



# CHALLENGES OF THE ART OF SPEAKING

## PROVOCĂRI ALE ARTEI VORBIRII

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**Irina SCUTARIU,**

PhD, lecturer,

George Enescu University of Arts, Iasi, Romania

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*Articolul cuprinde o prezentare a autorului, ca activitate desfășurată în cadrul Universității de Arte „G. Enescu” din Iași și propuneri ale unor forme de colaborare între cele două instituții de cultură. Studenții proveniți din Republica Moldova sunt numeroși și mulți dintre ei sunt deja integrați în societatea teatrală românească. Schimbul de experiență între școlile de teatru nu rezidă numai în declararea scrisă a obiceiurilor ce țin de pedagogie. Organizarea unor ateliere de lucru nu este un obiectiv ușor de atins, dar susținerea lor de către profesorii ambelor departamente din cele două orașe ar veni în ajutorul candidaților, într-o fază incipientă de colaborare. Dacă tot efortul nostru de a ne cunoaște va rămâne doar la nivelul articolelor, cei direct interesați, adică studenții, vor avea de suferit.*

Theatrical practical training during school years and later on, practical training on stage have proved us that the pure intuition of the character, in the absence of a good approach method, leaves us bare handed in front of a classical dramatic monologue.

In a very short period of time, directing style and actor's style have experienced modifications not only in relation to the scenic conception but also to the manner of sending the message across. During the three years of studying the actor's art, different techniques of speaking on stage and body movement techniques, we have become familiar to Stanislavski method. The Romanian theatre schools still consider him an important turning point in the field of pedagogical art. In time, many other important names have joined his: Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski. There were

no translations of Meyerhold<sup>1</sup>'s theatre classes but the rules he laid down in theatrical art became familiar to those taking part at national or international meetings or Theatre Festivals.

We remark the Universities' initiative of introducing the inter-university exchange of pedagogic methods for succeeding in our attempt of creating artists. Our University's Theatre Department is frequented every year by students from the Republic of Moldova who undertake a more rigorous program during their specialized classes, if we were to mention one we could refer to the subject of speaking on stage. Experience allows us to mention some of

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<sup>1</sup> We mention the publication of the volume V. E. Meyerhold, *About the theatre (Despre teatru)*, Translation, notes and postface by Sorina Bălănescu, Bucharest, „Camil Petrescu” Cultural Foundation, „Theatre today” Magazine (supplement), 2011.

the existent imperfections we have come upon, for example the use of accents within the sentence or the phrase, that is due to the influence of the Russian language, language that is still used in communicating between the members of their family. This is how the entire way of saying becomes anything else but Romanian. Getting rid of this habit of speaking cannot be immediate and it cannot be achieved in a short period of time except for those students who decide to enroll in the Romanian pre-university educational system. The integration in this environment at an early age gives them the possibility to make use of their sense of hearing and get accustomed to the Romanian way of saying. We insist on this aspect for those young people who intend to become actors and continue their university studies in Romania. One of the possible problems they might confront themselves with the moment they have to freely manifest themselves on stage is the sensation of inhibition.

Most often, being aware of our diction imperfections implies a rigorous individual training program, most probably, later than it should be, when our educational period is approaching its end. In this case, the most important signal comes from our teachers or students during the final semestrial exams or even worse, from the audience the moment the students collaborate with theatres and go on stage. The lack of diction leads to confusion or worse, to perplexity.

The student exchange between theatre schools does not reside only in the written declaration of pedagogical customs. The organization of workshops is not something easy to do, but if this initiative were suppor-

ted by the teachers of both departments from both cities the candidates would definitely take advantage of this opportunity in an early phase of collaboration. If our entire effort is limited to articles, the directly interested people – the students will suffer. The exercises proposed by those who taught us to be teachers are moulded by our personality and put into practice in our own style. The authors of theatre classes who are our guides are very often, the same. In his career, the teacher is forced to change his teaching methods and approach because every generation of students changes the way of seeing art. Another very interesting phenomenon can happen – the different ways of teaching the same exercise related to the emotional load that is characteristic to each of us.

Some of the exercises preferred by the students with this kind of speaking imperfections are those with an immediate applicability. After an exact analysis that reveals us the entire series of imperfections deriving from bad usage of accents, we move on to correcting it. We point out that not only the students coming from the Republic of Moldova are concerned. Every year we come across a large number of students who are not accustomed to using the Romanian phrasing rules. Some have the accent from their native regions while others simply do not care. Together, they form an acting class. One of the most important exercises for speaking on stage consists in listening the plays recorded at the Department of radio theatre. This is followed by applications on the text that consists in reading the text heard or any other written or translated text in Romanian. This kind of exercise is

recommended to take place in the company of a specialized professor. The professor's role at this point is to exemplify the right accent when it does not correspond to the Romanian phrasing.

Returning to our subject, we consider it is necessary to pay special attention to education even since high school, especially in the case of the students who intend to enroll at the University of Arts in Iasi. They could take up study programs consisting in listening Romanian actors from all times whose voices and lines have been recorded so their attempt to eliminate their accent or the improper reproduction of sounds becomes easier (We refer here to the velar *l*, as in Russian).

We insist on this aspect for obvious reasons. The actor, if we exclude the pantomime, needs the word. The expectations that people have from the actors taking part at castings are higher every time. The students ordinary from the Republic of Moldova have an additional inner moti-

vation that we hope will not be shaded by an improper diction that was not corrected at the proper time. Contemporary theatre counts on the harmonization of the entire actor's means of expression: he is at the same time instrument and instrumentalist and he must give himself enough time for physical training, interpretation and exercises of vocal technique.

It is rightfully said that art moulds the human, teaching him to widen his horizon, educates him to become a true human being. Let's remember the words of professor Sandina Stan included in her book dedicated to the "salvation" of the word: "theatre is first of all, an art of speech... hence it is absolutely compulsory for the dramatic artist to own the art of speaking on stage without which, no matter how talented you are, the message of the text presented on stage will not reach the audience".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sandina Stan, *The art of speaking on stage* (Arta vorbirii scenice), Editura didactică și pedagogică, București, 1972, p. 3.

