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**The Knowledge of the Body - An Interpretive Framework of the
Conscious Body in Contemporary Actor Training**

– DOCTORAL THESIS –

Summary

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1. INTRODUCTION

Personal motivation

A recurring question throughout both my acting and pedagogical career concerns what is shared in the embodied knowledge of both the actor and the dancer. This question serves as a point of departure for the present dissertation, which seeks to develop a possible interpretative framework for rethinking the role of movement within contemporary actor training.

During my acting studies, I encountered an approach rooted in physical theatre that fundamentally shaped my relationship to the body and to training. This approach, developed

within the creative and pedagogical practice of Péter Uray, became decisive for me not primarily as a movement form, but as a distinct working methodology. In my doctoral research, I aim to construct, on the basis of experiences gained through this method, an interpretative framework that offers new perspectives on understanding the role of movement in actor training.

My research departs from the recognition that contemporary theatre simultaneously encompasses both traditional and postdramatic forms, which in turn poses new challenges for contemporary actor training. In my view, training should not be based on the unintegrated accumulation of diverse techniques, but rather on the understanding and development of general competences within a specifically theatrical context. This shift in perspective also necessitates a reconsideration of the role of the body.

Research thesis and structure

The research examines how the role of movement training can be interpreted within contemporary actor training. Its fundamental premise is that movement should not be treated as an independent subject, but as a physical approach to acting, centered on bodily awareness. To explore this, the dissertation is structured around five key concepts:

- body (bodymind)
- consciousness
- attunement
- movement patterns
- organization

The investigation of these concepts is conducted through three perspectives: theoretical, historical, and practical. The theoretical part clarifies the meanings of the concepts on philosophical, primarily phenomenological grounds. The historical perspective focuses on two models that have had a significant impact on contemporary actor training: the work of Eugenio Barba and Odin Teatret, and the Viewpoints system associated with Mary Overlie, as well as Anne Bogart and the SITI Company.

The practical-pedagogical section examines Péter Uray's movement-based actor training system through the established interpretative framework, demonstrating how the developed concepts manifest in teaching practice. The practical perspective not only supports the thesis of the research, but also contributes to understanding how these concepts can become integral parts of pedagogical and training practices.

2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONSCIOUS BODY

Overview of the theoretical perspective

The theoretical perspective approaches the five key concepts that constitute the backbone of the research primarily from a philosophical standpoint, while also incorporating psychological and neuroscientific sources where relevant, in the spirit of interdisciplinarity. The chapter addresses the relationship between body and mind, questions of perception and consciousness, different interpretations of attunement, as well as the phenomena of movement patterns and organization. It does not aim at an exhaustive mapping of these concepts, but rather seeks points of reference that facilitate a more nuanced understanding of them. These five concepts also provide the structural framework for the subsequent parts of the research, now situated within the context of actor training.

The concept of the bodymind

This subchapter examines the concept of the bodymind through philosophical, phenomenological, and partly interdisciplinary approaches to the relationship between body and mind. Its point of departure is that the dualistic perspective, which long shaped Western thought—from Plato to Descartes—interpreted body and mind as separate entities in a hierarchical relationship.

From the early twentieth century onward, philosophical thinking—primarily within phenomenology—proposes a break with this position and introduces a new conception of the body: the body is no longer understood as an object, but as the fundamental mode of access to the world, emphasizing the intertwinement of the physical and the mental instead of their division. Within this perspective, concepts such as “bodymind” (David Edward Shaner, also adopted by Phillip Zarrilli), the hyphenated “body-mind” (Yuasa Yasuo), “mindbody” (William H. Poteat), and the “mindful body” (Maxine Sheets-Johnstone) emerge—and the list could be extended further.

The subchapter presents the contributions of William H. Poteat, Phillip B. Zarrilli, David Edward Shaner, Yuasa Yasuo, and Richard Shusterman to the formation of this conceptual field, with particular attention to how these ideas relate to practice, self-cultivation, and actor training. Findings from contemporary cognitive science and neuroscience also reinforce the inseparability of body and mind, suggesting that physical experience does not merely accompany, but actively shapes conceptual thinking.

The subchapter emphasizes that actor training must confront a linguistic challenge: within contemporary discourse, the term “body” no longer refers solely to the physical body, but to the unity of the bodymind.

The concept of consciousness

This subchapter draws on definitions, usages, and synonymous terms of the English concept *consciousness*, emphasizing that consciousness cannot be reduced merely to thinking. Max Velmans primarily highlights that the concept of consciousness should be approached from its everyday meaning, as free as possible from theoretical distortions. In contrast, Brian O’Shaughnessy examines the conditions of conscious states, emphasizing the roles of experience, attention, and mental activity.

In examining the phenomenon of attention, the dissertation first underscores that—according to O’Shaughnessy—attention is a system of limited scope. Following William James, attention can also be understood as a selective mechanism that determines which stimuli, among many, enter the field of conscious experience. Felipe de Brigard and Jesse Prinz describe the relationship between attention and consciousness as both necessary and sufficient, from which the dissertation concludes that consciousness arises in the presence of attention and ceases in its absence. This suggests that the regulation of attention is one of the key factors in the dynamics of consciousness.

The subchapter further investigates the roles of proprioception, touch, and kinaesthesia in relation to bodily awareness. According to O’Shaughnessy, despite its recessive character, proprioception is a necessary condition for all physical action. From the relationship between short- and long-term body image, the dissertation concludes that spatial experiences acquired through learning new movement forms can become integrated into the long-term body image, where they stabilize as recessive content and can later be re-accessed through attention. The dissertation agrees with O’Shaughnessy’s view that touch and proprioception are embodied manifestations of attention, and thus can contribute to the body functioning as a more sensitive and differentiated “sense organ.”

Sheets-Johnstone likewise emphasizes that proprioception—although operating in the background—is the foundation of all other senses and is present from conception. In her interpretation, the primary form of consciousness is kinaesthetic awareness. However, the fundamental role of kinaesthesia becomes evident only when attention is explicitly directed toward it.

Finally, the subchapter examines levels of bodily awareness through Richard Shusterman's somatic model, emphasizing that consciousness is a dynamically changing continuum. He distinguishes four levels, ranging from unreflected bodily functioning to reflective awareness, and highlights that the complexity of bodily experience can only be understood by considering these levels together. The research also includes a comparative section that contrasts the conceptions of consciousness in Shusterman and Merleau-Ponty, particularly in relation to reflected and unreflected modes of functioning.

The analysis aims to demonstrate how these philosophical questions can be interpreted within the context of acting practice. From the perspective of actor training, it is crucial that ingrained patterns can be modified through conscious attention and subsequently re-automatized. Bringing proprioception into the focus of attention enables a more refined perception and transformation of bodily functioning. The chapter concludes that consciousness can be shaped through bodily experience, and thus movement is not only a physical process, but also a process of self-awareness and perception.

Attunement

This subchapter examines the concept of attunement, which is terminologically associated with tuning, alignment, as well as states of heightened sensitivity and readiness. Drawing on the ideas of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phillip Zarrilli, Dick McCaw, and Stanton Garner Jr., attunement is interpreted as a mode of being-in-the-present and as the capacity for continuous alignment with one's environment. This state is not passive, but presupposes constant adjustment and sensitivity.

McCaw emphasizes that this sensitivity is not an innate given, but a developable capacity that enables more refined responses to the environment. According to Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, attunement is primarily kinetic in nature, and not a form of fixed knowledge, but a personal bodily experience. Both Zarrilli and McCaw highlight the importance of "cultivation"—that is, sustained, conscious practice—in the development of this capacity.

The subchapter distinguishes three interpretative levels of attunement: long-term learning, preparation prior to an event, and adjustment during the event itself. These are not mutually exclusive, but complementary modes of operation that together create the conditions for actorly presence and readiness.

Movement patterns

This subchapter interprets movement patterns as the fundamental material of the actor's creative work: as constellations of bodily techniques, rhythms, and cognitive schemas,

requiring a deeper understanding of their functioning, in order to make it possible to be consciously aware of them and transform them into creative resources. Movement patterns are closely intertwined with our use of the body and, consequently, with our identity; through repetition, they continuously reinforce the pathways the body establishes in space and time. Their role in shaping personality thus derives primarily from their repetitive nature.

For their interpretation, the subchapter draws on Marcel Mauss's concept of body techniques, Edmund Husserl's notion of the "I can"—drawing on the interpretations of Sheets-Johnstone and Garner—as well as the concepts of habit and habitus, following Carrie Noland, all of which can be grasped at the level of bodily movement.

Mauss's anthropological perspective demonstrates that recurring patterns structure human actions, not only on an individual level but also socially, emerging as responses to environmental, cultural, or political influences. Erhard Schüttpelz confirms the relevance of this concept, while also emphasizing its elusiveness, suggesting that body techniques should be understood as a heuristic interpretative framework. Body techniques are in constant transformation: they may refine, develop into virtuosity (as in sports or yoga), or disappear altogether. Because they are deeply intertwined with personality, their conscious observation and modification are challenging; thus, following Noland, a certain distancing from oneself becomes necessary.

In Tim Ingold's interpretation, there is no such thing as "natural" body use: all forms of movement are learned and become second nature through repetition. This insight is particularly significant for actor training, as it enables the conscious transformation of bodily habits and the acquisition of new movement forms.

Husserl's concept of the "I can" interprets bodily movement not merely as a physical event, but as the foundation of subjective experience and agency. Garner emphasizes its counterpoint, the "I cannot," which comes into effect in the presence of physical or psychological constraints; the distinction between the two lies in how resistance is experienced—either as a surmountable or insurmountable limit. According to Sheets-Johnstone, awareness of the "I can" does not arise from theoretical knowledge, but from tactile-kinaesthetic experience—that is, from action in movement. The exploration of movement possibilities thus also entails an enrichment of one's presence in the world: through movement, we not only act, but also understand, as thinking and movement are not separate but develop in an intertwined manner.

Finally, the subchapter interprets movement patterns as habits, drawing on the ideas of Noland and Clare Carlisle. These are automatised yet transformable forms of action that can

be brought into awareness and reshaped. Habit has a dual nature: it simultaneously constrains possibilities and frees attention for other levels of activity. Consequently, within theatrical practice, movement patterns can, through reflection, be transformed into creative resources.

Organization

This subchapter examines organization as a fundamental pattern of bodily experience, drawing on the ideas of Alva Noë, Sheets-Johnstone, and Merleau-Ponty. According to Noë, organization emerges dynamically: action itself organizes the participants, who operate within an evolving pattern. Organization is therefore not a static structure, but a mode of functioning shaped through action–reaction relations, refined through practice, and capable of becoming “second nature” through repetition.

Sheets-Johnstone describes this process as dynamic kinetic patterning, in which the immanent intelligence of movement—a kind of bodily logos—guides organization. In Noland’s interpretation, body technique is the organization of kinetic energy, culturally shaped yet open to reorganization. From this perspective, following Noë, art can be understood as a practice of reorganization. The aim of training, therefore, is to develop this capacity for conscious reorganization.

The first part of the dissertation thus establishes the theoretical framework of the research, which, through the five key concepts—bodymind, consciousness, attunement, movement patterns, and organization—seeks to rethink the role of movement training as a physical approach to contemporary acting.

3. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: BODY PEDAGOGIES BASED ON ODIN TEATRET AND VIEWPOINTS

The second part further develops the theoretical framework through the historical and practical examination of two influential theatrical practices – Odin Teatret and Viewpoints system– which serve not only as fields of application, but also as sources for the formation of the conceptual system.

Odin Teatret as a training model – the actor’s conscious body in the pedagogy of Odin Teatret

As an introduction, this subchapter examines the early influences on Eugenio Barba in order to contextualize the pedagogical model of Odin Teatret. Drawing on Erik Exe Christoffersen’s historical periodization, Tatiana Chemi’s pedagogical interpretation, as well

as Barba's own writings and recollections, the analysis reveals the defining influences – among them his collaboration with Jerzy Grotowski and his experience with kathakali training – that laid the foundation for his later creative and pedagogical practice. Among these influences, particular emphasis is placed on military discipline, the master–apprentice relationship, and the autodidactic path of learning, all of which contribute to the formation of an approach grounded in practice, observation, and experiential learning. The subchapter then examines how the five key concepts are interpreted within the system of Eugenio Barba and Odin Teatret.

The unity of body and mind as a starting point in Odin actor pedagogy

The point of departure in the pedagogy of Odin Teatret is a holistic conception of the body, influenced by Eastern theatre and philosophy, in which the physicality and virtuosity of the Eastern performer serve as a primary source of inspiration. Barba develops a training model based on continuous practice, intrinsic motivation, and sustained effort, grounded in the recognition of the unity of the bodymind. From this perspective, the actor's presence is understood at a pre-expressive level, where the actor must “exist as an actor” prior to representation; this level pertains to the totality of the bodymind. Consequently, actor training is not directed toward shaping the body as form, but toward directing and modelling energy, a process encapsulated in the concept of the “dilated body.”

Layers of consciousness in the Odin approach

In the Odin approach, consciousness does not appear as a unified concept, but is interpreted in multiple layers. In Barba's terminology, a distinction is made between a “cold,” analytical form of consciousness associated with planning and control, and a “warm,” body-based mode of functioning that manifests in action. This distinction is related to the concepts of daily and extra-daily technique.

In actor training, extra-daily technique is internalized through reflective attention and eventually becomes operative as a “second nature”: consciously acquired forms are transformed into tacit knowledge. The mastery of extra-daily technique means that the actor is capable, within the system and in accordance with its rules, of proposing new solutions spontaneously. The actor thus develops a form of “bodily intelligence,” which Barba—adopting Michael Polanyi's term – refers to as tacit knowledge, while Sheets-Johnstone describes it as kinaesthetic awareness or bodily intelligence.

Processes of attunement in Odin practice

In Odin practice, the long-term form of attunement is primarily understood as preparation, realized through training as an ongoing, never-ending process. One of the fundamental paradoxes of Barba's pedagogical approach is that it seeks to train "rebels" who possess a high degree of autonomy. The aim of preparation is not the acquisition of specific technical knowledge, but the development of the capacity for "questioning," through persistent, embodied investigation of details.

Another key element of preparation is the development of the actor's presence, which unfolds at the pre-expressive level, prior to the intention of expression. Accordingly, training can be divided into two interwoven phases: in the first, the actor acquires foreign, "cold" techniques that generate resistance and open up new bodily experiences; in the second, these forms are organized into sequences (chains), where they become tools for modelling energy.

When interpreted as preparation for performance, attunement does not aim at introducing new knowledge, but at activating knowledge already embodied. It can be stated that, in the case of Odin, warm-up is not a unified method, but the individual responsibility of the actor: it is scarcely addressed in Barba's writings and can rather be reconstructed from actors' accounts. The process often takes on a ritual character and is closely linked to the preparation of space: arranging props, clearing the space, handling costumes and makeup. Warm-up is not a fixed sequence of exercises, but a process adapted to the material of the given performance and to individual modes of functioning, whose central aim is the achievement of a state of readiness, with particular emphasis on vocal activation and the focusing of attention.

The third level of attunement is momentary presence realized in stage action, which, in Julia Varley's formulation, operates as a continuous dialogue between the fixed score and the "unknown" brought by the spectator. The actor's performance consists of a series of subtle reorganizations in response to the situation, in which the live relationship with the spectator plays a decisive role.

Movement patterns, codified forms, and principles of body use in Odin practice

In Odin training, the acquisition of foreign movement patterns and the creation of new, repeatable patterns play a fundamental role. Based on the systematization proposed by Gábor Viktor Kozma, the toolkit is partly open and exploratory (e.g., improvisation, inner images), and partly based on codified forms that offer fixed spatial and temporal structures. These codified forms – such as pantomime, ballet, acrobatics, or various Eastern performance techniques – serve the acquisition of extra-daily body techniques and aim at the conscious organization of bodily dynamics. Thus, in Odin practice, codified forms function as tools for developing the expanded bodily functioning and energy use necessary for actorly presence.

According to Barba, the key to the actor's presence is not the reproduction of everyday behaviour, but its dynamic reorganization, which involves directed surplus energy. The study of codified forms therefore does not aim at formal enrichment, but at uncovering the principles that enable the organization of bodily energy and the capture of the spectator's attention.

The subchapter further establishes a connection between Barba's concepts of daily and extra-daily technique and the continuum of "I can / I cannot," pointing out that codified forms function as surmountable resistances within the process of preparation.

The dramaturgy of the body: organization in Odin theatrical practice

In the practice of Odin Teatret, the actor's work is understood as a multi-layered form of organization. The dissertation emphasizes that the development of Barba's perspective is significantly influenced by the theatrical theories of Vsevolod Meyerhold and Richard Schechner. In Meyerhold's work, plasticity appears as an autonomous layer of the actor's craft. Building on this, Barba represents a theatrical practice in which stage action emerges according to its own specific principles of organization.

The subchapter discusses both directorial and performative montage, highlighting that directorial montage is constructed from the actor's montage – that is, from the fixed and repeatable score. In Odin practice, the actor, like the director, is capable of structuring material: during improvisation, units that emerge are selected and reorganized into new relational systems. Through this process, both form and meaning are reconfigured. The subchapter also addresses the internal dimension of the score, the subscore, as well as the dynamic relationship between the two.

Viewpoints as a training model – the conscious actor's body in the Viewpoints system

The research examines two defining versions of Viewpoints: Mary Overlie's Six Viewpoints system and Anne Bogart and Tina Landau's Nine Viewpoints approach. It takes Overlie's system as its point of departure, as it provides a comprehensive philosophical framework, while the Nine Viewpoints is interpreted as its applied and modified version.

In approaching Viewpoints, the dissertation adopts a postmodern perspective, which relativizes the unified, hierarchical worldview of modernity and understands reality as a constellation of coexisting, plural truths and experiences. Postmodern artistic practices (e.g., John Cage, Merce Cunningham) dismantle traditional structures, democratize the creative process, and shift toward questions such as "What is art?" – a line of inquiry with which Overlie engages through her intent to deconstruct and reorganize theatre.

Mary Overlie’s career and the formation of Six Viewpoints

The dissertation situates Mary Overlie’s work within a postmodern context in which research on the body, perception, and presence emerges at the intersection of various movement systems and experiential modes of knowing. Overlie’s practice and thinking are inherently interdisciplinary, closely intertwining artistic and pedagogical dimensions.

The Six Viewpoints system developed over decades of teaching and creative work and received its theoretical articulation in *Standing in Space*. The dissertation emphasizes that Overlie’s approach, developed within an academic environment, represents a structured pedagogical model that – unlike the laboratory-based operation of Odin Teatret – can be adapted to a broader institutional framework.

The subchapter then presents the structure of the Six Viewpoints, based on Overlie’s premise that the fundamental components of theatrical creation can be distinguished as space, shape, time, emotion, movement, and story. These “materials” exist in a horizontal, non-hierarchical relationship and unfold from the experience of “standing in space”, serving as a practical field for the cultivation of perception and attention. A central element of the system is the “Bridge,” which, through various laboratories, enables the deconstruction, reorganization, and examination of the heterarchical relationships among these materials within a postmodern framework. The exercises constitute the pedagogical realization of this approach, developing perceptual capacities through the isolated investigation of individual elements.

The Six Viewpoints does not offer a fixed toolkit, but rather a conceptual framework in which the performer engages with the materials as both observer and participant, and understands theatrical creation as a process of inquiry directed toward the Unknown.

Anne Bogart and the Nine Viewpoints: the applied version of the system

While the development of the Six Viewpoints system is attributed to Mary Overlie, the term *Viewpoints* became more widely known through the work of director Anne Bogart. The Nine Viewpoints, shaped by Bogart’s artistic practice, differs from the original concept in several respects. Bogart and Tina Landau employed Viewpoints as a tool for renewing actor training, particularly in response to the lack of structured training and the misinterpretation of the Stanislavskian tradition. Through the work of the SITI Company, Viewpoints –combined

with the Suzuki method – has become widely disseminated not only as a creative but also as a pedagogical practice, exerting a significant influence on American theatre training.

The role of the bodymind in the Viewpoints system

Both Overlie and Bogart address the relationship between body and mind only rarely and implicitly, presumably because the Viewpoints system is already grounded in a holistic conception of the body. The research relies on four key observations to support the claim that Viewpoints presupposes the unity of body and mind:

1. Postmodern creators were significantly influenced by Eastern philosophical traditions, in which the relationship between body and mind is understood a priori, and its conscious cultivation appears as a human task.
2. As a dancer and choreographer, Mary Overlie possesses a form of somatic knowledge that profoundly shapes her worldview—particularly in her interpretation of the relationship between the body and performative space.
3. The central focus of the system is consciousness, which simultaneously belongs to both the physical and mental aspects of the human being.
4. The practice of Viewpoints is grounded in the unity of body and mind: it builds upon the integrated psycho-physical functioning of attention, perception, and response.

The role and interpretation of consciousness in the Viewpoints system

In the Six Viewpoints system, consciousness plays a central role, particularly through the principle of the “original anarchist,” which emphasizes presence grounded in continuous attention. In Overlie’s interpretation, it is precisely this deep, sensitive connectedness that forms the basis of “anarchism”: a mode of relating that does not require external rules or structural guidance. Within the Six Viewpoints system, readiness does not arise from external stimuli, but from conscious decision, grounded in the direction of attention. In contrast to unreflected, habitual functioning, the system aims to activate an alert, perceptive awareness. It emphasizes that through the practice of attention, habitual movement patterns can be recognized and transformed, forming the basis of artistic freedom.

The Six Viewpoints understands perception as an active process, creating a dynamic relationship between the body and the environment. The exercises of the system cultivate this chosen and sustained state of attention, enabling the emergence of new actions through perception. Attention functions as an open, non-judgmental space, while observation embodies a receptive attitude that suspends fixed knowledge and allows space for new impulses. The aim

of the system is not the acquisition of knowledge, but the maintenance of an ongoing dialogue with the environment. Through the deepening of awareness, the practice of attention becomes the foundation of the actor's presence. Both Bogart and Overlie emphasize that stage presence depends on the sensitive direction of attention and the micro-level perception of reality.

Interpretative possibilities of attunement in the Viewpoints system

Both the Six Viewpoints and the Nine Viewpoints approaches emphasize lifelong learning and preparation. Overlie clearly separates Viewpoints from the process of artistic creation, defining it as a training system. At a practical level, mastering the Viewpoints system means that the participant is able, through the conscious structuring of dialogue, to maintain a relationship with both the environment and themselves.

Viewpoints can be identified as training, practice, or exercise (including the warm-up phase). Based on accounts from actors of the SITI Company, the research highlights that shared training generates a form of kinaesthetic attunement among participants, which constitutes the basis of trust, collective functioning, and the actor's presence.

As a third interpretation, the subchapter examines attunement as the experience of presence, in which the actor, while remaining within a fixed score, responds to environmental impulses through the micro-level perception of reality. Through Overlie's concept of the "original anarchist," the dissertation demonstrates that this form of presence is not based on rule-following, but on embodied experiential knowledge and technical commitment. As a result of training, the maintenance of connection and attention becomes second nature, enabling the emergence of an authentic, dynamic presence.

Viewpoints and movement patterns

Although Viewpoints does not include classical dance or movement technique training, it is fundamentally a movement-oriented system in which—according to Overlie—movement serves as the primary means of preparing the artist. The system provides a framework that enables the observation and expansion of physical experience, primarily through everyday movement patterns (walking, standing, sitting, lying), while formal variability emerges organically through experience. This is further supported by the fact that everyday movement patterns, when removed from their functional context, enter a reflective space where they become perceptible to the participant as independent formal, rhythmic, and spatial phenomena. The research further reviews movement-based systems that Overlie proposes as effective complements to Viewpoints. These include Contact Improvisation, Jean Hamilton's technique,

Body-Mind Centering, and the practices of Allan Wayne. The dissertation emphasizes that these methods do not focus on the acquisition of fixed forms, but on movement exploration grounded in internal experience. In this light, it is particularly noteworthy that in the practice of the SITI Company, Viewpoints is combined with a strongly form-oriented system, the Suzuki method. Both Bogart and members of the SITI Company emphasize the effectiveness of this dual approach in both training and maintenance of practice.

Viewpoints as a practice of organization and self-organization

The postmodern perspective, by dismantling traditional artistic hierarchies, shifts attention to the level of constituent elements and understands art as a reorganizable structure. In the Viewpoints system, accordingly, the first step of reorganization is deconstruction: separation—the distinction and isolation of individual components. This allows the elements of a whole to be observed independently of one another. Overlie stresses that it is essential for the participant to spend sufficient time in this phase before moving on. Only thereafter can one proceed to the next stage, where transitions between different viewpoints and their combinations become possible, leading the participant into a multidimensional field of play.

The research examines two forms of reorganization: improvisation and composition. Improvisation operates with frameworks that both limit the participant's choices and provide reference points for orientation. In Viewpoints practice, these frameworks are typically related to time, space, action, movement patterns, and the number of participants. Improvisation creates a space for exploration through a dynamic balance between constraint and freedom, in which the framework plays a key role in enabling the emergence of flow. In this process, organization is grounded in dialogue and interaction.

Composition, within Viewpoints, represents a fixed form of reorganization, particularly emphasized in the approach of Bogart and Landau. While Overlie's system focuses on deconstruction and present-moment experience, the Nine Viewpoints interprets composition as repeatable, structured theatrical material. Like improvisation, composition operates within various frameworks, but is complemented by processes of fixing and montage, which enable the editing and recombination of material. Through blocking, the creator produces an organized structure that serves as a narrowed field of investigation. Thus, composition simultaneously contains fixed and open (performance-dependent) elements: a predetermined component and a continuously reorganizing element shaped by the immediacy of presence.

The systems of Odin Teatret and Viewpoints represent two distinct yet complementary models of contemporary actor training. Through their analysis, it becomes evident that the five

key concepts—bodymind, consciousness, attunement, movement patterns, and organization—not only gain meaning within these systems, but also offer points of orientation for rethinking actor training as a whole.

The body as a sensing and organizing entity, presence as cultivated attention, training as sensitization—these are modes of operation that extend beyond specific examples and raise broader pedagogical implications. In the following chapter, a local training practice will be examined, in which these perspectives take on concrete pedagogical form and become subject to detailed analysis.

4. PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE: A PERSONAL READING OF A LIVING MOVEMENT PEDAGOGY

Contemporary possibilities of movement training: contextual considerations

The practical perspective of the research unfolds through the presentation of a pedagogical system for which no comprehensive written documentation currently exists; therefore, the analysis follows the internal logic of the training process.

Within the tradition of dramatic theatre, the actor's body functions in subordination to verbal expression: movement is primarily limited to conveying the meaning of the text. In contrast, contemporary approaches interpret the body as an autonomous, reflexive medium, serving as a carrier of both sensory and cognitive experience. Drawing on Husserl, Ádám Mestyán describes understanding as a somatic process, emphasizing that the body is not an expressive instrument, but the foundation of cognition and meaning-making.

Accordingly, the research proposes that the actor's movement be understood as dance, and the actor as a dancer. Stage actions—whether as parts of a fixed score or as the result of improvisation—are consciously organized movement materials. The actor is thus not an executor, but the organizer of their own movement, shaping their presence through a dialogue with space, time, and form. This perspective—in which the actor is both organizing and organized—already appears in Meyerhold's work and is further developed in Overlie's concept of the “inquiring” performer's presence.

The dissertation proceeds to analyze the practice of movement training within institutional Hungarian-language actor training in Romania, highlighting that it has historically been based on the Stanislavski system. In practice, this often appeared in a simplified, logocentric form, treating movement as subordinate to text. As a consequence, movement training occupied a limited number of hours and held a supplementary role within the

curriculum—a situation critically addressed in the work of Ghyssa Éggy. This approach has persisted in later training contexts, where movement has often become detached from acting and treated as an independent, non-integrated skill. Although in recent years—particularly in the Faculty of Theatre and Film from Cluj—there has been a noticeable shift toward strengthening the role of movement and incorporating contemporary training methods, the system still lacks a unified conceptual framework. The research concludes that there is a need for a model of movement training that interprets the body not as a tool, but as the foundation of the actor’s presence, and that approaches movement as an integrated, embodied perspective within actor training.

The dissertation also addresses the question of how movement-based methods developed in theatre laboratories can be applied within institutional training frameworks. While these methods align with the physical demands of contemporary theatre, their application is often hindered by time constraints and the lack of coherence within training programs. Consequently, in higher education, the key issue is not the complete adoption of entire systems, but the conscious selection and integration of their elements. Whereas theatre laboratories are built upon coherent pedagogical structures, the parallel presence of diverse methods within university training often fragments the process, raising the question of how a unified perspective might be established.

Overview of the analyzed training system

In the following, the dissertation examines Péter Uray’s movement pedagogy system in light of the established theoretical framework, as applied in the author’s own pedagogical practice.

The training system interprets the body as a sensory organ and aims to refine its sensitivity, primarily through the conscious direction of attention. Its central objective is the development of kinaesthetic awareness: elevating the participant’s perception of movement to a reflective level as a resource for acting. At the same time, it seeks to cultivate an investigative, questioning attitude, in which observation and discovery become fundamental modes of operation for the actor. In parallel, the system develops the conscious use of physicality, enabling its flexible application across different aesthetic contexts. The training does not aim at the production of performance, but at the practice of “search”: movement material is not an end in itself, but a means for developing kinaesthetic intelligence and conscious presence.

The pillars of the system and their aims

Movement technique elements (movement patterns)

The foundation of the system consists of a finite, formalized set of movement technique elements, which serve to expand the body's movement patterns, to observe the principles governing movement, and to establish the basis for both individual and group practice. These elements function as reference points against which individual variations can be articulated.

Creative framework: movement composition, improvisation, and play (organization)

The creative frameworks enable participants to treat both the movement technique elements and their everyday movement material as stage material and to organize it accordingly. The system distinguishes three forms: movement composition (the creation of a fixed score), improvisation (spontaneous organization), and playful exercises (situational application). These frameworks support the development of movement memory, dramaturgical thinking, as well as the handling of space and time. The research focuses primarily on movement composition as the most elaborated form of organization in this training system.

Movement study

Within movement study, the body becomes “inquiring”: the participant investigates their own bodily functioning in a non-verbal manner while in motion. The aim of the process is the active maintenance of attention, the reflective understanding of the body, and the conscious awareness of the physical principles of movement. The system organically integrates technical elements with creative processes. As a result, movement material does not appear as isolated knowledge, but becomes a tool for inquiry. The thesis argues that if this experiential integration does not happen—if movement material does not become a tool for investigation—knowledge related to movement may remain fragmented, and students may struggle to establish a connection between movement and acting.

The role of warm-up in the examined training system

Warm-up is a prerequisite of the training process which, although not one of its core pillars, is methodologically indispensable. It functions as a transitional space between everyday existence and stage presence.

The research concurs with David Zinder that, although many practitioners emphasize the importance of warm-up, a significant number of actors lack a conscious, structured warm-up practice. Moreover, often the conditions of theatrical work—such as the rehearsal process—

fail to provide space for its application. For this reason, training plays a crucial role in establishing a culture of warm-up. While contemporary theatre practice does not always require structured warm-up, the formative influence of training can contribute to its long-term integration into rehearsal processes.

The meaning of warm-up is context-dependent: in everyday language it primarily refers to physical preparation, whereas in acting practice it signifies a complex psycho-physical attunement. It is an adaptive toolkit shaped by the actor's current state, the working process, and individual characteristics. Experience shows that even personalized routines can become rigid over time; therefore, a more effective approach is one that responds to immediate needs, allowing space for both individual and collective forms. As an umbrella term, warm-up may encompass any activity that facilitates the transition from everyday functioning to creative presence. Its forms range from self-reflective, state-awareness-based practices to structured rituals, all sharing the common goal of activating the body and attention.

The subchapter further outlines the four main phases of a training session within the analyzed training system—warm-up, technical practice, creative work, and stretching—and highlights their interdependence. It demonstrates that warm-up is a modular process composed of various types of exercises. A typical structure is also presented: static mobilization is gradually replaced by increasingly complex, dynamic, and floor-based movements that require greater physical load and coordination. Warm-up and technical practice may overlap, as learned movement elements can also function as tools for bodily activation.

Movement technique elements

The movement patterns present in the training system are derived from various dance and martial arts techniques. Uray Péter refers to this composite as *movement theatre technique*, indicating that elements borrowed from diverse movement practices acquire their specific function and meaning within a training system in which both movement and theatre are central. The movement material of the training is thus constructed from heterogeneous dance and martial arts sources.

The subchapter highlights the influence of Aikido, particularly its emphasis on circular movement, redirection of energy, and the unity of form and inner intention. It also outlines the principles of Contact Improvisation, stressing physical dialogue, trust, and sustained attention. Importantly, these techniques do not appear as autonomous forms but as integrated elements that foster cooperation, bodily awareness, and group dynamics.

The research demonstrates that the technical foundation of the training consists of fixed, referential formal elements. These elements support the deconstruction of habitual movement patterns and enable the conscious observation of bodily functioning. They are not static units but part of an evolving system shaped by its practitioners, where playful naming conventions facilitate shared interpretation and communication. The system organizes these elements according to the spatial position of the body's center of gravity, ranging from floor-based movements through mid-level actions to more complex forms involving weight-sharing with a partner and jumping.

The subchapter further presents the layered pedagogical logic of teaching these elements: progression moves from floor-based work to mid-level movement and eventually to jumps, gradually deepening bodily experience. The initial phase focuses on activating the body center and establishing safe foundational patterns, while more advanced stages are not ends in themselves but serve to expand movement possibilities. Different modes of work—individual, partner, and group—direct attention in distinct ways. The learning trajectory moves from precise repetition of form toward the creation of individual variations. The system thus operates on a balance between form and freedom, supporting creative application, the emergence of flow, and the recognition of artistic value.

The research emphasizes that movement technique elements function as pedagogical tools for developing body awareness and creative agency. They expand the movement vocabulary by offering new pathways and inspiring forms; they serve as reference points in the preparation of compositional work; they support compositional thinking as stable units within movement composition; and they deepen the experiential understanding of physical principles. As attentional practices, they cultivate concentration and presence. Overall, they are presented as versatile, flexible tools that support both technical development and the creative process. In the following section, the research addresses the role of fixed movement forms through personal pedagogical and artistic experience. It demonstrates that the acquisition of foreign, codified forms operates as an external constraint that helps expand habitual movement patterns, whereas in spontaneous situations the body tends to revert to them. The limitations of movement improvisation are also highlighted: although exploratory in nature, it does not allow for the repetition and conscious observation of movement. In contrast, the repetition of fixed elements enables reflective processing and kinesthetic understanding. The subchapter stresses that complex movements can only become part of the body's "vocabulary" through such repetition; therefore, fixed forms are essential tools for conscious learning and the deepening of embodied experience.

Finally, through three personal artistic and pedagogical examples, the text examines the relationship between foreign form and individual articulation. Movement material originating from external sources initially appears as technical execution and only becomes personal through time, processing, and transformation. The learning process is thus characterized by a dual movement: first the acquisition of form, then its transformation, through which the participant establishes a personal relationship to the material. The subchapter concludes that the relationship between movement and personal expression depends on the interaction between the participant and the form: mechanical repetition serves as a starting point, which reflective work and time can transform into meaningful artistic expression.

Movement composition: organizing the actor's material

Movement composition is a central component of the analyzed training system, in which the actor functions as an active agent who organizes movement material through embodied decisions. The research defines movement composition as the conscious structuring of movement units, realized in individual, partner, or group formats, and based on the varied use of space, time, and form. While it shares similarities with other compositional systems, its specificity lies in its close connection—especially in the initial stages of training—to the learned movement techniques. As a foundational practice permeating the entire training process, movement composition develops not only technical skills but also creative thinking and the capacity to organize creative material.

The subchapter emphasizes that the primary aim of movement composition is to understand and practice the act of organization itself, and to acquire competence in structuring creative material. Within this pedagogical system, movement composition teaches the organization of both movement material and kinetic energy, thereby supporting a theatrical perspective that understands art as an act of (re)organization. The structured nature of the tasks facilitates the emergence of flow and enhances the transparency of the creative process. The practice develops movement memory, supports the integration of learned movement elements into a theatrical context, and contributes to their personalization.

Regarding its structure and phases, the research presents movement composition as a multi-stage process extending across several sessions. It progresses from the selection and sequencing of movement units, through memorization, to the elaboration of transitions, spatial organization, rhythm, and the integration of music. In the initial phase, fixed movement elements serve as the primary material, while decision-making gradually shifts toward bodily impulses and the “voice of the body.” Through repetition, the material becomes internalized;

subsequent phases involve conscious editing and modification, making the material increasingly personal and complex. This structured progression simultaneously supports technical development and the emergence of theatrical quality.

Importantly, the strict frameworks of movement composition do not restrict but rather enable the emergence of individual creativity. The fixed structure provides stability while allowing space for spontaneous impulses. The emergent phase becomes possible once the memorized material frees attention, enabling the participant to focus on internal sensations and associations. This process supports both the experience of flow and the personalization of the material. The chapter ultimately underscores that movement composition is both a structured and an open system, in which the balance between stability and variability allows for the development of authentic, living stage presence.

Movement study

This subchapter examines movement study as the third foundational pillar of the training system, emphasizing its pedagogical significance. It highlights that everyday, automated movement patterns can only be transformed through reflective awareness, and that movement study plays a key role in this process. Rather than a theoretical exercise, it is an embodied, experience-based practice focused on the observation, decomposition, and reorganization of movement. Attention is directed toward internal sensory processes, making movement study a somatic learning space that supports the development of conscious presence and stage readiness.

Movement study appears at various stages of the training process and within different frameworks, ranging from the learning of technical elements to movement composition and thematic exercises. Fixed forms provide a stable, impersonal foundation for the reflective observation of bodily functioning and the deepening of somatic experience. Thematic exercises—for example, the exploration of relaxed and tense body states—aim to refine the perception of bodily processes and to develop awareness of energy use. These frameworks facilitate the exploration of both the physical and associative layers of movement.

The subchapter further outlines the primary objectives of movement study. These include: the experiential understanding of the principles governing bodily functioning, through which participants recognize the complex, interdependent dynamics of movement and the role of “background work”; the cultivation of somatic attention and the ability to “listen” to the body; and the practice of an investigative, exploratory mode of being, in which reflective thinking and an artistic attitude are fostered through the experiential examination of movement.

5. REINTERPRETING THE ROLE OF THE BODY IN ACTOR TRAINING – RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter concludes that, due to the aesthetic boundary-crossings characteristic of contemporary theatre, the view of the body as merely an expressive instrument can no longer be sustained within actor training. Contemporary theatre effectively compels a redefinition of pedagogical aims.

However, the analysis of the examined pedagogical practice suggests that the issue is more fundamental. It is not only that movement training cannot rely on the indefinite accumulation of techniques, but also that the role of movement within the entire training system must be reconsidered through the integration of a holistic understanding of the body. While contemporary performing arts increasingly adopt a holistic perspective—understanding the body as the primary medium of engagement with the world and of cognition—training systems, including Hungarian-language actor training in Romania, have not yet fully integrated the implications of this “corporeal turn.” According to the research, addressing this gap is essential.

The study ultimately proposes a paradigm shift: movement training should not be treated as a supplementary component, but as an approach to actor training *through movement*, in which the body is understood as an investigative, sensitive, and creative medium.

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