yoga, Demidov demonstrated the importance of physicality and inner stillness, which resonated with Stanislavsky's quest for authenticity in performance and the search for the illusive creative state.

It is important to remember that 'Stanislavsky's genius was not solely his own; it was forged in the crucible of collaboration' (McClatchy 2001). His partnership with Demidov reflects a blend of philosophy, spirituality, and practical techniques that enriched the fabric of Russian theatre and laid the groundwork for the modern acting methods we use today. Thus, acknowledging the influence of Demidov in this transformative period sheds light on the interconnectedness of artistic innovation and the importance of collaborative relationships in the creative process.

*Gabriela Curpan* is an experienced Romanian professional female actor with a distinguished academic background. She earned her PhD from Goldsmiths, University of London, where she explored spiritual methods of preparing actors to reach the creative state on stage as envisioned by Konstantin Stanislavsky. Curpan is a Senior Lecturer and an MA Course Leader in Acting and Performance at the University for the Creative Arts. Her research continues to explore the spiritual aspects of acting preparation, and she has developed a particular interest in the Nikolai Demidov School of Acting. Her work integrates these methodologies to enhance actor training, blending traditional techniques with innovative approaches to actor preparation.

## **The Acting School of Nikolai V. Demidov at the Crossroads of Acting Pedagogy** Marianna Kozak, Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, Czechia

While Stanislavsky's System has profoundly shaped modern acting techniques, Nikolai Demidov's contributions remain under-recognized, despite offering a transformative approach to actor training that prioritised subconscious creativity, organic impulse, and unforced emotional truth. Demidov's signature etudes cultivate the actor's inner life, supporting an indivisible psychophysical training process.

Demidov's school of acting, built on principles such as surrendering, inexact-creative repetition, and the rigorous daily practice of reflex-based exercises, challenges conventional 20th-century acting pedagogies by shifting the focus from action to perception. This emphasis on the actor's ability to tangibly perceive real and imaginary stimuli enables a more authentic, independent creative process on stage.

In my research I try to name the similarities and connections between the pedagogical approaches of Nikolai V. Demidov and Prof. Ivan Vyskočil, exploring how both practitioners — despite working in different historical and political contexts — sought to redefine acting training by integrating psychological and artistic exploration.

Like Demidov, Vyskočil emphasised the importance of spontaneous, truthful reactions, developed through the discipline of dialogical acting. Both theorists viewed actor training as a fusion of education and research, questioning traditional authoritative teaching models and advocating for a more intuitive, self-discovering process.

My research investigates whether Demidov's method, largely unexplored in Czech academia, could offer an alternative or complementary approach to the acting pedagogy as taught at the Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy.

Key questions: What unique qualities and perspectives does Demidov's method offer? How does it align with or diverge from Stanislavsky's and Vyskočil's approach? What are the challenges in introducing this method into the practice?

***Marianna Kozak*** is currently pursuing a PhD in Theatre Studies at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Her research explores the intersections between the Dialogical Acting discipline and the ground-breaking acting methods developed by Nikolai V. Demidov (1884–1953). Kozak's academic journey has been shaped by both practical teaching and extensive theatre studies, culminating in an MA in Acting from the same institution, where she trained under the guidance of Prof. Ivan Vyskočil (1929-2023). Her educational background is primarily theatre-focused, though she has gained diverse experiences across the cultural sector. Kozak's professional portfolio includes experience in film and theatre productions, as well as casting and mentoring for international artist residencies.

**15:30-16:15 Workshop 7 – Dramatic Reading: VCT**

**A Dramatic Reading of the chapter ‘The Voice’ from *Stanislavski in Art***  
Branca Temer, Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro

In this presentation, I highlight Stanislavsky’s reflections on the actor’s voice and self-work, in dialogue with my long-standing research into the spoken word in performance. Since my undergraduate studies, my academic and artistic path has been dedicated to investigating the actor’s voice as a primary element in the actor’s craft—where the spoken word is not merely a vehicle for meaning, but a central tool for presence.

***Branca Temer*** is a PhD candidate in Performing Arts at UNIRIO. She holds: an MA in Contemporary Arts (UFF) with a focus on researching the actor’s vocal presence and a BA in Communications (PUC-Rio). Temer also pursued acting training at CAL (2007). She is a member of Studio Stanislavski since 2006 and co-founder of Instituto do Ator. Temer is also a public speaking teacher (2018–2023), with performances directed by Celina Sodré.

## **16:15-17:00 Workshop 8: VCT**

### **Truthfulness Through VR Immersion: A Vakhtangov-Inspired Pedagogy**

Evi Stamatiou, University of East London

In *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary*, Konstantin Stanislavsky, through the fictional tutor Tortsov, explains to student-actor Vanya:

Bring all the Elements, the psychological inner drives, the Throughaction, to the point where they become normal, human – not convention-bound and actorish – activity. Then you will come to know the truth of your own mind and nature. You will come to know the truth of the character. You cannot but believe the truth. And where there is truth and belief, the state of ‘I am being’ arises of itself. (2008: 330)

From his understanding of human psychology and the subconscious, Stanislavsky suggests that as actors explore a role, they simultaneously develop self-knowledge and an understanding of the character's truth. The interplay between the actor's own experience and the character's has been central to the work of Yevgeny Vakhtangov, Stanislavsky's colleague at the Moscow Art Theatre, who trained actors in the studio drawing on the system, while Stanislavsky primarily spent his time applying it during the direction of productions.

Vakhtangov's teachings are widely known through their adaptation by Lee Strasberg, who consistently encouraged students at the Actors Studio to engage with them. While my training with the Actors Studio introduced me to these principles, I have also explored how they can be reimagined to serve today's actors. This involves addressing well-being and social inclusion in actor training, identifying individual acting strengths to help actors stand out during auditions and castings rather than conforming to the outdated repertory theatre model that demands versatility, and leveraging technological advancements, such as VR, to enhance the actor's craft.

This workshop invites participants to work on a monologue and explore it in a VR environment, allowing them to juxtapose their own experiences with the character's. By identifying and activating personal triggers, actors can bring the character to life in an immersive pedagogical journey. This approach aligns with Vakhtangov's teachings by facilitating a shedding of social masks and fostering actor self-awareness, reimagining his methods for the contemporary performer.

*Evi Stamatiou* is a practitioner-researcher specialising in actor training. With two decades of international experience as an actor and creative, she has received prestigious awards and funding, including support from the British Science Festival, Arts Council England, and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. She is a Senior Lecturer in Acting for Stage and Screen at the University of East London and holds a PhD from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London. A Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Evi also serves as Chair of the Acting Program at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education. Her research and publications explore inclusive actor training, the relationship between acting and human development, and the intersection of acting with technologies, higher education, psychology, and nursing.

## **20:00-22:00 Jean Benedetti Annual Lecture: VCT**

### **‘If You Will’: A Performance-based Marriage of Methodologies from Stanislavsky and Shakespeare**

**Bella Merlin with Miles Anderson**

In the spirit of Jean Benedetti’s merger of theory and practice, this performative lecture comprises an ongoing piece of practice-based research. With actor-husband Miles Anderson, Bella Merlin weaves tools from Stanislavsky’s system with the elements of Elizabethan theatre that form the training programme at Shakespeare & Company (co-founded in 1978 by Tina Packer and Kristin Linklater). Inspired by Packer’s groundbreaking *Women of Will* -- which traces the evolution of female roles in Shakespeare’s canon -- Merlin and Anderson explore his portrayal of marriage in this playful experimentation with "then and now" methodologies.

**Bella Merlin** is an actor, writer, and actor trainer. Trained at Moscow’s State Institute of Cinematography and with a PhD from University of Birmingham, UK, she is a Distinguished Professor of Acting and Directing at the University of California, Riverside. With Professor Paul Fryer, she co-created *The S Word*, an international series of Stanislavsky-based symposia. Theatre includes *The Wild Tenant* by Lucy Gough (2024), five seasons at Shakespeare & Company (Massachusetts, USA), including *A Body of Water* (Berkshire Theatre Critics nomination for Outstanding Lead Actress, 2024) and *Henry VI Part 2* (Berkshire Theatre Critics nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actress, 2023), along with two seasons at the National Theatre (London) with Out of Joint Theatre Company. Her fact-based solo play, *Tilly No-Body*, has performed at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (2024), the Daejeon International Play Festival, South Korea (2024), and forthcoming at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (2025). Screen work includes the award-winning Mexican feature, *Revolver Mind*, and numerous roles on television, as well as performing on BBC Radio including Gough’s *The Raft* and *Mapping the Soul*. Widely published in several languages, her books include *Acting: The Basics* (third edition, 2023), *Shakespeare & Company: When Action is Eloquence* (2020), *Konstantin Stanislavsky* 2nd Edition (Routledge Performance Practitioners, 2018), *Facing the Fear: An Actor’s Guide to Overcoming Stage Fright* (2016), and *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit* (2014). She leads actor-training workshops around the world, from Australia to Zimbabwe. [www.bellamerlin.com](http://www.bellamerlin.com)

**Miles Anderson** is a veteran actor of theatre, film and television. Born in Zimbabwe and trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, his award-winning career in the United States includes multiple seasons with director Adrian Noble at the Old Globe San Diego. There, key roles included King George in *The Madness of George III* and Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (both of which garnered him the San Diego Critics Circle Awards for Most Outstanding Performance by an Actor). In the UK, Miles spent ten years at the Royal Shakespeare Company, including leading roles in *Macbeth*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *Mother Courage* with Judi Dench and *Volpone* (for which he received a British Theatre Award).

Equally known for his screen work, Miles’s credits include the Oscar-nominated films *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (directed by Joel Coen with Denzel Washington and Frances McDormand) and Damien Chazelle’s *La La Land* (with Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone). A familiar face on British television, his favourite roles include Colonel Dan Fortune in *Soldier, Soldier*; Roger O’Neill in the original BBC *House of Cards*; and five seasons as Colonel Dempsey in *Ultimate Force*.

Long-time collaborator with Bella Merlin, Miles is the director of *Tilly No-Body* and author of *Colonels, Cads and Charmers: Memories* (which received Honorable Mentions at the Los Angeles Book Festival and the Southern California Book Festival).

**Sunday 9 November**

**9:00-10:30 Panel Session 12: Room 5**

**Holistic Stanislavsky: Why Modern Theatre Acting Fails to Match the MAT**

Arvind Pandey, Whistling Woods International, India

Stanislavsky's lifelong refinement of his acting system, validated by the Moscow Art Theatre's (MAT) productions, remains a cornerstone of global acting pedagogy. Following the post-Soviet era, previously suppressed aspects of his methodology were revealed, leading to a renewed dissemination of his revolutionary work.

Despite new theoretical and practical insights, no contemporary theatre company consistently achieves MAT's ensemble acting standards. While individual actors excel globally, the central question persists: why, with advanced pedagogy and widespread dissemination of Stanislavsky teachings, has no group replicated MAT's ensemble excellence under his direction? MAT, encompassing diverse genres and styles like the work of Chekhov, A. Tolstoi, Maeterlinck, Goldoni, Pushkin, Tchaikovsky (opera) showcased seamless, authentic ensemble acting, a century-long benchmark. While ideologically driven companies like Brecht's or Meyerhold's achieved cohesion for specific goals, no general theatre practice, free of overarching ideology, equals the MAT. Thus, the MAT remains uniquely exemplary in ensemble acting history.

MAT's performance excellence stemmed from Stanislavsky's integration of actor, director, and teacher roles into a cohesive pedagogy. Effective training demands more than just theoretical and practical knowledge/technique; it requires accessing and guiding actors' creative processes via Stanislavsky's framework. This necessitates comprehensive understanding of psychology, acting, directing, pedagogy, literary interpretation, music, movement, stagecraft, and society. Only directors/teachers with these inherent or cultivated qualities, combined with system mastery and practical application, can consistently guide actors to exceptional performances.

This paper argues that modern theatre groups and institutions, despite access to Stanislavsky's methodology, advanced technology, financial resources, globalization, and expanded institutions for theatre and acting, fail to reach MAT's level primarily due to a deficiency in directors/teachers possessing Stanislavsky's holistic skill set.

Through historical analysis and comparative study of theatrical productions, this paper will substantiate this thesis, further exploring the specific elements that contributed to the enduring success of the Moscow Art Theatre.

**Arvind Pandey** is an actor, director, educator, and researcher dedicated to the study and application of Stanislavsky's system. From Himalayan folk theatre to advanced training at NSD and the Lee Strasberg Institute, Arvind brings a unique blend of practical experience and scholarly insight. With a rare distinction of teaching at India's foremost film and theatre institutions, he is currently a senior faculty member at Whistling Woods International, engaged in extensive Stanislavsky research and authoring a book on his work.

## **Grotowski's Re-Composition of Stanislavsky's Studio and Method of Physical Actions**

Tsu-Chung Su, National Taiwan Normal University

Stanislavsky and Grotowski are several generations apart. In appearance, their methods of actor training are belonging to two radically opposite poles, namely, mainstream psychological realism and non-realistic, physically-based experimentation. However, on closer examination they are closely connected by some strings of theatrical traditions and practices. Other than diehard realism, Stanislavsky himself had searched for non-realistic means of staging the plays that had emerged from the Symbolist movement. In 1905, he commissioned Meyerhold to conduct research on new forms of acting, *mise-en-scène*, and theatricality through the so-called 'Theatre Studio'. In the 1930s, Stanislavsky continued this experimental momentum and research impulse. He initiated the Opera-Dramatic Studio to try out the Method of Physical Actions that he had envisioned. Being one of his final innovations in acting and directing, this Method intended to highlight 'doing' and 'physical action' rather than 'intellectual discussion' and 'emotion memory' as the actor's fundamental tool for characterization. When Grotowski came on the scene attending the State Theatre School in Krakow from 1951 to 1955, he was dubbed 'a fanatic disciple of Stanislavsky'. Convinced that the Studio research and the method of physical actions devised by Stanislavski would break new ground, Grotowski chose to explore them further in his own work with actors and went on to re-compose them. Of course, he was drawn to an area well beyond the realistic context and instituted his own 'Theatre Laboratory' to implement concentrated and consistent experiment and research on the method of physical actions. Why does Grotowski consider this Method to be Stanislavsky's most useful discovery? How does he ex-pose, de-compose, dis-pose, re-compose this Method? In this paper, I attempt to map out the ways and steps that Grotowski re-fashions Stanislavski's theories and practices, and explore the differences between their respective approaches. I will first pinpoint the main thrusts of Stanislavsky's System. Then I will identify the methods that interest Grotowski and are key to the Stanislavsky-Grotowski lineage, and finally conduct an in-depth investigation into Grotowski's new composition of physical actions.

*Tsu-Chung Su*, Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at the University of Washington, is Distinguished Professor of English at National Taiwan Normal University. Su was President of Taiwan Shakespeare Association (TSA) from 2017 to 2019, President of the R.O.C. English and American Literature Association (EALA) from 2016 to 2017, and Vice President of the ROC Comparative Literature Association from 2010 to 2012. He was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Goethe University Frankfurt in 2024, a Visiting Research Fellow at the University College London from 2021 to 2022, a Visiting Professor at Aberystwyth University from 2012 to 2013, a Fulbright Senior Scholar at Princeton University from 2007 to 2008, and a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University from 2002 to 2003. He was a four-time recipient of NTNU Award for Distinguished Research & Distinguished Professor (2016-2027). His areas of research interest include Shakespeare studies, performance studies, religious studies, dramatic theory and criticism, and theories of consciousness and mindfulness. His recent publications include essays on Antonin Artaud, Eugenio Barba, Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Richard Schechner, Phillip Zarrilli, and Konstantin Stanislavsky.

## **Stanislavsky and the Question of Truth: Belief, Sincerity, and Gnosis in Actor Training**

Giuliano Campo, Ulster University

Konstantin Stanislavsky's pursuit of 'truth' in acting remains a cornerstone of contemporary actor training, yet his conceptualization of truth was shaped by broader philosophical debates in his time, including those on belief, sincerity, and the nature of perception. This presentation examines Stanislavsky's notion of truth in performance alongside contemporary discussions of sincerity and belief among his peers, particularly theatre directors and theorists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It further considers how Stanislavsky's legacy influenced later practitioners, particularly Jerzy Grotowski, in their continued refinement of the actor's psychophysical engagement as a means of refining the actor's vertical connection through performance.

The presentation will first explore the philosophical and theatrical discourse on sincerity and belief during Stanislavsky's era, examining figures such as Vladimir Solovyov and Leo Tolstoy, who engaged with questions of spiritual authenticity and moral truth. It will then analyse how Stanislavsky navigated these debates in his own writings and teaching, particularly his later emphasis on the actor's authentic psychophysical engagement with a role as a means of truthfulness in performance.

Building on this foundation, I will examine how later directors and theorists, particularly Grotowski, extended Stanislavsky's search for truth in performance towards a form of embodied knowledge that fused actor training with rigorous psychophysical discipline. Grotowski's notions of 'poor theatre', 'via negativa', 'total act', and 'art as vehicle' suggest a process of self-stripping aimed at achieving heightened presence and a direct, experiential understanding of performance as an act of knowing. By exploring these continuities and divergences, the paper will contextualize the evolving relationship between theatre, truth, and the epistemological dimensions of actor training, arguing that the pursuit of 'truth' in acting is historically situated within discourses of sincerity, belief, and an actor's lived experience — one that ultimately engages with gnosis.

**Giuliano Campo** is an Italian performer, director and actor trainer, currently Lecturer in Drama at Ulster University in Northern Ireland (UK). He has been visiting professor in a number of international institutions, including the Moscow Art Theatre School (MXAT) and the Federal Universities of Rio de Janeiro and Bahia (Brazil). Campo is a member of the company LUXE, formerly Research Associate for The British Grotowski Project based at the University of Kent, UK, and founder of the theatre company Ypnos Teatro and of the laboratory theatre Towards an Active Culture in Rome.

Campo's publications include *Acting the Essence: The Performer's Work on the Self* (Routledge, 2022), *Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work-The Legacy of Jerzy Grotowski*, with Zygmunt Molik (Routledge 2010, published also in Portuguese, Polish, Hungarian, and French), and several articles and book chapters in English, Portuguese, and Italian on theatre and film. He is a member of the editorial boards of the journals *Voz e Cena* (University of Brasilia, Brazil), *Repertorio* (PPGAC/UFBA – Salvador de Bahia), *Rascunhos* (University of Uberlandia, Minas Gerais, Brazil), editor of the journal *Performance, Religion and Spirituality* (University of Toledo, Ohio), and convenor of the IFTR Working Group Performance, Religion and Spirituality.

**9:00-10:30 Panel Session 13: Room 6**

**Stanislavsky and Postdramatic Theatre**

Narges Yazdi, Iran University of Art

Stanislavsky has suffered greatly as a result of the fact that his attempts at proposing a psychophysical approach to actor training had not been acknowledged for a long time. Having realised the importance of developing bodymind in actors rather than prioritizing one or the other, he contributed significantly to actor training. Stanislavsky soon realised that body and mind are unified and considering them as separate entities could be profoundly misleading; therefore, he turned his attention to yoga that was fundamentally based on developing a unified bodymind. However, partly because his attempts were not recognised at his time and partly owing to the fact that in his time realistic and naturalistic plays were still dominant he is still largely known for the first stages of his training career. Recently, however, with the flourishing of postdramatic theatre and performance the need is increasingly felt for an approach to actor training where the performers become equipped with skills to demonstrate stage presence in presentation rather than portray the characters of a play written in the representative mode. Postdramatic theatre presents figures rather than characters and portraying believable characters is not the case anymore. Therefore, it is of great importance to explore what Stanislavsky's efforts to introduce a psychophysical approach to acting offer to performers willing to put postdramatic plays such as those by Sarah Kane, Martin Kimp or others on stage. The present research aims to explore Stanislavsky's work on developing a psychophysical approach to actor/ performer training to acknowledge his huge contribution to the field of performance, postdramatic theatre, and other forms which are not based on representation.

*Narges Yazdi* is an assistant professor of Cinema and Theater Faculty, Iran University of Art. She holds a PHD in Art Studies focusing on Dramaturgy of Digital Performance and New Media. Yazdi has published several articles about postdramatic theatre and also psychophysical acting. She has also translated several books into Farsi including *Postdramatic Theater and the Political, Culture is the Body*, *The Theater Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*, and *Ghost Light, an Introductory Handbook for Dramaturgy*. Yazdi has taught courses on postdramatic theatre and psychophysical acting at university and other institutes over the last ten years. She has also taught courses on Dramaturgy over the last twenty years. Currently Yazdi is the Director of International Affairs at the Iran University of Art.

## **‘Stanislvskian Psychology’ Today: Stick or Twist?**

Vladimir Mirodan, University of the Arts London

Historical Stanislavskian approaches have made and continue to make strong claims regarding their roots in and associations with certain psychological perspectives. In some cases, such connections were considered foundational and significant weight was given to them in the training studio as well as in rehearsal practices. Over the past few years, however, psychological approaches to acting have been overshadowed by other emphases. Nonetheless, I always suspected that they remained an important part of the practice of actors and the teachers of actors: widespread interest in the symposium on ‘Stanislavsky and Psychology’, which I co-organised in November 2024 under the S-Word aegis, provided convincing confirmation.

At the same time, the landscapes of contemporary psychologies are very different from the ones across which Stanislavsky, Michael Chekhov or Strasberg ambled. For example, a significant literature on cognition and acting has done nothing but grow over the past 20 years; while recent concerns surrounding actor well-being have led some acting teachers to begin looking at contemporary advances in therapy. Yet the impact of these approaches on our training institutions remains negligible. A close examination of the links between psychology and acting is either confined to academia or, if understood in the conservatoire at all, is set to one side. Is this because the new psychologies are little understood, or is it out of fear, or both? Granted, contemporary psychology is complex, continuously evolving and cannot be reduced to a few core metaphors and thus assimilated, half-understood, into artistic practices, in the way in which certain core concepts of psychodynamics were in the past. So, what is to be done? Stick with what we know? Give up altogether?

My talk will survey some of the key findings of a forthcoming book on *Stanislavsky and Psychology*, which I am co-editing with Dr Benjamin Askew and which is due to be published by Routledge in 2026, and offer some thoughts on challenges and possible answers regarding what I think are necessary efforts to rehabilitate, revive and reconsider the ways in which we assimilate psychological insights into our pedagogies and practices.

**Vladimir Mirodan**, PhD, FRSA is Emeritus Professor of Theatre, University of the Arts London. Trained on the Directors Course at Drama Centre London, he directed over 50 productions and taught and directed in drama schools in the UK, the US, France and Israel. He holds an MA and a PhD from Royal Holloway, University of London - his PhD thesis was concerned with *The Laban-Malmgren System of Character Analysis*, an influential actor training approach which incorporates key Jungian concepts. He was Director of the School of Performance at Rose Bruford College, Vice-Principal and Director of Drama at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Principal of Drama Centre London and Director of Development and Research Leader, Drama and Performance, Central Saint Martins. Mirodan served as Vice Chair of the Directors Guild of Great Britain, and is a former Chairman of the Conference of Drama Schools, Deputy Chair of the National Council for Drama Training and has chaired the Directors Guild of Great Britain Trust and the Directors Charitable Foundation.

His research interests revolve around acting psychology, in particular as this relates to the neuropsychology of gesture and posture; while most of his published work is concerned with cognitive approaches, he returns occasionally to his first interest – psychodynamic views of the acting process. *The Actor and the Character*, his book on the psychology of transformation in acting, was published by Routledge in 2019. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Stanislavski Studies* and Review Editor of the journal *Frontiers in Performance Science*. In 2026 he will edit with Dr Benjamin Askew a book on *Stanislavsky and Psychology*, part of the *Stanislavsky And...* series (Routledge).

## **The Stanislavsky System and Artificial Intelligence: Towards a Participatory Methodology for Role Creation in the 21st Century**

Elena Stamatopoulou, School of Drama, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

This presentation explores the intersection between Stanislavsky's System and artificial intelligence, proposing a hybrid methodology that reconsiders role creation through digital dialogue and participatory reflection. Building upon the fundamental principles of Stanislavsky — such as the 'as if', inner monologue, objective and obstacle, and the psychophysical unity of action — it investigates how AI tools can serve not as replacements, but as mirrors, companions, and provocateurs in the actor's process. The work emerges from an ongoing artistic research trajectory involving workshops and performances where AI-generated text, image, and conversational prompts are used to stimulate emotional memory, uncover subtext, and generate alternative actions. A recent application of this approach is also being piloted in the university course *Digital Theatre*, at the Drama School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, where students interact with generative language models as rehearsal partners and role-building assistants.

The presentation will offer both a theoretical and practice-based perspective, introducing the philosophical and methodological implications of working with AI in actor training and rehearsal. It will showcase examples of how AI has been used to map the emotional arc of a character, propose internal conflicts and motivations, and support reflective practice through structured prompting. At the same time, it raises critical questions about authorship, presence, and the ethical boundaries of human-machine collaboration in performance.

Rather than offering fixed conclusions, this contribution invites discussion around how twenty-first-century technologies can deepen our engagement with Stanislavsky's legacy — not by abandoning its human core, but by reimagining the tools with which we approach inner truth, presence, and transformation.

*Elena Stamatopoulou* is a theatre director, performer, and researcher with academic backgrounds in theatre, cinema, and computer science. She teaches at the School of Drama, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, focusing on research methodology, modern Greek theatre history, and digital theatre. She holds a PhD in Theatre Studies and has completed a postdoctoral research project on the Security Police file kept on the communist actor Manos Katrakis (1946–1981). Since 2002, she has been a founding member of the political theatre collective *Facta Non Verba*. Her current research explores the integration of AI into performance as a space for ritual and co-creation.

## **9:00-10:30 Workshop 9: VCT**

### **The Final Face: Active Analysis brought to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Practice**

Michael Shipley, University of Memphis and Joelle Ré Arp-Dunham, University of Kansas

Ever-experimenting artist/pedagogue Konstantin Stanislavsky's last significant technique – coined 'Active Analysis' by his protégé, Maria Knebel – is experiencing a renaissance decades after it was originally practiced. By moving from analysis 'around the table' to analysis 'in their bodies', this technique encourages actors to bring their full selves into the process of discovering a script through improvisation-based 'studies'.

While practitioners such as Sharon Carnicke, Bella Merlin, and Katie Mitchell have championed Active Analysis since Soviet-era restrictions eased, it remains an under-utilized rehearsal technique. Its flexibility and adaptability make it useful for both student and professional actors in classrooms and productions. Drawing from newly available translations of Knebel's writings, their own practice-based research, and other contemporary sources, directors/actors/educators Michael Shipley and Joelle Ré Arp-Dunham will demonstrate how they have integrated this technique into their respective rehearsal styles and pedagogical approaches. Their workshop synthesizes these perspectives, highlighting both shared methodologies and key distinctions.

In this 90-minute hands-on session, participants will move from an initial reading of a short script – to discern facts and events – to a scaffolded process of Active Analysis, culminating in rich, embodied storytelling within a remarkably short time. The facilitators will also share variations they have employed when working with actors of different experience levels in both classrooms and rehearsal settings.

*Michael Shipley* is an Associate Professor of Theatre who teaches acting, voice, speech, and accents. As a teacher, director, and coach, he seeks to help actors integrate voice skills and acting technique in performance, and his creative scholarship explores methods to increase the effectiveness of the rehearsal process for actors, giving them greater creative freedom and authenticity. He is certified in Fitzmaurice Voicework, Knight-Thompson Speechwork, and Vocal Combat Technique, and holds a BS in engineering from Texas A&M, an MS in engineering from Stanford University, and an MFA in Acting from the American Conservatory Theatre.

*Joelle Ré Arp-Dunham* is a director, actor, consent and intimacy consultant and choreographer, and educator. Her primary academic research is in how the cognitive sciences may lead to revisions of old and the creation of new pedagogical strategies in directing and acting that help create safer, braver spaces for the entire production team. She currently teaches at Kansas State University and previously served as the Producing Artistic Director of the Circle Ensemble Theatre Company in Athens, Georgia for 8 years. She has directed over 50 productions and acted throughout the US east coast.

## **10:30-11:00 Coffee Break**

## **11:00-12:00 Conclusion**