

RECLAIMING THE NATURAL COMPONENT THROUGH THEATER GAMES

VLAD BĂLAN

Ovidius University of Constanța, Romania
vladcbalan@gmail.com

Abstract: One of the most important objectives of the methodology of the "I.L. Caragiale" National University of Theatre and Film for the 1st year Acting Department is "reclaiming of the natural component", as it was initially formulated by Professor Ion Cojar, which involves the taking back in possession of a human potential unaltered by the norms of society, free from fears and anxieties, available for the act of creation. The research seeks to demonstrate that theater games are the main tool that facilitate this process, the student retracing under guidance the same stages of play from the first years of life. To support this idea, a parallel will be drawn between the theater games which the student meets in class work at the National University of Theatre and Film (UNATC) and the games played instinctively in early childhood. The main idea of this approach is that theater games are not only a tool for learning, but rather for re-gaining skills, for re-learning and re-discovery.

Keywords: reclaiming the natural component, learning through play, theater games, childhood games, theatre pedagogy, improvisation.

How to cite: Bălan, Vlad (2022). 'Reclaiming the Natural Component through Theater Games', *Concept 1(24)/2022*, pp. 185-199.

Introduction

A student actor at the „I.L. Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film, Theatre Faculty, makes first contact with the actual study of their profession via Theater games. Over the first semester of year I, students from the Acting department come across a large variety of improvisation games and exercises. Although most of them come from easily identified sources, such as Viola Spolin's manual, *Improvisation for the Theater* (first published in 1963), Augusto Boal's work, *Games for Actors and Non-actors* (first published in 1992), John Wright, *Why Do We Laugh at the Theater* (first published in 2006) etc., there are also games of uncertain origin, games whose structure the acting teacher adapts based on the needs of each student and each working group, in accordance to the study goals from the analytical curriculum.

According to the analytical curriculum, the first semester goals are: developing specific skills, preparing the acting student for organic involvement by gifting them with working tools (Problem, Focus Point, Objective), involvement, availability, and creativity within the group, reclaiming the natural component through behavioural truth.

By specific skills we are here to understand a fine tuning of the actor's instrument (body, voice, means) for the requirements of this profession. This is

done via exercises for corporeality, gesture, mind-voice coordination, etc. The gifting of working tools is done, initially, also through theater games. Basically, playful structures facilitate an understanding of the working principles of the art of acting and the theatrical theory by experiential means, according to Viola Spolin: „Do not teach. Expose students to the theatrical environment through games, and they will find their own way” (2008, p. 53). The *Exposure* exercise outlined by Viola Spolin is a staple of this category of games:

Divide the total group into halves. Send one half to stand in a single line across the stage, while the other remains in the audience.; Each group – audience and stage - is to observe the other. Coach: “You look at us. We’ll look at you.” Those on stage will soon become uncomfortable. Some will giggle and shift from foot to foot, others will freeze in position or try to appear nonchalant. [...] When each person on stage has shown some degree of discomfort, give the group that is standing a task to accomplish. Counting is a useful activity, since it requires focus: tell them to count the floorboards or the seats in the auditorium. [...] Keep them counting until their discomfort is gone and they show bodily relaxation. Then their bodies have a natural look, although at first they continue to show signs of years of held muscles.

When the initial discomfort has disappeared and they have become absorbed in what they are doing, reverse the groups. (2008, p. 57)

Through this exercise, students personally discover what it feels like to be watched, to be exposed, and they discover the self-sabotage process taking place in the human being when put in front of one or more viewers, the abundance of physiological sensations that floods us. In the next stage, when the student is counting physical objects, the feelings in their stomach, shoulders, the shaky hands are no more, as they have something real to do, they focus their attention on an exterior point instead of themselves. Having a Point of concentration and a Purpose, they forget about the pressure of being watched and regain their functions. Thus, terms like Point of concentration and Purpose are introduced, in direct correlation with a living experience, which was had just now, this very moment.

The availability and creativity of the group is trained through exercises challenging the group to get to a state of interdependence. Games where they all have to carry a tray with a glass full to the brim, or where they have to run an obstacle course while holding hands and wearing blind folds, these are just a few examples of such exercises. Thus, through group challenges, the classmates stand a chance to create a safe framework in which the students feel free to create.

The last and probably the most important purpose formulated by the analytical curriculum is reclaiming the natural component and the behavioural truth. The notion of „reclaiming the natural component” was initially formulated by Ion Cojar, the mentor of the current generation of teachers at UNATC and the one who outlined his own method in his book *A Poetics of Acting*. He states:

Training is a delicate process of recovering the human wholeness, of the whole individual potential, a formative collection of new habits, typical of an activity which requires physical and spiritual performance, of surpassing limits of the common human (Cojar, 1998, p. 33).

As such, reclaiming the natural component is, in Cojar’s view, getting into contact with the being unaltered by society and the educational system, a being that includes all the possibilities of becoming.

The conclusion this article pursues is that this process of reclaiming, of accessing this unaltered „me” is done by the actual playing of theater games and not through theory. Through the theater game, certain resources from early childhood are reawakened, and so, through a series of regressions, the acting student may get in touch with a forgotten „me”. This article sets out to demonstrate that theater games are often similar in structure and requirements with the games a child comes into contact with in his first years of life, and even with those he plays instinctively. Practicing these playful structures leads the acting students toward the reawakening of their resources.

This hypothesis will be researched by analysing the functions of games in the child’s cognitive development, by describing the types of games a child plays, and then by describing the categories of exercises the acting student experiments during the first semester of year I and highlighting the matches. This research will turn both to theoretical sources such as specialty studies (theatre, psychology), and to the description of practical experiences (describing games and how they are guided by the teacher).

The function of games in early childhood

The first theory on the function of games in the child’s evolution comes from Karl Groos. In his research *The Play of Animals*, Groos talks about the influence of games in physical and mental development. „The animal does not play because it is young. It has its youth because during this time it must play.” (1898, p. XX) The author observes similarities between the play of animals and situations it later encounters: the fight for supremacy, the difficulties of obtaining food, even

mating. Thus, the idea of the *pre-exercise appears*. According to Groos, through games, animals practice functions they will later need. Through practice, the muscles and neural pathways grow together, so that the animal, having reached adulthood, can face the numerous difficult situations in its life. Groos is the first to signal the fact that games are an activity closely tied to a biological necessity. Up until that point, games were seen as a marginal activity, with no purpose other than recreation. To give just one example, here is how Plato defines games:

Here is one thing that involves no utility, no truth, no value for comparison, nor is it harmful in any way; it can best be assessed by its grace (*chari*) and the pleasure it offers. Such satisfaction, involving neither material gain nor loss, is what games are: *paidia* (apud Solomon, 2003, p. 48).

One may see that Plato's definition puts games outside the realm of utility and truth, its sole purpose being to offer some satisfaction. All game theories put forth before Groos' research placed games in a peripheral area of human behaviour. Even though Groos' theory is perfectly applicable to animals, in the case of human games the situation is far more complex. Elkonin notices how „K. Groos makes a grave error when he directly transfers, with no reservations, the biological sense of games from animals to humans” (1980, p. 75). It is easy to see that not all children's games train biological functions. Perhaps a game of Catch readies the child for a „fight or flight” situation, but risk games such as War seem to train no such function.

Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries numerous psychological theories have been put forth on the function of games in the child's evolution. Many of them were influenced by Groos' theory. Another set were influenced by Sigmund Freud. To Freud, games are a means of defusing certain compulsions that the child cannot enact. By noticing how a child plays with a bobbin after a negative interaction with his mother, Freud concludes that the bobbing becomes a projection of the mother during play. „We often find that children repeat in their games what they are most impressed with in life, and the deeds they can react to in order to gain control of the situation.” (apud Elkonin, 1980, p. 104) Among the theories about the negative compulsion evacuation function through games we mention the one by Anna Freud and later, Melania Klein. Klein is the first to treat games as material from which a therapist can gather information on the patient.

The first modern theory on the function of games in child development comes from Jean Piaget. In his work *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* (first

published in 1945), he identifies three stages of games, which occur in the child's first years of life. The ages of games as outlined by Piaget are:

- *Practice games*
- *Symbolic games*
- *Rule games*

Practice games appear during the baby's first months of life. These are months when the baby starts to make the difference between subject and object, between themselves and the surrounding environment. „At first, the subject and object are one and the same, and primitive consciousness cannot make the difference between the role played by one or the other.” (Piaget, 2000, p. 13). During his first weeks of life, a new-born thinks he is one with the universe. He thinks he is the bed mother puts him to sleep in, as well as the mother who smiles and the noises he hears. The trauma of otherness (becoming aware that he is a singular individuality) takes place over several months. It is not a revelation taking place all at once.

Piaget notices two complementary processes taking shape in the baby's behaviour at this time: imitation and practice games. “This is what games are, at first, the complement and opposite of imitation.” (2000, p. 89) Imitation involves an automatic reproduction of an exterior move. For instance, the mother smiles, and the baby smiles back. The baby isn't aware that he is smiling, as he doesn't yet make the difference between himself and the mother. He thinks he is smiling when the mother smiles, and the body mimetically reproduces the mother's smile. Piaget notices that the two processes described serve a double function: to assimilate and to assuage the trauma the new-born is experiencing. By bodily play, the baby better navigates the terrible dawning of the notion that he is not the entire universe, but just a small and limited being. “This is how games mitigate the traumatic impact of otherness.” (Ciccone, 2010, p. 200)

Also, by making such bodily moves (practice games), the baby exercises his muscles, which will be very necessary during the following months, when he will begin to roll over, then crawl, then moving on all fours, and then walking on two legs.

Practice games are the imitation of certain moves for the pleasure they offer. For instance, the child will wave his hands in a certain way, touch his forehead with the outer palm, move his head in a certain way, etc. The moves have no other motivation but the soothing they offer. The baby simply feels better by making such moves. They also serve a biological function stated by Karl Groos in

his work. Subconsciously, the baby is training his muscles, which will be necessary in a few months, for crawling and then walking. As the child undergoes physical and neural development, bodily games change. For instance, the child practices various types of walking, coordinates his voice with certain moves, starts to make series of moves. Bodily games are constantly accompanied by the pleasure the child derives from having caused something. "What the child likes is not so much the result per se, but the fact that he produced that result." (Château, 1967, p. 16)

Thus, through bodily play the child proclaims his autonomy, takes hold of his own body, develops and discovers it all at once. Body games also include running, walking through imaginary environments (where the child pretends the floor is lava or that it's raining etc.). Also, it is accompanied by ritual lines that the child repeats compulsively for the pleasure they offer. Counting before games (an dan te) or various correlation games between kinetic and vocal inputs (I fall upward, I fall downward) are such examples. "The child is serious, because through the success of the game he asserts his being, proclaims his force and autonomy." (Château, 1967, p. 30)

Symbolic games appear later, around the age of 1. They involve using objects with other functions than their real ones. They draw play material from the surrounding reality, which they transform through their imagination. The metamorphosis thus keeps into account the shape of the real item. For instance, a child will never turn a chair into a gun. The symbolic imagination begins with certain attributes of reality. Reality is not denied but rearranged into a new paradigm. Thus, the couch becomes a tank, the carpet becomes the sea, the stick a bayonet and the table a train car. The symbolic game is built on the following principle: the macro universe is reduced to a micro universe. Château draws similarities between symbolic game and children's drawings. Just like little children draw a complex house by reducing it to a simple scheme (a square with a triangle on top), so the symbolic game turns an unfathomable reality into a simple structure. Also, negative compulsions are released through symbolic games. Just like in Freud's example of the bobbin, we may notice that little children often behave in a tyrannical manner with their toys. "The game allows a substituent satisfaction of desires." (Marcelli, 2003, p. 220).

In another couple of years, around 4-5 years of age, children start to take to *rule games*. Rule games are then present until adult age. Together with rule games, play action enters a new phase, that of competition. Playing thus becomes the framework in which children can fight for supremacy. The game, unlike real

life, gives them that framework where victory comes to the one who deserves it. Thus, as Château points out, games create hierarchy. Each game brings its own hierarchy.

All theories about the function of the game in the child's development subsequent to *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* took its ideas over and further. For instance, Sue Jennings takes Piaget's functional stages and renames them as follows: bodily games, projective games, role play.

„*Bodily*: birth-12 months (everything is experienced through the body);

Projection: 13 months-3 years (exploration of toys and environments beyond the body);

Role play: 3-7 years old (roles and stories are developed into a dramatic play).” (Jennings, 2012, p. 4)

Sue Jennings outlines the theory, adopted over the past years by more and more psychologists, according to which the emotional foundation upon which any human being is built is set in the first seven years of life. According to the author and the theories of modern psychology, any new experience a person goes through triggers the emotional mechanisms obtained during this period. Thus, any new procurement, any learning process is done within the acquired playful structure. “Playing produces introspection, creates the Ego, the psychic matter.” (Ciccone, 2010, p. 200)

Thus, one may infer that any new situation, in our case a different reality (that of being watched) will throw the student actor into a position similar to his first years of life, and the theater game, as natural games developed in childhood, will similarly accompany them in their process of assimilation and trauma soothing.

The Theater Game – a reclaiming tool

As I was saying before, the first game Viola Spolin describes in *Improvisation for the Theater* is „Exposure”. Any teacher who guided their student in class through this exercise can attest to the fact that all who went through the experience of being watched by their colleagues described the feeling as unpleasant, cringing, almost traumatic. Many students speak of a process of self-sabotage. Faced with an audience, they have the feeling they are “askew”, that their clothing is improper, that they are breathing “badly”, that they *are* “badly”. It can be no doubt that Viola Spolin placed “Exposure” before other exercises by no accident at all. More than any explanation, it shows students that being watched is

a particular condition, an altogether different paradigm in which the student, in a way, must re-learn to exist. Also, Stanislavsky likens the beginner actor to a child who must relearn all basic processes: “This is why, on stage, it is mandatory to learn to walk again, sit, stand, lie down” (Stanislavsky, 2013, p. 183). Next, through comparisons, we will attempt to demonstrate that the relearning Stanislavsky speaks of takes place by reawakening certain resources from early childhood, and that theater games are designed as to lead the student to the rediscovery of a process they naturally undertook during their first years of life. Thus, reclaiming the natural component is done by recovering certain parts from the infantile ego.

A more thorough look at the actual games first year students come into contact with is necessary for our demonstration. They will be put into groups based on the objective requirements. In order to notice the similarities to early childhood games, it is necessary to actually draw up the play structures taught. As previously stated, the aim will not be to identify the source of the game, as that is the object of another research (although part of them or their variations can easily be found in the works of various theoreticians and theatre practitioners, such as Viola Spolin, Peter Brook, Augusto Boal, Michael Chekhov, John Wright etc.), rather to understand their structure and pedagogic goals in sight.

A first category is represented by *exercises involving random walks*. “Random walks” require students to move in a clearly outlined space, with the same tempo (most often putting the same foot forward at once), in a controlled posture (straight back, organic walking – hand to opposite leg), without bumping into one another. Starting from this simple requirement, new commands are added. For instance, the students might be required to walk while being led by various focal points such as the head, the nose, the chest, the pelvis. The similarity is obvious to the bodily games described by Jean Piaget and Sue Jennings, respectively. As Jean Château points out, children experiment with various types of walking. The only difference is that they experiment walking styles instinctively, while the acting student is coordinated by a teacher. The actual purpose of this kind of “random walk” exercises is to become aware of bodily possibilities, according to the analytical curriculum (developing specific skills). Thus, one might conclude that we are dealing with a real awareness of moving across space and even a rediscovery – reclaim.

Another variation of random walking is through imaginary surfaces – the series of exercises Viola Spolin calls *Space Substance*. Students are required to imagine they are crossing various environments such as ice, hot sand, a sticky

substance etc. In the case of this category of exercises, a similarity is noticed to the bodily exercises described by Piaget. Students must relate to the new substance experienced in a concrete, direct manner. In other words, as Mihaela Bețiu, the translator of Viola Spolin in Romanian, pointed out, the substance is more like invisible than imaginary². Like Peter Brook, Spolin believed in the actor's capacity to make the invisible visible:

Every actor becomes a broadcast-reception instrument, capable of expanding beyond their body and the immediate surrounding environment. As water surrounds and supports sea life, the invisible substance surrounds and supports us. [...] When the invisible becomes visible, the magic of theater is born! (Spolin, 2014, p. 77)

Children strongly believe they can make the invisible visible. If you explain to a child that he forgot to work with the "imaginary" cloak, he will answer: it is not imaginary, it really exists, but you can't see it.

Another category of bodily games are *impulse games*. There are multiple examples of this type, and part of them have unclear origins („Dârli-Da", „Hep", „Samurai", „Pește Mare Pește Mic"). Whatever the rules, all impulse games have the same structure. One or more impulses move around the circle, and students must always pay attention to the impulse. A quality of presence is developed. A simple moment of carelessness is enough for the impulse to go astray. Also, the speed at which the impulse is passed on must gradually increase. Changing the speed of the impulse at once, whether a player passes the impulse on too fast or too slow, is fined by elimination from the game. One might notice a very similar structure to children's games such as „Pic-Pic" or „Oranges". Impulse games also train gesture-vocal coordination through simple ritual formulas. Of course, there is more complexity, but, largely, the game structure is similar. So, again, we're talking about a reclaiming process more than an actual learning process.

A final category of bodily games are *Coordination games*. The representative exercise for this category is "Step code", which many UNATC „I.L. Caragiale" teachers include in the partial exam for Theater Games. The structure of the exercises is variable and easy to understand. The most known ones are „8, 7, 6" with a decreasing count and turning around, and „10-10" without turning around, moving front to back and a decreasing count. A sequence of steps is done to a particular rhythm, gradually decreasing from 10 to 1. The structure may vary,

² Viola Spolin defines *Imagination* as "subjective; an invention; pertaining to the intellect, not the intuition" (Spolin, 2014, p 137).

as the group or the teacher desires, by differently combining the descending sequences with the ascending ones. In this case we may also notice the ritual structure implemented for the pleasure it offers. The resemblance is amazing to children's games where a child obsessively repeats a series of movements, purely for the pleasure it offers. Like children, students enjoy the game and often obsessively the step code or play impulse games for hours. It is clear that more than the working principle introduced by the game (focus on the partner, coordination, attention), the benefit of theater games is bringing the actor student back to a child-like state. Enthusiasm and fun (according to Viola Spolin) is an element that accompanies the entire game playing process. Thus, it is clear that Cojar's idea of reclaiming/recovering those unaltered resources is accomplished through bodily games. Step codes can be seen as an incorporated stage when students can be given new combinations of numbers, directions and modes of walking and can solve then spontaneously and synchronously.

Another category of theater games are *symbolic games*. Viola Spolin's object metamorphosis exercise is representative for this class of play structures. An object of a certain shape is chosen – for instance, a book. Students are invited to “transform” it into something else by interacting with the book. For example, by taking the book to their eyes as if filming, the book becomes a photo / video camera. The attending colleagues are asked to guess what the object has become. Of course, a multitude of exercises operating with dramatic convention derive from here. Sequences can be invented with symbolically used objects, spaces can be created, etc. One can see that Viola Spolin's exercise, through its structure, accesses a game stage described by Piaget and Sue Jennings, respectively – “the symbolic game” / “the projective game”. In the symbolic/projective stage, the child imagines that a lot of objects in the external environment have another quality than what they really have. For example, the stick becomes a sword and the bed a bunker. What is initially naturally undergone by the child in their first years of life is now guided by the acting teacher, in order to be relived, rediscovered in the first steps toward becoming a professional. Again, theater games become the main tool for recovery and reawakening of atrophied functions. At this stage also one cannot speak of actually learning something new, but more like the rediscovery of something. “Bring me ten children and I will tell them this is their new home – you'll see what their imaginations can produce.” (Stanislavsky, 2013, p. 104)

A final category of games students practice in the first semester are *improvisation exercises on given topics*. One such example is silent improvisation,

in preparation for A-B exercises (line-line), Action vs. Activity exercises, Action-Reaction exercises. They also recreate a certain way of thinking pertaining to early childhood. Sue Jennings calls rule games role play. She points out that a child's emotional education is done by making transitions from one role to another. This, in a rule game, the entire journey becomes clear, which is why she calls it role play. Still, a lot of transitions from one role to the other happen in the interaction between mother and child, even from the very first interactions, when the mother turns her own emotional impulses into loving contact. The role play is, for this reason, named by Jennings *neuro-dramatic play*. „Neuro-dramatic play is the sensorial, rhythmic and dramatic game that takes place between the mother and the unborn child, and between the mother and the newborn child.” (2012, p. 2) At this point, role play takes place through substituent replacements. For instance, if the mother is upset with the baby, she pretends to eat him, turning her negative compulsion into an emotional bond.

All throughout his evolution over the first few years of life, the idea of role generates the child's play, as emphasized by Elkonin a few years before. „So, one may assume that the role and operations related to playing it are the building block of the game.” (1980, p. 26) Still, this process is only crystallized through role play, so rule games. Rule games are, essentially, a role taking game. The first rule games are similar to the improvisations proposed as part of the teaching activity at UNATC „I.L. Caragiale”. The first role play a child experiments are also the first social games they play together. Thus, they take the form of imposed improvisation, marked by specific actions. For example, two kids play cops and robbers according to a previously established script, such as “I am the thief, you are the cop, we fight and at the end you catch me”. The rule game is the most advanced form of role play because the role can be completely assimilated, opening a way to a potential becoming, according to Jennings. For instance, a child who plays football very well might later become a football player. So, we see that all improvisation theater games have a structure similar to the first role plays. In improvisation theater games, the generation of an authentic path in direct relationship with the partner is required, aiming for a particular goal. Moreover, occasions abound where the teacher gives students the example of a child playing mother and father or baker and customer, in order to help them understand the type of involvement necessary in improvisation. “The child is serious, because, through the success of the game, they reassert their being, proclaim their strength and autonomy.” (Château, 1967, p. 30)

Other bodily games that students come in contact with are *bodily awareness exercises*, where they are first required to relax on their back, and then to tense up and then relax again certain parts of their body, like the left arm, fist, right leg, etc. The tensing up later becomes repetitive movement, which students are required to observe. Again, we find powerful elements that refer to the toddler Piaget describes, who, in their first months of life make repetitive movements in order to mitigate the otherness trauma. There are plenty of other bodily games examples, involving the breaking down of a movement into a repetitive sequence, which the students are invited to first carry out individually and then as a group. *Mirroring games* can also be included in this category³. They all turn to the newborn's adaptation mechanism during the first few months of life.

Conclusions

This article has attempted to demonstrate, through specific examples, the fact that games are the main instrument through which one may reclaim the natural component. We have tried, by identifying similarities between theater games and the first forms of playing in the baby's life, to highlight the fact that reclaiming the natural component is not an act of learning per se, but one of recovery, reacquaintance, rediscovery.

Over the first part we analysed the functions the game during the first years of human development. Starting from the research of Jean Piaget, the first modern theory of the game as a method of becoming, the three stages/ages of the child's play were noticed, corresponding to the phases of cognitive development. The reason why Piaget's research, also called the theory of cognitive development and later developed by Sue Jennings, was adopted as a model is that, it contains the two previous thinking models on the function of play: *the biological theory* developed by Karl Groos, and the *psychoanalytical* one, initially formulated by Sigmund Freud. Another reason is that a large number of modern psychotherapists such as Ciccone, Marcelli, Sue Jennings have drawn up their own theories, based on the research of Piaget, and based their work on it rather totally disagreeing with it.

In the second part, game categories were analysed for games 1st year students come into contact with. Similarities were spotted in comparison with games the child approaches instinctively over the first years of evolution, in an attempt to demonstrate that the main way to reclaim the natural component is via

³ See *Mirroring Games Series* (Spolin, 2014, p. 55)

theater games. Thus, through the games that an acting teacher coordinates, the students find a part of *Who* they really are (by activating game memory from early childhood) and cognitive, physical and emotional skills from their first part of life are to be recovered here, reactivated, additionally put through training.

So, beyond the practical and theoretical skills that theater games help practice, beyond an introduction into professional ethics regarding group work, an essential requisite of art of theatre, their main function is *to experience reiterating a forgotten Me, upon whose awakening depends the actual skill of approaching experiences specific to the actor's art.*

Also, we find that the potential of theater games is far from being fully tapped and that they can contribute much more than they do now in the process of becoming a professional, and in the inherent quests that are show rehearsals. „A game generates many superior activities, if not all superior activities – arts, sciences, work, etc.” (Château, 1967, p. 146)

References:

1. Belmont, Judith (2015). *101 activități de grup*. București: Trei.
2. Benga, Oana (2012). *Jocuri terapeutice*. Cluj-Napoca: ASCR.
3. Boal, Augusto (2005). *Jocuri pentru actori și non-actori*. București: Fundația Concept.
4. Caillois, Roger (1975). *Eseuri despre imaginație*. București: Univers.
5. Château, Jean (1967). *Copilul și jocul*. București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
6. Checkov, Michael (2017). *Gânduri pentru actori. Despre tehnica actoriei*. București: Nemira.
7. Cojar, Ion (1998). *O poetică a artei actorului*. Ediția a III-a. București: Paideia & Unitext.
8. Darie, Bogdana (2018). *Arta actorului. Complex atitudinal în analiza interdisciplinară*. București: UNATC PRESS.
9. Donellan, Declan (2006). *Actorul și ținta*. București: Unitext.
10. Elkonin, Daniil Borisovici (1980). *Psihologia jucătorului*. București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
11. Groos, Karl (1898). *The play of animals*. New York: D. Appleton and Company.
12. Huizinga, Johan (1998). *Homo ludens*. București: Humanitas.
13. Jennings, Sue (1999). *Introduction to developmental playtherapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
14. Jennings, Sue (2006). *Creative Play with Children at Risk*. Brackley: Speechmark Publishing Ltd.

15. Jennings, Sue (2012). *Neuro-dramatic-play and trauma*. Penang, Malaysia: B Braun Medical Industries.
16. Johnstone, Keith (1987). *IMPRO Improvisation and the Theatre*. New York: Routledge.
17. Kaduson, H., Schaffer, C. (2015). *101 tehnici favorite ale terapiei prin joc*. București: Trei.
18. Marcelli, Daniel (2003). *Tratat de psiho-patologie a copilului*. București: Editura Fundației Generația.
19. Napier, Mick (2004). *Improvise: Scene from the inside out*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann Drama.
20. Piaget, Jean (2000). *Play, dreams and imitations in childhood*. London and New York Roudledge.
21. Rousillon, R., Ciccone, A. (2010). *Manual de psihologie și psihopatie generală*. București: Editura Fundației Generația.
22. Solomon, Marcus (2003). *Jocul ca libertate*. București: Scripta.
23. Spolin, Viola (2008, ed. integrală). *Improvizație pentru teatru*. Traducere Mihaela Bețiu. București: UNATC Press.
24. Spolin, Viola (2014, ed. prescurtată). *Improvizație pentru teatru*. Traducere și editare Mihaela Bețiu. București: UNATC Press.
25. Stanislavski, Konstantin (2013). *Munca actorului cu sine însuși*. București: Nemira.
26. West, Janet (1996). *Child Centred Play Therapy – Second edition*. London: Hodder Education.

Vlad Bălan graduated from the doctoral school of the "I.L. Caragiale" National University of Theatre and Film in 2021. In the last year of his master's degree and his four years of doctorate, he was an assistant at the Acting Department, BA level, class of Associate Professor Andreea Vulpe. In parallel, he worked as a trainer at numerous teen festivals such as ID Fest, T4T, Aplauze. He was also a teacher for *Școala de Bine*, a project initiated by the Act Theatre, which aimed to bring non-formal education to disadvantaged schools and high schools, with over 200 beneficiaries. At the Ioanid School, he was a theatre teacher, working with children from primary, secondary and high school. Currently, he is an actor at the Nottara Theatre in Bucharest, actor and director alongside the Unteatru team, associated teaching staff at the Ovidius University of Constanța.