

EXTENSIONS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT INTO THE PERFORMING ARTS

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ABSTRACT. *Extensions of Physical Education and Sport into the Performing Arts.* For the acting student, physical education and sport have formative valences, developing influence relationships into the study of stage movement and body expressiveness. The actor's physical training or the creative art behind a successful role engage all the components of the human being, combining the body's physical education with mental education, in complete harmony. For obtaining the acting performance, the established methods and techniques of the major theater schools of the 20th century that underlie the actor's professional training are enriched with new formulas and currents specific to the actor's art, physical education and sport. With an interdisciplinary approach, physical education and sport, through specific means, naturally intersect with the other formative components focused on the actor, on his physical form, on the ability to understand and artistic expression. By influencing each other, these methods hone the actor's path to professional fulfillment and assume his living presence in a scenic space at a given time. In the equation of the actor's training, based on their professional experience and knowledge, all trainers will be involved alongside, instituting methods of progressive training appropriate to contemporary times.

Key-words: *physical, formative training, stage movement, body expressiveness, body, voice.*

REZUMAT. *Extensii ale educației fizice și sportului în artele spectacolului.* Pentru studentul la actorie, educația fizică și sportul au valențe formative, dezvoltând relații de influență în studiul mișcării scenice și a expresivității corporale. Antrenamentul fizic al actorului sau munca de creație cu succes a unui rol angrenează toate componentele ființei umane, combinând educația fizică a corpului cu educația psihică, într-o deplină armonie. Pentru obținerea performanței actoricești, metodele și tehnicile consacrate ale marilor școli de teatru de secol XX ce stau la baza formării profesionale a actorului, sunt

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îmbogățite cu formule și curente noi specifice artei actorului, educației fizice și sportului. Printr-o abordare interdisciplinară, educația fizică și sportul, prin mijloacele specifice se intersectează în mod firesc cu celelalte componente formative focusate pe actor, pe forma sa fizică, pe capacitatea de înțelegere și exprimare artistică. Influențându-se reciproc, aceste metode jalonează calea actorului spre desăvârșirea profesională și asumarea prezenței sale vii într-un spațiu scenic și un moment dat. În ecuația formării actorului, bazându-se pe experiența și cunoștințele profesionale, se vor implica cot la cot toți formatorii, instituind metode de antrenare în progres, adecvate contemporaneității.

Cuvinte cheie: *antrenament fizic, formativ, mișcare scenică, expresivitate corporală, corp, voce*

Introduction

The indisputable values of physical education and sport have allowed these activities to enter the higher education system, regardless of the field and specialization. For the acting student, these components of physical culture with an instructive-educational role for the body, mind and psyche are materialized in a stimulus which enters naturally and organically his day-to-day life, becoming his partner throughout his entire career. The integration of physical education and sport into the formative path of the future actor involves analysis, knowledge and understanding of the functions, principles, activities and relationships that it generates.

1. Physical Education and Sport Landmarks in Higher Education

Components of the higher education system, regardless of the field and specialty, physical education and sport in academia are a natural continuation of the educational act which shapes personality. According to the axis of continuity, the first year student is at the end of a formative cycle and at the beginning of a new one. It is a new educational pathway which provides a framework favorable for physical education and sport to leave its mark on shaping the student's correct body development, in developing and perfecting his motor skills. As a leisure activity or as an instructive-educational process, physical education and sport equally manifest their role in improving the quality of life, physical and mental health and preparing students for their later life and professional activity.

During the first academic year, at least from a theoretical point of view, we come into contact with the student who is at a level of his personality in agreement with the forms of expression, aware of the benefits of physical education and sport programs, with basic motor skills, as well as good physical shape. During this stage of development, the student most often is eager to move and has sufficient knowledge of anatomy and physiology. Thus are created the premises for continuous training and education through physical exercise, as a means for consolidation and perfection of the processes started in the early part of his adolescence.

Practicing physical exercise isn't resumed solely to physical effort and physical development. It involves mechanisms for the personality development, for training and developing attention, logical thinking, memory, perseverance and will. Practice has proven that by designing an attractive and efficient training system, adapted to the present social requirements and trends, while also taking into account the direct beneficiary of the training-educational process, namely the student in our case, positive results are obtained, both physically and psychologically. According to a basic principle of training through physical education and sport, more precisely the *principle of connecting training with the requirements of practical activity*, also known in specialized theory as *principle of shaping*, physical exercise must have a practical value, and the acquired motor skills and performances must be transferable into professional and leisure activities (Cârstea, 2000). The veracity of this principle is also confirmed in the higher education environment. The instructive-educational programs, through the specific means of physical education and sport, are designed according to particularities related to the future profession of students.

An example of this is the higher education into the arts. The objectives and requirements derived from the program for the education and training of future actors, lyrical artists or dancers require a scientific approach based on two communication coordinates: the verbal coordinate, namely speaking and singing and the physical or non-verbal coordinate, defined by corporality. In universities with artistic vocational profile, the physical coordinate involves the study of stage movement and body expressiveness, while the theory and practice gives the students the opportunity to experience various physical activities, applying specific techniques and methods.

2. The show's existence based on the actor's work

Remaining in the field of artistic academia, namely in training the future actor, we must remember that the study of movement and body expressiveness seeks to develop the body's natural assets and understanding the mechanisms

underlying movement. Physical education and sport have a well-established place into this process, being rightfully considered a part of the artist in training's day-to-day life. Gymnastics, fencing, dancing, acrobatics, dynamic games, wrestling and martial arts are just a few activities that significantly affect the process of training and shaping the future actor and that is why they are found in his educational program. Just like professional athletes, the training period for the future profession involves continuous training throughout their entire careers.

“The acting profession is the only one where the artist is his own instrument. It's better to play a Stradivarius and not a decrepit violin. A healthy mind in a healthy body is the actor's first condition, as he resembles a professional athlete, because he always has to be in excellent physical shape. If he's not «in shape», he cannot perform on stage, under excellence conditions, a script lasting one or two hours and which challenge his both mentally and physically to the same extent.” This is what the great Radu Beligan believed about the place of sports into his artistic career, in one of the few interviews he gave to the press. It's a confirmation of the symbiotic existence of sports and the performing arts and an acknowledgement, if it was still needed, of the fact that in the *actor's work* there are no boundaries between art and sport.

Although they resort to different means of expression, theater, ballet, lyrical theater, operetta and musical use both the human body in movement and the spoken or sung word. In their professional education and training, the actor, the lyrical artist or the dancer go through an ample process of physical, mental and emotional harmonization. The future lyrical artist perfects his vocal technique with correct breathing, the result of the exercises which are part of his daily training, and for correct posture, he performs exercises in physicality and body expression. During his training and subsequently in his profession, the actor in training participates in trainings with specific physical exercises for body expressiveness, for the development of motor skills, of the strength of his body energy, plasticity and mobility. In the art of dance, an art of movement, the spoken word is replaced by the gesture, acrobatics and body expressiveness. Moreover, in the contemporary show, defined by grandeur, nonconformist and the reunion of the arts, the actor has to resort to means of expression from various artistic genres. He has to be the *total actor*, who knows how to emphasize the spoken word, voice, expressiveness and body mobility. It is, therefore, a clear proof that the existence of the show is based on the actor's work.

A careful look into the contemporary theater phenomenon emphasizes the fact that the theatrical show has shifted its center of gravity from the dramatic text to the theatrical language. The actor thus becomes the main

instrument in the theatrical creation. The affirmation of stage movement, of body and voice expressiveness requires an approach to the performing arts which dictates a work for the “decryption of the meanings in the dramatic text and their insertion into the body and voice actions; [...] the discovery and assumption of body language, the functional unit between body and voice” (Cozma, 2016, p. 55).

In the process of training an actor or in the process of creating a role, it is a well-known fact that the actor experiments with means of different theatrical methods and techniques, through exercises, analysis, observation, research, assumption and rendering, the actor combines the education of the body with the education of the personality, perfecting that physical, mental and emotional harmonization. The actor has to be able to control and manage, at the same time, the manner in which he communicates on the stage through movement, speech or singing, in such manner as to transform verbal communication on a continuation of the body's movement. To achieve this goal, the actor undergoes a lengthy process of knowledge, documentation and training. This double-role formative process, namely exploring and developing, represents precisely the actor's training or that which we call *the actor's work with himself*. For the future actor, reaching a certain level of creating freedom is a primordial goal, for which “the recovery of innocence and construction of experience are called in to structure his entire formative path” (Odangiu, 2013, p. 15).

From the perspective of communication, directing our attention to the relationship between the actor and his body, in the process of training the future actor, the knowledge of his own body as physical, mental and emotional presence becomes essential. This is the first step he takes in becoming a *total actor*. He must know himself, be actively aware of the bodily mechanisms from an anatomical, biomechanical, physiological and psychological point of view in order to develop and progress. Discovering, knowing limits, assuming and updating his potential from the body language's point of view is a process which takes place over time. In “The Transient Dance of the Actor's Actions” the author, give particular attributes to the actor's body, which becomes “musical or instrumental”, and “needs to be tuned in order to perform flawlessly” (Cozma, 2016.p.57).

Movement, relaxation, physical exercises imply an activity involving the spine, legs and finally the arms. Performed with active consciousness, this activity materializes in a *process of learning the geography of the body* (Oida and Marshall, 2009, p. 35). In this sense, an interesting aspect is the work on segments, part of any artist's technique. For example, for the future actor, preparing for the role of a mime requires complex biomechanical work. He works on segments, oscillating between the fixed parts and moving parts of the

body. The mime's joints serve as hinges between a moving part of the body, moving in relation to the other fixed part of the body. We could have the following examples of pairs: hand -finger; head – neck; neck – chest; chest – waist; waist – pelvis; pelvis – legs. The specific training for the mime begin with light movements and continue with ample movements, going in both directions through all segments, exercising them both as fixed and as mobile parts.

Another step in the actor's work is the release of emotions. It is an act resulting from the action of the psyche, which involves dedication and concentration. Given the fact that the mind, body, and emotions are closely intertwined, the way in which this connection is made is responsible for natural interpretation. The position of the body, the thoughts and the emotions always change together, and the human body, "bearer of signs and emotions, is a perfect dramaturgic instrument" (Cozma, 2016, p.57). As the actor needs to be natural, *a living being*, to live everything through his own body, it requires involvement, "methods that will produce a *human*, truthful interpretation in each show, regardless of the actual feelings of the actor at that time" (Oida and Marshall, 2009, p.78).

Developing actor's energy is another requirement in his education and training. The actor's energy influences the show's energy. The actor has to be unique; he has to have personality and individuality, to maintain a plentiful stage presence. "The source of the actor's specific corporeality is energy and vertical alignment. Only after studying and training these two basic elements can we speak of a development of expressivity" (Bács, 2012, p.24). "To study the actor's energy means to explore the principles on which the actor can model or shape his own muscular and nervous force through means which are not specific to everyday life" (ibidem, p.23). Physical and emotional alignment attracts energy. In performing the physical exercises that help to develop energy, it is important to understand, to gradually sense the origin of energy, and then to unite our own selves with that energy.

If up to now we have only referred to the body-actor relationship, it is still important to continue by noting that in this chain of physical and vocal actions in the actor's training, an important role lies in the exploration and development of the communication skills from the perspective of the actor-spectator and actor- stage partner relationships. Here I would like to highlight the role of Commedia dell'Arte in training students, as a curriculum for the second year. Considered to be a reference in terms of complexity, this show requires the best of an actor for certain roles, both vocally and in terms of stage movement, most of the times overcoming their limits. Being an improvisation show, it requires perfect coordination, reaction speed, promptitude of movement and a number of motor skills and plasticity, in perfect coordination with student stage partners.

In the actor's daily training, the balance between inner movement and outer activity is essential. Quality performance requires technical craftsmanship, freedom of movement and free thinking. Following this training path, physical training becomes the support for shaping the mind.

In searching for the path to acting performance, the great theatrical researchers of the 20th and 21st century have developed theatrical methods and practices focused in the actor, on the actor's physical training. Stage theorists and practitioners, regardless of their philosophical thinking, have focused on the actor's work with other actors, researching and developing techniques for training the actor. The common denominator in their research is the actor as the essence of the show, exploring his vocal, bodily and mental potential, creating harmony between his mind and his body. K.S. Stanislavski and his disciples, Vsevolod Meyerhold and Michael Chekhov, Antonin Artaud, Jacques Lecoq; Jerzi Grotowski, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba and Andrei Șerban distinguished themselves through the methods for the actor's physical training and the creation techniques they assumed and promoted.

The "*system*" created by famous director and pedagogue K.S. Stanislavski (1863-1938) is being developed in Russia. *The actor's work with himself* requires for the actor's training techniques and methods based on his own experience. In his view "the artist's voice and body need to be educated starting from nature itself" (Stanislavski, 2014, p.11) otherwise "the bodily apparatus used for embodiment will be too crude for the delicate work destined for it" (ibidem, p.12). The indicated gymnastics follows the sculptural requirements of the body and the acrobatics programs have the role of developing firmness, ability and mobility. Dance is the one that corrects the position of the hands, legs, or spine, but the hours spent dancing in the director's view also serve as support for more complex exercises. For the expressiveness and plasticity of the body, his method promotes dance and ballet exercises on the extremities of the legs, arms, hands and fingers. By exercising walking during the exercises, he seeks the continuity of the horizontal line of movement and reaching the floating sensation. Awareness and sensation of all these activities are fundamental to external expression. The Russian pedagogue pays particular attention to voice and speech. Voice impersonation work involves the development of correct breathing and sound, which implies exercise, awareness, assumption and understanding. These are only a few relevant aspects of the famous "Stanislavski system", which is focused on the actor's training and included in his book, "An Actor's Work".

A disciple of Stanislavski, but detached from the psychological side of the theater, Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940), the creator of the *virtuous actor*, produces a radical change in the actor's training. In Meyerhold's theatrical

thinking, movement, as an expression controllable by measure and rhythm, is essential in the theatrical expression. Applying the principles of mechanics and anatomy, he proposes a training system with a focus on gesture, drawing attention to the concept of biomechanics, as an art of decomposing and recomposing, of reinvention and shaping corporeality. Michael Chekhov (1891-1955), another one of Stanislavski's disciples, in "The Actor's Body and Psychology" identifies three basic requirements of the actor's training: the sensitivity of body to the psychological creative impulses, the richness of the psychology itself and complete obedience of both body and psychology to the actor (Chekhov, 2017).

Antonin Artaud (1896 - 1948), French playwright and theorist, advocates in the practices and methods he developed for the release of the subconscious and the appreciation of the sensory forces of body and gesture.

Practicing athletics, swimming and gymnastics in his youth, Jacques Lecoq (1921 - 1999) develops a system of theatric pedagogy focused on movement, the starting point of his pedagogical system being precisely his sporting experience. His early connections with the sport world have helped him better understand the mechanisms of movement and its effects from a mental and emotional point of view. Considered to be a pedagogical concept with deep communicative meanings, the system proposed by J. Lecoq respects the physical limits, the freedom of expression, the flexibility and the naturalness of the movement (Lecoq, 2009).

Jerzi Grotowski (1933-1999) brings great changes in dramaturgy. A director and theater theorist, he is considered to be the exponent of theater reformation in the 20th century, focusing his research on the actor's work. Focusing his research on the *actor - living presence*, he brings to the fore *via negativa* in his *laboratory theater*. The method based on physicality in stage creation and in the actor training is the path to the *total actor*, by eliminating mental blockages, physical reminiscences and negative energy. Grotowski is also the artisan of a *poor theater*, in which the actor can shine without many decors, lights and other effects, only through the actor-spectator functional relationship (Grotowski, 2014).

The special interest given to physical training is also evident for the 21st century theorists and practitioners. In his plea for *an empty space*, Peter Brook draws attention to the liberation from the lifeless theater and the orientation towards the *immediate theater*, towards honest play and the living presence of the actor. Peter Brook's pedagogy, oriented towards life and vitality, puts in the forefront the body and the actor's ability to "live everything through his own body" (Brook, 2014, p. 175). For Eugenio Barba, the actor's body has to say more than the word, the pre-expressive actor technique used Odin Teatret

focusing on the *decided body*, available for creation and generating emotions. Permanently searching for perfection in theatrical art, in his theatrical creation workshops Andrei Șerban devotes the moments in the early hours of the morning, in the midst of nature to physical exercise. In: „Cartea Atelierelor” the author noted: “To pass through fire and water you need a certain force, another unknown energy. For this, the whole body needs to mobilize.” (Șerban, 2013, p. 17)

We can observe that in all these models, methods and techniques, physical education is responsible for creating and maintaining the bond between the mental act and the physical exercise. This bond is a primordial condition for the intelligent construction of a scene and its successful artistic completion.

3. Forms of sport and physical education in the performing arts

In light of the above, we can therefore deduce that physical education and sport, as a complementary subject with a formative function in the training of stage movement and means of expression, acts in two directions.

One pursues as a priority the achievement of the basic objectives of physical education and sport as an instructive-educational process, acting for: harmonious and correct physical development; developing basic motor skills; acquiring and perfecting motor skills; cultivating the customary practice of physical exercise. At the same time, it is hoped that these activities will become an option for a healthy and balanced life. From this perspective, the role of the sports teacher is paramount, as he is the one who sets the appropriate objectives, techniques and methods, as well as putting them into practice.

The other direction based on the influence relations sport - actor's art, requires collaboration between the trainers on physical education and sport, acting and vocal coaching. Since the acting teacher leads the actor's training, he has the task of setting the performance and competence objectives in accordance with the specific circumstances deriving from the work schedule of the acting class or the artistic productions and performances to be staged. In this complex process of training the future actor, through his status and role, the sports teacher has the task of making the best decisions so that the general and specific objectives can be reached. Based on his professional experience and knowledge, he will look for ways and means to optimize the movement potential of the future actor, acting as efficiently as possible, establishing the training strategy with the appropriate methods and techniques, the correct duration and frequency, and the optimal training parameters. The sports teacher must be a *pillar* in the actor's training process. Some of the objectives are:

- identifying and determining the physiological limits for the training process by assessing the biological, mental and motor state of the future actor;
- harmonious and correct physical development, following morphological and functional indicators;
- developing and perfecting basic motor skills, namely speed, strength, endurance and deftness;
- developing and educating specific motor skills (physical mobility, speed of reaction, precision and promptness in the execution of movements, the appropriation of a correct posture, a correct body attitude in harmony with correct breathing, as fundamental elements of the form) ;
- developing and educating sensory skills (sense of rhythm, rapidity of perceptions, speed of response to stimuli);
- development of motor skills specific to joints (elasticity, plasticity and expressiveness in motion);
- developing and educating coordination and balance;
- knowledge, self-knowledge from an anatomic, biomechanical, physiological and psychological point of view;
- training and correcting basic driving motor such as walking, running, jumping, throwing, catching, climbing, escalating and more in as many variations as possible;
- forming and developing basic attitudes and values such as discipline, self improvement, awareness of the concept of training - long-distance marathon.

The palette of instructive-educational means through sport and physical education is a generous one. The discipline has challenging means and methods specific to the European school, specializing in body education, in physicality, as well as oriental methods that engage all the components of the human being, combining the education of the body with the education of the mind and soul. Thus, through physical exercises, the body of the future actor transforms, acquiring new motor skills, physical condition, plasticity and mobility. By resorting to oriental methods, the training program aims at physical, mental and emotional harmonization. "The purpose of all these exercises should be to encourage the freedom of the body and the mind" (Oida and Marshall, 2009, p. 65).

For optimizing performances, the training methods and techniques are based on the established models of the great theatrical art schools, constantly enriched with new formulas and trends. Practice has shown that gymnastics, dynamic games, fencing, martial arts, fitness, dancing and acrobatics are responsible for the actor's physical shape and body expression.

Dynamic games, through their multiple forms, combine motor and mental benefits, contributing to the increase of distributed attention and focus, to educating self-reliance and the development of responsibility. As a form of dialogue between man and the unforeseen, games develop observation, orientation, auditory acuity and team spirit. Through its universal and permanent character, dynamic play is a generator of good mood, imagination and creativity (Chiriță, 1983).

Fencing, a sport of elegance, uses corporeality to the utmost potential. The objectives of training through fencing programs seek, on the one hand, to acquire the skills specific to scene battles in order to deal with the theatrical roles involving the art of battle, and on the other hand, they fall into the sphere of corporeality and artistic expressiveness (Habala, 2007).

Gymnastics, fitness and aerobics improve coordination and balance skills, tone the muscles, strengthen the bone system and have beneficial effects on the cardiovascular system.

Another beneficial sport for actors and singers is Pilates. It combines breath control with motion control at a precise pace and the permanent control of the mind over the body. The conscious execution of each element induces harmony and a gradual increase in concentration power, effects which the actor needs so much (Ganciu, 2012)

Practicing martial arts produces physical, mental and attitude changes. By combining knowledge of Oriental philosophy, medicine, psychology and material science, he also develops a higher consciousness, a capacity for knowledge and understanding of various mechanisms specific to the body and the mind. Physical and mental exercises develop the capacity for self-control and for overcoming one's own limits. Judo, as a situation sport, is based on the unpredictability of the situation and involves a variety of procedures and techniques. The alert pace of the attack, defense and counter-attack phases demands precision and a high response speed (Burlacu and Focșeneanu, 2007).

Conclusions

Achieving a high level of creative freedom can only take place by perfecting physical, mental and emotional harmony. Physical education and sport through specific means fit perfectly into the category of educational sciences responsible for raising the level of performance and improving the control mechanisms of the future actor. Moreover, the rigor, discipline and consistency of the trainings practiced by professional athletes are fully applicable to the actor throughout his entire artistic career. This is the reason why the techniques and trainings practiced by athletes will always provide effective solutions to the actor's training.

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