

Approaching Stanislavski's work at the Opera-Dramatic Studio:

Part 1. Training.

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Abstract: This is the first of a series of two articles written as an investigation of the Opera-Dramatic Studio (1935 – 1938) unpublished files, held at the Moscow Art Theatre Museum, between November 2017 and February 2018. In it, I try to present an analysis of some new aspects of Stanislavski's preparation of the Studio's faculty and his practice with the pupils. After a short introduction to the research, I present the period of the faculty's preparation (Jun-Oct 1935) and the training work conducted with the pupils (Nov-Dec 1935). In it, we analyze three aspects of Stanislavski's practice during his last years: the *étude*, the physical actions and the subconscious moment, as a triple basic-training structure used in the preparation for the future work on the play and the role. To finish, I present a short conclusion on the analyzed material.

Keywords: Stanislavski, Theatre History, Opera-Dramatic Studio, Physical Actions, Training.

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1. Introduction.

Critical tradition has it that Stanislavski, in his last years, developed one (or sometimes two) synthesizing rehearsal method to his System. Either calling it action-analysis (действенный анализ) or the method of physical actions (метод

физических действий). A very practical method for rehearsing had been established during the years in which Stanislavski held the Opera-Dramatic Studio in his house, from 1935 to his death, in 1938. This, nonetheless, has been confirmed mainly by his late pupils' memoirs, manuals and pedagogical practices throughout the 20th Century. This is the first of two articles about the so-called "late Stanislavski's" pedagogical procedures based on research conducted at the Moscow Art Theatre Museum Archives.¹ Based on previously unpublished stenographic transcripts from Stanislavski's lessons for the Studio, I will try to present a picture of the experimenting Stanislavski, which, as I think, questions the established narrative of a solid synthesized method and contributes to an understanding of the Stanislavski System as a continuous living and developing culture.

The first problem that should be addressed when trying to reestablish Stanislavski's practice at the Studio is one, as we mentioned, of the available materials, and how accurately they reflect Stanislavski's practice at the Studio.

For example, a few years prior to the first publication of Stanislavski's *Collected Works* (1953), Vladimir Prokofiev published a series of articles on the Studio in the *Theatre* (Театр) journal, between 1948 and 1951. These articles were, indeed, the first ones to draw upon not only the author's notes and personal memories, but also upon part of the unpublished stenographic transcripts of the Studio's lessons. Prokofiev, however, instead of enlightening Stanislavski's work at the time, ended up casting more of a shadow over it. By mixing documental material with an attempt to narrate his own personal impression of the lessons, he actually reinforced the image of a wise, mature and all-aware Stanislavski that inspired a nearly mystical respect in all around him. This image, that would be endlessly repeated throughout the history of Soviet theatre pedagogy in the 20th Century, is very easily broken when we look at Stanislavski's practice at the Studio, as we shall see.

Some years later, a few other valuable documents were included as appendixes in the first edition of Stanislavski's *Collected Works*, published in eight volumes. The first of these published documents are in Volume III, which contains the second part of *An actor's work* (Работа актера над собой. Воплощение.) Aside from *To the question on the creation of a Theatre Arts Academy* (К вопросу о создании Академии Театрального Искусства), a document which elucidates Stanislavski's plans during the period immediately prior to the Studio, there is also the *Opera-Dramatic Studio's Scenic Program Staging Plan* (Инсценировка программы Оперно-Драматической

Студии), dated 1938. The document is a script, written by Stanislavski for a demonstration of his work at the Studio.

Another document which contributes to painting a picture of Stanislavski's theoretical and practical searches during the Studio years is *The Work on a Role: The Inspector General* (Работа над ролью. Ревизор.). The manuscript, originally edited by Prokofiev and Kristi and transformed into the last portion of Volume IV of the *Collected Works*, is dated 1936 and 1937, coinciding with Stanislavski's work at the Studio. Not only this, but in this material Stanislavski, through his fictitious students and teachers, exposes the theory behind some of his positions about a "new procedure for the work on a role (новый прием работы над ролью)", which, as I have confirmed during research was simultaneously tested in the Opera-Dramatic Studio².

Apart from that, the available material on the practices that took place in the Studio are, as previously stated, restricted to memoirs written by its participants. Among those, the first one that should be mentioned is Lydia Novitskaya's book³, *Lessons on inspiration* (Уроки вдохновения). Published in 1953, it contains theatrical memories and practical exercises for actors. In it, the author thoroughly analyses the Studio's pedagogy through her own practice. Novitskaya was a part of the main group of the Studio's assistant-pedagogues who had studied under Zinaida Sokolova, Stanislavski's sister. Between 1937 and 1938 Novitskaya directed, under Stanislavski's supervision, a student production of *Romeo and Juliet*, based entirely on the new rehearsal methodology developed in the Studio.

Still within the memoir field, Maria Knebel's works must be put into evidence, especially her autobiography, *All my life* (Вся жизнь), which contains her memories of the Studio.

There are also passages about the Studio in other memoirs. This is the case with *General Rehearsal* (Генеральная репетиция), by Aleksandr Guinzburg (Galitch)⁴, one of the Studio's pupils and, later, a greatly successful soviet bard, just like *Encounters with K. S. Stanislavski* (Встречи с К.С. Станиславским), by Boris Zon, a St. Petersburg Opera director who met Stanislavski sometimes through the final working period of the Studio.

In 1987, Irina Vinogradskaya published a compilation of important documents on the Opera-Dramatic Studio's practices. The book, *Stanislavski Rehearses* (Станиславский репетирует), contains a series of Stanislavski's rehearsal

stenographic transcripts, dating from different periods, and a chapter dedicated to the Studio.

This is precisely where we start. The last portion of Vinogradskaya's book is a selection of 15 out of the 38 transcripts made from Stanislavski's classes at the Opera-Dramatic Studio, which are currently filed at the Moscow Art Theatre Museum. Vinogradskaya's selection, therefore, enables only a partial understanding of the works which took place in the Studio, since it is focused mainly around the work on the play and the role (which didn't begin before 1937), but not on the intense previous training that was conducted by Stanislavski during 1935 and that, as we shall see, contains the foundations and the controversies on the so-called new procedure.

This article, therefore, proposes an analysis of some of the unpublished stenographic transcripts from 1935, referring to the initial period of Stanislavski's work, that is, the period which precedes the work made on the play and the role.

2. Stanislavski's work at the Opera-Dramatic Studio.

When Stanislavski met with the pupils of the Opera-Dramatic Studio for the first time, on November 15, 1935, they had already been having classes for a month and a half. Since September 29, the Studio's official opening date, pupils and assistant-pedagogues had been working in full swing in daily, long-duration lessons. Aside from Stanislavski, Solokova and their 11 assistants, the Studio's faculty was comprised of more than 36 pedagogues in different disciplines, ranging from the History of Theatre to Acrobatics and Plasticity⁵. This massive structure allows Vinogradskaya to classify the Studio as a "higher education institution for theatre"⁶, although this, in our opinion, is not its most accurate definition⁷.

Stanislavski's work at the Opera-Dramatic Studio is documented throughout 38 stenographic transcripts in the Stanislavski *Fonds*, at the Moscow Art Theatre Museum. These transcripts can be divided, roughly, between two periods. The first period dates from March 30 to December 13, 1935 and covers both the preparation of the assistant-pedagogues before the beginning of term and the Studio's first semester of classes. There is, then, a gap lasting about a year and the stenographic documentation of lessons isn't brought back until April 27, 1937, going more or less continuously until May 22, 1938. In the second group of transcripts, which shows

Stanislavski's return to the Studio after being absent for a year under medical recommendations, we can notice the development of a new procedure in approaching the play and the role. The work done then alongside pedagogues and pupils, which I have explored in further detail in the third chapter of the dissertation that resulted from this research,, is dedicated to the rehearsals of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Griboyedov's *Woe from Wit*, Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, and Naidenov's *Vaniushin's Children*.

Looking closely at these sets of transcripts, we can see that the first period - between November and December 1935 - provides the basis for the further works on the play and the role to be done. In the first place, it was a period during which Stanislavski's health was relatively good, and this becomes evident through the large amount of encounters between him and the Studio's pedagogues and pupils (not to mention, as clearly indicated in the documents, that he was able to move well enough to demonstrate the correct execution of exercises to his pupils). For a better idea, concerning this short period between November and December 1935 alone, I was able to count 14 encounters only with the Dramatic Arts section, against 15 during the whole year of 1937, and January to May 1938. Secondly, this is the period in which the exercises and basic training procedures are developed, alongside the assistant-pedagogues as well as the pupils, and this would later enable a new approach to the play and the role. I will try, in this article, to exemplify some of the procedures which appear to be of more relevance.

From this earlier period, there is a series of transcripts ranging from May 30 to November 11: these lessons happened during the interval between the decree which created the Studio and the beginning of Stanislavski's meetings with the selected students⁸. This sequence of documents comprehends those produced during the preparatory meetings with the group of assistant-pedagogues.

I shall name this series, to be presented below, *preparatory period of the pedagogical faculty*. In turn, it can also be divided into two parts. The first two meetings happened on May 30 and June 6, 1935, between Stanislavski and the assistants before the Studio's admission exams (which happened between July and August of the same year). In my perspective, these lessons contain the origins of a few important positions, which are necessary for the understanding of Stanislavski's pedagogical practices at the Opera-Dramatic Studio.

3. The preparation of the Studio's faculty

The Opera-Dramatic Studio's faculty was basically composed of a group of eleven people who had studied with Zinaida Sokolova since the mid-1920s. Even though this group was, in Stanislavski's own words, "fully drilled" in the System⁹, the first task in their preparation as assistant-pedagogues was to correct their approach to the actor's work in general. The first approach to the actor's work on a role – precisely the one in which the assistants had been "fully drilled" – didn't match Stanislavski's approaches to the work anymore. In this first procedure, which had its first public formulation during the 1920s in a series of lectures given by Stanislavski at the Bolshoi Studio¹⁰ the rehearsal process was divided into four stages: acquaintance (познавание), experiencing (переживание), embodiment, or incarnation (воплощение) and action (воздействие). It is important to state that all these stages were worked around the table, and not in action¹¹. To Stanislavski the important elements here were the ones drawn from the psychological, interior analysis of the play and the role. Bits and volitive tasks (куски и волевые задачи), will (хотение) and the experience generated through affective memory¹² (переживание через аффективную память) were elements to be carefully appropriated by the actor before they were cleared to go on stage.

Thus, the first lesson given to the assistants, dated May 30, 1935, is dedicated to the critique of the previously established work procedure on the play and the role. He states, on this day, to the future pedagogues:

Before, we tried to remember emotions from previous rehearsals. But as it happens, today I might be in a certain mood and, tomorrow, another. Today it is raining, tomorrow will be sunny, today I had some pork, tomorrow I'll have porridge. Emotions don't stay the same, and violence inflicted upon emotions leads to bad acting, to artifice (ремесло).¹³

In fact, action as an element for the actor's inner creative state¹⁴ (сценическое самочувствие) had already been central to Stanislavski's thought for a few years. Back in 1930, that is, five years prior to the beginning of the Studio's activities, Stanislavski began a revision of the previous approach to the work on a role, that centered on the so-called "volitive tasks". In France, while recovering from a fulminating heart attack suffered two years before while on stage, he began to draw a staging plan for *Othello*, which was simultaneously being rehearsed in Moscow under

Iliya Sudakov's direction. Away from the daily rehearsing practice, Stanislavski started developing the action as a central element to the actor's work on the role. In the plan, he wrote on the importance of what "they [the actors] will do physically, that is, how will one act (and no longer experience (переживать), God forbid one thinks about emotion during this initial phase) in face of the given circumstances? (...)"¹⁵. Stanislavski's plan, however, wasn't followed.¹⁶ The new approach, then, would have to wait until 1935 to be verified and practically developed, at the Opera-Dramatic Studio.

Going back to the lesson on May 30, 1935, we read:

Before, we would fill the actor's mind with lessons on history, everyday life, etc., and as a result, actors would go on stage with their minds full and unable to achieve their work. I won't deny it is necessary to study different costumes, history and whatnot, but, first of all, we must start from the action. THIS IS WHERE LIES THE BASE¹⁷ of our art form. Act, action, drama - all of these come from the greek verb "to act".¹⁸

From the action, Stanislavski stated, now "WE MUST CREATE A CONTINUOUS LINE OF EVENTS, (...) a line of events that'd be analogous to life."¹⁹. In contrast to the "inner line" of the "volitive tasks", it was necessary to draw the pedagogues' attention to "TRUE ACTION (настоящее действие)" instead of "representation (представление)". According to Stanislavski, true action needs to be discovered and assembled into a "series of accomplished tasks, which creates the LINE OF PHYSICAL ACTIONS". As soon as the actor feels the truth of the exterior line, the interior line immediately appears to them."²⁰

The reorientation of the System's pedagogical approach and its focus on action becomes clearer upon a reading of the second transcript, that accounts for Stanislavski's second meeting with the assistant-pedagogues, in June 6, 1935.

This lesson begins with a curious episode. On this day, described by Novitskaya in her memoirs as warm and sunny, Stanislavski entered the classroom and asked one of the pedagogues to teach him a lesson on the System, "a lesson on the elements of the inner creative state."²¹ After a certain surprise expressed by part of the class - "the dread brought on by the idea of a teaching a lesson on the System to its creator!"²² - the group asked if they could, instead, choose one of the elements and speak about it. Then, one of the students rose and started to elaborate her thoughts on the element of *communication* (общение).

After patiently listening to the theoretical lecture, Stanislavski says:

I have never given lectures such as this one and consider them to be detrimental to the process. Each of the truths you gathered into the same pile is gigantic, and several lessons would be necessary in order to understand a single one of them. One can't just spill out a lecture the way you do, each of these truths must lead the pupil by themselves, based on practical lessons and your directions, even if you all are great speakers. You have just exposed something that has been my research object for the last 50 years and, even so, I sincerely admit: I couldn't understand a word of what you just said.²³

Following up, he stated that "It is possible to give uncountable lectures on art. But we do not need that. We do not need '[unreadable] to drown' our pupils in terms, we cannot use such a formal approach."²⁴ , and continuing, he emphasized the theoretical changes made to the System during the years prior to that moment.

It is interesting to note here that every lesson is directed towards preventing excessive and overtly scientific theorization from the future pedagogues:

You eat a piece of candy, savouring it for three minutes, at the most. But if I were to ask you to write about it, you would hand me brochures full of specific terms. Now, give this brochure to your pupils, and then make them eat the same candy after that. They will choke on it! This is what you are doing. You will fill their heads with lectures and then have them do the exercises. It will be a blur in their minds and they will get lost. Moreover, your lessons should not be lectures, everything must be made through simple actions, get the pupils to do simple actions, and may they seek through these actions all they need through asking you questions. The number of truths a pupil needs to fully appreciate is not that high. In a lecture system, a lecturer walks in, spills a number of terms to the pupils, and after that there is nothing left inside their heads.²⁵

After that, Stanislavski went on to describe the intended approach when working with pupils: "When you apply the exercises, do it not for the sake of the exercises alone, but for what they mean. Don't use terminology. (The terms I invented have no scientific meaning whatsoever)."²⁶ , and, immediately after that:

In order to teach the way I want you to, you need example after example after example. You need leading examples, in order for the pupils to understand what is asked of them. For the pupil to understand it organically, the pedagogue must have around 20 thousand new exercises ready to go.²⁷

In other words: the priority, when working with pupils, should be practical experimentation, putting the theory behind each of the System's elements on the background. It is, in my view, a position of principles: action as a central element not only when approaching the dramatic material, but also of pedagogical practices in themselves²⁸.

The three last transcripts referring to the preparatory period of the Studio's faculty are dated later than those two and confirm such a position. Containing the lessons given on November 5, 9 and 11, 1935, they attest to the period which starts right after the admission exams and precedes Stanislavski's first encounter with the pupils²⁹. In other words, Stanislavski meets the assistants at a period during which they are already in daily contact with the pupils and we witness his efforts to conduct this work, even if from afar.

Stanislavski's first concern seems to be, in that sense, that the assistant-pedagogues manage to understand that creating a sense of ethics and discipline on the new pupils was essential for the work conducted in the Studio. He states, for instance, on the lesson given on November 5, to the pedagogues:

We must get the pupils to understand well what is collective art. We must get the correct worldview to be passed on to them. Without it, the following may occur: an actor comes in for curtain call, gets a bunch of flowers, and that is that. He decides: "I'm a genius". A specific kind of discipline must be at work: once we begin, discipline should be kept to the end. There should be no concession, or rust will start to spread. (...)

If we give in, as little as it may seem, towards breaking discipline - this is the end of it. A conscious attitude towards discipline must become rooted in them. They must stick to their work. Work is our life. When the collective maintains the discipline, then no individual alone is able to break it and ruin it all.³⁰

We may observe, through this excerpt, a change in the concepts of ethics and discipline. Indeed, discipline was cultivated by Stanislavski from the early years of his professional development. We can observe the way he describes, in *My Life in Art*, the fascination felt as he witnessed the rehearsing procedures used by Kroneck's troupe³¹. Similarly, the second volume of *An Actor's Work* contains a chapter named "*Ethics and discipline*". In it, we see an approach to the concepts similar to those in *My Life in Art*. We see how much a military-like discipline is necessary, mainly due to the complexity of the theatrical apparatus, and even more so in collective scenes, the so-called "mass scenes"³². As early as the first volume of his book on the work of the

actor, military vocabulary is widely used by his "teacher" alter-egos, who often refer to pupils as "squad", "battalion" and to the training and "drills"³³. The excerpt cited above, taken from the November 5 lesson, despite appearances, inspires different content for the concept of discipline. Novitskaya writes in her memoir about the same lesson:

[We need] For them to understand they must, [said Stanislavski], together, form a collective creator. We don't need the *previous* [my italics] military discipline, but the consciousness that "I am not alone"; if I break discipline, this will interfere with the collective work. Future actors must love their work, lean on it, and understand this is their lives.³⁴

Interestingly, this excerpt narrated by Novitskaya can be compared to the direct transcript, found in the stenographic transcript:

You must love not yourselves in art, but art in yourselves. [You must] Understand that all of you must be a collective creator. We don't need the old military discipline, but a new one, completely different, conscious, founded in a firm position: "I AM (Я ЕСМЬ)". And should I break this discipline - I am exterminating my entire battalion.³⁵

That is to say, not the previously implicated military discipline, but a new one, brought about by the consciousness that one is not alone, thus, collective work depends on them as well as the whole group.

Let us compare this once more with the "*Ethics and discipline*" chapter, in which we can see, curiously, how the need for ethics and discipline is explained by the degree of complexity and danger of the theatrical apparatus. In other words, if one is not disciplined enough for collective work, this could cause disastrous accidents – the given example is that of a lighting device falling on an actor, causing his death, by an oversight of the lighting technician³⁶. Here, on the contrary: the need for an ethics code, much more than that of discipline, is brought about through commitment to the collective work and the collective character of artistic work.

This shift, according to Stanislavski, came from the simple answer to a question, which should be sought along with the pupils: "what do I exist for?"³⁷

He is the first one to answer this question - the first question asked to pupils and pedagogues at the beginning of their work at the Studio – by drawing on his memories. He states:

I remember when, in Leningrad, I went out at two in the morning and saw bonfires, many of them... It was night, and -25 degrees outside! People were standing in line to buy tickets to our performance. In that moment I understood a lot. We were going on stage very carelessly and acting for an audience who had not slept at night in order to get tickets to see our play.³⁸

This example is repeated a few times during his lessons in 1935³⁹. With it, Stanislavski creates the concept of the *supertask*, which, at least since the times of the planning for a Theatre Arts Academy, should be present in every single exercise⁴⁰. The supertask, for Stanislavski, has an ethical component, first of all. By answering the question "what do I exist for [in theatre]?" with a personal, ethically oriented example, he enables the creation of a logical system for collective work which is based on trust rather than coercion.

The following lesson, dated November 9, followed the practical preparation of pedagogues for working with the pupils. Here, questions concerning the pedagogical procedures were explored in a more concrete way. After a brief reminder that "every element [of the System] is equally important"⁴¹, Stanislavski started to speak about the concrete needs which come from working with each pupil:

You feel, because of the pupils' inexperience, there is something valuable about them. It is their spontaneity! How can we preserve that? I am not experienced enough for that. I have not followed their work closely, which is why I am talking to you. Here, we must find this approach: one thing for a pupil, but another for a different one.⁴²

Following up, we see him return to the importance of working practically first: "Work with them practically at first, and then explain: 'that happens because of this', 'this is like so,' but for now, do not give them shortcuts. And only after that do you properly name the elements. Maybe it is for the best."⁴³ For Stanislavski, it was necessary to "have these actor pupils go on stage to act, and not to represent."⁴⁴

Besides that, in these lessons Stanislavski also worked directly with the pedagogues, asking them to perform the same exercises they were applying to the pupils. Therefore, both on November 5 and 9, the more direct approach on pedagogy

was followed by comments on exercises the members of the faculty executed themselves, concerning training of the scenic speech on both occasions.

This had a double purpose. At the same time Stanislavski needed to prepare the assistant-pedagogues for dealing with the pupils, he also had to ensure that their perceptions on the System itself were adequate.

The last lesson before Stanislavski met the pupils for the first time is dated November 11, 1935. In it, he focused on two subjects: the line of physical actions and its connection to subconscious creation.

We shall go into more detail on Stanislavski's concept of the subconscious and the importance of developing it for the Studio's practice later. For now, we can focus on how Stanislavski put his entire System on a subordinate position in relation to subconscious creation, a sort of "ocean of artistic creation" into which the creator must work their way. From the opening statements of the lecture, Stanislavski said that the entire System "exists to cause, through conscious technique, the subconscious creation and, thus, get our nature to start acting, as nature is the greatest artist there is."⁴⁵ , and the purpose of all we do is "to bring us closer to the remaining 9/10, the System with a "capital letter", to subconscious creation. All of it is for this."⁴⁶

The image of an "ocean of the subconscious" that, according to Tcherkasski⁴⁷ , was taken by Stanislavski from Hatha Yoga, appears for the first time on the Studio's practice in this way:

In order to walk on the threshold of the subconscious one must lead themselves to the subconscious. You arrive at the margins of the subconscious ocean; a wave hits your calves, then another one hits your knees, and another finally takes you into the ocean, later pushing you back to shore. (...)

The correct inner creative state, supertask and through action lead us into the threshold of the subconscious. One must find stability at the threshold, while swimming the ocean becomes our final goal. We must constantly remind the pupils of their final goal, we must remind them it is leading them into the subconscious.⁴⁸

Moving further, Stanislavski went on to watch *études* presented by the pedagogues. Here, too, we see him leading the attention of his students to subconscious creation. One of them, for instance, presented an exercise in which she manipulated an imaginary object. Stanislavski resumed his comment with: "The more calm you are able to find, the closer to the threshold of the subconscious [you will be]."⁴⁹ . Or, to another student: "A simple muscle relaxation exercise can lead you to

the threshold of the subconscious."⁵⁰ , or, yet: "By acting in an ultra-naturalistic way, you may reach your subconscious."⁵¹

The exercises Stanislavski led with the pedagogues in order for them to get to "the threshold of the subconscious" were "objectless actions" exercises, or "action with imaginary objects" exercises. Those, a central part of the Studio's pedagogical practice between 1935 and 1936, had been present, as observed, since the faculty's preparatory stages. The procedure, in a way, was an attempt to solidify a position which Stanislavski had been maturing since the beginning of the 1930s - that is, that action was a central element of the actor's technique. Simple physical actions - within the imaginary objects exercise - were, then, "tests" for determining the composition of what he began to refer to as "the lifeline of the human body (линия жизни человеческого тела)". It is precisely in connection to this concept that he demonstrated the necessity of these exercises. Then, for example, when asked about "how to work at home", he responded: "You must follow the lines of simple, elementary physical actions. It is possible and necessary to work on the lifeline of the human body at home. Even so, do not break the logics of physical action."⁵²

The "lifeline of the human body" was, precisely, the first step towards the creation of "the lifeline of the human spirit (линия жизни человеческого духа)", something that could only be created from subconscious creation, according to Stanislavski. He states: "I repeat: if you are able to correctly act the life in the human body of Hamlet, Othello, then you will act the life of the human spirit of it."⁵³

The period concerning his work with the assistant-pedagogues reveals the experimental character of Stanislavski's practice. Here, he redirected the entire System, regarding the creation of the role as well as the practical approach to lessons and rehearsals towards the action, which must be fulfilled before being theorized or understood.

On the lesson given on June 4, 1935, for instance, he says: "Keep on doing everything the way you used to, while you are unable to say to yourselves: 'This won't do anymore'. Don't be afraid to change. Confuse yourselves, lose yourselves, this is creating, this is researching."⁵⁴. That is, the assistant-pedagogues are to continue teaching the way they used to, regardless of critiques, and there, in the Studio, they were merely "doing experiments, we can change and keep researching."⁵⁵ . On the lesson given on November 5, he circles back to the theme: "As long as I am healthy, I

will work with you as much as we need to. (...) My job is to show you your GOAL (ЦЕЛЬ). Let us reach together for this goal, in a group effort."⁵⁶

Therefore, the Studio's practice was, in fact, about preparing an experimental field, a true-to-form laboratory where he and his faculty could experiment, change and continue to research, in his own words. In my opinion, this point becomes even clearer when looking at the lessons Stanislavski gave to the Studio's pupils during the final months of 1935. In the following article of this series on Stanislavski's training at the Opera-Dramatic Studio, therefore, we shall see how the direct work with the pupils (from November 1935 on) led to the creation of the basis of what would be later be named "the new approach for working on a role".

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1 The research as a whole resulted in a dissertation called “The late Stanislavski in action: translation and analysis of the Opera-Dramatic Studio experiences (1935 – 1938)”, presented at the University of São Paulo, Brazil, in early 2019.

2 The close relation between Stanislavski’s experiments at the Studio and his late attempts to summarize a new procedure for the actor’s work is explored further in third chapter of the dissertation that was presented as an outcome of this research, *The Late Stanislavski in Action: Translation and Analysis of the Opera-Dramatic Studio Experiences (1935 – 1938)*. See Moschkovich, 2019.

3 Lydia Novitskaya (1901-1992) – was a Soviet actor and director who studied under Zinaida Sergueevna Sokolova, Stanislavski's sister. Novitskaya was an assistant-pedagogue among Stanislavski's faculty in the Opera-Dramatic Studio, and she directed her pupils on *Romeo and Juliet*, under Stanislavski's supervision.

4 Guinzburg's autobiography (GALITCH, 1991), brought to our attention by Sergei Tcherkasski, is quite interesting and is surely worth a small note. It was written outside of the USSR (the author was forcibly exiled in 1974 and died in Paris, in 1977), and therefore contains reflections which obviously could not be published in the country. His point of view, evidently, is the one of a teenager pupil at the Studio, which must be taken into account. Nevertheless, he makes interesting remarks: "It was a strange institution - the genius master's last Studio, the last offspring of the glorious actor and director, one of the founders of the Moscow Art Theatre, creator of the famous "Stanislavski System", studied all over the world.

What a strange institution, strange indeed!

Well, in the first place, roughly a third of the faculty were close or not-so-close family members of Konstantin Sergueevitch Stanislavski himself. (...) But, of course, of course - There were Stanislavski, Leonidov, Podgorni, Knipper-Tchekkhova, there were very experienced pedagogues, and the nights at the Studio in which we could see and listen up close to great actors such as Moskvina, Katchalov, Tarkhanov...

And that is not all: a great part of the people in there - myself included - a very simple question was never asked: how could it be that out of thirty people, picked out of three thousand (...) no important actors, not even a little important, came out of this (...)?

The answer is simple: it did not truly matter to anyone whether the pupils would, in fact, become actors or not. We had "acting classes" (актёрское мастерство) - sure - but we were, in essence, wooden dolls on a chessboard proudly named the "Sanctuary-Theatre", we were inexperienced little rats on whom Stanislavski tested his new theory - "the theory of physical actions". (1991: 349-350)

5 Vinogradskaya, 2000, p. 432

6 Ibid., p. 431

7 The analysis of the Studio's materials reveals, for instance, that although its faculty was comprised of over 50 members, the Studio remained without a defined pedagogical program until 1937. In 1935 Stanislavski states, for instance: “(...) We have no program, whatsoever, so far. The Narkompros trusted us, so we’d start to work without a program”. (KS 21138) It is only at the end of 1937 that Stanislavski formulates the program, and proceeds to putting up a staging model for it. See KS 21170, for example.

8 We attempted a historical approach on the creation and admission exams to the Opera-Dramatic Studio in an article published as: Moschkovich, D. (2019). O último estúdio de Stanislávski. (Stanislavski’s last studio: a historical approach) *Sala Preta*, 19(1), 229-259. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2238-3867.v19i1p229-259>

9 This is how Stanislavski refers to the group of pedagogues-to-be in a letter to his American translator, Elizabeth Hapgood, dated December 20, 1936: “A year ago I opened my new school-studio for Opera and Dramatic Art. Its origins are the following: my sister Zinaida Sergueevna (...) had, for a long time, a group of private students that she drilled in a way, that even at a very young age, it was possible to hand them the pedagogical work at the new studio.” See Stanislavski, 1999, pp. 584 – 585

10 These talks have been carefully transcribed by actor Konkordia Antarova, and later edited and published in: ANTAROVA, Konkordia E. *Беседы К. С. Станиславского В студии Большого театра в 1918--1922 гг. [K.S. Stanislavsky's talks at the Bolshoi Theatre, 1918 – 1922]*, Moscow, VTO, 1947. See, also Krist & Prokofiev’s Preface to Stanislavski, 1957, p. 31.

11 Kristi & Prokofiev, in Stanislavski, 1957, p. 14.

12 Later on, the term *affective memory* (аффективная память) is changed to *emotional memory* (эмоциональная память). More on the subject and the term's appropriation in the West, see Sergei Tcherkasski's book, *Stanislavski - Boleslavsky - Strasberg*, RUTI, St. Petersburg, 2016.

13 KS 21137. All the references to the stenographic transcripts will be given as KS, that is, the *Stanislavski Fonds*, followed by the number under which the document is catalogued.

14 The famous "lung scheme" is an articulated graphics of the System created by Stanislavski and published with the second volume of *An Actor’s Work* (1955: 360). It illustrates the "System's elements", which were consciously used to obtain the inner creative state, which in turn brought the actor to the "threshold of the subconscious". At the studio, Stanislavski provides the assistant pedagogues with a similar illustration on the May 30, 1935 lesson. See KS 21137.

15 Stanislavski, 1945, p. 37

16 According to Vassina and Labaki, Ilyia Sudakov "was not gifted with enough talent and intelligence to execute Stanislavski's acting plan" (2015, p. 70), which lead his show to absolute failure and its exclusion from the repertoire after ten exhibitions. (idem)

17 All capitals letters appear in the original transcripts as a means of denoting vocal stress on a matter.

18 KS 21137

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Novitskaya, *op. cit.*, p. 49

22 Ibid.

23 KS 21138

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Page 8 of Stanislavski's journals, dated from 1912 to 1938, shows a curious note: "The communist statement: the social being determines (not thought, but another word). My system corresponds to this statement, since life is my starting point, from practice to theoretical rules." (1986, p. 294) Certainly, this is a sparse and inconclusive note, but it helps when thinking about the central role of practical experience in Stanislavski's experiments then, and how he saw the constant need for his practice to dialog with his surrounding reality.

29 Let us be reminded that lessons officially started in September 19, 1935, but the first one given by Stanislavski takes place in November 15 of that year.

30 KS 21139

31 See, for example, the chapter "Meiningerians" in *My Life in Art* (1986: 129)

32 Stanislavski, 1955, p. 237.

33 See, for example, the chapter "Inner psychological drives" in the first volume of *An Actor's Work*, where Tortsov first refers to the student body as "battalion" (1954: 307).

34 Novitskaya, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

35 KS 21139

36 Stanislavski, 1955, p. 239

37 KS 21139

38 Ibid.

39 Cf., for example, the lesson given on November 17, 1935 (KS 21144).

40 The Theatre Arts Academy plan was the unrealized plan for an innovating Academy, dated 1931-1933. For more details on the project of the Academy, that ended up turning itself into the Opera-Dramatic Studio, see the already mentioned article: MOSCHKOVICH, 2019b: 234-240)

41 KS 21140

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 KS 21141

46 Ibid.

47 Tcherkasski, 2016, p. 94

48 KS 21141

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 KS 21138.

55 Ibid.

56 KS 21139