

The Open Program of the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards

THE OPEN PROGRAM STUDIO

Class Description

Working together on individual monologues, The Open Program Studio is designed for actors, directors, theater artists, or anyone wishing to investigate the elements of the actor's craft. This cycle will explore in practical and theoretical terms the nature of intentional action through work on individual monologues and scenes and the current research of the Workcenter.

In theatre we can understand behavior as a complex phenomenon, based on the dynamic relationship we have with the world around us. This relationship exists through actions, contacts, intentions, spoken words, and associations. From the outside – in theatre – one can read this manifestation of mind/body processes as something that carries a meaning. A practical understanding of the complex and yet simple nature of action can be seen as the core of the actor's practice. But how does one approach it and access it organically? How to let this stream of behavior develop, grow and extend, and become meaningful?

The objective of this studio is to utilize the tools of the actor's craft as developed by the Workcenter over many years to approach the seed of a possible organic manifestation of mind/body processes. What is the relation between the mind, the body and something that is neither mind nor body, something that we can call the heart?

Led by Mario Biagini, Associate Director of the Workcenter, studio participants will work on Stanislavski's physical action through the work on individual monologues and scenes explored over a four-class cycle.

TIME AND LOCATION

440 Studios (Studio 4E), 440 Lafayette Street

October 15, 12 – 4 PM

October 22, 12 – 4 PM

October 29, 12 – 4 PM

November 5, 12 – 4 PM

COST

\$250

INFO AND REGISTRATION

Please contact openprogramstudio@gmail.com or 917-569-5292

Mario Biagini

Actor and director, a close associate of Jerzy Grotowski in the second half of the 1980s, considered – together with Thomas Richards – Grotowski’s official successor. He began collaborating with the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski in 1986 and soon became one of the most important figures in the group (in 1987 he became, on Grotowski’s recommendation, leader of one of the groups within the Workcenter). He belonged to the group of performers working on *Downstairs Action* and was one of the protagonists of *Action* – one of the most significant works of the *Art as vehicle* phase – which was prepared by Richards in collaboration with Grotowski (*Action* was performed and developed up until 2009, always together with Biagini). He also worked closely with Grotowski in preparing his Paris lectures and as a translator and editor of his texts. After Grotowski’s death, Biagini together with Thomas Richards led the *Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards* in Pontedera. Beyond working on developing and presenting *Action*, Biagini was also director of the project *The Bridge: Developing Theatre Arts* (1999–2006), the aim of which was to explore possibilities of enriching the theatre arts with experiences emerging from *Art as vehicle*. He directed and performed in *One Breath Left* and *Dies Irae: The Preposterous Theatrum Interioris Show*, also creating a montage for the latter performance. Since 2007, he has directed the *Open Program* realised by the Workcenter and continuing the activities of *The Bridge* project. One outcome of this work is performances presented in the past few years and are still developing, which use the texts of Allen Ginsberg while linking various performance forms with actors’ internal work. These performances include *I Am America*, *Electric Party Song*, *Electric Party* and *Not History’s Bones – a Poetical Concert*. At the same time, Mario Biagini is preparing further publications on the Workcenter’s activities (including its collaboration with Antonio Attisani) while also running various workshops.

Pedagogy

The Open Program Studio gives students unprecedented access to the knowledge and training of Grotowski’s late work, whose unique practical understanding was grasped by Mario Biagini through direct and long-term exposure.

The Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski was founded in 1986 in Pontedera, Italy. It is here that for the last thirteen years of his life Grotowski developed a line of performance research known as *Art as vehicle*, which he continued until his death in 1999. During these thirteen years of intense practical work, Grotowski transmitted to Thomas Richards (Artistic Director) and Mario Biagini (Associate Artistic Director) the fruit of his lifetime research, what he referred to as “the inner aspect of the work. Since 1999, acting as the Workcenter’s Artistic Director and Associate Director, respectively, Richards and Biagini continue to develop the Workcenter’s line of performance research. Today, the Workcenter is comprised of 18 artists from 9 countries.

Open Program commenced in 2007 under the guidance of Mario Biagini, Associate Director of the Workcenter. The team is composed of 11 actors from around the world and closely cooperates with associated dramaturges and scholars who come and go for different periods of time. Currently the team’s work aims to rediscover the living aspect of the poetic word as a tool for contact and action.

Their research is multi-faceted: work on ancient vibratory Afro-Caribbean songs, the creation and exploration of structured sequences of actions, and experimentation with poetic texts of American poet, Allen Ginsberg, including musical compositions based on these texts. Another fundamental line of Open Program’s research focuses on songs from the Southern United States and how they serve as a bridge between African cultural heritage and modern Western music (blues, jazz, rock, pop).