AUDITIONS AND…MORE AUDITIONS

John Matthews and Victor Ladrón De Guevara

Abstract:

This is the third of a four-part series of interrelated articles discussing the pedagogical, ideological, and sociological functions of the audition process in drama school training. For this third paper we have re-interviewed our contributors in 2019, as they come towards the end of their formal training. We have asked them to compare their experiences of professional auditions with their experiences of auditioning for drama school recounted for the first two papers. Their accounts describe a complex and contradictory response to the process of audition which negates any possible interpretation of a linear or progressive development. This is apparently at odds with the pedagogic strategies pursued during their studies. Aiming to explain that dissonance we draw on the Bergsonian concepts of 'clock time' and 'psychological time' to help to classify and analyse these experiences, broadly categorising these with reference to an actor's own conscious states in audition. Using Stanislavksi's writing as a key point of reference allows us to align our theorisation with his discussion of a long-term and indeterminant pedagogical process of actor development. This is also counterpointed by Stanislavski's recognition that technique, no matter how it has been acquired or how competently it may have been mastered may not be sufficient for the actor to exercise her craft.

In the last section of this article we utilise Csikszentmihalyi theorisation of 'flow' states in order to reinforce the distinction *felt* by our interviewees between auditions determined by/in 'clock time' and those inscribed within/by the psychological time, which Bergson calls *la durée.*

Key words: auditions, Bergson, flow, clock time, *la durée,* psychological time, talent, technique, acting training

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understanding of the body in performance, and the interrelationship between theory and practice.

In this third paper in the series *auditions and…* we have returned to our original sources, re-interviewing our original student-actor contributors for the previous two articles to enquire into how the conditions of stress and self-modulation that were identified in their audition experiences may have changed or developed over the three years of their formal training. Having looked at the admission process to drama school – the first-round auditions in our first article (Vol. 5, #2, November 2017), the call-back experience in our second paper (Vol.6, #2, November 2018) – we have interviewed our contributors again, this time to ask them about *leaving* drama school rather than entering it.

We have re-interviewed these students in their final year on the Equity and Spotlight accredited BA Acting programme at Plymouth Conservatoire, a few months before graduation. We have asked them to reflect again on their admission auditions and we have also asked them about their experiences of auditioning as part of their degree programmes. For example, auditioning for parts in end-of-year and showcase productions. As these students are at the point of concluding their training they have also had some exposure to professional audition processes, and we have asked them to compare these experiences with their auditions on, and for their degree programmes.

We are, perhaps, in this series of articles, at risk of over-theorising our evidence. We have a select number of contributors and therefore a comparatively small base of primary evidence. We have generated most of these interviews over the last four years and we have been deliberately unstructured in the questions that we have asked. Methodologically, we have sought to allow our contributors to talk about what they wish to talk about with regards to auditions and we responded in our writing to the themes and ideas that have arisen within those conversations. We have been led to consider stress and self-identity as well as role-modelling and institutional processes as significant factors in the experience of auditionees for drama school acting programmes in the UK. In these most recent interviews we have asked our contributors to reflect on three years of experiences and to discuss the development of their feelings with regards to audition, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that we have been moved to understand some of what we have heard in the context of theories of time.

Here in this paper we suggest that we might be able to theorise audition experiences from at least two perspectives: auditions in and for training purposes, and, auditions in and

for employment purposes. In other words, we might choose to see the practice of auditioning as being both 'of the industry' and also 'of training', and that we might find reference points for both of these within the writings of Konstantin Stanislavski whose influence is, of course, dominant within both of these discourses.

Our central assertion is that the experience of an actor's own conscious states in audition, and their reflections on the personal value of these experiences will be heavily influenced by the attitudes towards time summoned in and by an audition. This is not simply a case of professional auditions being one thing and auditions in drama schools being another, nor a matter of less-pressurised auditions in any context feeling less stressful and thus generally more positive. Rather this emerges as a matter of the ways by which audition determines the auditionees' sense of the present tense. Being 'of the industry' or 'of training' is not definitively about the context in which an audition occurs – professional context or drama school – but rather *how* the audition occurs with reference to the experience of the present tense. We aim to show these two different conceptualisations of audition – of the industry and of training – as different on the basis of how the parties involved view and experience the time spent in audition. We have found reference points and pedagogical basis for these two different categories in the writings of Konstantin Stanislavski, and we tentatively suggest that these writings may have helped to determine these two experiences insofar as they relate to contemporary acting discourses.

In seeking to categorise the differing experiences of actors in auditions we have drawn on the Bergsonian concepts of 'clock time' and 'psychological time'[1]. The former we have used to denote the teleological predicate of audition, as a point of entry into an institution or job and, as discussed in our second article, a threshold moment between *not having* and *having*, *not being* and *being*. The latter we have conceptualised with reference to what Bergson might call *la,* or duration; categorising certain experiences as determined by a consciousness that situates auditions as part of a processual experience of training.

To try to speak as plainly as possible about our assertion (even if, perhaps, rather simplistically) there is a marked difference between accounts we have taken of the experience of auditions when they are felt by the auditionees to be an end unto themselves, self-contained and circumscribed, and when they have been felt to be comparatively loosely demarcated parts of larger, longer and more continuous processes. As indicated above, we frame the former using Bergson's concept of 'clock time' and the latter using his conceptualisation of *la durée* , or 'psychological time'.

Bergson's seminal work *Time and Freewill* set out to 'un-mix' space and time, which he saw as erroneously comingled in the philosophy of Kant. This co-mingling was, for Bergson, a philosophical error and yet one which despite its erroneousness exerted tremendous influence of the social experience of time. One significant way in which this influence has been felt is in the context of 20th. Century training and education in Europe which, as Foucault observed, developed out of timetabled rituals of the monastery which divided an otherwise shapeless day into a uniform succession of circumscribed events and activities (Foucault: 1991 [1979]). The subsequent 'industrialisation of entertainment' (2006: 42), as Nicholas Ridout has described it, has meant that, even beyond training, the workplace for actors requires that they must 'submit themselves to the regulation of clocks and bells' (ibid) and live a worklife segmented by calls and cues, between the half-hour call and clearance, pre-shows and intervals, acts and scenes and ever-more molecularized and delineated into super objectives, objectives, actions and units.

Bergson sought to differentiate between the qualitative experience of time and the quantitative nature of space which had been blurred together by mathematical conceptualisations of the movement of time. Time, thought of as seconds, minutes, hours and days is indivisible from the movement of objects in space – the movement of the earth around the sun, to be specific – but while this 'clock time' is a useful invention for a number of purposes (the standardisation of start times in theatres and the coordination of final curtains with the last bus, for example) it unhelpfully obscures the sensation of time wherein past, present and future interpenetrate one another. Or, as Bergson has it, 'several conscious states are organized into a whole, permeate one another, [and] gradually gain a richer content' (122).

Actor training discourses would seem to wish to operate within the developmental framework that such a qualitative experience would presuppose. One in which knowledge emerges as that 'richer content' arising out of experience. Yet, training, and actor training specifically in this context, has, in companion with widespread social processes and practices of employment, configured certain of its activities around the fixed framework of clock time; by the division and juxtaposition of time-limited tasks and attainments and their relative positioning along a conceptual continuum of experience. Thus, audition has a particular and complex status with regards to these two possibilities and we discuss this status within this paper.

We have seen *la durée* in congruence with the slow method depicted in Stanislavski's writings; of repeated failure and relapse prefiguring incremental, hard-won and, at least in theory, resilient change. In *An Actor's Work* Tortsov's students make slow progress, and are constantly faced (not to say haunted) by their repeated and continuous mistakes. Right from the beginning of his work he warns those who may want to pursue training with him that his system 'do[es] not at first produce benefit but rather a temporary set – back' (Stanislavski: xxxi). 'Psychological time' even sounds like a phrase that might have been invented by Stanislavski and yet the practices of auditioning that are so centrally positioned within this discourse (both in and by training institutions and also in professional contexts) are to a significant degree operated within and by a rigorously quantitative context of 'clock time'. The contradiction between these contexts might be useful when explaining the feelings of stress and confusion that occur for our participants even at the level of their self-identity as well as the possibility for audition to be both enjoyable and edifying.

As we summate the findings of the two major sections of this article that follow – Clock Time and Psychological Time – we draw on literature from the field on the subject of talent as well as theorization of the state of 'flow', which has been described by Csikszentmihaly as typified by certain characteristics, one of which is the transformation of time[2].

CLOCK TIME

Auditions, almost by definition, are fragmentary. A fragment of text from a larger script; a fragment of context from a larger situation and framework in which an actor must perform a discrete representation of character aligned to a broader, longer more sustained and continuous whole. Auditions are firmly temporally circumscribed and often perfunctory thereby reinforcing the fragmentary nature of their experience. Temporally they are also future-oriented in a way that suspends and alienates the experience of the present artificializing the present *in the present* by demarcating it as for the purpose of a later moment. A later moment when that which is being done now in the present of the audition will be done *for real*. It is not only a sublimation of the activity of employment, as would be the case for other interview-based tasks whereby 'real-world' workplace requirements are modelled in synthetic exercises that test skills and aptitudes, but rather it is a discrete performance of the job itself. This has evident usages for selection purposes but also,

philosophically speaking, this means that the activity practised in audition is in an important sense identical with the job itself. It is not a presentation of *any* text or character it is the presentation of *this* text and character and thus something very specific about the actor's ability is being revealed to herself and to others. There is then, in this experience of audition an almost meta-temporality in which the tenses of present and future are peculiarly juxtaposed in a way that overdetermines their mutual exclusivity in spite of the apparent identicality.

The mutual exclusivity of *now* and *later* as experienced in audition can be understood via Bergson's theorisation of the materialisation of time. This is a conception of time as manifold static locations within a linear space. A sense of time where moment follows on moment and the boundaries of these moments envelope our consciousness also. Bergson saw this linear and material conceptualisation of time as connected to the scientific view of the world and as both a predicate and methodology for the scientific method of examining it. This 'clock time' is of human creation, different to both the quantum-physical nature of time and also our conscious reality.

Hannah Arendt, in her historical overview of the European philosophy of time associated clock time with the ascendency of 'organized knowledge' over the last three centuries and the predominance of 'scientific thinking' as an historically recent subset of the enterprise of thought[3]. She argues that this artificial conception of time was both methodologically necessary for scientific experimentation and also philosophically problematic insofar as it imputes a false conception of the human experience of time[4]. Whether or not 'clock time' has philosophical credibility – Bergson convincingly argued in *Time and Freewill* that it did not – it is a useful methodological basis for the highly productive enterprise of scientific inquiry (as Arendt has shown) and it has come to dominate many of the activities of modern capitalist economies, including the job-selection activity that is the audition. Furthermore, in our day-to-day lives, clock time is made to exist insofar as multiple mechanisms of sociality appear to predicate it: my daily routine of train times, meetings and classes, dinner engagements and other scheduled and time-limited activities certainly make it *feel* as though clock time exists and often (for example, as I note the deadline for submission of this article looming) I feel its presence strongly pressing down on me and closing in around me. As Bergson puts it, we are so familiar with the idea of clock time that we are,

beset by it, we introduce it unwittingly into our feeling of pure succession; we set our states of consciousness side by side in such a way as to perceive them simultaneously, no longer in one another, but alongside one another; in a word, we project time into space, we express duration in terms of extensity, and succession thus takes the form of a continuous line or a chain, the parts of which touch without penetrating one another (Bergson 1910: 100–101).

As we discussed in our first paper, there are multiple stressors within and around the audition experience effecting auditionees and causing them to experience stress (Matthews, Ladron de Guevara, 2017: 219-222). Utilising James Davies' findings about the experience of stress in trainee psychotherapists we theorised that these stressors could facilitate threshold-crossing experiences for candidates auditioning for drama school and serve a distinctive pedagogical purpose in preparing them to role-model valorised professional behaviours (ibid: 223-225). We followed this train of thought through in our second paper and argued that call-back audition experiences could facilitate what Bruno Latour called 'actorial shifting' in helping to accomplish these transformational experiences for trainees, shifting their sense-of-self in potentially positive and advantageous ways. The qualifications that we placed in these previous two papers notwithstanding (for example, the negative effects that institutions may provoke in auditionees, Matthews, Ladron De Guevara, 2018: 147-149) we had perhaps expected to find our sources describing their later experiences of auditions, professional and in training, more positively and yet we have observed in our most recent interviews a marked lack of resolution to the feelings of anxiety and self-identity confusion in participants. This may be, we suggest, something to do with clock time.

When we asked our contributor *N*, who is in her final year of training, to consider life after training and to talk about her experience of auditioning for work internationally we observed common and recurring themes in her responses relating to the day-to-day experience of jobbing actors as they await and prepare for auditions and wait-on callbacks and job offers. Utilising Bergson's clock time concept, we have chosen to see these themes as *outside of* the audition but *related to* it; affecting it and being affected by it.

> You're not able to plan things because you don't know – maybe I will have a job or maybe I won't – you just don't know…the stress is more like, in the waiting [than actually in the audition]. Just the feeling of not knowing is a bit stressful, a bit nerve-racking. It's like having a race and you're almost at the first place but you're not quite there. It's not another stress but another nervous thing. You're so close but you have to do this one more thing before you get there. It's that feeling when you're so close and there's not that many people left. A bit nerve racking...I am on edge all the time [after an audition]. You can get a bit tired of it maybe…tired of the anticipation (*N*)

In *N*'s account we can observe a particular form of work-related stress common to all freelance and self-employed workers. The employment conditions for actors are, in this sense, not unusual; we might even choose to see the emergent 'gig economy', wherein such conditions are typical, as having adopted its name from the pre-existing slang used by actors and musicians to refer to short-term employment contracts[5]. The stress and alienation induced by an employment context characterised by waiting, uncertainty, unpredictable work patterns and inconsistent communication which has been experienced by professional actors since the emergence of the modern theatre industry has been found to be evermore widespread with the more recent development of the 'precariat' workforce[6]. This feeling of precarity is doubly experienced by most actors as often they will have to have a casual/part-time job to support their main occupation. As Broderick Chow argues, '[t]he precarious nature of the business therefore means that actors must combine the unremunerated labour of auditions, promotional material and managing finances with one or more non-acting-based jobs – often casual or part-time and flexible enough to allow time off for auditions – as well as creating showcase pieces and their own work during those fallow times when an actor is euphemistically said to be 'resting' (Chow, 2014: 131). However, we have also identified some more seemingly context-specific stressors in the case of audition that appear to indicate that something specific may be happening in audition to stress and affect actors which cannot be straightforwardly explained by precarious employment conditions. When we asked *N* about her experience auditioning for a part in a film abroad she said,

> It was very quick. It was my first *proper* audition. It was a challenge to try to prepare. When I got there, it was very quick and quite rushed…I forgot the lines a lot because I was quite nervous… I can tell sometimes [whether I've done well] …I've learned [that it's normal that you get the script only the night before the audition] … [but] it [a feeling of 'blockingness'] still happens but for me personally its now more to do with going into my head. I probably think too much. It's probably a reason why I have that blocking in those settings. You wanna be yourself, and you are yourself, but you're just this *one* side of you. It's that kind of pressure [professionally] of "will I get this job or not" … I felt very blocked in that one! There was one line I kept saying wrong and I kept get frustrated with myself. I didn't relax into it. I was really mechanical…it was all a mess! (*N*)

N discussed how the feeling of 'blockingness' which was first discussed in the second article of this series (Matthews, Ladron de Guevara, 2018: 147) still stays with her in professional auditions and that it can be particularly present when the audition feels rushed and time-

pressured. *C* discussed some similar feeling when we asked about their experience of auditioning professionally:

> I was like "what am I doing?!" I get really, like, in my head about it. I wanted to show *not that*; that's everything you don't want to do. You don't want to snap out of character and that's what I did. And that's everything I've seen, in these auditions for example, that I know doesn't work! where I've seen so many auditions [now] I do have a better understanding of what's *not good* to do. Rather than what's really good I have a *very* good understanding of what's not good and so when I do something like that I can *see it*, like, from the perspective of the other person. *(C)*

It would be logical to assume that this knowledge could offer *C* a solid understanding of what to expect and to allow her to engage with the process of auditioning in a confident and relaxed manner. Yet, *C*'s account differs significantly from that assumption:

> I can't eat. I feel sick all day. I don't know why because I know it's all ok. I just still get really nervous [about auditions] … [Discussing a particular audition:] I got the part but I still felt the need to apologise for what I did [in audition]. It's not what I wanted to show. It's not how I practised it or rehearsed it. It completely changed when I was in the room. I don't know why I felt the need to apologise, but I did. *(C)*

C like *N* commented on a certain dissociation from self, an almost dual consciousness whereby their more experienced self can stand apart from and witness itself making what it knows to be mistakes and doing what she, self-consciously, intends to not do. The parties refer to an inability to relax linked to a propensity to over-think action as well as an acute sense of empathy with the auditioner almost to the point of stepping outside of the self and watching the self through the eyes of another. *N* 'can tell sometimes' how the audition is going by her empathetic connection with the auditioner where *C* finds herself experiencing an even more acute kind of disembodiment where she feels as though she is watching herself from an external perspective. Interestingly, both *N* and *C* refer to the persistence of feelings in recent professional auditions dating back to their earliest experiences of auditioning for drama school. This is most marked in *N*'s reflection that her sense of 'blockingness' 'still happens' and that auditions still 'give me that blockingness' (*N*).

Both *C* and *N* are now in the final few months of their training and where our earlier conclusions might have suggested that training would be able to bring resolution to some of these feelings and reconcile trainees with their own feelings and sense-of-self the opposite

seems to be as often true for *C* and *N*. Clearly, repeated experience of auditioning, and conscious training for the purpose of auditioning has afforded these actors skills to contend with and utilise the stress and confusion inherent in the audition situation, and also brought them certain 'hard-won' expertise but the persistence of their feelings in audition suggests pause for thought about not only the effects of this process but also its utility.

Nicholas Ridout has helpfully troubled the assumption that workers in the arts sector are less-alienated *tout court* than workers in general; as we noted in our first paper, the specific form of alienation that is stage-fright is, in a certain sense, 'intimately connected with the specific condition of theatrical employment' (2006: 9). In an even more pragmatic sense auditions are also intimately connected to the conditions of theatrical employment and may be experienced, as in the case of *C* above as uniquely alienating in this sense. The alienation experienced in audition shares commonalities with the alienation experienced in interview processes more generally (Davies, 2007) but is also typified by the peculiarity of character in this situation, as alluded to by *C*. While all interview candidates might present 'a character', in the Goffmanian sense (Goffman, 1990 [1959]) the actor at audition is explicitly presenting at least two characters – the actor and the role – as well as their ability to shift between and modulate these two in accordance with the demands of their assessors.

This complexity and specificity duly noted, this section of this paper undertakes to describe the teleological nature of alienation in audition and the ways by which we can understand this as 'of the industry' rather than 'of training', to draw a conceptual if not phenomenological distinction. In this mode, auditionees may experience a sense of self within the context of 'clock time', and, following Bergson's negative critique of the effects of clock time this may help to explain why even practiced actors continue to undergo stress and self-identity confusion in audition.

No doubt the precarity and scarcity of theatrical employment and also the asymmetrical competition for work between 'connected' actors and recent graduates has an impact on the stressful nature of audition experience also but we were struck by *N*'s description of recent audition experiences as not only anxiety-inducing but also amnesiac in nature: 'it seems weird that I still don't know how I've done in an audition…that sense of not really being able to remember what I said or did. I do remember stuff but there's also things I don't remember…it's a bit blurry.' (*N*)

It is difficult to know whether to seek to understand this account in the context of the dissociation experienced through repetitive labour[7] which might be allied to clock time as the medium for a certain form of alienated work or whether to theorise this amnesia through the lens of the intense absorption associated with 'flow states'[8] and Bergson's sense of psychological time as a particular state of consciousness. Bergson writes that 'pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live,* when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states' (Bergson 1910: 100–101). We can, he writes, 'conceive of succession [time passing] without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought' (ibid).

In this context, the amnesiac experience may be best understood as a product of the 'abstract thought'. In other words that this forgetfulness only becomes a 'problem' in the context of our trying to remember; in our assumption that there is a unit of time/space to go back to, abstractly, and in which will be contained a memory of it. In Bergson, this is really a problem of the spatialising of time in our societies and this account might not be given by 'a being who was ever the same and ever changing, and who had no idea of space' (ibid). Indeed, we may not be able to rigorously apply Bergson here given our methodology of participant interviewing: Bergson might point out that the apparent reliability of retrospective reflection is a distortion of consciousness by the idea of clock time seeing as any attempt to contextualise the flux of consciousness could only succeed in deforming the phenomena.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TIME

To persevere with the idea of *la durée* as a useful framework for understanding audition experience for now at least, it is noteworthy in our interviews that final year student-actors had positive audition experiences too. Although some of these were at professional auditions most were in the context of productions forming a part of their training. *N* gave this account of auditioning for a professional director for an end-of-year production at Plymouth Conservatoire:

> [it was] very casual. Felt really relaxed doing it…I was a bit more nervous [because] I really wanted the character that I went for. [It was] very fun but also quite difficult…I

> kind of knew what I was doing and I felt very secure. I felt calm, although I was nervous. Also, I was open about being nervous, which helped…the feeling of wanting a specific thing sort of disappeared. (*N*)

These auditions were conducted by freelance professionals engaged to direct and produce shows as part of a season of productions. Revealingly, even though both *N* and *C* felt that time was not constraining proceedings in these auditions they were in fact being run to a rigid schedule.

We might see these auditions as potentially freighted with acute stress because of the perceived need to *get the right part; to get the right agent*. Equally some of this potential stress might be ameliorated by the fact that the auditions fell under the auspices of formal training and were therefore less subject to the employment-related conditions discussed earlier. We asked *C* and *N* to consider these stress factors and to compare their professional experiences of audition with the quasi-professional experiences of auditioning for productions forming a part of their training. *N* and *C* identified knowing the person auditioning them as well as feeling that time was not a constraint as significant factors in their feeling more relaxed and also in their ability to perform better. *C* summed up these two factors saying,

> I've been to a lot of [professional] auditions and I know what it's like when they're just like, "right, go on then, start your audition!". And that's never going to be that person's [auditionee's] best work…it's very different to walk into a room and not know who they [the auditioners] are. (*C*)

C also related these factors together and suggested that in their own experience the sense that there was not much time to capture the attention of a stranger in audition gave rise to a further sense of identity dissociation, which *C* discussed in Stanislavskian terms as related to Character.

> I hate this version of yourself that you have to put on to be noticed. Even though, I like, I get it. You have to do it. There's no way that you can't, it just feels so untrue to who I am…you do have to put on a character. You do have to be someone else [other than yourself and the character you're reading for].

> I do feel really untrue to myself [when I am in audition]…I always feel like I'm never enough. I don't like being untrue to myself but I just don't feel enough for certain things. '[I got a part] but I felt, like, how am I *enough* for it. I wasn't *enough* for it, so how am I allowed to get it over anyone else?...I think that I'm always like, never enough [for a

part]…nothing prepares you for *that* [the experience of professional auditions] before *that*'. (*C*)

There appear to be multiple identity paradoxes contained within this account. *C* knows that they must play a character (from a text) in order to be cast for a role; *C* feels that they must also play a character *as an actor* in order to be cast for a role; *C* feels troubled by the fact that this latter character is 'untrue', but seemingly necessary; *C* feels that her 'true' self is insufficient and that the 'untrue' self is superior even though she herself experiences this 'untrue' self as detestable; all of these selves and their associated values for *C* are constructed in relation to the perceived desires of another person (the auditioner) and are variously deployed in an attempt to satisfy this other person that *C* is *enough*. At this point, it is important to interrogate, *enough* for what? On one level, it may be obvious that *C* is interested in demonstrating that she is capable of 'truthful' representations of character, that is, that she is able to do that which she has been trained for, and to work as a professional actor. Yet, in theory, she should already know the answer to this question, as the feedback received through her training process should have offered clear guidance about her ability as an actor. However, in here, *C* does not appear to be stating that she is not sufficiently prepared for this task, but seems to be pointing to an issue that was signalled as key in the first article of this series, that is, not knowing what the auditioner wants and looks for.

This article has positioned the auditioning process as a teleological phenomenon, a medium to achieve a desired end, yet the specific quality or qualities that need to be demonstrated within the audition remain unclear and undefined and are often grouped under the all-encompassing category of talent. Nevertheless, what 'talent' actually is cannot, perhaps, be defined and the indiscriminate use of this term can be highly problemtatic. Mark Seton, points to a study done by Kath Leahy in which she argues that 'many sections of the Australian community are denied access to theatrical training and expression simply because of the underlying cultural values which inform talent' (Leahy in Seton, 2007: 170). Seton aims to define the 'X factor' sought after by auditioners as residing in the actor's 'vulnerability' (2007: 174), which is often misrecognised as an object which the actor owns and is often referred to as, 'a person's "having" energy, charisma, passion, emotion or sex appeal' (Seton: 173). Even though the authors of this article agree with Seton in his reluctance to think of the actor's vulnerability as an object that the actor possess (as they are instead sensed and recognised as an experience, Seton: 174), the concept of vulnerability appears to be as abstract and undefined as those that he rejects (e.g. talent, charisma, etc.). In

the second article of this series, we suggested that auditioners are necessarily embedded within ideological, and therefore aesthetic, institutional frameworks which shape and guide their judgements. In a similar way, we also argued that auditionees can read and/or infer those frameworks in a process which might affect the formation of their own selves. Nevertheless, the question of what precisely is being looked for during an audition is still a provoking and elusive one. There are, certainly, some partial answers to this question. In a professional context, auditioners may look for a competent actor (that person with the sufficient skill to exercise their profession) or for a person who may fulfil a genotypic casting requirement. Nevertheless, both in an educational and professional context, consciously or unconsciously, auditioners may be looking for that 'X factor' Seton points at.

The authors of this article recognize that it is difficult to make generalizations on phenomena such as auditions, as their purposes are manifold and its configurations continue to change and evolve. However, it is possible to infer that a search for that which is *ineffable* (that which can be refered to as talent) is still one of the main drives of the audition process. *C's* feeling of not being enough may be related to not sensing nor recognising that experience, and, as her process has been predominantly a pedagogical one, the lack of that extra quality is, to a certain extent, expected. In other words, technique in itself is never *enough*. Technique itself cannot prepare the actor for that state in which things just work, a state that may be equivalent to that which Mihaly Csikszentmihaly referred to as *flow* (2002 [1992]).

Arguably, most acting techniques aim to set the basis for the actor to be able to achieve a state of flow, but the study of those techniques themselves is insufficient to achieve such a state. Stanislavski himself is clear in this respect. His system aims to allow the actor 'to stimulate subconscious creation through the conscious means' (Stanislavski: xxxii) but acknowledges that not everybody will be able to achieve this goal. In fact, towards the end of *An Actor's Work,* Tortsov, in a conversation with Rakhmanov, discusses the attributes and weaknesses of his students and expresses grave reservations regarding their abilities, doubting that their studies will prepare them to join his professional company. For example, with regard to Leo, Tortsov suggests that Rakhnanov should 'stimulate his magic "ifs", the Given Circumstances… [d]evelop his imagination, devise interesting tasks which will help feeling come alive [and by doing that] we'll have, I won't say a very good , but a useful actor' (Stanislaviski: 615-616). Extensive work with Grisha and Varya would result in '[n]ot

quite art yet [but a] kind of hamming [that] can come near to art' (Stanislavski: 618) while Varya's acting is only deemed to be 'public flirting' (620).

It is in fact rather meaningful that there are very few occasions when Tortsov's students get things right. Most of those occasions, are brief and short-lived but the most distinctive and meaningful ones are only two in number. The first one is the performance of Othello by Kostya and Pasha achieved after a long process of trial and error. The second one, is a rather surprising event.[9] When Tortsov is questioned about the process of characterization, he suggests to his students to organise a masquerade. Most of students embraced this opportunity with joy and are later criticized by Tortsov for their poor and deficient work. Kostya seriously struggles through this process, yet, moments before showing his character, inspiration strikes, and he creates a full-fledged character based on his own inner-critic. It can be argued that Kostya's moment of inspiration is a result of the internalization of those techniques that he has been studying (the subconscious made conscious), yet, the systematic training technique pursued and meticulously discussed by Stanislavski breaks apart at this moment leaving this sudden engagement with a state of flow unexplained and undefined. Furthermore, the apparition of this critic appears to be a stark condemnation of both Stanislavski's teaching and of Stanislavski himself. In his encounter with Kostya's critic, Tortsov asks:

> What can you criticize? You're an ignoramus,' Tortsov said, disparagingly. 'Ignoramuses criticize, too,' I defended myself. 'You know nothing , you can do nothing, ' Tortsov continued, provocatively. 'Those who can, do, those who can't, teach,' I said, sitting down by the footlights, opposite Tortsov, in a very affected manner. 'That's not true. You don't criticize, you carp. You're no better than a leech, a slug. They're not dangerous, any more than you are, but they don't give life.' 'I'll drag you through the mud... relentlessly... tirelessly,' I squealed. 'Vermin!' Tortsov yelled in undisguised fury. 'Oh! What style!' I said, leaning across the footlights, playing games with Tortsov. 'Parasite,' Tortsov almost screamed […] 'You can't wash off a leech. And where there are leeches there's a marsh and where there's a marsh there are devils, and me.' (Stanislavski: 549)

Kostya's retort to Stanislavski's technique (whilst embodying it fully), appears to point to a state of contradiction. A state in which the student (however momentarily) masters the technique by superseding it. In a certain way, the ability of the actor to enter into a state of flow ends up *overflowing* the technique that originally prepared and supported her, and it becomes a way to criticize it and delineate its limits. Yet, achieving a state of flow within the constraints of an audition appears to be particularly difficult as, it has been argued above,

auditions are primarily framed by Bergson's notion of *clock time* – a definitively non-flowing succession of individuated and disconnected units.

In many of our interviews with student-actors about their experiences of auditioning, *for* and *on* their programme as well as outside of it, our contributors spoke of the factor of stepping into an audition room with a sense of time-limitation and without prior knowledge of who they will find inside. These two stressors, which seem to give rise to dissociation and alienation in the experience of audition appear to be quite integrally coupled together – our contributors seemed untroubled by time limitation if they already knew the people auditioning them in advance and they seemed untroubled by not knowing the people auditioning them if they sensed that the allotted time for the audition was not overly constrained. *N*'s account of a professional audition where the casting director and producer demonstrated to *N* that time was not constrained is typical of these responses: "[It felt] quite casual…it was very free…knowing that you were nervous they were like "*take a breath, be calm, have fun*"… I felt very secure [in that]. I felt calm, although I was nervous. Also, I was open about being nervous, which helped".(*N*)

Interestingly, even though *N* did not get this part she felt positive about the experience as a whole, and also commented on having learnt from the experience.

Perhaps the pattern and connectedness between time, self and other that we are seeing in these responses is coincidental rather than causational; it would not be surprising to find that casting directors who are pleasant, who take time and make actors feel unhurried achieve better results with actors and also leave actors feeling more valued and positive about their experiences in audition. However, it is marked in our responses that even when auditioners are not personable or warm provided they give the sense of time *not* pressurising proceedings actors tend to reflect positively on audition experiences insofar as they feel that they have done good or at least representative work. Similarly, even when time was constrained, provided that auditionees did not feel that it was constrained they also tended to reflect positively on the experience as representative of their best work even if they did not get the part they were auditioning for. *N* suggested that instances where time did not seem to be over-determining their audition, 'the feeling [of auditioners] wanting a specific thing sort of disappeared' (*N*). It is interesting to us that there would appear to be a connection between time and the sense of self here as it is intervened on by the imagined sense of another. Or rather, the imagined sense of another's desire.

It is tempting to observe a contrast here between an audition process in which auditioners allot a brief interval of time in which to reveal *that which they already know* – the much-parodied revolving door audition model which has been successfully monitised by talent competition TV shows as an entertainment psychodrama - versus an audition process whereby auditioners *undertake to find that which they don't already know* in an activity that is more loosely determined in and by time. Except, of course, such a hypothesis would be beyond the remit of our methodology, which has centred on actors in audition and not those individuals conducting auditions. However, from this emic anthropological perspective *N* and *C*'s accounts of multiple audition experiences both inside and outside of a training context suggests that it might be possible to loosely categorise auditions via two different conceptual models. These are not simply to do with giving *less* time or *more* time, or even to auditions with greater or lesser predetermined expectations of auditionees, but perhaps to how time feels and is experienced in audition and whether or not time-limitation is secondary to personally-felt experience or preeminent over it.

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[1] See Bergson, H. (1910) *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness,* Meneola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, and also David Scott's 'The "concept of time" and the "being of the clock": Bergson, Einstein, Heidegger, and the interrogation of the temporality of modernism' in *Continental Philosophy Review*, June 2006, Volume 39, Issue 2, pp 183–213

[2] See Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi in Weinberg, R.S., and Gould, D., ed. (2006) Foundations of Sports Psychology, Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishing, pp. 147–148.

[3] See Matthews, J., (2019) *The Life of Training,* London: Methuen Drama, p.78

[4] See Arendt, H., (1978 [1971]) *The Life of the Mind*, San Diego, New York & London: Harcourt Inc., 7

[5] This usage of 'gig' is thought to have emerged first in the 1920s or 1930s as a term used by musicians to denote an 'engagement' to play at a party for one evening. See *Partridge, Eric, (2006). A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, London & New York: Routledge,* p. 462.

[6] A term coined in the 1980s but popularised in the 1990s through the publication *The Socialist Review* and more recently by writers including Noam Chomsky and Guy Standing.

[7] For a brief history of this cultural-materialist theory see Baroniam, L., (2013) *Marx and Living* Labour, London & New York: Routledge, 116-188

[8] See Matthews, J., (2011) *Training for Performance,* London: Methuen Drama, 45-48

[9] We are aware that the descriptions included by Stanislavski in this section of the book are, predominantly, rhetorical exercises. However, we would like to suggest that within that particular construction, there is something rather significant and meaningful about his pedagogical endeavours.