

*“The Fulfillment Comes When Somebody Loves
What He Is Doing”*

**Ștefana Pop-Curșeu in dialogue
with Alejandro Rodriguez**

Alejandro Rodriguez : Mon français n’est pas très bon.

Ștefana Pop-Curșeu : Mais tu peux parler en italien, espagnol, anglais. Tu peux changer si tu n’es pas à l’aise.

A. R. : D’accord, mais j’essaie quand même en français.

Ș. P.-C. : J’ai vu vos trois spectacles, Electric Party Songs, I Am America et le concert et j’ai beaucoup aimé. J’ai été un peu surprise qu’il y ait autant de musique ; ça contredisait mes attentes. Connaissant assez bien le travail de Grotowski, je ne m’attendais pas à ce genre de continuation. Par ailleurs, il y a des fils qui relient votre travail à ce que Grotowski visait en tant qu’homme de théâtre, cette énergie qui passe entre les acteurs et vers les spectateurs. C’est ça que j’ai ressenti, de l’extérieur. Je suis curieuse de voir comment tu le ressens, toi, de l’intérieur. Qu’est-ce qui vous relie à Grotowski ?

A. R. : Moi, personnellement, je n’ai pas connu Grotowski. J’ai lu beaucoup de livres, j’ai suivi les traces qu’il a laissées, mais je ne peux pas vraiment répondre à cette question. Peut-être Mario pourrait-il y répondre. Grotowski a fait un grand, grand parcours et il a changé beaucoup, gardant quand même un fil rouge. Mais je ne suis pas un expert de Grotowski.

Ș. P.-C. : Telle n’est pas la question. Je voudrais tout simplement savoir si parfois vous avez travaillé sur des choses qui vous relient consciemment à Grotowski.

A. R. : Quand je lis ses textes, je vois qu’il y a une très forte cohérence entre ce qu’il a dit et ce qu’il a fait. Mon rapport direct se fait à travers Mario Biagini, qui est le directeur de notre troupe. Il a travaillé avec Grotowski

pendant 13 ans. Le travail de Mario est à un niveau très haut comme metteur en scène et aussi dans le sens de quelqu'un qui veut voir les personnes, saisir ce que chacun veut faire. Comme metteur en scène, tu peux créer le contexte pour quelqu'un de se plonger dans ce qu'il a envie de faire. C'est un territoire assez inconnu et tu dois laisser parler ton intuition, c'est-à-dire choisir le texte ou donner des indications par rapport à... But it is better to speak English.

§. P.-C.: *Ok.*

A. R.: You never know what a person wants to do or what is his/her true intention, but there is a desire to accomplish something, to touch something. You can give indications and try. This is what is great in Mario's work: to see the person, not to impose a point of view. People like to talk about bodies: in stage I like bodies doing this, bodies doing that. But what is a body? It's like a piece of meat, it's a fashion that creates a context in your mind, that creates a frame, a way of looking in your mind, a meaning. So, what is important is not the body, but the person, meaning something much more complex.

§. P.-C.: *What is a person?*

A. R.: An incredible mixture of things. In each one, there are different processes at work and what is great about this craft is that you can see men and women in action, behavior. You touch something like the field of memories, like the associative cognitions, like the field of emotions and of psychological processes, the field of body processes. You can see all happening. So, what I understand is that Grotowski was working in this direction.

§. P.-C.: *Right.*

A. R.: So, me too, I'm not interested in the actor, I'm interested in the person, in this encounter when something happens between us, something that is a discovery, something new and special. A special moment takes place. If this is also Grotowski's idea, it means that we are his inheritors. We work somehow to look for these special moments between people.

§. P.-C.: *It happens only between the actors, or also between the actors and the spectators? It works both ways?*

A. R.: It's not something collective; it happens between two people, in-between. So, the work is one-to-one. Yes, there is a sort of group and that's something that you see from the outside. But, from inside, we are individuals working together and trying to discover something, by each one, individually. But this research is done in group, between you and me, between two people. If I do something for you, I do something for me also. You work with someone, you discover something, but in this relation you watch each other and there's a fact nobody can hide. I am not hiding the fact that I am being seen by my partner. If this thing happens, another one can occur: somebody who is watching from the outside feels the influence of what I do with my partner. But it's a very delicate process. For us, it took many years to discover these things. There is no audience, because what we call audience is composed by individual spectators, with their own individuality.

§. P.-C.: Individuals with specific backgrounds.

A. R.: With particular stories, desires, emotions, traumas. If we were to think our encounter for the audience, we would change the nature of our intercourse. It would not work.

§. P.-C.: This is a main problem of the actors.

A. R.: Yes. And we should start always by that, no matter how old we are on the craft. We should always begin by the ABC. In relation with the audience, the people who is witnessing, watching, Grotowski was saying something very interesting, and also Mario Biagini. There is a phenomenon like an induction: you have a metal wire full of electricity and you approach another one, of the same material, without electricity. The energy passes from one to another.

§. P.-C.: You experimented to see if it works?

A. R.: Yes. We were trying to see in which context it works. Which is the best context of this work? The theatre? The house of people? A party? We were doing many different experiments, that you were seeing these days. It is not always really a theatre show. We are looking for a way in which the work can have a relationship with people. Not us, but our work, something more impersonal. It is true that we are actors, that we apply all the strategies of this craft Stanislavski described. But there is something more: a commitment,

a responsibility, a sense of experimentation and, from this point of view, I feel very strongly related to this man I didn't know, Grotowski.

§. P.-C.: *In fact, Grotowski didn't want to make tabula rasa of the past; he used the metaphor of him standing on the shoulders of predecessors, like the Modern saw themselves standing on the shoulders of the Ancient. It's a very beautiful image of what we can do by assimilating a heritage.*

A. R.: Yes, it's true, but there is a little problem. The problem is not to repeat the form, it is to make a division between what is the content and what is the shape, the form. Because the shape has to change, the content...

§. P.-C.: *The content must be generally human in order to last.*

A. R.: It doesn't belong to time. Sometimes, in the work, it happens many times that you can perceive that this very special moment I was talking about is touched. It's like something that's always there, something that you remember, that your memory actualizes. It's new and old at the same time, but space is wider, thoughts are light, your body is light. A very subtle substance.

§. P.-C.: *You don't feel the gravity. You know that, in a way, it's something that happens in rituals. Actually, Grotowski explored a lot this side of human behavior, the transcendence, the religious ecstasy. I talk about this because when I saw you reciting this poetry, allied with a very concrete presence, I had the impression that you had no weight. You were not really on the floor.*

A. R.: You know, theatre is the art of repetition. How to do when there is this special moment and you have to repeat it? I have to tell you how was the whole process for this moment you have seen, because it's extremely structured.

§. P.-C.: *Mario told me that you work on small pieces and that you put all together in the end.*

A. R.: Yes, it's true, but there is a lot of work implied. A small piece, like the one you saw may take years of work. Let's talk about *I Am America*. I was working with Mario on this traditional song and on some actions derived from it. Little by little I found those texts by Ginsberg that have a very strong connection with what I was doing. I renounced to the actions

and I began to study and to memorize the text differently, not by putting artificial intonations on it. That’s a wrong way to do things, because when one talks, intonation comes naturally.

§. P.-C.: *And what about the body?*

A. R.: Some people say “Ah, you did contemporary dance!” I never do dance, but something more complex. I work very hard with the body, so it should always be ready to do what you want to do. What you see is the union between structure and the living flow of reactions. Different processes taking place inside a very precise structure: that is a very difficult thing. You should always formalize the living flow of uncontrolled reactions into a structure, but not like an engineer, because you are working with a living matter.

§. P.-C.: *Does Mario help you to stop on a certain form?*

A. R.: In this specific construction, yes. For example, he told me I was making a lot of noise when I was falling on the ground, so I was obliged to work on that and to find a good shape. Mario thought I should have been completely silent. I found a creative answer to this.

§. P.-C.: *Does your theatrical experience help you in this respect?*

A. R.: I studied theatre and I have my acting diploma, but I have been doing a lot of theatre and I was getting bored. When I came to the Workcenter, I found out theatre is not everything. The way of working here attracted me very much. For example, I worked on an action from different angles, from different points of view. Mario, the director, had to think at the proper angle without forcing the actor to change his findings. It’s delicate because the director, without knowing, can take something essential from the actor, then he kills the whole process. Together, Mario and me, we found the right way of doing the precise actions we needed, without cutting something essential from my discoveries. This served the whole performance.

§. P.-C.: *So, you say that what you learned in a theatre school doesn’t really help you here? What about your other experiences?*

A. R.: I was doing a lot of music because my father is a musician. He plays the guitar. I composed also a lot.

§. P.-C. *So it must have served you.*

A. R. Apparently yes. Then, I was in a circus for many years too. I created my own company and I travelled. Then, I came to Europe from Argentina. I was doing street performances, living in illegality, without a job, without money. I knew someone from the Workcenter and I understood that this experience was important for him. This encouraged me to come here, I was selected and...

§. P.-C.: *This was in 2007?*

A. R.: You are well informed. We jumped in this incredible adventure without knowing it.

§. P.-C.: *And it's something that makes you still happy after so many years?*

A. R.: Well, it's happiness after all, even if happiness is something one can't grasp. This work became essential for me.

§. P.-C.: *I asked you this because all of you seem very happy, full of joy on stage and I find it's great. It is rare to see professionals this way; sometimes, non-professional actors have this joy.*

A. R.: It's hard to get there. Money is never enough, we travel a lot. We work from morning to the night, even in our dreams. There are very difficult periods. But the most exhausting thing is that one cannot let his/her emotions speak, despite his/her mood. This is a sign of professionalism.

§. P.-C.: *Yes, but at the same time you see when one tries artificially to impress.*

A. R.: It's fake. Fortunately, in this group everybody can find his/her way.

§. P.-C.: *Everybody seems fulfilled.*

A. R.: Yes, but the fulfillment comes when somebody loves what he/she is doing. I love what I do. It's a luxury. I come from a country where ten years ago people were dying because they had nothing to eat. I was in Bucharest and I saw how hard life can be. And me, I have this

“THE FULFILLMENT COMES WHEN SOMEBODY LOVES WHAT HE IS DOING”

luxury of doing art when some people are killed on the streets because they are black or because somebody else claims their land. So, of course, I am aware of that and I think I should do everything 100%.

Ş. P.-C.: *In this respect, the message of Ginsberg's text is very eloquent.*

A. R.: Indeed it is.

Ş. P.-C.: *Thank you very much...*

A. R.: Thank you!

Interview transcribed by Ioan Pop-Curşeu

