

на "превъплъщение". Когато говорим за превъплъщение, трябва да разбираме промени в човешката органика, а не в областта на въображението. Скованият от артрит старец се прегърбва, скелетът му става трудноподвижен, психиката и цялото му отношение към света се променят. Такъв човек може да бъде обект на творческо превъплъщение от актьор в драматичния театър, а как това ще стане с куклата? Ще може, разбира се, само ако сменим куклата с група. Тогава художествено ще зарадваме зрителя – колко хитро сме измислили това превъплъщение, ако наистина то е необходимо в развитието на фабулата и конфликта. Очевидно в творчеството на актьора с кукла в ръка не може да става дума за превъплъщение. С помощта на своето активно въображение ние можем да изобразим как куклата възприема света, как действа, как "чува", как "вижда" и как "осезава". И активно да се увлечем в това ИЗОБРАЗЯВАНЕ. Ние можем да съпреживяваме на куклата така, сякаш тя самата действа, "чува", "вижда", "осезава", "пее", сякаш "живее".

На това качество на въображението – вживяването или съпреживяването, би трябвало да се обръща особено внимание! Както при подбора на студенти по време на изпити, така и в процеса на тяхното обучение.

И тук е необходим внимателен подход, защото произволното развихряне на въображение може да доведе до обратни резултати. Актьорът да се отчужди от куклата, дори и да я захвърли. Куклата трябва да бъде с пестеливи възможности, които да позволят на актьора при оживяването ѝ сам да разкрива нейната образна енергия. Свързването на въображението с предмети и материал от най-различно естество може да стимулира въображението на всеки творец в разкриване на нейната енергия в определена посока! В драматичния театър режисьорът се вживява в ролята, докато прави действения анализ върху поведението на героя и го представя на актьора, който

става и обект, и субект на целия творчески процес. За тези процеси Станиславски е казал почти всичко. Но така ли е в кукления театър? След действения анализ актьорът се възлага в предложената му кукла, за да проникне дълбоко в чувствения свят на нейното изображение, за да се вживее в него, за да го изобрази в поведението ѝ до такава степен, че да започне да освобождава от себе си и глас, и говор, и смях, и песен, и щедро да се вживее във всичко, което тя ще направи.

Оживяването на куклата е динамичен процес на вибриращо и вживявящо се въображение, протичащо от актьора към куклата и от куклата към актьора и търсещо своята образна реализация. А самата творческа вибрация между куклата и актьора е въпрос на пълна концентрация и освобождаване на сетивата...

Затова съм против названието "кукловод". То говори за едностранно властване върху процесите само от актьора към куклата и не отчита възможността куклата така да освободи въображението му, че той с радост да се остави тя да го поведе в своя дивен свят.

И още нещо. Няма по-хубава българска дума за нашата отгаденост в професията ни от думата "куклар"! Имам приятел цигулар и окончанието "-ар" не го смущава ни най-малко. Той не смята, че някой може да помисли, че куклар е някакъв дребен занаятчия. Окончанието "-ар" не може да бъде срам за една професия. Стига да бъдем творци и като хора да не дадем повод някой ден да ни римуват със свинар, говедар или връзка!

Нашият голям художник Илия Бешков остави на студентите си крилатия завет: "Рисувайте, рисувайте, рисувайте, докато сами се превърнете в рисунка!" С други думи – такова всеотдайно вживяване, при което да забравим себе си. Такова творческо вживяване е откривателско прозрение, валидно за всички изкуства!

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Getting Into It

Professor Atanas Ilkov

The surge in the popularity of professional puppet theater in Bulgaria at the beginning of the 1960s urgently raised the question of how to prepare highly-qualified specialists. In 1962 the Higher Institute for Theatrical Arts, VITIZ Krustyo Sarafov, started offering a major in acting for puppet theater. The pedagogues in the new department faced the fundamental problem of how to create an artistic and educational methodology for teaching students. The solution to the problem turned out to be impossible without first clarifying the unique characteristics of puppet theater acting.

Until that moment there had existed in practice only a few attempts to get at the essence of the problem and to offer some kind of explanation for the processes at work. The main basis for these explorations had been Stanislavsky's system. According to them, the artistic processes in Puppet Theater were not essentially different from those used by dramatic actors. As long as the actor was sufficiently emotionally and logically engaged in the character, he would inevitably transfer this onto the puppets he was animating. Thus the Stanislavsky system was applied to Puppet Theater

acting without extensive reflection. Some of the system's elements - such as attention, communication, action within the circumstances presented and so forth - were applied literally, without taking into account their incompatibility with the puppet theater. The focus was on the onstage experience of the actor himself, the richness of his emotionality, temperament and verbal expressiveness in speeches behind the curtain! To affect the public, they relied primarily on speech and on the actor's extreme expressivity and timbral variety in the portrayal of various characters.

Rehearsals usually began around a table with a read-through to help actors become familiar with the piece and the author, to master their lines and to bring their roles to life with maximal verbal expressivity. The timbral character of the speech was sought only upon receiving the puppet. Permit me to illustrate the above approach with an example for my own experience as an actor in Mara Penkova's Puppet Theater. She was a student of Masalitinov, and he was former actor from the Stanislavsky school. I was to play the role of the Prince in the fairytale "Cinderella". I, the Prince, fell deeply in love at first sight with Cinderella, played by my colleague Lina Boyadzhieva, an enchanting 18-year-old beauty. While sitting round the table we were well-matched and had fun performing together, but when it came time for the puppets, everything went wrong! My Prince looked like an idiot with glassy eyes and a thick neck. A nationwide referendum had just been implemented in which the New Government of the Fatherland Front demanded that the people decide: Were they willing to finally break with the decaying monarchy and to choose the bright future in a new People's Republic of Bulgaria? For that reason, the scenographer laid down the law: from then on the Prince couldn't be anything but a hopeless imbecile, and certainly could not be a worthy husband for that wonderful proletarian heroine Cinderella! But we couldn't stand looking at him, so in the performance Lina and I partnered up eye-to-eye, just like in the rehearsals.

At that time obviously we were very far from the truth, thus our acting with puppets was rather haphazard and willy-nilly. We couldn't depend on the widely accepted practices of the time, nor on attempts to fit these practices into theoretical frameworks, because they suffered from fundamental flaws, one of the biggest being that we paid attention to the puppets only enough so as to show the viewer which puppet was speaking at the moment and which puppet "represented" the dramatic experience being presented. This was done with small gestures and movements of the head and body.

However, the creative intuition of talented actors even at that time refuted this approach. For them, bringing a puppet to life engaged their entire creative nature. The speech, gesture, temperament and logic came from the

puppet itself, which swept the actor along after it. The life of the puppet took precedence over everything. Without denying the place, sonority and artistic impact of speech, these artists nevertheless were most concerned with the life of the puppet. In the process of creating a methodology, however, questions continued to arise. What is the creative process of an actor performing with the puppet? What are the artistic differences between an actor animating a puppet and a dramatic actor? What is the path of the process of verbal action while acting with a puppet? In fact, the main question can be reduced to the following: what is the process of animating a puppet and giving birth to an artistic character with it?



Атанас Илков.
Щарж от
Мирослав
Цветанов

Atanas Ilkov.
Caricature by
Miroslav Tzvetanov

It wasn't hard to discover the huge role played by imagination in animating a puppet. It is an undeniable fact that the puppet comes to life in the imagination. The actor's hand is just a tool to help the imagination. This thesis does not require endless proof; we need only look at any child playing to convince ourselves of this. When an actor plays with a puppet, this is the play of the imagination which is stimulated by the puppet itself. General psychology considers imagination in the field of artistic creation, including acting, to be imagination of an exceptionally figurative type. This psychological state applies absolutely to the artistic process of an actor with a puppet in his hand. The puppet stimulates his figurative imagination - this is an important, irrefutable fact. But this fact cannot fully explain the animation of a puppet and its ability to lead a full-blooded, active life on stage. As is well known, the artist/puppet maker provides the actor with a puppet already saturated with a distinct visual content, which determines how the actor, with the help of his imagination, will finish "illustrating," clarifying or discovering the characteristics of the puppet he receives.

But this type of imagination is of a very reflective and static character and still cannot explain the animation of the puppet and its incorporation into dramatic action. Here I would like to recall one important aspect of the creative imagination, which Stanislavsky paid particular attention to. This is the effect of character on the actor's imagination. The offspring of the actor's imagination include not just the circumstances created, but rather the

whole dramatic play, that is, the action. This aspect of the imagination is inherent not only in the actor's imagination, but in the human imagination in general. Its magnetic force is undeniable, as Stanislavsky brilliantly demonstrated. While imagining, a person is carried away by a certain activity. While imagining, he acts. In his imagination he overcomes difficulties or settles old debts, breaks down or is reinvigorated...the more intense the activity, the more emotional the imagination. It is a proven fact that intensive activity in the realm of the imagination is often more active and more emotional than real activity. The imagination gives rise to new connections and circumstances that increase the power of and motivations for actions.

This aspect of the imagination is extremely crucial for explaining the nature of an actor's creative work. But it is still not sufficient to explain the animation of a puppet. The actor's imagination may lead the actor to internal action, causing him to fight to overcome difficulties, or to hesitate, or to run away from them. But what of the puppet? What is it doing during this time? Can it love, hate or imagine internally? How would it express these experiences? We know that in the final phase of his research Stanislavsky focused on the effective moment of the imagination and created a method for physical action. Is it applicable to an actor animating a puppet?

We won't be able to answer this difficult question unless we focus in turn on one extremely important and interesting aspect of the human imagination, namely: the EXPERIENCING WITH or GETTING INTO, that is, the ability to experience as one's own the fates, actions, thoughts and desires of others [in Bulgarian, both words contain the root "to live" - translator's note]. This "experiencing with" or "getting into" (the question requires further terminological clarification) is the fundamental quality of the imagination, the mental phenomenon that illuminates the actor's creative process on stage. But the actor has not cornered the market on this phenomenon. We can discover this creative "experiencing with" and "getting into" in every creative work where there is an external and internal distance between the subject and the object of the work: between the writer and his characters, between the painter and his paintings, and, of course, between the puppeteer and his

puppet. Led by the puppet's actions, getting into its life, he also frees his speech, temperament and feelings, allowing the puppet to figuratively re-create them as it desires and within its capabilities. Thus in concrete situations, the puppet can remain silent, crucially letting us know that at the moment it is pondering something over very carefully! But, in fact, it is only convincingly portraying this to us! And it is the actor's job to simply concentrate in order to carry this out as convincingly as possible! For this reason we say: the actor lives, but the puppet comes alive; but the actor experiences, but the puppeteer "gets into" an experience. This small but essential difference in the tuning of the imagination, and hence the entire psyche, sets apart a dramatic actor from an actor-puppeteer. Without this differentiation, it would be impossible to create a true methodology for the artistic process of creating convincing artistic characters with puppets.

Certain research studies based on Pavlovian experiments on conditioned reflexes attempt to explain and show that the puppeteer's artistic process is a process of "incarnation." Such theories are based on the human psyche's ability to adjust, change and adapt to existing conditions, which Pavlov demonstrated. Supporters of this theory attempt to show that in time and after the necessary quantitative accumulations, the actor-puppeteer adjusts himself or blends with the life of the puppet to such an extent that he begins to see and hear through the puppet, to sense and to live through it. But such an explanation comes dangerously close to being a complete contradiction. It ascribes to the puppet human qualities and abilities – seeing, hearing, feeling, experiencing – qualities with which the actor merges in order to "incarnate" the puppet. Using these qualities of the puppet, the actor begins to take in and to modify the world and to incarnate himself within it.

Supporters of the incarnation theory, after demonstrating the process, themselves sense its unsoundness, yet without abandoning their position, they expand the range of the term "incarnation" by adding adjectives such as "particular" and "specific", meaning incarnation only in the sphere of the imagination, and not on the organic level. In this way they count every effective play of the imagination



as incarnation: if a child stretches out its hands like wings, then it incarnates itself as a bird or an airplane; or if the child gets down on all fours, it incarnates itself as a dog or a wolf... In a similar way, the puppeteer incarnates himself as his puppet, with the help of his imagination. The untenability of the theory obvious. It simply pushes the problem back into the sphere the imagination. It also perverts the content of the term "incarnation". When we speak of incarnation, we mean changes in human biology, not in the realm of the imagination. An elderly person stiffened by arthritis becomes bent over, his skeleton becomes inflexible, his psyche and his entire attitude toward the world change. Such a person can be the object of artistic incarnation by a dramatic actor, but how would this happen with the puppet? It could happen, of course, if we substitute one puppet with another. In that case, we would artistically delight the viewer – how cleverly we thought out the incarnation! – if, in fact, it was necessary for the development of the fable or the conflict. Obviously, in the creative work of an actor with a puppet in his hand, we cannot speak of incarnation. With the help of his active imagination, we can picture how the puppet takes in the world, how it acts, how it "hears", "sees" and "feels". And we can actively be drawn into that PICTURING. We can experience with the puppet to such an extent, that it seems like the puppet itself is acting, "hearing", "seeing", "feeling", and "singing" - as if it is "living".

We should pay particular attention to this quality of the imagination, the "getting into" or "experiencing with" – when we are selecting students during entrance exams, as well as during the process of education.

And here a careful approach is needed, since the free unleashing of the imagination can lead to undesired results, such as the actor becoming alienated from the puppet or even abandoning it altogether. The puppet must offer restricted possibilities, which allow the actor and his animation of the puppet to discover its figurative energy for himself. Connecting the imagination with objects and materials of various natures stimulates the imagination of every artist to discover artistic energy in a given direction! In dramatic theater, the director brings a role to life by conducting a working analysis of the character's behavior and presenting it to the

actor, who becomes both the object and the subject of the entire creative process. Stanislavsky has said almost everything that needed to be said about such processes. But is the same true for puppet theater? After a working analysis, the actor must examine the puppet offered to him in order to immerse himself deeply in the emotional world of its imagination, in order to come alive in it and to portray this world in its actions to such an extent that he begins to free within himself its voice, speech, laughter and song – that is, in order to freely "get into" everything the puppet does.

Animating a puppet is a dynamic process of the vibrating and "getting-into-it" imagination, which runs from the actor to the puppet and from the puppet to the actor seeking its figurative realization. This creative vibration between the puppet and the actor is itself a question of absolute concentration and freeing of the senses...

For that reason, I am against the term *kuklovod*, or "puppeteer". From the roots *kukla*, or "puppet", and *vod*, "to lead", it implies a unidirectional control over the processes, running only from the actor to the puppet, and doesn't take into account the puppet's potential to free the actor's imagination such that he joyfully allows the puppet to lead him into its magical world.

One last thought. There is no better Bulgarian word for our dedication to our profession than the word *kuklar!* I have a violinist friend, or *tsigular* - and he is not the least bit disturbed by the suffix *-ar* (which means "one who does something"). He doesn't think that someone hearing the term *kuklar* might consider it a petty craft. The suffix *-ar* is not shameful for a profession, as long as we behave as artists and don't give anybody reason to someday create rhymes at our expense with *svinar*, *govedar*, and *vruzkar* (swineherd, cowherd and nepotist)!

Our great artist Iliya Beshkov offered this soaring advice to his students: "Draw, draw, draw, until you yourselves turn into drawings!" In other words, that wholehearted "getting into it", which allows us to forget ourselves. This kind of artistic "getting into it" is that eureka insight, valid for every art!

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Translation by **Angela Rodel**