This chapter reconstructs Eugenio Barba's theoretical reflections on apprenticeship. Beginning with the idea of a laboratory as a space for technical research, it ends with ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology) and with the idea of the theatre as an unending school, an environment where, through technical principles, one tries to transmit ethical principles.

Training is the transcription of Eugenio Barba's commentary for two films on Odin Teatret, directed by Torgeir Wethal for Italian TV in November 1972. The actors mentioned in the text are: Jens Christensen, Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Tage Larsen, Torgeir Wethal and Else Marie Laukvik.

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**PHYSICAL TRAINING**

During the eight years of Odin Teatret's existence, its actors have trained regularly. Our vision of this training, its forms and aims, have undergone a continuous evolution due to experience, to the contribution of new members and to new needs which have grown up during the work.

At the beginning, the training was composed of a series of exercises taken from pantomime, ballet, gymnastics, sport - exercises which we knew or which we had reconstructed. Training was collective: everybody did the same exercises at the same tempo and in the same way.

In time, it became clear to us that rhythm varies from person to person. Some have a fast vital rhythm, others a slower one. We began to talk of organic rhythm and by this we meant variation, pulsation as with the heart. From then on the training was based on this rhythm. It became personalised, individual.

Gradually, the exercises which we developed, although remaining the same, changed their meaning. The exercise is like a gate in a slalom through which the actors guide their physical activity, thereby disciplining it.

In our theatre, training has always consisted of an encounter between discipline, that is, the exercise's set form and the surpassing of that set form, which the exercise represents. The motivation for this surpassing is individual, varying from actor to actor, and it is this justification which determines the significance of the training.

At the present time - October 1972 - the training is based on very elementary actions-exercises which involve the whole body, making it react totally. The entire body has to think and adapt itself continually to each situation as it arises. The first example is an exercise which demands precision. You have to touch or hit your
companion's chest with your foot on a precise spot just above the breastbone so that s/he doesn't get hurt.

(Demonstration: duel with the feet striking the chest)

This exercise serves to inspire confidence in your companion. It sounds paradoxical to awaken confidence through an action which frightens and provokes a defensive reaction. But it is a matter of having and inspiring confidence in your companion and kicking in such a way that s/he is able to overcome the defensive reflex. The whole body must react, adapt itself, yet work with precision and with all the senses at their sharpest.

This type of exercise, demanding continual self-adaptation, can vary but always requires precision and a cool head. The actors must be carried along by their physical intelligence; it is the entire body which does the thinking and these thoughts are already actions, reactions.

Another exercise involves attempting to strike your companion's neck or ankles with a stick in order to provoke an immediate and precise reaction.

(Demonstration: duel with sticks)

This feeling of trust in your own reflexes, in your own physical intelligence and in your companion becomes apparent through physical actions. But this trust is developed further. In our theatre there are no teachers. The actors themselves have developed their training. Those who have been here longer put their experience at the disposal of the more recent arrivals. Helped by one of the older actors, the younger one begins to assimilate a particular series of exercises. When s/he has mastered these, s/he will be able to personalise them, that is, to adapt them to his/her own rhythm and justification.

First, each exercise is assimilated in a precise way.

(Demonstration: acrobatics)

Once the separate exercises are assimilated and you have mastered them completely, they can be linked, fused together in a series, like a wave of two, three or four exercises, with a different rhythm.

The exercises have now been assimilated. Having complete mastery over them and having linked them together in little waves of three or four, you can now work with them absolutely freely according to your own rhythm.

This series of acrobatic exercises is an example of physical reactions being carried to their extreme consequence. Our body really can fly, can meet the floor as if weightless, without fear. The psychological value of these exercises is enormous. They appear to be very difficult, and for someone who is confronted with them for the first time they may seem quite impossible. However, even after the first day's work, helped patiently by one of the others, you are able to do one or two of these exercises reasonably well. After a month's daily work the new member is able to do almost all of them, not perfectly perhaps, but it does not matter; there is plenty of
time ahead. What counts is the knowledge that s/he can succeed; what seemed impossible is within reach if s/he works every day.

In this lies the essential value of the training: daily self-discipline, personalisation of the work, stimulation of and effect on one's companions and milieu.

Now another example of a few exercises which form the basis of the individual work of a group of actors.

(Demonstration)

Training, as we practise it in our theatre, does not teach how to be an actor, how to play a role in the Commedia dell'Arte style or how to interpret a tragic or grotesque part. It doesn't give a sense of being able to do something, that one has acquired certain skills. Training is an encounter with the reality which one has chosen: whatever you do, do it with your whole self. For this reason we talk about training and not learning or apprenticeship. Although all our actors are formed here in our theatre, we are not a theatre school in the usual sense since there are no teachers or study programme. The actors themselves devise and are responsible for their training. But in order to achieve this degree of freedom, there must be self-discipline. And this is why training is a necessity for everyone, irrespective of how long one has been working in the theatre.

Whatever you do, do it with your whole self. It sounds like - and is - a facile and rhetorical phrase. Anybody can say it. But we have only one possibility: to live it, to carry it out in our daily acts. And the training reminds us of this.

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**VOCAL TRAINING**

The voice, in its logical and its sonorous aspect, is a material force moving, guiding, moulding, stopping. One can, in fact, talk about vocal actions which provoke an immediate reaction. Now we will demonstrate the voice as an active force.

Using a language that she has invented and which she improvises as she goes along, Iben leads two of her colleagues and tries to make them do what she wants. Her voice acts all the time; it tries to persuade, beg, compel her companions to execute her wishes, while at the same time her voice reacts, i.e. adapts itself to what her companions do. They have their backs to her so that they don't see her. They do nothing, play no role, only react, respond with their entire bodies to her vocal stimulus.

(Demonstration: the voice as an active force)

The voice is a physiological process and engages the whole organism projecting it into space. The voice is an extension of the body and gives us the possibility of concrete intervention even at a distance. Like an invisible hand the voice extends out from our body and acts, and our entire body lives and participates in this action. The
body is the visible part of the voice and one can see how and where the impulse which will become sound and speech is born. The voice is an invisible body operating in space. There is no separation, no duality: voice and body. There are only actions and reactions which engage our body in its entirety.

Our work has only one aim: to preserve the spontaneous organic reactions of the voice and at the same time stimulate the individual vocal fantasy of each actor.

The working situation is one in which the body and its invisible part, the voice, are constantly adapting themselves, i.e. reacting to stimuli. Here is a demonstration of how the voice reacts to stimuli.

I am going to ask Jens to hold my hand with his voice and let his speech emerge from the part of his body which is nearest my hand. Just that: hold my hand with his voice and answer the movements of my hand; in other words, react to its actions.

(Demonstration: the voice reacting to stimuli)

In the situation we have just shown, the stimulus rebounded as a vocal reaction. The body of the actor who was speaking was totally engaged. The whole body spoke, constantly adapting itself, directed towards the exterior with a very definite point of reference. The rule is this: for precise reactions the stimuli must also be precise - precise in character and precisely situated in space.

I ought now to mention the spoken text. In our daily life when we talk we don't concentrate on the words, we don't interpret the words coldly. Our speech is carried on a wave, the respiratory wave, which may be long or short. If the process is spontaneous, we do not think about the words. Nothing impedes us or restrains us if we have a sense of security; in other words if we are not afraid, if we are not embarrassed, if we do not have to be careful of what we say or are not speaking in a foreign language that we are not altogether at home with. This sense of security must be recreated within the artificial situation that is the theatrical situation. We must therefore eliminate the objective blocking of the text which can occur if one has continuously to force oneself to remember it. The text must be learnt by heart so perfectly that it flows without the least difficulty as if it were a spontaneous process, allowing the actor, through his/her actions, to reach out in space, oblivious of the words learnt. In reality, even if the words were written by someone else - or if, as in my case now where I am using words which are not my own, were not invented by me but were passed on to me by a culture and a tradition - these words assume life and presence through my whole being as personal reactions.

What we call stimulus is the starting point which allows the actors to continue freely alone. From this point of departure, the actors themselves select and develop their own images, their own stimuli to which they react. This is the second phase of the work process.

(Vocal improvisation)

That which we call stimulus is a concrete, precise yet suggestive image which appeals to the actors' fantasy. It is a starting point which allows them to take the
original image and graft it onto their own fantasy, their own interior universe, thus developing their own images and associations which are vocal reactions.

In this way, although the point of departure, the initial image, is given from outside, decided by another, the whole process is personalised and becomes the individual expression of the actor's own universe.

If there are precise stimuli, there are also precise reactions, provided that there are no impediments. There may be objective impediments such as straining to remember the text, or psychological impediments stemming from a feeling of fear or lack of security. It is essential throughout this whole process to create a feeling of safety around those who are working. The results depend on this.

As I said before, if there are precise stimuli there are also precise reactions. Then a sonorous logic will become apparent, revealing itself through the rhythm, i.e. variations in tone, pauses, intensity, changes in volume, stress on particular parts of the sentences, micro-pauses before certain words and before breathing in, which instead of causing gaps in our speech, sharpen its sense and nerve.

This rhythm, this physical and vocal pulsation are signs that the whole body is alive. It is this pulsation which vibrates the fabric of sounds and meaning which is our body, present in and projected into space.

(Vocal improvisation)

Throughout the entire working process one must resist the temptation to try to obtain original results, to emit strange noises, inarticulate shouts, transforming our vocal reactions into a sonorous magma which may sound dramatic but is strained and artificial. You must forget your own voice and stretch out with all your body towards the stimulus and react to it.

Then the body lives, the voice lives, palpitates, vibrates like a flame, like a ray of sunshine which emanates from our body, illuminating and warming the space around it. From this modest point of departure and through regular work over the years, there springs our own vocal flora whose roots live in, are our body with its experience and its longings.