

SUMMARY dissertation

Dissertation title: Building characters from documentary footage with reference to the method of Konstantin Stanislavski and contemporary theatre and film makers.

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Field of art, discipline: film and theatre arts

Field of scientific and artistic activity: acting

Promoter: Anna Sarna-Śniecikowska, PhD, Professor, PWSFTviT

The premise for the dissertation I was preparing was to describe a method of character building based on documentary sources, with reference to the already established and widely used techniques of Konstantin Stanisławski, Sanford Meisner, Uta Hagen and David Mamet, and on the basis of theatre and film roles I worked on according to the aforementioned methods between 2014 and 2020. These are:

Karolina Corday from the play *Marat/Sade* directed by Rudolf Ziolo (W. Bogusławski Theatre in Kalisz),

Vicky O'Tarky from the play *Kansas* by Marcin Wierzychowski (W. Horzyca Theatre in Toruń),

Bronisława Borowska from the documentary film *Poza podejrzeniem* by M. Kumosińska (TVP Historia) and

Europe from the show *Śmierć wędrowniej handlarki. Monolog dla Europy* by J. Orłowski (K. Dejmek New Theatre in Łódź).

Stanisławski described the author's method of working as an actor in three volumes of textbooks - *Praca aktora nad sobą i swoim twórczym przeżywaniem*, *Praca aktora nad sobą i swoją techniką wykonawczą*, *Praca aktora nad rolą*. The other books that I refer to in my prepared dissertation are *Sanford Meisner on Acting* by Sanford Meisner and Dennis Longwell, Uta Hagen's *Szacunek dla aktorstwa* and David Mamet's *Prawda i fałsz*. I chose these items because their content is largely a negation of the technique created by the Russian artist.

(...) in searching for inner material, one should draw not only on what we have gone through in life ourselves, but also on what others have experienced and what we have lived through together with them¹, Everything that others live for themselves in him [the actor] becomes material for creativity², If I ask myself who SHE [the character] is and where she was born, I may end up with a brilliant treatise on someone

¹ K. Stanisławski, *Praca aktora nad sobą. Praca nad sobą i swoim twórczym przeżywaniem*, transl. J. Czech, Ludwik Solski State School of Theatre in Kraków, Kraków 2010, p. 363

² Ibid, p. 369

who is more different from me than I thought at the beginning³, *Technique is the mind of mediocrity. Play as in your fantasies*⁴. The cited excerpts from books on acting show how their authors approach the problem of role-building differently. In my work, however, I explore whether, despite the fencing off of contemporary authors from Stanislawski's method, it is nevertheless possible to find points of commonality in their thinking about character creation. In doing so, I hope to systematise the work on source material, which, in my opinion, is extremely inspiring and enriches the art of acting. An analysis of the acting techniques of the aforementioned pedagogues can be found in *Part 1 of the dissertation*.

The starting point for my reflections on how to work on a role inspired by a historical figure or contemporary person is my previous research paper from 2015, which I wrote in relation to a graduate role. Each successive role I mentioned above was created through activities tailored to work with directors and different dramatic forms (drama, improvisation, author's script, monologue, film script). The process of building each was different, not only because of the directors' different approaches to rehearsals or the different forms of dramatic works, but also because of the time that separated each performance, during which I gained experience and knowledge as an actress. During this period I was learning new methods of working on a role, completely different from Konstantin Stanislawski's method. The process of building individual roles can be found in *Part 2 of the dissertation*.

The question I am trying to answer is how sufficient, in the context of character building, is the use of one's own perceptions, experiences and knowledge. Isn't reaching out to other people's experiences the only way to detach yourself and your thinking? Isn't observing what is out there the only way to develop and thus enrich the role? I believe that working with source material and building on it the psychology of the character, her past and experiences, goes a long way to understanding her behaviour and actions in the play. The preparatory work I write about builds a very strong bond with the character, shortening - eliminating? - the distance between *me* and *her*. Without this tenderness, curiosity and understanding of the *character/person*, I find it difficult to imagine placing within myself the alien entity that the actor is supposed to think, feel and act with in a performance or film.

In my dissertation, I explore whether and how in acting it is possible to go beyond familiar thought patterns and ideas by observing, listening and learning from life, and which existing methods of character creation can be drawn upon during such work.

Dominiela d'elzy

³ U. Hagen, H. Frankel, *Szacunek dla aktorstwa*, transl. I. Libucha, M. Orski, PWSFTviT Library Publishing House, Łódź 2015, p. 155.

⁴ D. Mamet, *Prawda i fałsz*, transl. T. Szafranski, Film Publishing House, Myślenice 2014, p. 300.