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# The Artist As Tragic Hero: The Creative Process Of Playwright, Director Michael Gurevitch

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THE ARTIST AS TRAGIC HERO:  
THE CREATIVE PROCESS  
OF PLAYWRIGHT, DIRECTOR MICHAEL GUREVITCH

by

BILHA BIRMAN RIVLIN

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2018

MAJOR: THEATRE

Approved by:

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Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## DEDICATION

To My Mother and Father, Rachel and Yaakov

To My Partner Yair and Our Kids, Yotam, Yali, and Naama

With Love and Gratitude

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to extend a deep and heartfelt appreciation to the remarkable staff and faculty of Wayne State University's Maggie Allesee Department of Theater and Dance. As a department, your open arms were warm and accepting, and there was never a question unanswered. For this I express much love and gratitude.

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And to my family. To my beloved friend and husband, my rock and my partner, Yair Rivlin. All the words in this dissertation cannot express my love and gratitude to you. And to our three children, Yotam, Yali, and Naama. For all the joy you bring into my life, this work is dedicated to you.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCING MICHAEL GUREVITCH AND THE NATURE OF THIS PROJECT

In the 2012/13 catalogue to Khan Theatre members, the playwright, director, and Artistic Director of the Khan in Jerusalem, Michael Gurevitch, used a poetic image to encapsulate the essence of what he seeks to explore in his theatre productions:

I love to stand on the seashore in Tel Aviv and observe the thin line that exists between the city and the vast ocean; between culture and nature; between my daily life and the unknown forces, the mysterious unseen dynamic that actively works within me. It feels like this thin line mirrors a line in our psyche, in our soul. A line in our mind that makes the margins between what stays unknown and mysterious and what came to be seen, realized and is accessible to our conscious thinking. Yet how narrow is what lies in the light for us when compared to the boundless waters with its infinite depth? I stand there, waiting, for a kind of Aphrodite to rise from the waves, however, what usually rises are old plastic bottles, rotten pieces of wood, or a body of a dead medusa (Gurevitch 2012/13 catalogue).

Thirteen years earlier, in 1999, when Gurevitch was invited to create an original performance for the Khan Theatre, he brought with him to the rehearsal room his unique collaborative method of writing and directing that he had developed through years of working in the Nisan Nativ Acting Studio. The collaborative method would include two to three weeks of free improvisations on a chosen theme, followed by scenes Gurevitch brings to the rehearsal room which through a collaborative creative process culminate into an original theatre production.

After graduating from the *Nisan Nativ Studio*, Gurevitch had been invited to join the faculty and was provided with an arena for experimentation and development of his innovative technique, and he stayed to become an acting teacher and a director

until the present day. It was in the school that he developed this unique method for working with actors, which he called *Physical Image*, and his unique collaborative technique of creating his original productions in the theatre.

### ***Brief Profile on Gurevitch***

Gurevitch's attraction to theatre began at a very early age. He was born in Tel Aviv to a mother who was one of the pioneer dancers in Israel and a father who was a theatre designer, painter, and puppeteer. His father's puppet theatre became for young Gurevitch the first arena for his dramatic productions as he used to create shows for his friends and for his father whenever he came to visit (his parents were divorced when he was six years old).

Part of the lure and fascination with theatre was born for Gurevitch within the corridors of the theatres' backstage. As a child, he used to accompany his father to the Israeli National Theatre, *Habima*, for which his father designed scenery and created costumes. Gurevitch would often say that since that time, the *smell* of the theatre's back stage always resides in him as an enchanting aroma. His parents, were divorced when he was very young and that had a deep impact on his life and his art.

When telling about his life, one of the land-marks Gurevitch recalls is a time when he was about nine years old and played the lead in a school production. He remembers that after the show, everyone was looking at him and that he felt very empowered by that. He said, "I thought then that theatre was a place that gives me power" (Interview with Nurit Yaari). Later in life, he said that he realized that people are attracted to the theatre for the wrong reasons. He saw that when a person wants to act, as he wants to receive approval for his being and wishes to be looked at and

seen, is exactly why, one should *not* become an actor. One should become an actor, he would stress, because of a desire to create and express through the art of acting: “Artistic creation is usually a revelation, not an invention. To reveal one needs to look, to observe closely, while the ego, which usually craves the applause, clouds the clarity of the observation” (Interview with Nurit Yaari). As for himself, Gurevitch assumes that he became a director, as he was afraid to act, and rather than experiencing the dramatic event, he chose to observe and create it.

At age twenty, Gurevitch became a student in Nisan Nativ Acting Studio. In his third year, Nisan Nativ allowed him to direct at the school. It was with this first show, *Angels are not Forever*, that Gurevitch developed his collaborative method for writing and directing his original productions. After graduating, and returning from an advanced study in directing in London, Nativ invited him to teach and direct in the studio, which he has continued to do to the present day.

Before becoming the Artistic Director of the Khan Theatre in 2001, Gurevitch directed at all the major theatres in Israel and served as the house director in the Habima Theatre for six years. However, the Khan Theatre became his home and the only theatre at which he creates his original productions with the group of actors he helped to establish.

Among many awards Gurevitch received for his original productions, he received the EMET prize for excellence in professional achievement and significant contribution to society. The prize committee wrote: “Gurevitch is one of the most original and unique artists in the Israeli theatre today. Since he became the artistic director of the Khan Theatre, he led the theatre to a new and exceptionally meaningful

place in the artistic Israeli experience” (EMET 2005). Gurevitch received as well an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy from The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In the award, the university wrote that Gurevitch deepened, through his productions and directing, the viewing experience and changed the face of the theatre in Israel. The award committee also stated that his work is done in a style that is unique to him, that he developed a special dramatic and theatrical language that holds his unique artistic impression, which manages to create theatre that moves the heart and to leave a deep imprint, even after the curtain closes down.

Professor Menachem Ben Sassoon, the Dean of The Hebrew University, said that the Doctor of Honor was given to Gurevitch for his contribution to widening the limits of Israeli theatre and as a token of gratitude for enriching the cultural life in the country (EMET 2005).

Along with teaching at the Nisan Nativ Studio, Gurevitch had directed more than forty plays from Israeli and world drama for professional theatres<sup>1</sup>; however, the production of *Passing Shadow*, which he created for the Khan Theatre, was the first instance in which he applied his distinct collaborative creative process in a repertory theatre. “I have a theory,” he said in an interview with Avishay Falchi, “that when a director and a group of actors are together in one room there is always a show in that room, a particular show that needs to be revealed” (Interview with Avishay Falchi, 2000).

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix

The rehearsals, with which *Passing Shadow* was created, became a basic structure, a model with which Gurevitch creates, in collaboration with the Khan actors, his original plays and theatre productions.<sup>2</sup>

*Passing Shadow* received glowing reviews from all major critics. Gurevitch won the best director of the year from the Israeli Academy of Theatre and the Khan Theatre doubled the number of its subscribers. In the following sixteen years, using his distinct creative process, Gurevitch wrote and directed eleven original productions with the Khan group that moved the small repertory theatre from Jerusalem into the center of interest and success in the Israeli theatre.

Though Gurevitch became a very well-known and highly appreciated playwright and director in Israel, almost none of his work has received scholarly attention. This dissertation will provide a close examination of the authentic creative process with which Gurevitch's art merges to become colorful, poetic, meaningful theatre and adds to the discussion of Gurevitch's contribution to making theatre that, in Federico Garcia Lorca's words, "Feels the pulls of the raving events of the time..."

### ***The Nature of this Project***

The primary research will be analytical, experimental, and observational in nature. It will use a combination of observing the rehearsals, as well as close reading and analysis of the plays and productions, in addition to personal interviews with Gurevitch and his actors.

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<sup>2</sup> The second chapter in this project will have a detailed analyzed depiction of the full rehearsal process for the 2010 original production of *Private Investigator*.

The project of this dissertation is to study Gurevitch's distinct creative process by exploring his innovative method of making theater. I will examine the philosophy that inspires and informs his creative work, along with the method he developed and the tools and techniques with which he originates and devises his original productions. Gurevitch's creative process will be looked at by focusing on and exploring three main sections within his process of theatre making:

### 1. *Methods and Philosophy of Acting*

This section focuses on Gurevitch's methods of acting and his philosophy on the role of actors and the art of acting. For three months, I observed Gurevitch work with his actors on *being* the character, rather than *acting* the character, in Chekov's *Uncle Vanya*. "This is not a show about Russia and a far-away Uncle Vanya, or about Astrov, or Sonia, or Yelena," he said to his group in the first rehearsal, "It is a show about you and about your internal human journey manifested through the story of Uncle Vanya" (Gurevitch, 2014). Throughout the rehearsals Gurevitch would remind his actors,

The actors can be looked at as the scapegoats. They come on stage and they agree to re-live in their bodies the joyful as well as the very agonizing human conditions. As the tragic heroes, the actors are willing to look at their essence for the healing of the community (Self-observation).

This section will explore closely the Physical Image Method Gurevitch developed, taught, and practiced for more than three decades with his students in the Nisan Nativ Acting Studio as well as with his Khan Theatre actors.

### 2. *The Rehearsal Process*

I will present observations of a six-month rehearsal process that took place in the Khan Theatre in 2010, during which the show *Private Investigator* was written and staged. This will be done by analyzing the six-month live rehearsal footage, which was



recorded during the entire rehearsal period of *Private Investigator*, and by sharing insights from interviews with Gurevitch that were taken at that time. Through this method I will describe the distinct process with which Gurevitch was crafting and directing his original play, and I will look closely at the way in which he collaborates with his actors in order to enhance his overall creative process in writing and directing.

Gurevitch has been crafting an original production with the Khan Group and applying his improvisational technique every other year since becoming the Artistic Director in 2001. Though this section examines one of Gurevitch's theatre productions, it also aims to shed light on the distinct method and techniques Gurevitch developed and applies to all the original productions he creates--even thus far. In this section I will employ methods of rehearsal observation developed by Gay Mcauley and by Eugenio Barba.

### 3. Analysis of the original productions: *The Dragon Beloved* and *Passing Shadow*<sup>3</sup>

The analysis in this section of Gurevitch's original productions will be built on the production and play analysis, archived interviews with Gurevitch that were conducted in relation to these productions, and critical reviews written about the productions. While looking at the recurrent themes Gurevitch explores through his art, I will study the wide apparatus underlying his theatre, such as its dream-like quality, its tested illusionary boundaries, its symbolic mythological language, its mimetic nature, and its use of different genres. I will explore how the theatrical tools were

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<sup>3</sup> Both shows are available to watch in:

<http://www.michaelgurevitch.co.il/%d7%95%d7%99%d7%93%d7%90%d7%95/>

The play *Dragon Beloved* was translated into English and is available on Gurevitch Website:

<http://www.michaelgurevitch.co.il/biography-2/>

woven into the themes and contexts of the dramatic texts, and how the tools of theatricality enhance the essence of the narrative all the way to its resolution.

What makes these productions particularly special for my study is Gurevitch's experimenting with the boundaries of theatre and the rich theatricality in these productions, which becomes the other language that he developed and through which he communicates with his audience. These productions model how through the essence of the theatre, Gurevitch manifests his ideas. As in Euripides' *Bacchae*, the Theatre itself, which is embodied by its god Dionysus, is a critical participant in the dramatic text, and in the theatre production.

### ***Artist as Tragic Hero: Individual Versus Society***

*The fate cannot be changed not because a decree from heaven, but because of the individual nature that informs the nature of the collective.*  
Michael Gurevitch

At the acting studio, the founder and teacher, Nisan Nativ, would always remind the students that on Apollo's temple in Delphi there is a carved saying: *Know Thy Own Self and Be Moderate*. Gurevitch followed his teacher to make this quote a foundation for his teaching the art of acting and for creating theatre.

The Greeks believed that when we lose our inner *knowing*, we become alienated and delusional, a state that generates great suffering to any individual and the society formed by them. In the summer of 2014, during the Gaza War, (also known as the operation Protective Edge) in Israel, Gurevitch was rehearsing *Uncle Vanya* in the Khan. When asked whether the political conflict has any impact on his art he said: "I don't see a real distinction between political and nonpolitical. There isn't a big difference. It all comes from basic human behavior. We begin with asking what does he want, she

want, what is their state right now, what is their action, what is the conflict and we act. This is a show about *these actors in a situation* in the story of Chekov's Uncle Vanya" (Self-Interview, 2014). Gurevitch understands theatre as an experience that happens in the here and now. It is me here and now in the show's conditions. When Peter Stein, the German Director, was asked about theatre and politics he stated that, "The decisive political act of theatre is a humanistic one, just as Marx's philosophy has it as its ultimate aim--the restoration of human dignity to all man" (Michael Patterson 159).

Dr. Kziah Allon, a literature professor and an Israeli activist, asserts that each individual subject is also a political subject because every "I" contains the dimensions of "us"--transforming from being blindly blended in society to become an individual who is taking full responsibility on life, actions, emotions is a political act. Allon trusts that the meaning of being a human in society is imbedded in the depth of poetry (Allon, 31 May, 2018).

Gurevitch tells his students and actors that their role as artists can be looked at as the role of the scapegoats. They come on stage and they agree to re-live in their bodies the joyful as well as the agonizing human conditions. As the tragic heroes, the actors are willing to look at their essence for the healing of the community. In his artistic creative process Gurevitch embodies his understanding of the artist's role, and what he teaches he exemplifies in his work. His fundamental resources for creating are coming from the unfolding of his own life's experiences, feelings, emotions, conflicts--from his own wounds. As he asks from his actors, Gurevitch brings his life to the

rehearsal room to be re-experienced and torn into parts by the theatre, only to be reintegrated for himself, his audience, and his community.

Gurevitch is making a theatre that moves him towards his own catharsis, his own awakenings. As he teaches his students, only when they experience their own pain can the audience experience their feelings on stage. Through his writing and directing, Gurevitch breaks open his own wound and in so doing creates his art. As in the ancient drama, he is constantly exploring the interface between individual and society; the individual struggle with its unknown depth and society with its rules and taboos. The family unit will constitute the society in his plays, and through this nucleus unit he investigates the individual experience as an outcome of the interaction with society.

The creative process of Gurevitch's work--as a teacher, a playwright, a director, and as an artistic director--is explored in this dissertation while the underlining essence of the artist's work within his society is looked at in the light of the tragic hero's role as originated in the Dionysian Festivals of ancient Greece. I propose looking at the tragic hero as the embodiment of the artist, who journeys to realize his true essence through his art, and, with that, gains the capacity to act upon the highest good for himself and the community. I argue that the redemption of the city by Oedipus, the tragic hero, is a political act, which does not come through the changing of socio-politic structure, but rather through internally transforming the self-construct-mask and intention's trajectory of inner life. This dissertation suggests the artist as the tragic hero who is mirroring life in the deepest sense of the word while the essence of his drama, his productions, his art, affect the destiny of the society.

Gurevitch sees the tragic hero as a hero who fights for his fate, not against it by

moving into a state of consciousness, of clearly seeing the conditions, state, intention, and conflict which are working presently within his dramatic life. Only through Apollo's "suggestion," *Know Thy Self*, the tragic hero can move through his reversals into the recognition point where he then *can choose for himself and with that save his community*.

As Gurevitch's theatre is inspired by and charged with strong mythical structure and content, this study will incorporate theoretical work focusing mainly on: the Apollonian and Dionysian concepts (Nietzsche), theatrical means used in the classical era to dramatically express the nature of Dionysus (Folly), ancient mythical language as the mimetic language of theatre (Edinger), an analytical reading of the Orpheus myth as a topographical map and a metaphorical structured process, in which art is born through the mind and spirit of the artist (Blanchot). As a poetic artist, Gurevitch dialogues with reality through a kaleidoscopic mirror of poetry, myth, music and dance. For this study, the concepts and language embedded in these scholarly works are valuable tools for exploring and expressing Gurevitch's creative process when making theatre.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### *The Playwright and His Plays*

Most of the resources for this dissertation will come from observations of rehearsals and live performances I have attended; archival footage of rehearsals and productions; and detailed interviews I have conducted with Gurevitch, with some of his actors, and one of his longtime designers. The primary literature for this project will be based on three plays written and directed by Gurevitch through a five to six-month period each, using his interactive rehearsal work with his group in the Khan Theatre: *Passing Shadow* (1999), *The Dragon Beloved* (2009), and *Private Investigator* (2010). These plays were created through the process of the intensive collaborative improvisational rehearsal technique Gurevitch brought with him to the Khan Theatre. Through these plays Gurevitch recreates and explores his continual theme of the family unit and its dramatic disintegration. While looking at the family as an emotional unit in which inner forces erupt and create a traumatic explosion, he searches to reveal the force of healing and integration. He uncovers the force of love as a central ground of being in the life of a family. The force of love as a central source of life's energy is in the heart of all Gurevitch's dramatic work. It is his belief and understanding that all spiritual, psychological, social and political ailments that have befallen the individual and society are due to a negative relation to the energy of love.

In this study, I will look at the ways in which Gurevitch explores and applies the tools of the theatre, such as its dream-like quality, its illusionary boundaries, its symbolic language, and its mimetic nature while weaving these tools into the theme of

his play, which make the theatricality become the essence of his drama. As in the *Bacchae*, in this production, the art of the theatre is a critical participant in the play. Exploring this theatrical creative means, which Gurevitch and his group developed while creating this production, makes it a meaningful and valuable source for my project.

Gurevitch's search within these plays brings to mind Federico Garcia Lorca's words after the premier of *Yerma* "...the role of the theatre is to mirror life in the deepest sense of the word, not in the journalist meaning of it." These plays model the political theatre in its purest form, as Professor Feingold from Jerusalem University wrote about Gurevitch's work: "It is theatre that does not relate to 'Relevant' problems, but to human beings that their nature is right there on stage and not in one more TV latest news broadcast" (Feingold).

### ***Critical review and interviews***

Even though Gurevitch has been involved in writing and directing for the Israeli theatre for the last four decades and has been the Artistic Director of the Khan Theatre from 2001 to the present, so far, no official biography or any scholarly work has been written about his life and work. To date, the literature on Gurevitch's biography, his views, reflections, philosophy about theatre, acting, actors and their role in society, about the themes of his plays, and more particularly, about the distinctive method he developed for co-creating original plays/shows with the Khan ensemble, is all scattered in critical reviews and interviews that were conducted with Gurevitch and published in the press, various Israeli journals, and chapters in books about Israeli theatre. In these scattered publications, there is much valuable information about Gurevitch's childhood, upbringing, events and people that influenced him, helped direct his

personal and artistic choices and moved him to become the artist he is today. This gathered data, along with the interviews I have conducted in person with Gurevitch, are essential primary and secondary sources that will be drawn from my dialogue with Gurevitch about his artistic pathway from a mere idea to the full production.

### ***Theories of Aesthetics***

Various theories of aesthetics will be drawn upon to establish the foundation of my conversation with and about Gurevitch's work. As a poetic artist, Gurevitch always dialogues with reality through a kaleidoscopic mirror of poetry, myth, music and dance. The theories of aesthetics included in this section will provide the layer of poetic language needed to better understand and express Gurevitch's art.

Two related concepts, the Apollonian and Dionysian, which were founded in Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, are part of the language that will support my conversation with Gurevitch about his creative process. The Apollonian/Dionysian duality offers a profoundly relevant vocabulary when discussing the textual layers in Gurevitch's drama and their interrelated individual and cultural implications.

Nietzsche, in *The Birth Of Tragedy*, glorifies the Hellenistic art as the crown creation in the form of drama in the history of humanity. Nietzsche is questioning the meaning of the Dionysian madness, from which the tragic art was born, and whether this Dionysian madness is a sign of disintegration of a dark culture, or conceivably oppressing this madness is a sign of degeneration of the existing culture. Perhaps embracing the madness opened the Hellenic door for grace and wisdom to come into their society. The theme of man's internal emblematic darkness and the odyssey to



individuation while facing opposing forces from society is a recurrent motif that threads through Gurevitch's drama.

Though Dionysus is the god of theatre, Nietzsche sees art as being bound as well by Apollo, the god of light, form and dream; Apollo embodies the symbolic language of the poets; he is the one who signifies through shape, color, sound, and rhythm, the movement of the artist's soul. The Dionysian and Apollonian qualities continually incite one another to artistic expressions through which the Greeks gave rise to art created in the dramatic form of tragedy.

Nietzsche relates to Apollonian dreams as Aristotle relates to the art: a mimetic form of life. Both discuss the fact that no matter how horrendous the object is in life, his aesthetic form transforms it to an appearance that contains beauty. Gurevitch deeply understands this mimetic form of life. When after the premier of *Passing Shadow* Gurevitch was asked how come incest between siblings, staged hints of oral sex, and homosexual intimation were performed on a Jerusalem stage without any opposition, Gurevitch thought that it may have to do with the silent movie-like style, the magical characters, and the grace of the actors that allowed this shared experience to be breathed in and embraced (Interview with Avishay Falchi. February, 2000).

### ***Looking through the prism of myth***

I experience Gurevitch's work as a constant search into the theatrical possibilities (e.g., use of myth, Metatheatrical operations, Greek classic themes, chorus, mask, use of many theatrical styles and genres), as his way of investigating human nature and of expressing one through the language of the other. When searching for my instrumentation to converse with Gurevitch, it was constructive for this study to invite Dionysus, the realization and symbol of theatre and theatricality, into my conversation and to examine Gurevitch's creative work through the essence of the other.

In "Mask of Dionysus," Helen P. Foley, discusses the nature of Dionysus and the theatrical means used in the classic era to dramatically express Dionysus' nature and understand his myth as an emblematic personification of human nature. Foley explores the interwoven nature of theatricality and meaning in Euripides' *Bacchae*, where for the first time the "god of theatre" himself appears as a personified character on stage. Dionysus demonstrates that his essence--mimetic art form of the human nature--is essentially a theatrical act, and for Foley, "a stage exploration of the nature of illusion, transformation, and symbol" (108). Foley sees in the *Bacchae* a play through which Euripides explores the ways art penetrates, breaches and expresses human nature in its many revealed and concealed layers.

As in the Dionysus myth where he is torn to pieces and disemboweled by the Titans, only to be resurrected as the god of theatre, so Gurevitch's characters will be torn, disemboweled and resurrected through his drama and stage as we witness through the three productions in the body of this study: *Passing Shadow*, *The Dragon Beloved*,

*and Private Investigator*. In her study of the nature of Dionysus and the way it is manifested in the *Bacchae*, Foley becomes a valuable tool in the exploration of Gurevitch's drama and theatricality and, in particular, when analyzing the inner movement of his protagonists as a modern version of the protagonist's inner movement in the ancient drama.

Edward F. Edinger (1922 - 1998), a Jungian scholar and analyst, in his book *The Psyche on Stage* and particularly in one of its essays, "Oedipus the King: Mythology and the Tragic Hero," traces the manifestation of the archetype of the tragic hero. Edinger states that Sophocles dramatizes our archetypal energies and the possibilities of rebirth to a symbolic life.<sup>4</sup> Mythology, as Edinger perceives it, is a mirror, or more so, a kaleidoscopic mirror to the soul. In Gurevitch's three shows which are part of this study, the contemporary protagonist becomes a character in a mythological narrative. The mythical narrative in these productions becomes the poetic world that holds the internal layer of the protagonist's journey. As an apparent stage signifier for the myth, Gurevitch employs, on stage, actual mirrors, which fracture the images of the protagonists to a dream-like kaleidoscopic state. Edinger stresses that what mythology does in its relation to nature and culture is that it breaks the terrifying totality of being into accessible images.

In his book *The Eternal Drama: The Inner Meaning of Greek Mythology*, Edinger adds to the discussion on Dionysus his role as the one who changes the status quo. When Dionysus appears, usually unexpectedly, he brings excitement, joy, and terror as we

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<sup>4</sup> Edinger defines rebirth to symbolic life through Gilbert Murray's view of the Greek tragedy as a ritual reenactment of the death and rebirth of the year-spirit (75).

see in the *Bacchae*. Accordingly, in *Passing Shadow*, the magician awakens the first signs of Eros in the girl's mind/body, brings joy and terror, and changes the status quo for the whole family. Edinger states that Dionysus comes to Thebes, and what he brings with him destroys the status quo of the city. In my study, Dionysus' distraction of the status quo, as it is seen in the *Bacchae*, stands as an archetype, a metaphor for a distraction of a family that resists embracing the god for what he is, as it unfolds in *Passing Shadow* and within all of Gurevitch's productions. I see Edinger's analytical work with Dionysus and the role of myth in theatre strongly kindred with Gurevitch's work and well matched with my study.

### ***Orpheus***

Gurevitch worked with the theme of Orpheus for many years. In 1983 he wrote and directed his first *Orpheus* as part of a project in the Nisan Nativ Acting Studio. In 2009, in the Khan Theatre, Orpheus again became a leading theme in *The Dragon Beloved*. The Orpheus myth, including analytical interpretations that were written about the themes embedded in this myth, deepen my conversation with the ways in which Orpheus serves Gurevitch in his work, especially in *The Dragon Beloved*.

Maurice Blanchot (1907-2003), in his essay "The Gaze of Orpheus," explores the process of the artist's work and his expressed art through the myth of Orpheus. Blanchot renders the dark point of the nether regions as the point in which the artist's control is being eroded and undermined, and so is the form of his art. Eurydice, for Blanchot, is the deep, dark point towards which art leads; however, Eurydice cannot come to the light. Once *in the light* she will be re-manifested as poetry and as music: "Orpheus' work does not consist of securing the approach of this "point" by descending into the

depth. His work is to bring it back into the daylight, and in daylight give it form, figure and reality. Orpheus can do anything except look this "point" in the face, look at the center of the night in the night" (99). I will further discuss the role of Blanchot's *Orpheus Gaze* in this study in the Methodology section.

Blanchot is a valuable support when exploring Gurevitch's theories, techniques, and practices that inform his creative work. To find the key with which to look at and understand Gurevitch's mythic language is central to understanding and appreciating his art. Employing Blanchot's theory on the Orpheus myth underpins my conversation with the artist's creative spirit and with the form he lends to his created work.

Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), in his book *Images & Symbols*, compares and contrasts the Orpheus myth as it was told and understood in different times and cultures. Eliade observes the principal understanding that the theme of the descent into Hell for the sake of the salvation of a soul is no longer undertaken for a personal advantage: "...a redemptive time: one 'dies' and 'resurrects' not to complete an initiation already acquired but to save a soul... the symbolic death is no longer undergone solely for one's own spiritual perfection, but for the salvation of others" (165).

As with Oedipus, Orpheus, and Weizmann--Gurevitch's protagonist in *The Dragon Beloved*--when they go down into their inner world to face their own soul, they do it for their own redemption; however, their act becomes the salvation of others. Moving his protagonist into the underworld becomes a political act in its purest form as Weizmann's act of redemption becomes the salvation of the wife, the family and the potential redemption of the spectators who witness the whole process and become part of the experience. This interrelated nature that bonds the one and the group is a key

point in this study. Eliade's approach to the Orpheus myth holds a resonance with the individual/society co-dependency I am looking at in Gurevitch's work.

In his article "Jung and the Myth of Orpheus," Julian David, a Jungian analyst and the founder of the Jungian training center in South Africa, provides through his analysis an insight into Gurevitch's use of the myth. Incorporating David's work into my analysis, I draw attention to the dismembered road on which Gurevitch takes his protagonist, and how, by applying the mythological language Gurevitch tricks him to enter the mythical abode of the dead to be redeemed. Nature knows nothing of good and evil, of rewards and punishment, they are political concepts. Dismemberment in a Jungian view is when the old structure of the ego is destroyed to make way for a new consciousness. Orpheus, as well as Dionysus and as King Pentheus in the *Bacchae*, have all journeyed this road of dismemberment. This is the road the protagonist needs to go through before he is moved through his initiation into his new consciousness, into his newly transformed existence.

### ***Dramatic and Theatrical Theory***<sup>5</sup>

As the spectrum of my study embraces the dramatic text, the production, and the rehearsal process, my range of theories is broad. Therefore, before I detail the more specific theories engaged, here is an overview of the texts that I apply to my study. In looking at Gurevitch's dramaturgy, several foundational texts will provide further insight into the specific theories incorporated in my analysis, that address the

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<sup>5</sup> (N.B.: I will be applying the methods of thinking and philosophies of the following dramatic and theatrical theories without necessarily directly utilizing their names. However, the critical standards that each of them suggests are part of the analytical process.)

methods, philosophy, and inner and outer sources Gurevitch and his actors employ when devising a new piece for the theatre.

In addition, I will draw on Aristotle's *Poetics*, especially as part of the conversation on dramatic character versus epic character and its different application on the spectator experience. "What is the epic theatre" by Walter Benjamin, is a discussion of the spectator's stage relationship. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* by Keir Elm is a secondary source when looking at Gurevitch's stage with its abundance of signifying the modes and the communicational codes he employs. "Theory and Play of The Duende" by Garcia Lorca, a text about the Duende, which Lorca describes as "the mystery, the roots that cling to the mire that we all know, that we all ignore, but from which comes the very substance of art.... the Duende is a force not a labor, a struggle not a thought" (4). The concept of the Duende as described in this essay by Lorca corresponds with Gurevitch's artistic creative inclinations.

*On playback theatre: Gathering Voices* by Jonathan Fox and Heinrich Daube, and *Playing the Other: Dramatizing Personal Narratives in Playback Theatre* by Nick Rowe are two sources on playback theatre that serve my theoretical need when discussing Gurevitch's use of playback theatre as a structure of a play within a play in *The Dragon's Beloved*. These texts explore theatrical techniques, such as working with symbols, metaphors, applying mythology, folk tales, and fairy tales while playing back the audience's story on stage.

Essential dramatic texts related to the analytical conversation with Gurevitch themes and the mythological-based narrative he builds upon will include: Sophocles'

*Oedipus the King*, *Antigone*, *Oedipus in Colonus*, and Euripides' *The Bacchae*, as well as the Dionysus myth and the Orpheus myth.

This dissertation deals with fully realized performances. The overall intention is to analyze the production and the text as one entity, as being parts of a sacred marriage, where the one builds on the other and contrariwise. James Thomas's book *Script Analysis* details formalist analysis<sup>6</sup> with precisely this understanding. *Script Analysis* approaches the dramatic text not as a finished literary artifact but as a blueprint for the theatre artist's staging interpretation. Thomas explains that "Literature uses words to illuminate actions and events, while drama uses actions and events to illuminate words" (xxviii). Hans-Thies Lehmann in his discourse on Post-Dramatic Theatre draws on this same kind of circular understanding of the process of making meaning in dramatic texts. Lehmann points to the increased interconnectedness and fluidity of contemporary written and performance texts, noting the potential in examining the texts on their own and in relation to others.

By regarding the theatre text as the stage uncoupled from the text as an independent poetic dimension and, simultaneously, considering the poetry of the stage uncoupled from the text as an independent atmospheric poetry of space and light, a new theatrical disposition becomes possible. In it, the automatic unity of text and stage is superseded by their separation and subsequently in turn by their free (liberated) combination, and eventually, the free combinatory of all theatrical signs (59). In this

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<sup>6</sup> *Formalist Analysis* is a close Reading technique, which focuses on what is present in the text rather than the cultural contexts of the writer and the time: "The underlying assumption of formalist analysis is that the plays themselves ought to be studied instead of the abstract theories or external circumstances under which they were written" (Thomas xx).



post-dramatic moment, Lehmann argues, the written text, performance text, and even the contextual atmosphere that produces them, can be read independently and in concert with each other. Lehmann's theory works with my study, especially in regards to the interrelated text/performance analytical approach I am taking when examining Gurevitch's creative process as an interweaving whole.

### ***Influential Directors***

Directing practices and philosophies of directing are an informational foundation for understanding the context, inspiration, and guidance that influenced Gurevitch's creative work as well as provide basic philosophical and theatrical tools in my conversation with Gurevitch's work.

The Russian directors, Stanislavsky, Michael Chekov, and Vsevolod Meyerhold, will provide a context to look at Gurevitch's acting method, Physical Image, that he developed and works with in the Nisan Nativ Acting Studio and with his group in the Khan Theatre.

### **Antonin Artaud (1896-1948)**

Antonin Artaud was an expressionist poet and playwright. Around 1925 he connected himself to the Surrealist movement that aimed to liberate the mind through fusing dream and reality; he wished to gain access to absolute reality through its layers of expression in the dream-like images. This strongly matches Gurevitch's poetics. Thus, drawing on Artaud helps express the layers Gurevitch creates in his dramatic text and with the theatrical language he chooses to stage it.

Artaud believed that theatre should affect the audience as much as possible. He advocated returning through theatre to the idea of physical images: "Theatre can re-

instruct those who have forgotten the communicative power or magic mimicry of gesture, because a gesture contains its own energy...” (81). This energy, Artaud believed, must be re-offered to the audience, wishing for his audience to dance in the theatre as a snake does when his body senses the vibration of the music it hears. When examining Gurevitch’s “Physical image” as part of this study’s chapter on Gurevitch’s method of acting, Artaud will be a valuable preliminary source. Through the language and elaboration used by the one deepens the ways of expression when examining the other.

### **Bertolt Brecht (1898 - 1956)**

Brecht had a major influence on the theatre in Israel, first through the Israeli playwright and director Nisim Aloni who embraced and closely studied Brecht’s theatre, his alienation techniques, and philosophy. Nisim Aloni brought it with him when he came back to Israel from his studies in Paris by the end of the fifties. Brecht’s influence can be strongly observed in Gurevitch’s theatre philosophy, story-telling narrative and his colorful vivid stage.

For Brecht, it was the story that stood in the heart of the theatre and everything stamped from it. The story holds all that occurs between people and it comprises, what Brecht calls the *Gestus*, the social action of the episode, the essences of all that take place in the event. Brecht’s actors had to be aware not only with what happened but with why and how the event came to be; they should probe and learn the many layers of reality that construct the happening they are acting.

Brecht claims that Epic Theatre is the modern theatre where the means of pleasure expand and progress into an object of instruction (42).

In Gurevitch's work, especially in his original productions, Gurevitch draws on epic artistic elements and, like Brecht, he "dresses" his ideas, which can be hard to swallow, with brilliant theatricality that helps take the ideas home.

### **Peter Brook (1925)**

In the last chapter of *The Empty Space*, Brook expresses the essence of the director's practice as a guide at night; the one who learns the route as he goes, while at the same time he is the leader that the actors need to have. Sometimes it takes all the time for a director to know the way, as Brook states, "A scene may escape the director for several weeks -- then as he works on the set he may suddenly find the place of the scene that eludes him, he may suddenly glimpse its meaning in terms of stage, action or succession" (101). Holding these two ends that seem opposites though truly are not, and helping the actors appreciate the uncertain and trust the search, is essential for finding the "alive" moment for the director as well as the actors.

Along with the search in the unknown territory, Brook cannot stress enough the importance of the repetition as the other tool of the Immediate Theatre: "It takes yesterday's action and makes it live again in every one of its aspects--including its immediacy" (139). The repetition in a very grounded manner, yet magically, abolishes the difference between yesterday and today. Brook trusts that anyone who refuses the challenge of repetition knows that some areas of expression become in an involuntarily fashion excluded for him.

Brook has a practical approach and philosophy about creating, and particularly about directing, as it is strongly expressed in the "Immediate Theatre." The last chapter in *The Empty Space* provides an advantageous backdrop to Gurevitch's directing

methods and help connect him to the lineage of theatre creators that, in a sense, desired to create the immediate theatre--the theatre that awakens the mind and spirit, and generates aliveness both within the actors on stage and within the audience who come to watch.

### **Nisim Aloni (1924-1998)**

On the wall in his Tel-Aviv apartment, Gurevitch has Nisim Aloni's photo hanging. Gurevitch refers to Aloni as his spiritual father who had deeply influenced his work. Towards the end of the fifties, the Israeli theatre was realistic and dealt mainly with Israel's independence war (1948 -9), Zionism, and the Kibbutz--a socialist establishment of living in Israel. Gurevitch tells that as a teenager he had received a record of Aloni's production, *The American Princes*, and being so inspired by it, he had listened to it endless times. He then contacted Aloni and met him, and a lifelong friendship began between them.

Aloni (Tel Aviv, 1926 - 1998), a young journalist and a writer of short stories, went to Paris to study with Jean Marie Sarau where he was exposed to the classic theatre that was performed on Paris' stages, such as: Molière, Maribou, George Feydeau, De Muse and Pierre Beaumarchais that were playing in the Comedie Francais, next to Jean Cocteau, Sartre, anew, Pirandello and the Avant Garde of Jane Genet, Enesco, Becket, Adamov and Arable.

After being deeply moved by what he saw on Paris stages, and especially the Berliner Ensemble that performed in Paris at that time, Aloni wished to become a closer observer. He asked Helena Vogel for permission to sit in the Berliner Ensemble rehearsals. Receiving Vogel's permission, Aloni went to Berlin and sat there through the

rehearsals of *The Good Person of Szechwan*. He later shared that this experience transformed him as in the rehearsal space he felt sacredness, as being in church. Aloni, back in Israel, pushed away the style of social realism that was dominant on Israeli stage at that time, the grayness of everyday life, and birthed into his dramatic text and stage the language of myth, metaphors, and poetry, and he dramatically changed the face of the theatre in Israel. His dramatic text, which was bright and colorful through the richness of the images, the rhythm and broad metaphoric associations that he embedded into it, along with scenery and *mise en scene* that became renowned for their beauty, were woven together and established an innate unity of meaning and form. Aloni's philosophy, creative process, and the productions he brought with him to the theatre had a deep influence on Gurevitch as a writer and a director, which for this project, broaden the understanding of the sources and influences that shaped Gurevitch's artistic world.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Based on Professor Nurit Yaari words on Aloni in the Khan's Website  
<https://khan.co.il/item/חיינו-ויצירתנו-של-נסים-אלוני/>

## CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

I employ data that I have collected during participant observations done during rehearsals with Gurevitch and the Khan Group, conducted through the Spring and Summer of 2014, while the company was working on *Uncle Vanya*. I utilize interviews I conducted during that time with Gurevitch and some of the group members, as well as using data I have collected from the last 30 years of interviews and critical reviews I have collected from the Khan Theatre archive. I apply and analyze rehearsal archived footage, which was generously shared with me by the Israeli documentary director Dorron Jeraci who attended and videoed the whole five months of discussions and rehearsals for *Private Investigator*. I conduct play analyses of three productions of dramatic texts that were co-created by Gurevitch and his group. I employ as well analytical readings from data collected through attending live performances of *Passing Shadow* and from viewing full length videos of *The Dragon Beloved* and *Private Investigator*, which are shown on the Gurevitch Web-Sight. All Gurevitch's original plays and shows created with the Khan Group can be watched on his web-site. Though I am concentrating only on three of the shows, the ability to follow the new and repeated themes, styles, theatricality, etc. through his eighteen years and nine original shows with the company deepen the perspective on his artistic development, complexity and intimacy of expression, and his faith in the embracing capacity of his audience.

### PARTICIPANT OBSERVER

Rehearsal Studies is a study pioneered in the beginning of twenty-first century by Gay Mcauley, an Honorary Professor in the Department of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney. Mcauley developed her research discipline based on her belief

that through detailed description of rehearsal sessions and overview of the set design process, one can provide “insight into the nature of creative agency in the theatre-making process” (p 276). Mcauley claims that being in the presence of the artists and watching their work process is central to scholarly, critical and analytical engagement with the performance event. In this section, I will draw on my experience as a participant observer during the three-month work by the Khan Group on their 2014 production of Chekov’s *Uncle Vanya*, directed by Michael Gurevitch. I will also apply Mcauley’s method while observing the five months of footage that was filmed during live rehearsals of *Private Investigator*.



*Figure 1: The Khan Theatre (Khan Website)*

### ***Observing rehearsals for Uncle Vanya***

Observing the rehearsals for *Uncle Vanya*, the 2014 production, during May 20-July 30 and September 1-September 24, 2014, focuses specifically on the ways Gurevitch applied his philosophy and method of acting into the work with each actor as

well as on the dynamics applied while creating the world of the show. This section will focus on how Gurevitch works with his actors on staying connected to the Through Action and Circumstances, helping to clear and to nail down their character's clear Will and clear Action moment by moment.

### ***Watching Footage from live rehearsals for Private Investigator***

About every other year Gurevitch crafts a new, original production with his group using his improvisational technique. This process is revealed in the footage that covers rehearsals for *Private Investigator* from the first day of rehearsal where a reading of Plato's *Symposium* took place, through the improvisational period where the characters and plot of this original production were crafted, through watching how scene by scene each is written during the months of rehearsals, to the opening show in 2012. In this section I closely observe the nature of the creative agency, both within Gurevitch and his actors, while giving birth to their new theatre production, *Private Investigator*.

Eugenio Barba's (1936, Italy) method of looking at the creative process is a valuable analytical observation tool that I will employ while studying the footage of these long rehearsals that evolved to become the 2012 acclaimed production *Private Investigator*. A few examples of Barba's suggested leading points to be employed in the observation process would be:

- Looking at order and disorder as two poles that coexist. They create tension that becomes an indication of the fertility of the creative process.
- Observe creativity as part of doubt, uncertainty, disorientation. To discover the real face behind the artistic process, the artistic process needs to move from the turbulence phase into the delicate order tapestry, which was seeded deeply in that turbulent storm.
- Sensing what makes a work organic and alive versus inorganic that seems mechanical. In nature one can check it objectively, however, in art one can only sense the organic nature of the work.



- The forces that are working and the tensions between the forces. Do these forces coexist? Do they merge in productive rather than destructive conversation?<sup>8</sup>
- Moments of losing heart during the rehearsals. Do these moments create any sadism or masochism that usually bring destruction, or do they open and strengthen the creative relations among the group members?
- As an observer of the Khan group creative process, a vital point is to look at the waste in relation to what is chosen to be left in. It is essential for this project to observe the elimination process, because the work employs a distinct method of collaboration. Gurevitch is the one who goes home, writes the scenes and eventually the final play.

## INTERVIEWS

Interviews with Gurevitch took place during the rehearsals of *Uncle Vanya*. A month into the rehearsals a war broke out between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas group located in the Gaza Strip. "Operation Strong Cliff" was a military operation launched by Israel on 8 July 2014 and lasted for about two months. The interview, naturally, took the direction of looking at the role of theatre in war times. I was particularly interested in Gurevitch's thoughts about Chekov and *Uncle Vanya* and its relevance to the times.

Interviews with selected actors who worked with Gurevitch for many years, Nir Ron, Yehoyachin Friedlander, Odelya Morea-Matalon, Arie Churner, Yoav Hayman, and Irit Pashtan were conducted during that time. In these interviews I wished to broaden my understanding as to how they perceived their part in the creative process. I learned from their long experience with Gurevitch as their teacher in the Acting Studio and as a director about his acting method as a tool for creating a character and its influence

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<sup>8</sup> This point would be especially significant to observe, as Gurevitch's productions always raise controversial political, social issues, however, almost never create critical objection. I trust it is the balance he plays with between content, context and theatricality that allows him to shatter his audience without evoking rejection.

on their maturation in understanding, building, and performing a character. With the actors, as with Gurevitch, I applied questions about the war time, as I wished to learn how the war affects the meaning of their artistic work. The creative pulse has changed due to this specific war. Did it touch their perspective, and if that's so, did it change their approach to the work and how?

## PLAY ANALYSIS

When analyzing the dramatic work for this study, I relate to the dramatic text and the staged production as one entity. The rationale for that is that the text and staged productions looked at in this project evolved to their full fruition through one inseparable process. These productions are fully available to watch for this project on the Gurevitch Website and thus can be closely read for analytical examination (Gurevitch Website).<sup>9</sup> As noted before, the productions that will be closely looked at and analyzed include *Passing Shadow*, *The Dragon Beloved*, and *Private Investigator*. This valuable access to viewing the productions opens a critical opportunity for an in-depth analytical study of the theatricality Gurevitch employs on his stage in terms of color, texture, sound effects, music, movement, rhythm, use of space, acting styles, genres, and Meta- theatre techniques. This theatricality woven into the dramatic text supports and creates meaning and realization and the experience it aims to convey.

This analysis provides concrete data on the conversation between spiritual, psychological, and sociological content that Gurevitch and his group deal with and search for in the context of their time and how they express it in their theatre.

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<sup>9</sup> Text and full stage production were never publicly published; however, both are available on Gurevitch Website.

My work in this section will employ the model for action analysis set forth in James Thomas's *Script Analysis*. Action Analysis aims at the physical investigation of the play, which includes the play's internal and external life events. This analytical method focuses primarily on the events in the plot. Arranged around Aristotle's six elements of drama (Plot, Character, Idea, Dialogue, Tempo and Spectacle), Thomas's *Script Analysis* provides a basis for understanding the structure and function of a play on its fundamental level, helping "actors, directors, and designers understand and perform plays as meaningful, harmonious arrangements of actions" (xxi).

Another useful analytical method is Elinor Fuchs' play analysis essay: "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play." Fuchs directly takes the reader through a set of leading questions into the inner and outer life of an imagined dramatic world. The metaphor of treating a play as its own planet is inspiring and valuable. Fuchs begins her essay with the premise that "A play is not a flat work of literature, not a description in poetry of another world, but is in itself another world passing before you in time and space" (6). From this point of departure, the questions listed in her essay shed light on a path leading to unfolding the context that is underlying the principles, structure, spiritual life, etc., that is rooted in the imaginary world of the play and the show.

For my purposes, Fuchs' questions establish the rules and constructions unique to each play and expand my discussion of the creative devices and how they work within each of the three "planets" in this study.

## THE LANGUAGE OF MYTH

In his book *The Eternal Drama: The Inner Meaning of Greek Mythology*, Edward F. Edinger talks about mythology as a phenomenon that can be looked at as a mythical language, a paradigm of the mimetic language of theatre.

Gurevitch holds a long, deep dialogue with the mythological narrative and language and particularly with the myth of Orpheus that goes back about thirty years. Gurevitch wrote and directed two plays that are based on the Orpheus story. The second play, *The Dragon Beloved*, is part of this dissertation. To find the key with which to look at and understand Gurevitch's use of the mythic language is central to understanding and appreciating his art.

Blanchot's analyzes the Orpheus myth in his essay "The Gaze of Orpheus" as a personification of the artist's creative process. Blanchot's analytical perception of the Orpheus myth as an embodiment of the artist's work becomes a valuable topographical map for looking at the overall primary structure of Gurevitch and his group's step-by-step creative process.

In his essay, Blanchot sees and analyzes the Orpheus myth as an embodiment of the artist's process of creating. In Blanchot essay, the Orphic myth becomes a topographical map, a step-by-step metaphorical structure to a process in which art is being born through the mind and spirit of the artist. Blanchot serves my project on two levels: 1. He provides a map, a structure to look at and to analyze the creative path Gurevitch takes while creating a new production with his Khan Group. 2. Blanchot looks at some unique relations that unfold between the creative structure Gurevitch walks in and where he takes his protagonist (to the underworld) to find salvation, to reveal love

and life. There is an intertwined path that connects between the artist and his informed art that Blanchot helps clarify and express.

As part of the process of creating a new piece, Gurevitch shared in an interview after *Passing Shadow*, “We all go through an intertwined process in which we touch and reveal new individual personal material along with finding its expression through an image, a metaphor. This unfolding experience takes place throughout the rehearsal process” (Interview with Keinar). At the same time, a mythological symbol, such as a Dragon, that the group worked with, is internalized in the process and transformed into concrete subjective content. When looking closely through the eyes of mythology, at the interrelations in Gurevitch’s theatre between the signified and signifier, the impulse and the form that embodies it, this analytical point of view increases the efficiency and authenticity of this study.

“Poets live in a constant awareness of the archetypal powers,” writes Edinger in *The Eternal Drama*, “They make the mythical images visible” (7). In this study, I integrate Edinger, Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*, Blanchot’s “The Gaze of Orpheus”, Foley’s “The Mask of Dionysus”, and Robert Johnson’s penetration into the Dionysus Mythos in *Ecstasy*, into my conversation with Gurevitch’s poetics. Their vision and understanding of the role of mythology in creating art becomes an instrumentation for applying analytical language into the dialogue with the mythic language (method), the mythological system Gurevitch embodies in his work.

In his yearly letter to the Khan members, Gurevitch wrote:

The Greek Tragedy is a fruit of the meeting between Dionysus and Apollo. Dionysus, the god of wine who represent the chaos, and Apollo, who is, in Nietzsche words, “The god of beauty and form”. Both gods are completing and balancing each other. A human being cannot contain the chaos, the

eternal darkness that lurks underneath our existence as madness, only with the bridging of form, that holds small pieces of our being. Nevertheless, a form without the gushing chaos is but a crust empty of meaning (Letter to Members, Season 2012-3).

It is in the light of these archetypal potencies, which were rooted in the tragic drama, that this project is looking at the artistic tapestry by which the contemporary artist Michael Gurevitch teaches acting, writes his plays, directs, and creates theatre.

## CHAPTER III: THE ART OF ACTORS AND ACTING

### WORKING WITH THE ACTOR: CREATING A METAPHORIC REALITY

#### *PART I: On Gurevitch Philosophy of Acting and Actors*

For three months, I observed Gurevitch work with his actors on *being* the character, rather than *acting* the character, in Chekov's *Uncle Vanya*. "This is not a show about Russia and a far-away Uncle Vanya, or about Astrov, or Sonia, or Yelena," he said to his group in the first rehearsal, "It is a show about you and about your internal human journey manifested through the story of Uncle Vanya" (personal observation, May 2014). Throughout the rehearsals Gurevitch would remind his actors:

The actors can be looked at as the scapegoats. They come on stage and they agree to relive in their bodies the joyful as well as the very agonizing human conditions. As the tragic heroes, the actors are willing to look at their essence for the healing of the community (personal observation, May 2014).

This chapter will explore closely Gurevitch's philosophy on the art of acting, the role of the actor, and Gurevitch's original method of acting, "Physical Image," that he developed and practiced for about four decades. This chapter aims to present a coherent whole of Gurevitch's creative process, which is informed throughout his work with acting students and the professional actors with which he creates his theatre.

Acting is a metaphor that becomes a live reality on stage, says Gurevitch. It is not copying life but a metaphoric reality, a physical image. For Gurevitch, the physical bodily image is the tool, the bridge on which the theatre artist crosses from his real world into the fantastic world created on the stage. The physical image is a physical event in action that stems from a clear objective and clear state, while the words, when incorporated into the act, are an extended form of the physical body. The words,

as is the physical image, are a metaphoric image, a manifestation of thoughts, an expression of meaning.

***Being on stage versus being in mundane reality--the arm wrestling***

Gurevitch says that on stage, everything is “as in life,” it is never the “actual life”:

I ask my first-year student to do arm wrestling. Then I ask them to go on stage and perform hand rustling and I ask: what is the difference between the first action and the second action they performed? One is the sport’s match, and one is a show of the sport’s match. What do the players want in the sport’s act? They want to win. What do the actors want in the show? They want to *express the will* to win. They do not want to win (personal interview, July 2014).

Gurevitch sees the expressed act on stage as a metaphoric action. Moving the arm wrestling onto the stage is moving it from being a sporting event to becoming poetry. The WILL to win moves from being a personal need to becoming on stage the archetypal imagery of the physical energy. “I want my actors to find the physical image,” he says, “which will express on stage the WILL to win in the most powerful and precise way viable” (personal interview, July 2014). It is the physical image that gives form to the WILL on stage. Speech and language for Gurevitch are but a continuation of the bodily image. “To talk,” he says, “is also a physical action. I can say, ‘I love you’ as someone who wants to hug, or I can say it as someone who wants to kill. Through the physical image of words, I express my WILL to hug out of love or my WILL to kill. It may look the same on stage, however, the difference lies in the intended WILL.” For Gurevitch, the bodily energy of the WILL, which is an energy with a trajectory, belongs to the soul, to the psyche. “We express this energy through our bodies,” he says, “I believe there is no other way” (personal interview, July 2014).



### ***On acting as a personal journey***

Actors need to be ready to meet everything in their heart, in their mind, and in their body. They need to know themselves, become aware of who and what they are: to become intimate with their habituated thoughts and thinking process, and to learn to see the effect of old habits on their feelings, emotions and actions. An actor can't act a thing which is not within himself -- that is, what he does can only come from the collections of his direct experiences. He does not need to be a psychopath to play Iago, however, he needs to be aware of this obsessive destructive quality in him. It may be true that we all have the whole human spectrum of thought; however, not all people, of course, are willing to act on all their possibilities, or even be aware of them existing within. There are actors that are afraid to open to or to touch some of the inner life possibilities that reside within them. A significant part of the actors' training is developing the actors' abilities to become deeply aware of and accept who they are.

For example, in *Macbeth*, audiences find themselves getting intimate with Macbeth through his many soliloquies. Macbeth opens his deep dark secrets and speaks directly into the audience's heart, into their own dark secrets. It is as if Shakespeare intended for his audience to wake up to know more of who they are, of the depth of layers they consist of as a human being. We are all a potential Macbeth if we chose to act so. There is no other play that pushes us into the heart of darkness as *Macbeth*. Shakespeare in his endless genius wants his audience to make a journey into their own underworld. An actor who mirrors for his audience own underworld demons needs to become aware of his own personal ones. The level of acting the character of Macbeth is calling for is the proficiency level Gurevitch aims for his actors to strive for.

Actors often bring to stage emotions, feelings, and thoughts that may be hard for people to cope with in their everyday life. The actor in that sense, says Gurevitch, is like the “public emissary” in the Jewish tradition: the one who remembers the prayer and prays for the people. In earlier times, the public emissary would step on a small stage facing the Holy Ark and pray out loud for the entire congregation that could not or did not know how to pray. Like the actor, the emissary was willing to take upon himself “stuff” that people tend to distance themselves from. The emissary, the public *shaliach*, would pray with all his might so the prayer would be heard. With that he hoped to purify his soul and the soul of his whole congregation.

The actor and director Joseph Chaikin writes about the actor Ryszard Cieslak of the Polish Lab Theatre: “There is no evidence of character in the former definition of motives and information. His work is an articulation of the common human condition. In every moment, he seems aware that his “confession” is something which applies to him but not only to him” (20). Chaikin sees that an actor who performs while employing consciously his own thoughts, feelings, and emotions on stage in a dramatic act journeys into his own boundaries and often would move beyond his boundaries into an unknown territory outside his own bubble. Through acting the actor rises to reveal new territories in his world and comes to grow and to mature through that as a person and as an artist.

***On the “right” reason to become an actor***

It is not an easy task becoming a theatre acting artist, and Gurevitch believes that one needs the “right” reason for becoming an actor so he can derive the energy, dedication, degree of strength and courage required for this profession. In one of his interviews he said, “I have no doubt that one wants to become an actor as he wants to

be looked at, to be seen, and this is precisely why one should not pursue the art of acting. A good cause, a good intention is the will to create, to express life through the art. The less the ego is involved, the better” (Interview with Yaari, Oct 2005). Gurevitch believes that a creation is usually a revelation, not an invention: “To reveal one should clearly see, become aware. The ego deludes seeing clearly what is there.”

When you observe the Khan Theatre group at work you realize that each actor is an exploring artist. What drives the Khan is a real artistic wish to explore life within the turmoil of their own life and the turmoil the time. You recognize that It is not the general success, the playing for the immediate taste of the audience that moves this theatre’s choices. One of the actors, Yoav Heiman, who came to the theatre right from Nisan Nativ Studio and is part of the ensemble for the last two decades said in an interview:

The Khan Theatre is the closest to where you can realize your dreams when you graduate acting school. I was hoping to be part of a theatre that would feel like home and be a lab for artistic work. I wished to be able to continue to explore, experiment, create--without being afraid that my contract would maybe end after the next show. In the Khan Theatre, there is this privilege to be in a constant growth, in a continuum of self-research. Usually, when choosing this path, it is not the ‘Big Fame, Big Money’ path. *The theatre is a way of life; it is not a jumping board for stardom.* I don’t object to fame and success but it is not a desired goal for my life. There are some artists that make fame and success their goal: they usually lose what they were searching for when they started (personal interview, June 2014).

### ***On creating long term relationships with the actors in the group***

Gurevitch believes that creating long term relationships with the actors allows for a space of trust and invulnerability actors need to free their creativity, to deepen their exploration and to create a distinctive, meaningful theatre together. “As in marriage,” he states, “I try to stay with the same actors as much as it is possible and

to reach maximum depth and grow with each of them. I also watch them in other directors' productions and learn from that" (Interview with Nurit Yaari). Yehoyachin Friedlander, one of the senior actors in the group, joined the Khan Theatre just before Gurevitch became the artistic director. He recalls that only after he came to the Khan did he feel he found a home as a theatre artist, and it was the first time he felt safe enough to think about creating his own family; however, no tenured track is offered and every year each actor signs a new contract. After eighteen years in the Khan, Friedlander did not become an idle actor but a profound, versatile, artistic performer.

One good model for believing in, promoting, and establishing long-term relationships, would be the renowned director Peter Brook. In the first chapter of his book *The Empty Space*, Brook states: 'The deadly theatre' is about the deadly economic theatre of Broadway in which the tyranny of the economic is leading in terms of the rehearsal-time aloud, the fear factor that rules the creators and shuns them from being intimate and truly experimental: all need to show results and fast. "In such condition," states Brook, "there is rarely the sense of security in which any one would dare deeply expose him/herself--it can be too risky" (19) To act "safe" would mean to act into the boundaries of the director's and the producer's taste and needs, which would often mean to by-pass the actor's own authentic artistic pulse.

### ***PART II: Physical Image - Gurevitch Method for Actors Training***

This section is based on live observation, on data gathered through interviews with Gurevitch, with his acting students in Nisan Nativ Acting Studio, with actors in the Khan Theatre, and through interviews and talks Gurevitch gave throughout his work in the Khan. It incorporates a detailed description of the Physical Image (PI) Method and

looks at the purpose of the method, what it serves, what kind of tools it gives acting students and actors, and what kind of an actor-artist Gurevitch aims to help grow throughout this training.

This section moves through the two years of acting training and includes detailed instructions of main exercises given within the training and the purpose each of them serves. It studies Gurevitch's realization of theatre, which identifies the stage as a metaphoric space of life and develops the underlining theory for the PI method for actors' triaging. The section explores the students' structured practice on dramatic texts from ancient Greek and Shakespeare and it looks at how human nature and the students' lives become the subject of exploration and the actors' main resources for their art. And finally, the section observes how Gurevitch's method of training develops the depth and integrity of each action taken on stage, while it encourages the actors to experiment with expressions and to train in their imagination to uncover theatrical forms.

This dissertation is the first to describe the Physical Image Method through which I hope to bring the reader close to Gurevitch's understanding of the art, the tools he established that enhance the development of an actor to become a genuine artist, and how it all ties in to Gurevitch's creative process. The PI method is both a philosophy and a tool; it serves as an inner-life topographic map and it invites the actor's work to become a lifetime of explorative journey. As Stanislavsky wrote about his method of acting in his book *Building a Character*, "...it is not like a cook book where all you need to find is the page and there is your recipe. No, it is a whole way of life" (4).

### ***On how physical Image was born for Gurevitch***

*Essentially, all that is being acted on stage happens in the body and nowhere else*  
Michael Gurevitch

While directing my first show at school, one day I was working with one of the actors on a monologue. The monologue was long and not easy to work on. I asked the actor to do the monologue while he is digging a grave. Then for the first time I noticed that when he is saying the text while doing a specific action, the text sounds different. This experience was a dramatic eye-opener. I have called this action, physical image. From this moment on that is what interests me. That is what I understand in theatre and that is what I teach: a stage is a metaphoric space; we can't copy life. An actor creates images and needs to be precise and effective, mirroring a state and a will with utmost clarity. This is the art. The actor is a poet, instead of creating words he creates physical images. His voice is part of his body and so is the text (Interview with Gurevitch before the premier of *Life is a Dream*. "From Here").

Acting is a metaphor that becomes a live reality on stage, says Gurevitch, it is not copying life, but a metaphoric reality. For Gurevitch, the bodily image encapsulates the theatrical drama; a physical action that stems from a clear, conscious inner objective and clear state, while the words, when incorporated into the act, are an extension of the physical body.

A conscious knowing of an actor's WILL and STATE releases a precise action and moves the WILL energy from a subjective state to an objective state expressed on stage. Having a clear conscious "WILL" is in the heart of the actor's authentic action on stage.

Gurevitch asserts:

A WILL is a subjective matter. What do I want right now? You, the audience, don't know. When I'll act--you'll know. An action is an objective matter. When I feel the will inside me, you can't know anything about it until I act, till I express this will in action." (Sitting in his chair he asks), "What do I want now? (Pause) You don't know, right? (He moves the chair) Now you know. The WILL stems directly from the STATE I am in, the condition: I am thirsty (STATE), I want to drink (WILL), I drink (ACTION) (personal interview, July 2014).

Gurevitch cannot emphasize enough the need for the actors to consciously know the precise *WILL* and *STATE* which initiates their action on stage when playing a role. As we'll see in the next part, Gurevitch developing the PI method is built on helping actors create their act on strong foundations of precise *WILL* and *STATE*.

The PI Method became Gurevitch's main tool for training actors in Nisan Nativ Acting Studio, where he developed a two-year training program applying this method. Before continuing to the two years of training part, this seems a good place to clarify Gurevitch's professional vocabulary.

***Basic definitions of concepts that underscore the PI training method***

**STATE** - the conditions that underline and effect the dramatic moment, the event, the scene. The will stems directly from the state, the condition: I am thirsty (state), I want to drink (will), I drink (action).

**SUBJECTIVE ENERGY:** The actor's inner intention, inner will—resolves to overcome dissonance.

**WILL:** Energy an actor feels in a subjective manner. The idea on stage is to move the subjective energy to an objective expression so anyone can observe this subjective energy. To do that, an actor needs to act.

**ACTION:** A movement an actor takes to express his subjective energy and make it an objective expression for anyone to be able to experience. That is why an actor *acts*, why an actor takes an action on stage. Action is anything an actor does on stage purposefully to fulfill a task.

**CONFLICT:** A struggle between two wills, or between a will and a state.

**THE OVERALL WILL:** The through line WILL the actor has within a scene. Overall will is the collective of all the micro objectives an actor has in the scene that are woven together to the macro overall will. In each scene, an actor has an overall action, which expresses the actor's main will in the scene.

**A DRAMATIC SCENE:** A physical progression of actions that take place in the here and now. The chain of actions come to change a state.

***PART III: Two years of training***

*I am all in favor of spontaneity,  
providing it is carefully planned and ruthlessly controlled.*  
John Gielgud

**THE FIRST YEAR<sup>10</sup>**

***Beginning to learn the Physical Image Method***

***Exercise I:***

***Part I***

*Two students are invited*

*One student puts his hands on his partner's shoulders, he is pushing his partner while saying: "Give me back what you have taken from me,"*

*The partner then pushes back saying: "I didn't take anything from you."*

*After a few times, students switch roles and continue in the same way.*

***Part II***

*You do the same thing without words*

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<sup>10</sup> All the quotations shared are transcriptions from recorded interviews or from class observations, unless otherwise noted.



On the platform of this simple exercise the students begin to learn the method of physical image. While saying the text, you push your partner and he/she balances and then pushes back saying her text. “Gurevitch listens to see if during the exercise my body is allied with the action,” Maria recalls, “he wants to know if my body is engaged and tuned with my voice and connected to the overall ‘pushing’ energy embedded in my speech. Slowly we become aware and learn to identify our body/voice relations. This is the basic.” Through this fundamental and “seemingly” simple exercise the students awaken to discern clear intention and clear will with their body’s energy and feelings. The students are trained to identify the spectrum of feelings rising within their body and learn to link those feelings with the shifts within their will while pushing and speaking.

“When working with students in private meetings,” Gurevitch told me in one of our conversations, “I am asking: ‘what do you want right here, right now? What do you feel in the body? Maybe tension in the shoulders?’ Then we can identify the tension in the shoulders in relation to what they want or the fear from what they want.”

***Exercise II:***

*Stand in front of a wall. Push the wall while saying any line you choose to say.*

*Your task is to activate a physical force while speaking.*

Maria recalls:

Miki would be around and listened to see if my body supports my voice as I push the wall. He was carefully listening to what extent my body is being engaged. As we practice we learn to identify if this voice/body interrelation is awake, truly alive. You see a room full of people pushing each other, saying: Give me back what you took from me; I didn’t take anything from you. I find myself beginning to use my lowest pitch voice

trying to genuinely feel it in my body. To no avail. The instructions given to us by Miki as he walked around are physical, such as bend your knees, lower you hip, breath, see where in the body your push is coming from? Do you push with your hand or with your whole body? Everything needs to be engaged like in yoga.

Here again, the basic work of WILL, STATE, CONFLICT, is to wake up into the world of the body's feelings and its relation to the mind: the mind's WILL, STATE, CONFLICT. The beginning practices aim to help the student's body become more flexible, free of tension, relaxed yet focused and alert. The practice was to feel the body in relation to everything that is being expressed through it: a physical move, a sound, or just a word. Sometimes Gurevitch would ask them to start by just making a sound while sensing where the sound comes from in the body.

### ***Primary intention and transitory secondary intentions***

Within each role an actor plays there is a core intention that branches, as the drama progresses, into some secondary intentions. The actor always searches to realize the primary WILL that underlines his role's through-line actions and its common ground with secondary intentions: within an event, a scene, or the entire play.

### ***Exercise III***

*Find a partner and take ten minutes to create a dramatic scene.*

*The scene needs to have a beginning, middle and end. Each one needs to have a clear intention for action.*

Maria and her partner came up with a scene in which they were involved in a hit and run accident. After fleeing from the accident scene, they stopped on the side of the road trying to figure out what to do. One wanted to run away, the other wanted to call the police.

What is the main intention here? “One way,” Gurevitch suggested, “for realizing the main intention is to keep on asking ‘why’ and to see how all the intentions involved, which may rise from asking ‘why’, connect to a core intention.” Gurevitch advised the actors to keep on asking “why” until the core intention will be revealed to them: Why did I flee from the accident? Why did I stop? Why do I want to keep on running or to reveal myself? The center intention could be the need to be loved and to be safe. One character wants to be loved and wants to not let anyone know about this event. The other also wants to be loved but by being exposed and telling all. The search for core intention and state is somewhat like the children that keep on asking “why” about people’s actions or about nature’s phenomenon in the world around them—they would ask until they may feel they have reached a satisfying, grounded center, a grounded intention for action.

This practice with the class is what Gurevitch works on throughout the two years of the school’s training: always search for the connection between the main underlining intention that moves the character to a certain action and the momentarily intentions. And always look for the common ground between these intentions and their resulted actions.

Tracing the intention of a role to its core is not always an easy task. Maria trusted Gurevitch on that. She felt that he holds a deep sensitivity and understanding of human behavior. She felt as if he is walking in the human brain with its thoughts and instincts as if it were a labyrinth where Gurevitch always finds the open path in its complexity and the way out. When sitting in rehearsal for the *Uncle Vanya* production, I felt the same.

***There can never be a clear WILL without a definite STATE***

“My WILL is to change my STATE from sitting to standing.” The essential teaching is that one cannot understand the character’s intent, the objective, without identifying and perceiving the character’s conditions, the state which underlies the dramatic event.

“There can never be a will without a definite state,” Gurevitch tells the first-year students. “For example, if I want to stand up, it means I am not standing; basically, I am either lying or sitting. The intent always comes with relation to a state I am in, always relative to a given condition I am in. My will is to change my state from sitting to standing.” The essential teaching is that one cannot understand the character’s intent, the objective, without identifying and perceiving the character’s conditions, the state which underlies the dramatic event.

***What is a conflict--the elements that engineer a conflict?***

Gurevitch discerns between two kinds of conflict that stem from conflicting WILLS. One is a conflict between two individuals’ WILLS: “You want to be a queen; I want to be a king. And there is a conflict between the will and the situation. There is a WILL to move out of the STATE I am in--out of thirst, out of not being a queen. In a hug,” states Gurevitch, “there is a WILL for unification, to unify. The conflict, the struggle is against the body. We can feel very close; however, we can’t fully unify. It is the same in sex. Sex is a struggle; it is a drama against the inability of our WILL for total unification.”

The other conflict, Gurevitch points out, resides between the WILL and the STATE a person experiences, not between people. A strong example for Gurevitch would

be Beckett and Chekov plays in which you can find a strong will to get out of the state humans are in. This kind of conflict resides between the STATE and the WILL a person is in, not between the people. Gurevitch points out that in *Uncle Vanya* there is a WILL to step out of loneliness. The loneliness is the STATE the people experience; the WILL is to step out of loneliness and the action is to bring flowers, or to encourage Yelena to stay, to run away together, or to try to kill the Professor and so on. A conflict, either between two people or between a person's inner battle, will always be a collision, a confrontation between two objectives, and/or between an objective and a state. Drama does not exist without a conflict and that is the underlining "secret" that makes theatre work.

***Transform the subjective will to an objective WILL on stage***

Gurevitch would tell his class "A WILL is an energy; it is a subjective matter, only the person who owns the WILL knows and feels it." Gurevitch believes that an actor must aspire to transform the subjective will to an objective will, so that he will have a way to connect, understand, and notice this will. "What allows us to see each other?" he asked me in a private interview, and immediately answered, "The body. The Body is objective. Our way to be in the world is through our body. With my body I *act* and with my soul/mind/spirit I WANT. The body is the thing that interconnects me to the world." He continued to talk about a WILL and an ACTION and asked, "How do we express our WILL? We do it with a physical action. As actors, we need to learn to express our WILL in as clear, specific, and precise way as possible." Yet, there is a clear distinction for Gurevitch between our will as people in life and our expressed will on stage.

### ***Arm wrestling—an objective in life versus an objective on stage***

Maria recalls how in the class after Gurevitch spoke about a WILL in life versus a WILL on stage he asked two students to engage in arm wrestling. They did, and one student kept on winning. Gurevitch then asked these two students to take turns in winning. Maria said: “Gurevitch asked us what is the difference between a real sport’s game to a staged sport’s show? He said that in sport, the WILL is to win: however, in *acting* a sport’s game, the objective is to express the will to win.”

Gurevitch would stress this point time and again to his students, to his actors, and in interviews, “In sport, I want to fulfill my WILL to win, and in the show, I want to *express* the WILL to fulfill the WILL.” On the stage the expression takes the *image* of the expressed WILL in real-life. Gurevitch repeats for the class what he sees as the essence of the art of acting: “The actor’s task is to express the will in a most precise way, internally and externally, with the lesser use of effort: effortless expression. The stage then becomes an authentic metaphorical space. In the theatre, on stage, we create an image, a metaphoric image of life.”

This realization of theatre, which identifies the stage as a metaphoric space of life becomes Gurevitch’s underlining philosophy for developing the PI method for actor training. It interweaves the indivisible threads between the art of theatre, which is metaphoric image of life, and the art of acting which expresses life’s intention on stage through the physical image of that intention.

#### ***Exercise IV***

*creating a physical image scene*

*Work In a group of two and come to class prepared with a chain of actions.*

*Just actions with no words.*

*The over-all will for each actor in the scene needs to be clear to the audience.*

*The length of the scene: 40 seconds*

The actors are told that while acting out their actions in this exercise, they need to be physically connected to each other throughout the scene. “Your actions” says Gurevitch,” need to create a clear through-line objective. The clear through-line objective holds a clear energy. Once you disconnect from either your action or *physically* from your partner, you break the chain.” In a physical image scene, when the physical contact between the participants breaks, the physical image dies and the clear energy it held dissipates. Gurevitch clarifies some more through an example: “If a student works alone, and, for example, is tied by a rope, the moment he loses contact with the rope he breaks the physical image. The idea is that the actors need to be continually connected in a physical way with either their object or partner throughout the physical image scene.”

***More on Action and WILL and what is the difference between a regular every day behavior and an action on stage.***

***Exercise V: action and will***

*Work in a group of two*

*I. walk one toward the other and say ‘Hi’*

*II. Walk one toward the other and say ‘Hi’ with a physical movement*

*III. walk one toward the other and only shake hands without the 'Hi'.*

Gurevitch never tires of teaching and repeating throughout the school year that the text expresses a WILL and a STATE, and that as an actor, you want to know what is your WILL and what is your STATE right now. The actor must know what he needs to express. Gurevitch would stress that in daily life, we can often behave and use words without necessarily being conscious about our direct WILL and STATE; however, with dramatic text, even in a text as “Hi,” an actor expresses the ACTION in a direct relation to the STATE and the WILL.

The action, which is a direct response to the WILL and STATE, is embodied as well in the physical word: “Hi.” Gurevitch insists that we do not give a name to the action but rather act it out as a verb. He indicates that the definition of the action is not, for example: “pressed down,” but: “to press down.” It is a verb, an action, not a noun. Comparably, the creative process is not an idea but acting on an idea with specific actions taken. An actor says “Hi” on stage as a person that loves, or else, wants to press down the partner. Before sending the students to create a scene for their next exercise, Gurevitch reminds them that every word on stage needs to be sourced in the body. They need to have an energetic connection between the physical action and the voice. For a clear objective, clear WILL is needed.

***What is a scene?***

Gurevitch clarifies to his class that a scene is a physical progression of actions that takes place in the here and now and that an action in a scene is a physical movement that comes to change a state. Gurevitch demonstrates: “I sit—then, I take a physical action and I move my body to a standing position.” A scene is a chain of actions



where each action affects the next one while this chain of actions alters the state the scene began with.

The beauty of the PI training method is that through the PI scene the actor is trained to physically feel the energy that is embedded in the scene's chain of actions—such as in the physical image of holding on to the rope scene. This energy is then the embodiment of the WILL, STATE, and ACTION, which the actor works to find and to distill its expression. As we'll see later when the class will move to work on scenes from *Hamlet*, the PI scene serves as a supporting tool for searching and awaking the precise energy in the body that directly relates to the precise WILL of the character. Once the precise energy is awakened and registered in the actor's body and mind, the actors can reapply it when acting their role from *Hamlet*.

I found Joseph Chaikin helpful in seeing into Gurevitch's instruction to not break the physical contact. Chaikin states that when an actor is working with an image, when he responds to an image stimulus, "He has the potential for deep contact with that stimulus, since it is privately chosen. This contact brings up energy for the actor's use" (4). On one level or another he is given energy by his inner promptings, associations, that part of his life which is already lived.

As will be discussed later when examining the work on classic scenes from *Antigone* and *Hamlet*, holding the contact alive while working with physical image is the heart of Gurevitch's PI Method: the precise WILL and STATE of energy found in the physical image exercises are registered, wired in the body and mind of the actor and may be reactivated on stage when performing the scene. Gurevitch would say that intuition as inspiration can sound right and can look right. Yet without acting from a

clear choice of STATE and WILL, intuition does not hold a powerful ground. Intuition without a clear STATE and WILL does not hold strong energy on stage. Gurevitch would share with the class that he sometimes senses that they too often are trying to be “authentic”, and that the question is: *what is being authentic on stage?* He says, “When you create on stage a situation, this situation has to agree with the action you take. The stage creates the rules and the authenticity is not in relation to life but in relation to what is happening on stage, in accordance with its rules; its demands for precision of actor’s WILL and STATE, its energy, its style, etc.”

As I heard Gurevitch saying many times while rehearsing *Uncle Vanya*: “When you go on stage it is not the time to wait for inspiration; the inspiration is there within you, wired already in your body/mind. You just allow it to relive itself in your body on stage.” Grounded technique becomes a means to free the artist’s spirit to create.

### ***Exercise VI***

*Physical connection with text.*

*Create a chain of actions with clear will and clear situation, and this time with text.*

Maria and her partner come to class with a simple investigation scene:

- Did you do it?
- No, I didn’t do it.
- Don’t lie to me.
- I didn’t do anything.
- I know everything about you. We recorded everything.
- *Pause*

- Please help me.

Maria said that they were basically all in trouble, that Gurevitch kept on asking: where does the scene take place? How do you change the state you are in, what is your will *now*, what exactly do you want *now*? She recalls that Gurevitch would go around *listening* to their voices and, for most of them, he would say: “The energy that sends your voice to the space does not spark from a clear will.” Maria admitted that it took her many agonizing classes to understand and experience the connecting energy between *WILL*, *STATE*, and bodily feelings in present time.

To experience life in the present moment is to experience it in the body--it is as true for life as it is for the stage. When we stay intimately with a sensation of an itch, we can't be but in the present moment. It is when we begin to proliferate about the experience (Oh, this itch is going to get me crazy again...) is when we move to the past and future. The underlining goal of Gurevitch's method of teaching the art of acting is twofold: Identify the will and state of the character bit by bit and feel this will and state as clear bodily energy from which any of the character's actions originate.

In preparation for internalizing the physical image, for soon words were going to take over, the class worked on opening the voice/body channels. It was preparation for being physically separated from the partner while maintaining inter-connection through words. Gurevitch came with a body/voice exercise before the class moved on to work on scenes from *Antigone* with the text from the play.

***Exercise VII:***

*On being aware and feeling body-sensation/voice interrelation binding*

***Part I***

*While standing-up*

*Create one movement and add one word to it.*

*Repeat it again and again and experiment with it. (For example: if working with the word OPEN, allow the word to dance your body with the feeling it embodies. Feel the boundaries the word may arise within your body, or thought patterns it may awake, and play with it using your body and your voice.)*

## **Part II**

*Create and dance a self-monologue*

*The monologue: no-one-but you need to know the narrative that underlines your dance.*

*The first stage is dance to music of your choice.*

*The second stage is to add a voice.*

*The third stage is to add text in any amount and way you choose and it doesn't necessarily have to have any inner linear narrative.*

The Dance Monologue Exercise is a free flow experiment with an inner account expressed in dance and voice. The purpose is to experience the connection between body and voice that is rooted in and emerges from the body; to feel the body's energy that aligns with the voice and becomes aware of how the voice is birthed from clear will and state.

### **On words as actions**

As actors, the symbol of words is birthed from the body. The role of the actor is to transcend the symbol to a physical energy, to ground the words and to give it a physical body. "If I speak I act," states Gurevitch. "The speaking is an action. An action does not end until something stops it. When something stops the action, immediately a

new action begins.” The objective, the WILL on stage does not stop until the actors leave the stage. The actors manifest their words through their voice and need to connect voice to a Will, to a State, and to an ACTION.

The actors need to feel the energy of the action in their voice. They need to be aware that their voice is clear, not stressed and technically, fully expressed; loud enough so audience can hear, and well pronounced. It needs to embody the action with minimum effort and maximum effect. Maximum effect of the *STATE* and *WILL*: Maximum, means the entire body is being engaged, including the voice. The actors need to create a physical situation that is fully alive in the here and now. An effective action is one that is effortless, does not hold any unnecessary strain, yet it is precise and authentic.

In relation to their work on speech, words, and voice, Gurevitch asked the students to read an article written by the Israeli national poet, Haim Nahman Bialik (1873-1940): “Revelment and Concealment in Language”, and be ready for a discussion in class. “Revelment and Concealment in Language” is an essay on words and their source rooted in the human soul: the soul’s longings to be expressed, to be heard, to connect. Bialik is reflecting about the first man taken aback by the sound of thunder, and imagining that man, overcome by amazement and terror, burst spontaneously with a primordial roar reassembles a beast’s roar “errrrr.” And Bialik wonders, “could this wild cry vastly free his bewildered soul? Was this roar an echo to a spirit shaken to its core...? Could this meager syllable, this seed of the future word, embrace a complete volume of primordial emotions... resembling terror, fear, amazement, submission, astonishment, preparedness for self-defense?” And if this was true, Bialik wonders in

his article, was not this first man himself at that moment a very faithful artist? An intuitive creator of a faithful complicated inner disturbance? Nevertheless, Bialik writes, these words such as “thunder” and many like it, got lost throughout time in the language, and people were left inwardly untouched, “...their core was consumed and their spiritual strength fades or yet hidden.” There is a call in Bialik’s article, to reconnect, to rewire the experience of our human spirit to the words, as the words are such a powerful tool through which we communicate with and express our being in the world.

This article had a strong impact on my life,” says Maria, “It had deeply influenced me as a person in the world, as an artist, and I know it had a strong influence on all of us.” It feels as the thoughts about language and art Bialik expressed in “Revelment and Concealment in Language” holds a deep conversation with the creative spirit of Gurevitch who keeps on telling his students that: “Every physical experience on stage is an experience of the spirit.”

Soon the class would work on characters from the 430 BCE ancient Greek drama. The work on the scenes would begin without any spoken word but with the students first searching to feel the words of the ancient text as a distinct physical experience in their body; as WILL, STATE, CONFLICT, and ACTION

### ***Working with classic scenes - Antigone by Sophocles***

About three months into the first year the class begins to work on scenes from *Antigone*. The work in this project can be looked at as a progression of three parts.

I. In the first part, the task is to choose a scene from Sophocles' *Antigone* and to create a physical image for the scene without using any spoken words, while realizing clearly: what is your character's WILL, STATE, and what is the main conflict.

Maria recalls "Antigone and Ismena are sisters that are strongly bound together. We did the whole scene joined in an embracing hug. This entwined hug was our physical image for the scene." Though Antigone is deeply tied to her sister, she can't bury her brother while attached to Ismena. To bury their brother, she needs to remove herself and detach from her sister. Ismena does not wish to be separated from her sister; however, Antigone wants to bury their brother against her will, and while they are strongly tied to each other within this hug, the whole tragic conflict is being experienced. "Gurevitch would stand next to us touching our backs," remembers Maria. "He was listening to feel inner intention energy and how it is being expressed in our bodies; searching for the clear energy of our will and its struggling movements within the dreadful conflict."

This physical image exercise, which is a metaphoric image of the forces that move the scene forward, trains the actor to let go of mind proliferation and stay and act from the feelings and emotions that underline the will and state of the role.

The Physical Image Method was organically developed to help authenticate the art of theatre. Gurevitch, who sees the stage as a metaphoric space of life, believes that when actors work with an accurate poetic image of their character's inner life, (WILL, STATE, ACTION) such as the entwined hug between Antigone and Ismena, the actors awaken the precise energy that moves the scene's action forward authentically.

The actors, which Gurevitch refers to sometimes as “life’s messengers”, the “emissaries”, act on stage as a live metaphor of the stream of life they perform.

II. Next, the task for the student is to stay with the physical image and add the text from the Antigone/Ismena scene. In this stage Gurevitch wanted Maria and her partner to reveal what is the *WILL* the text discloses moment by moment. He wanted them to align the physical action with the subjective will hidden in the text, which is an inner movement, as it works against an existing condition.

Gurevitch would indicate that if there is one action in the text, there should be one physical action that links to that inner action. The students were to be in a continuous “contact” dance with the text and the inner dynamic will. Maria and her partner were just holding hands; however, every tiny movement would have inner meaning and connection to their inner will. “Repeatedly Gurevitch would remind us” says Maria, “to speak with full voice, a voice that would align with a full bodily energy; to lower and release shoulders, to use voice in a sharp, clear manner, and to let the voice be aligned with the body energy.”

III. When moving to the third part on working with *Antigone*, Gurevitch encouraged the class to look deeper and become more aware of their personality, their reactive thoughts, feelings and emotion, and aware of their spirit wishing, longing. He urged them to use their imagination and learn to expend their stage expressiveness. Gurevitch would say to the class, “Actors need to develop and have the courage to know and be who they are. This is the spirit of the actor, to incessantly explore and develop his/her own self.” Gurevitch pressed that the students need the courage to be grounded in their own self, that they can only be 100% of them self. They can’t be



anybody else. It is the best each of them has. Maria understood Gurevitch's call for her and her peers to be grounded in their own self. She agreed that the need and responsibility to be Maria is in her and only in her; however, she recalls "For me at that time, to *know* my weaknesses, shadows, conflicts, fears, agony, triumph - to meet it, understand it, accept it, and embrace this kind of deep exposure--felt like dying." However, the more courageous she allowed herself to become, the more connected she felt to acting.

The class worked on this same scene for over a month. Gurevitch then told them he begins to feel the improvement. Then, they worked on internalizing the physical image and act without the need to be in an unbroken physical contact with their partner (Being in a continuous physical contact with a partner is part of the instructions whenever training with physical image). The words, as one of the expressions of the inner life's intention and energy, will become the physical action which will hold the continuous contact.

Odelia, a long-time actor with the Khan Theatre group, who was also Gurevitch's student in Nissan Nativ Acting Studio, recalls a transformative time for her when her class worked with classic scenes. She worked on *Medea* from Euripides's *Medea*. "We first analyze the text and the forces that are actively involved in the event. Then we find the physical image we want to work with. A physical image that will help us be specific with our will and action." Odelia said that when she searched to realize the PI that will best serve her in the scene, she asked herself, "what in the physical image will be realized and will inform the WILL and STATE in my scene? How the PI leads my action and serves my need and intention. What in my PI will represent condition and

what will represent the action?” Action, as Gurevitch teaches, always stems from a thing one wants, aspire to, need. Condition always stands in opposition to action, to the character’s will. An actor won’t act if she does not want to change a situation. Here is Odelia on working with the PI she and her partner found for their Jason and Medea scene:

I worked on Medea. What is revenge? Get even, I’ll get even with you I’ll put you in the place you brought me into. Jason humiliated Medea. What is humiliating? What is it for Medea? Stepped on her, put her down. She wants to put him down and step on him, as he did to her. In the Studio, my partner was a big guy. We tied Jason’s hands. I as Medea try to crash him and that’s how I act my text. It is not something Medea activates; something is being activated on her—and it is her will to revenge. The sentences are flowing with the action you have chosen to do. Guilt feelings is a quality that can oppress energy, will, desire can push you forward with a lot of energy.

One more very important point which Gurevitch works on through the PI is helping the actors interrupt their habitual patterns of thinking and acting. “When I act,” says Odelia, “I allow the physical action to direct the way I cut and emphasize my words within the sentence.” While Odelia imitates drilling in the table she says “this effort I invest in the drilling movement leads my energy and how I say my lines. I let my action divide my words in the sentence. It leads the intonation and the whole scene. It helps free you from your habits.” Another way in the Studio they used to free the mind from old habits and be in the flow of action was to work with music. “We would choose a musical piece, and you physically in a very concrete way do an action within a precise situation and intention. It frees you and gets you be creative in the present moment.”

### ***Uncover what is “theatrical” in the theatre***

As the year progressed, Gurevitch would push the class to search more and use their imagination to open the range of their expression on stage. Gurevitch would repeat reminding his class that when they act on stage it is not as they act in life. “He wanted us to continually reach beyond the edges of our expressions while being on stage,” says Maria, “to experiment with modes of expressions when working with the rules of clear knowing the WILL and STATE.”

It is clear from such evaluations that Gurevitch’s PI method of training indeed aims to develop the integrity of the act while cultivating the imagination, the image-initiation of the actor, inviting it to be free and flourish. The PI Method trains the imagination of the actors to expose for them the “theatrical” expression in the theatre and invites the actors to investigate into it and experience it. This training reminds me of the Russian critic Nikolai Pesochinsky’s observation on Meyerhold’s Bio Mechanically method, as quoted in Alison Hodge’s chapter on Meyerhold: “In the power of the [biomechanically trained] actor, there resides not only the imitation of ordinary life, but also the way towards its subconscious image-association, the embodiment of the metaphor.” (Hodge 40)

### ***Beginning to work on scenes from Shakespeare***

#### ***Hamlet: ‘Go to the Nunnery’ scene***

Gurevitch gave the class a short talk before they started working on “Go to the nunnery” scene. Through this talk, which holds a distinct observation of the scene, Gurevitch offers his students a support for discerning the intentions, WILL and STATE that underline the actions of both characters in the scene:

“Go to the nunnery” scene can be close to approaching subject matters that all could be personal to you: Hamlet and Ophelia are both young and around your age. Ophelia separated herself from Hamlet at her father’s orders. Hamlet is breaking into her room furious and confused after last night’s encounter with the ghost of his father. Ophelia wants Hamlet to truly love her. She wants a direct contact with him. She cannot have a direct contact, as she knows someone is watching them. Nothing can be authentic for them. Ophelia wants to create an intimate event in a situation that does not allow it.

This scene is a microcosm event of the entire play. A real loving experience is putting on a mask. In the scene, Ophelia feels that they are being watched so she cannot tell Hamlet how she feels, and Hamlet is aware of that conflict in her. He believes that she is innocence and grace. There is a big gap between what Hamlet thinks and feels towards Ophelia and how he acts. The scene begins with a false pretense by both. Ophelia returns Hamlet’s presents, as an act to stop him from leaving the room (as she thinks that that what he is doing). She didn’t want to give it back. She wants to make him stay and talk to her. Hamlet feels that Ophelia threatens him as she might hurt him again, as she did in the past by not returning his letters.

Even though the conditions are dire, not every sentence and act needs to be solemn and heavy. Every moment needs to connect to the will and act of the moment, not the overall state of Ophelia in the play.

Gurevitch told the class that when they worked on scenes from the Greek Tragedy, the focus was mainly on technique; however, in Shakespeare they would apply the technique and begin to act. The process, nevertheless, as in working with the classic scenes, can be looked at as an evolution in three parts.

### ***1. Finding a physical image for the scene***

As in working with *Antigone*, the students do not begin the work with the text but start with finding the physical image of the scene and act it in class. Maria tells that hers and her partner’s physical image was a ball game. She recalls that as they began their PI scene, they were just playing throwing the ball to each other, while slowly Hamlet began to hit Ophelia with the ball harder and harder, “It became aggressive. There was increasing of violent energy in throwing the ball.” In the end of

their physical image scene, Ophelia was on the floor, Hamlet was viciously hitting her one last time with the ball and left.

### ***II. Adding the dramatic text***

Gurevitch liked their physical image and they could move to the next level, while working with their same physical image. They, in this stage, would add the scene's text and would perform the scene in class with their physical image: the aggressive ball game. Everyone in the class would work with the same scene, and each one, of course, came up with a different physical image. Maria said that they could then see and feel what image worked for the scene (i.e., helped to align the actors with the right energy in relation to the will and state of their character), and what physical image was not a supportive tool. Maria recalls that sometimes Gurevitch would say, "This is a good image, continue to work, develop it" and some time he would ask us to search for a new, more accurate image: an image that will activate the bodily energy that is embodied in the need, the will and condition of the character in the scene.

### ***III. Working with the dramatic scene***

Next the class moved to the actual scene from the play. The students worked with the text and mise-en-scene from the play. Maria and her partner did not play the aggressive ball game; however, she says, "We held the physical image energy activated within us and acted the scene with the intention and energy of the WILL and STATE embodied in our 'ball game' image, which was memorized in our mind/body. There is the awakened violent feeling from the ball game. I recognize it and feel it in my body and I act the scene from this embodied memory of energy." When acting the actual scene, Maria and her partner let go of the physical action; they did not throw any ball

at each other, but they used the same energy and feelings that were built in their bodies when they acted out the physical image scene. “You have the energetic blue print from the physical image scene embedded in your body” says Maria, “and it frees your mind and allows you to be in the present moment.” The creative joy opens up. Following the process Maria was trained in, it became obvious to her how her creative energy has been freed for her artistic adventures and growth.

Maria recalls that it was in this part of the work that the idea of physical image found its home in her body and mind and that the “fog” began to clear out. She began to feel the ground, the life of the acting art right there in her body, she began to feel the joy in acting:

I learned to identify in the text emotional and feeling states and allow the images these states activated in me to show up in my mind. If, for example, the image was that I feel utterly tied up, I worked with this physical sensation of being tied up, cannot move. Working with this image opens lots of fear, violence, inner forces to fight against it. Then the work is to act the dramatic scene with the feelings of the “being tied” image evoked. It is extremely interesting to reconstruct, to restore the energy. Interesting and not at all easy.

The work for most of the first year was practice to the point you get the method, to own it in your body and mind. In the second year, the class moved to work on individual, personal scenes. They began the work with finding the physical image for their own personal life scene.

## THE SECOND YEAR<sup>11</sup>

What do you want, what is your will? what is the situation, what is the state? Why?

Why? Why?

*"Acting is what I do with who I am"*  
English Actress Harriet Walter

In the first year, the focus is on technique, in the second year everything becomes personal; the human nature and the acting student's life become the subject of the exploration. The goal is to explore the actors' own resources for the art by becoming intimately familiar with their own feelings, emotions, habitual thinking, and any strong behavioral patterns. As in the first year, the Physical Image Method continues in the second year to be the method employed to penetrate and advance this intimate, deep exploration.

### ***Exercise I***

*creating a physical image as a mean to intimately explore a meaningful personal moment in life.*

*The students are asked to be mindful of the initiating forces that had a role in the experience with which they choose to work.*

*The directions:*

- *Think about a physical image for a personal meaningful moment in your life.*

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<sup>11</sup> All the quotations shared are transcriptions from recorded interviews or from personal observations, unless otherwise noted.

- *Then go out for a 20 minutes' walk and try, as much as possible, not to be engaged with thinking about the scene, but be in your walk's experience.*<sup>12</sup>
- *When back in class, take 10 minutes to create and be ready to act out your physical image with partner/s.*

Maria's physical image was sourced on her relations with her father, "I haven't seen my father since I was about five," she says, "we do not have any connection." In her PI scene, Maria was on her partner's shoulders while a third participant was trying to pull her down. Her partner began to walk with her on his shoulders; he walked fast, and the more he walked the less safe she felt. It was a startling and effective physical image for Maria: sitting on somebody's shoulders came from a child's playful world, and yet it did not feel safe, as her father was not a safe place in her life. "Gurevitch was repeatedly asking," says Maria, 'what exactly do you want, what is your WILL here?' The image felt to Gurevitch good yet too formulaic, too direct, too blunt." Maria recalls that being on her partner's shoulder brought a childlike image, which Gurevitch agreed was a good physical image to work with; however, it was not intimate enough nor was it enough emotionally clear. Gurevitch wanted the physical image to be personal in a way that the WILL, STATE and the CONFLICT will be clear to the student's consciousness and that Maria would feel its precise energy in the body. Gurevitch would tell the class that, "A poet does not talk about falling rain, a poet creates the falling rain. The same

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<sup>12</sup> In one of his interviews Gurevitch was sharing that this is what he often does when he is writing at home: takes a break and goes out for long walks. Sometimes, his best ideas for writing or solution to problems emerge during these walks.



we can say about the actor. An actor does not talk about the act of separation, the actor on stage is experiencing separation in the moment.”

### ***Exercise II***

- *Continue the exercise with the same PI*

Maria’s work for next class was to deepen the search into her personal event while working with the same image. Gurevitch wanted the audience to receive the PI scene as a clear emotional experience. He asked Maria to start to develop awareness for details, to be more intimate with the changing instances in the situation, and the shifts in her WILL, in relation to the alteration of her physical condition. The more specific she could be in her work, the deeper she could see into her experience in the situation. When reflecting on her work with that PI scene, Maria said: “I had my mother that I wanted to be with pulling me; I had my father holding me on his shoulders while I am holding onto him. My stay on the shoulders was not stable. The emotional state opened up for me, right there, with this almost tragic unsolvable conflict I experienced. I could not break the connection within this triangle.” The clearer Maria got with her WILL and STATE in the momentary shifting within the scene, the freer she became in acting her unsolvable emotional conflict.

### ***Exercise III***

*The instructions are:*

- *continue and work with the same PI.*
- *create a new scene in which this PI would be its image.*
- *The scene needs to have a beginning and an end, to include text, and there needs to be an energetic kinship between the scene and the PI.*

- *In class, perform first the original PI and then the new scene.*

Gurevitch wanted the class to move forward and create a new scene, which for Maria would align with the energetic elements of the PI she worked on for the “separation from her father” scene. For Gurevitch the PI is a dynamic image. “Don’t use it as an illustration,” he would say repeatedly, “be alive with it and act it fully.” (Interview with Maria)

In each scene Gurevitch wanted to know what is new, if they have learned anything that felt original for them? Maria resolved in doing a scene about this fear of separation—the fundamental source for the new scene was the need to be loved and embraced by everyone—on and off stage. After a talk with Gurevitch he suggested that Maria should try to work with the empty space, the black hole, that opened and stayed within her when she separated from her father; this space that she felt needed to hold them both. “Make the stage be this space, be the trigger for you, make it touch your need for this father’s love.” Gurevitch suggested, “Allow yourself to be in the turbulent waters.” Gurevitch offered Maria to make the stage the trigger for her need for success, for receiving love on stage. Working with Gurevitch, Maria, and every actor, knows that allowing the turbulence in is their life long journey.

Just as the practice went in the first year when working with *Hamlet’s* “go to the nunnery” scene, the purpose of this exercise was to help the students find and work with a very specific *WILL*, with clear *STATE*. The exercise aims to support the students to discover the precise energy, which was created in the previous PI exercise and apply it to this new PI scene. The physical image is not an illustration but a physical energetic experience that needs to organically move and change as the scene does. The beauty

of this practice is that it frees the mind of the students while stimulating the imagination and challenging them to realize their own needs in every moment.

An actor should ask: am I applying the physical image accurately, am I embodying the right energy, the right tension as I act my scene? PI aims to create for the actor an energetic map; a mind/body movement directory of the inner process—the WILL, STATE, level of energy--of the scene. It works as an X-ray of the energetic process within the scene. If in the scene there is anger that the actor wants to hide, in the PI, the audience sees the energy of the anger, not the hiding of it. In the scene, the actor works with anger that she may hide, however, the energy of the anger is fully active. The actor needs to find and awaken the anger so she will have the emotion to hide later. As in an actors' training method, the PI becomes a tool to discern and reveal for the student the underlining energetic forces which drive the action in the scene. And most important: once the actor moves from her conceptual analytical mind into being in the body, this shift frees the imagination and the creative forces and opens the doors for the student to become a genuine creative artist.

Gurevitch searches for actors who are able to free their imaginations, who are daring and open to challenging their boundaries, and who develop the ability to bring the creative joy to the rehearsals and to the performances. These are the actors whom Gurevitch invites to work and create with him in the theatre. These are the kind of artists that speak his creative language and the ones that inspire him to make theatre with.

### ***On Repetition and expanding boundaries***

How can an actor be fresh, get repeatedly excited in the same situation, the same scene, night after night? Even if there is a strong excitement originally, it is not easy to replay and to relive the excitement, or to recreate the deep sadness. How do actors act with the high energy from yesterday? How can we connect our center that is relevant to the part we are acting? “You need,” says Gurevitch, “to find a clear key of connection with yourself--your actor—to the part you are acting.” Gurevitch’s PI method looks at repetition as part of the actor’s personal journey. When an actor is acting a scene, she is taking a certain path. This path is fixed yet not fixed. The actor’s repeated actions throughout the PI scene and the new scene in this exercise become the experiences within the personal and professional journey--all in present time. “We practice in the studio,” Gurevitch tells his students,

Our body would become aware of its energy, would be skillful in acting through this energy right now, in present moment, as we perform on stage. The action, i.e., being physically touched by the intention and the state and move to act, awakens the inner experience that the body ‘remembers’ and enables the actor to recreate once and again the dramatic event. Each time the actor awakes into the precise state and will of the character in the dramatic event, this experience becomes part of the actor’s journey as a professional theatre artist.

In this time of the year, Gurevitch encourages the class to break boundaries, to be more daring with their body’s expression. To allow the body to be touched in a way that will open new forms for them as performers.<sup>13</sup> He encourages the students to work

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<sup>13</sup> When Gurevitch talks about more daring with the body, he means in a physical /emotional/feeling way as people do *feel* their thoughts and emotions in their body. He encourages the students to broaden and deepen their body/emotional/feelings overall experience. This subject will be further discussed through the conversation with Rani.

on scenes that are of strong interest to them. “He wants to see that in the scene we reveal something new about our self,” says Maria. “Something unexpected, maybe very bold.” He would say: “If you want to work on an evil quality within you, find a scene in which you can be absolutely, entirely evil in it. We need to reveal secrets about our self—this is the meaning of theatre and acting.” Gurevitch believes that as much as the art of acting is calling to reveal secrets about one’s self, when on the stage, the actor’s job is always to hold a secret. He would say to the class that on stage, there is always a secret and a revealing of the secret. A good example is a scene they did in class. In the scene, “A” dressed herself nicely, met “B” and said: I dressed nicely as I knew you came to leave me. A had a secret. She knew about it but the audience didn’t know, neither did the partner. Gurevitch would state that “Holding and revealing a secret is a tool we have for creating interest: to act from the state and allow it to be progressively revealed. The dramatic scene gets interesting when you see a character in a situation, yet you do not know what is this character’s intention and what is on this character’s mind.”

Maria realizes that a scene in the theatre is not copied from life--a dramatic scene is a metaphor of life. She feels she begins to understand in her mind and body the art of making theatre: “I wanted to create a scene that would be a theatrical scene, that metaphorically would mirror on stage the essence of my conflict in life. This understanding was transformational for me. I felt I can use the tools the theatre gives me, to create something bigger than life, which embodies the will, conditions, and conflict that works within the personal reality of my scene.” Gurevitch is training his actors to become professional actors as well as become to be independent, creative

artists of the theatre. When he creates new performances, these are the kind of actors he would love and choose to work with.

***What is allowing the turbulence? How does it relate to acting training?***

*Acting is half shame, half glory. Shame at exhibiting yourself,  
glory when you can forget yourself.*  
John Gielgud

The training is not therapy sessions, though no doubt, it stirs up the psyche and gets the students to relook at their lives. The training moves the acting student to become familiar with his habituated thoughts and awakens his system to *feel* the direct effect of his thoughts on his body; the actor's consciousness awakes to feelings as tension, contraction, burning sensation, or pleasant impressions. The feelings along with the proliferations of the thoughts evolve to become emotions, such as anger, frustration, revenge, sadness, grief, joy, and excitement. To be intimate with his feelings, to know his feelings, is to consciously become aware of them when they rise in his body. Knowingly he becomes aware of how the sensation of fear, for example, feels like in the body and where these feelings are most apparent (the chest, throat, belly, etc.). An actor can recall the past and think about the future, however, the present time can't be experienced in the mind. The only way an actor can experience actual life on stage is in the body, in the present moment. When an actor learns to consciously feel his experiences in the body, he learns to free his mind and to enter the present moment on stage. The actor learns to be in his creative flow and truly act.

“During the second year,” Maria reflects, “you are sent to survive in the desert. Gurevitch wants you to search and be the one who finds the water. He wanted us to work and understand through our own experience, without *explaining* that much.”

To consciously agree to *feel* the turbulence rather than block the feelings they create can be far from easy, however, says Gurevitch to his students, "...this is the only way I know an actor grows to become an artist," says Gurevitch. "It is the actor's life long Journey."

### ***Conversation with Rani: Inviting the body***

As the word stands as the symbol for the object it wishes to express, "Physical Image" stands as the metaphor that expresses the subjective and objective energy within a dramatic scene. For example: standing on the table with one leg creates an unstable energy, an ungrounded feeling in the body - the energy here is very clear, one doesn't need to even think about it. This sense of unbalance creates anxiety, fear of falling, which is experienced as an explicit unpleasant feeling in the body. A feeling such as tightness, strain, burning sensation, etc. The body experiences the contracted energy of the fear in the present time of the standing on the table with one leg.

In his first year, Rani felt he did not clearly understand what Gurevitch was aiming for, especially with referring to awareness of bodily feelings. In the second year, when work was on personal scenes, he noticed he was stuck.

Rani's personal PI scene was based on a conversation with his father, in which he asked him to allow his stepfather to adopt him. "I couldn't get to *feel* it in my body," he recalls. "Instead, I was aiming for dramatic results; however, I couldn't *feel* the experience in my body where Gurevitch was trying to lead me to again and again." Rani felt frustrated and confused. He asked Gurevitch for a private meeting and shared his difficulty to realize in his body what he believed he understood in his mind.

Gurevitch asked me to lie on the carpet and state whatever feels uncomfortable, as it is in the heart of the practice we do here. "I am

going to put my hand on your forehead,” Gurevitch said. I said “okay” and he put his hand on my forehead. “I am going to take my hand off your forehead,” he said and did, and then he asked: “what do you feel?” I feel your hand on my forehead, I said. “Okay,” he said, “I am going to put my hand on your chest” he put his hand on my chest and asked me “what do you feel?” Calmness, I said. He took away his hand. I felt fear, unrest. As we went on like that, I began to consciously experience what I felt in my body, I started to discern the different feelings that woke up in my body with every touch.

Gurevitch asked me to put my hand on his chest. I noticed I felt discomfort with this closeness and I shared it with him. When he put his hand on my sternum, I felt alone. His touch created the sense of aloneness. The aloneness was physical. Gurevitch tried to help me get more intimate with this feeling and asked: “what is this aloneness? Why do you think you feel that?” I couldn’t answer. In that time of my life my ability to see through my emotions and feelings was quite limited. I understood that I am not allowing myself to feel. As in many of the times that Gurevitch touched me, I was not clear of what I felt; as if my body blocked the information from moving into my consciousness.

At one point, he asked what I feel like doing now, and I felt like hugging him. I felt he is working with me with a deep understanding. I hugged him. As I hugged him, he asked, how do I feel.

This meeting was a beginning of a transformation for me as an actor and as a person. It opened a deep awareness and connections with feelings that were in my body yet blocked from my consciousness. I began to allow myself to be curious and conscious about what I feel, and mainly about wanting to grow into a person that can *feel* life in all its spectrum, to fully experience the winds of life play in my body. I don’t have enough words to describe how transformative this meeting was for me. This meeting enabled the beginning of a new creative process that will, with no doubt, continue for the rest of my life. The meeting with Gurevitch opened within me a deep understanding. Only much later did I realize how this meeting was revolutionary for my life, how it changed my whole way of being.

If we experience separation and we are hurt, we experience this hurt as unpleasant feelings in our body. Sometimes it’s more apparent in our belly or our throat, or our chest. Rani said that he could understand he was sad but not consciously feel it. The “Know Thy Self”, the new revealed information of his feeling capacity, opened for Rani and connected him with multiple new layers of his authenticity. Rani talked about that experience as finding a lost treasure box, a fresh felt bodily



information, which would become his source for becoming the artist he wished to be. Rani felt he began to be mindful and alert to the nature of his body/mind direct relations. It later would open for him a variety of feelings that he was not aware that he embodies and could employ in his acting. “There are roles” he said, “I would not know how to act, I would not have the sources, if my connection to my own fears, to the violent feelings within me were blocked.” Rani continued to say that he still feels that he is just beginning to allow that. And that it all began in that meeting with Gurevitch. “Gurevitch succeeded in connecting me to levels of consciousness in me, I didn’t even know existed. Before that meeting, I could mentally understand his teachings, however, I was not *experiencing* it.”

Rani was sharing his experience with a rape scene in the studio that before his meeting with Gurevitch, he couldn’t act. He could only illustrate the rape. He couldn’t permit himself to feel the violence within himself, the bully’s will, and he couldn’t act it in the scene. A rape scene on stage can be looked at as Gurevitch looks at a sport’s scene--unlike in life, the actor on stage, acts the WILL to win over. The rape itself is the repercussion of acting from uncontrolled need. The physical image helps the actor move organically from one emotional state to the next emotional state. All the time the actor is connected to a clear state and a clear objective, which he then acts from, it leads his actions.

Gurevitch states in class that “All we practice here at school is to allow our body to be a cylinder of experiences.” Rani began to allow it. Physical image became for Rani, “anything that activates a feeling in you that physically you can’t ignore. If I will

put big stones in my pockets, I will feel the heaviness, the strain, the pain. The heaviness becomes to be a kinetic action.”

Rani’s sharing is a strong, authentic narrative of an actor. It is empowering to see how an actor’s professional artistic life in the theatre began to shift through his work with his teacher and how the right training has the potential to free the authentic creator, the artist within.

### ***Giving the Turbulence a theatrical form***

As the year progressed, the scenes moved into being more theatrical. The theatrical tools such as use of definite color, rhythm, music, movement and style, began to be applied into the students’ creative processes while they worked on creating their personal scenes. The WILL and STATE in the personal scene underline the physical image, and, all is integrated into theatrical artistic expression on stage. Space was opened for staging explorations, and different venues were used for performing. The stage designs were more thought of and became part of the student work. “Gradually, we began to stage and design our scenes and apply stage lightning we have distinctly designed including special light effects,” said Maria.

When looking at Gurevitch’s creative process, the Physical Image Method he had developed is a method that aims to evoke the inner mythology which triggers the students’ creative imagination. With the PI method, the student’s imagination is being evoked and work to transform intimate personal experiences into the theatrical form—into a metaphorical act. Thus, the inner mirroring process becomes the mimesis on stage and fulfills what Gurevitch stated in the beginning of first year: “Acting is a metaphor that becomes a live reality on stage. It is not copying life but a metaphoric

reality, a physical image.” The method began to be realized by Maria somewhere in her second year. The elements began to synchronize within her: the intellect, embodied feelings, emotions, voice, movement, audience, text, personal life, transforming life to the stage. She felt the practice start to be integrated. “I felt that the poetic language of the art that Gurevitch was talking about began to be woven with my personal experience into becoming the characters and the world of the theatrical scene I created.” Maria recalls how at that time, in one of her scenes, she took a piano and situated it in the middle of the stage. For her, the music became a key player which metaphorically and emotionally expressed her WILL and STATE in her scene.

The actor, in this stage of the training, evolves to become a creative theatre artist. The class was about to continue their training with scenes from Chekov. Maria shares from her notes Gurevitch words before beginning the work, “In Chekov, a very stressful life of existing struggles is embedded in trivial everyday events. If you do not bring to the stage the raw meat which lies under the skin, under the ordinary, then nothing is there but the ordinary. It is boring.” The narrative Gurevitch wanted his students to act was the one of their souls; its conflicts, turmoil, turbulence, and joys, all wrapped in a very ordinary life. “Gurevitch wanted us to be ready for exposing and expressing our soul,” said Maria. The PI method was there to support them and give them enough tools to safely trigger their life experiences, and the poetic layers in their psyche, and be ready to express it in the theatrical form.

Providing these tools and practices, Gurevitch moved the class to work with and explore the world of Chekov’s characters. The students knew by now, that for Gurevitch, any role you play, you’re first yourself. You enact your own life in situations

of Sonia's life, of Hamlet, of Ophelia. First, you are yourself in a situation. You never try to act being Astrov, Uncle Vanya, or anyone else which you are not. What is interesting in theatre is to see how *you* are acting Hamlet. The story is the same, however, each time it is utterly different as it is somebody else's life's journey—and when you play Hamlet, it is nothing but your own life's journey.

### ***Working on scenes from Chekov***

In the first class Gurevitch tells the students that closely reading Chekov's *Uncle Vanya*, you realize that the inner drama of these people Chekov wrote about is a drama that can easily beat every *Superman's* dramatic complexity. Gurevitch brings as an example the Astrov and Sonia scene from *Uncle Vanya*: "There are two situations in the scene that work together but do not connect at all. Astrov is in deep stress, which seemingly calls for Sonia to be there for him; however, as much as she wishes to, she can't help him. Astrov is struggling with the meaning of his existence, a state without any sense of solution. Astrov is crying for help, while Sonia is crying for him: two cries that are left unanswered."

Natalie, Gurevitch's student in the studio, was invited to play Sonia in his *Uncle Vanya's* production. "How fascinating," she said to me in an interview, "you are not supposed to live another person's life, your work is to immerse your own life in characterization; in changing conditions and altering states." Natalie stressed that "All Gurevitch kept on saying to us, in the studio and here in rehearsals, was that "there is no character, there is you." This is rooted in my work. I could work with that, it frees me. He helped me to find Sonia *in me*, to realize Sonia's conditions within me right

here and now; to touch and awaken the tortured young woman in me that longs for love” (Personal Interview, September 2014).

### ***Ivanov***

The students are asked to choose a scene from Chekov that feels closest to them. Maria chose the scene from *Ivanov* where Sarah is blaming Ivanov that he is not there for her, that he does not love her.

Gurevitch insists on hearing and understanding the spoken words: “you’re not playing for yourself, you’re acting for us and we are here, not next to you on the stage.” Maria said, “I brought many personal emotions and feeling to the scene and it all felt too much, and Gurevitch thought we are basically not clear with what we want or do in this scene.” Gurevitch told the class that *Ivanov* is the scapegoat in the scene, that he is a wounded animal fighting for being innocent and that the audience needs to identify with both characters; both should be held in empathy.

For every scene the students worked on, they would first create the physical image; it was the base for each scene from Chekov they worked on. Working on her physical image, Maria is a typewriter: “I am the image of my partner’s passion to write. Whenever he feels the need to write, he comes to me and we start to be sexual with each other.” This scene brought Gurevitch to talk about life and creation and the discussion raised the question if they can live their daily ordinary life and be fully involved with creating, or rather do they need to devote their life to being creating artists and with that move themselves from common, everyday life? “Is it not part of what Chekov’s *Seagull* is dealing with?” asked Gurevitch.

Maria was working again on her scene from Ivanov and again Gurevitch said it was not working. “By now” says Maria, “I am crying. I understand everything that is happening in the scene but I can’t make it work!” Gurevitch asks Maria and her partner to work with a clear physical image. “Both in this scene,” he says, “are in the same state, both weak and want to feel better.” Gurevitch told Maria that in the scene she is like a fish caught in a net. Every fibrillation gets the net tighter and each of them twitches in the net and just makes things more complicated for them both. Gurevitch indicated to Maria that Sarah is more confused and doesn’t know what to do, while she seems to be stronger and decisive. He said that Sarah is much more fragile, as she is trying to solve the infidelity situation, which is unsolvable: she needs to get a hold of something while she does not want to know the truth. Ivanov tries to distance himself until in his despair he attacks Sarah. Gurevitch suggests to do Sarah’s monologue while standing on one leg, so the physical difficulty will help with Sarah’s difficulty in her monologue. “This is the state: you’re on one leg and it is difficult, this is Sarah’s state. Be with it. Why are you trying to hide it? Let it be in your body.” This was doable and things started to clear up for Maria.

“What is empowering in Chekov,” Gurevitch noted, “is the painful drama which exists in the silent bits between the words, along a flow of an ordinary daily life.” Gurevitch instructs the class that they should work from moment to moment and reveal what is happening underneath the surface for each moment. In *Uncle Vanya’s* rehearsals, Gurevitch constantly would stop and ask: what is your state right now? What do you want? What is your action?

The goal in the second year was to connect all the parts and apply them to being on stage, to acting: that is, the physical image with its precise energy of WILL and STATE, the clear projected voice, the authentic being on stage in the present moment, and to fuse it with the sense of audience being there to watch this magical mimesis of life becoming alive for them. Maria recalls, “In the second year, I worked on taking all the tools I was given and the technique and applying them into exploring, exposing and expressing myself; so, that I can find Maria in dying Sarah from *Ivanov*, and that I can reveal Maria in the life of Nina from the *Seagull*.”

The highlight in the end of second year in the Studio is a gala night, where the Nina Costia scenes from the *Seagull* are performed by all the second-year students.

### ***The Last Class***

Towards the end of the second year, Gurevitch reminds his students that sometimes working in the theatre may get hard, tedious. He would ask them to always remember their dream. “We need to learn to enjoy our work in the theatre,” he would say, “even when rehearsals are difficult or boring, and you must do, night after night, the same role, and the audiences are not cheering, and things are not working your way--always remember your dream.” In an interview, he said, “I want them to try to remember the ‘right’ dream—not the one where they become extremely famous but the dream of becoming a very good artist.”

Maria feels Gurevitch taught her the language of the stage. “He taught me to understand that what I bring to the stage is my life, yet it is rather very different. In the studio, the stage began to enable me to experience life in a kaleidoscopic way. The stage became the space where the boundaries of my imagination opened up. My being

felt larger than the familiar life, like I could see the whole world in one drop of water, in one moment of life.” For Maria, it feels to this day as a precious present she took with her into her journey away from school. She took the freedom to write, the freedom to take a moment in her life and transform it to something magical. And she took the sense of total connection between her body as an instrument that can’t but synchronize with what she does on stage. “One can’t be on stage,” says Maria, “without a physical sensual experience. As Gurevitch kept on saying to us all this time in school: ‘A physical experience on stage is an experience of the spirit.’ I believe,” says Maria, “these are the two essentials I carry in me from him. They are absorbed in my mind and body. The physical image became in me as a scale in music; I do not practice it all the time but it is in my cells’ memory.” The magic is crossing boundaries, traveling into the beyond with your imagination, while the life of it all is grounded in the body.

### ***How it all binds together***

The art of acting, as any art, holds the language of expressed life. Gurevitch would say, “These people in *Uncle Vanya*, and you the actors and the spectator, we all experience the human longing, suffering, wishing, missing; we all have experienced the need for love. We were all rejected in some way or another in different times in our human history, in different places, and in different costumes.” (personal observation, rehearsals for *Uncle Vanya*, May 2014).

The Physical Image Method stemmed from viewing the theatre stage as a space that holds a metaphoric essence of life. It holds a poetic physical expression of life potentially lived and experienced by all individual human beings. As in a natural course of birth, from intention, to planted seed, to maturing and being born and manifested



as a new form in the world, Gurevitch's method of creating a theatre evolves organically. It begins with an intention being dressed into a dramatic form that is realized and felt in an actor's mind/body as energy of WILL and STATE. The actor with his imagination creates the physical image that gives a form to the energy of the WILL; the actor gives this energy rhythm, melody, tension and direction. This WILL than moves to become visible and expressed as an action on the stage. "Each act on stage," says Gurevitch, "of great import or not as great, is part of the metaphoric art creation, the art of theatre. The act taken on stage tries to capture moments of existence and express it in a direct and potent manner; as direct and strong as a metaphor in a good poem..." ("Intro to Theatre", TV series).

Odelia, a long-time actor in the Khan group, would add, "It's an infinite search. It is never as if you have reached some point. It is always a walk towards, a move towards this light. It is walking in the dark unknown path that is lighted up by the creative inner force. It is like the artist who moves his creation not knowing the road it may take, while the authenticity lies in the mystery of the next unknown moment."

This dissertation that explores the creative process of theatre-making began in this section to look at and study the actor's practice and the developed tools used by Gurevitch to help the actor, connect with the freedom to create, to be, to become, to give new forms to the known and the mystery, to step into the liberating unbound union between life and art—to become a theatre artist, to grow to be a good actor. Gurevitch was once asked: "As an acting teacher, what is the main thing you would want your students to learn?" Gurevitch said: "I want them to discover the strong bond between

life and art and the affinity between personal freedom and creation” (Interview with Alboim, 2009)

From this point, the study will move to observe the rehearsal methodology practiced by the Khan group under Gurevitch. The study will witness the ways in which an original dramatic narrative is created, and will have a close, analytical view of the unique and innovative ways in which an original performance emerges out of Gurevitch’s and the Khan Group’s collaborated work.

## CHAPTER IV: PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

### THE REHEARSAL PROCESS:

### REFLECTING & IMPROVISING--WHAT DO WE DO TO EXPOSE WHAT NEEDS TO BE EXPRESSED?

#### *PART I: Reflecting Stage*

*In the future, it will be known where I would have always been—  
until this point my history is truly unknown*  
Hito Steyerl

On May, 2011, Gurevitch sent a letter to the Khan artistic team and actors, inviting all for a few weeks of reading and studying Plato's *Symposium* that was to be facilitated by the translator, Professor Margalit Finkelberg. The plan for the coming weeks was to read the *Symposium* as a source of inspiration for the next original production Gurevitch would create with the Khan actors. "Dear Friends", he wrote,

On Sunday.... we'll begin to read Plato's *Symposium*. I trust that a focused reading of the *Symposium*, which is one of the utmost achievements of the western culture, will nurture us much beyond this coming show as it deals with substances of human life inherent in us all, such as: Eros, love, physical and spiritual attraction, creation, as well as the art of story-telling and even theatre.... I wish for us all interesting work and I hope it will bear fruit and move us to create a show we will love and be happy with (Gurevitch, May 2011).

Gurevitch apologized in the letter that the casting would take place later, after the idea of the show matures and becomes somewhat clearer to them.

As this chapter looks at the creative process with which Gurevitch creates an original show, it is significant to bear in mind that on May 6, 2011, when the invitation to read the *Symposium* was sent, the production, which no one knew anything about--including

Gurevitch who was the playwright and director-- was already published in the Members' 2010/2011 catalogue:

**Symposium**—A temporary name

**Writing and directing:** Michael Gurevitch

Inspired by the famous Dialogues of Plato.

A theatre group meets to talk about Eros, the god of love.

Gurevitch's play will be created through a unique rehearsals method; the same process with which the artistic director and the Khan's actors created in the Theatre the shows: *Fleeting Shadow*, *A Word of Love*, *A Brigade We Are*, *Happiness*, *the Winners*, and *The Dragon Beloved*.



*Figure 2: Reading the Symposium (Rehearsal Footage)*

The reading began on June 5, 2011, and from then on took place on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday of each week, for about three weeks; while on the other week days, the group met to think together about the show they will create following this reading. Though the cast was announced about two months into the rehearsals, two actors had to leave the production as the play took a new direction and their roles were eliminated. Toward the end of the rehearsals, Nir said in an interview: “The end of the play is rolling forward.... we are still changing the play, and we will change it to the last moment” (Nir Ron, Dec 2011). This is the way Gurevitch creates; he continues to

*reveal* the show after it has left the rehearsal room and has met us, the audience. This process usually takes place until the official premier.

Gurevitch is taking the group with him to an entirely unknown territory where the empty landscape holds infinite possibilities, yet he trusts in his heart, as he shares with the actors, “We want to create a show. We have a desire to create a new show, and it is clear that somehow, somewhere this show is here with us in this rehearsal room--it exists already.”

This chapter is one of two chapters that closely observes the six-month rehearsal process that took place in the Khan Theatre in 2011, during which the show *Private Investigator* was written, rehearsed, and staged. This observation has been done by watching the six-month live rehearsal footage, which was recorded during the entire rehearsal period of *Private Investigator*, and by listening to interviews with Gurevitch and his actors that were taken at that time.<sup>14</sup> Through this method this chapter studies the distinct process with which Gurevitch was crafting and directing his original play and looks closely at the way in which he collaborates with his actors in order to enhance his overall creative process in writing and directing.

Since becoming the Artistic Director of the Khan Theatre in 2001, Gurevitch has been crafting original productions with the Khan Group, while applying his improvisational technique, every other year. Though this section examines one of Gurevitch’s theatre productions, *Private Investigator*, it also aims to shed light on the

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<sup>14</sup> All quotes, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the rehearsal footage.

explicit method and techniques Gurevitch developed, and applies to all the original productions he creates--even thus far.

***Uncovering the Show: How does Gurevitch begins to uncover the show which, “He Believes is already there in the rehearsal room?”***

*Chance only favors minds which are prepared  
Louis Pasteur*

Gurevitch works intuitively yet he is always very precise, detailed and organized in managing the work--it seems it is a way for him to bring order to the chaos and to survive within it.

Watching Gurevitch for many months in the rehearsal room, one sees how extremely skillful he is at managing the rehearsal process. He arranges the time to be clearly planned for the next day, week, month, to the premiere. However, at the same time, each day’s progress in the creation process dictates the needed changes in plans for the next day. Gurevitch’s skillful management is conveyed through establishing good orderly patterns of work, through giving the needed priorities to the work and the people, in maintaining the energy of himself and the actors—making sure one is invited to the rehearsal only if needed. In the same skillful, clear mode, Gurevitch manages the outlining of the whole process with which he creates his original show.

The process can be looked at as a classic behavioral approach to learning: first, you receive knowledge, you read and research, you learn about your theme—reading and studying *The Symposium*. Second, you contemplate, you reflect, you voice your thoughts, your own reactions and feelings to what was studied, and you listen to the other participants’ reflections. Third, you get into *knowing* through the experience—the improvisation period followed by exploring the new written scenes, staging, and directing the show to its full production. The reading of the *Symposium* lasts about

three weeks. The actual phase of the creation of the show begins right after the reading is done.

### ***Reflecting Stage***

#### ***The first day of rehearsals***

In the room are eleven actors and the musician, Yoni Rechter, who will compose the music as the play develops. It is the first day of rehearsals and all are invited to sit in a circle. The circle, as in Plato's Dialogues, will create a discourse on the inner reverberations each one experienced when listening to the Athenian's discussion about the denotation of love. The circle then serves as a bridge between the inspiring text along with the thoughts, feelings and emotions which it stirred and evoked and the period of improvisations on the theme of love the group will be engaged in creating soon after. "We have read a chapter in Philosophy," said Gurevitch to the group of actors, when they gathered in their first circle for the first day of rehearsals, "what do we do now? How do we make it personal, experiential? How do we begin and make our personal creation? We went through a learning experience, and now we are dealing with our own creative experience.

Gurevitch asked everyone what the *Symposium* meant to them and what in it stimulated or stirred in them? He then began the conversation saying that for him this writing is about the force that gets life moving. At this point the group was invited to react. Orit, a new actress in the company, was inspired by the talk about body and mind interrelations, "The idea of inclination between the spirit, the psyche, and the body excites me" Orit said. Chini, one of the senior actors, was inspired by the enigmatic concept of eternity, which may hold for him the essence of existence. He



was also moved by a deep longing which was expressed in the *Symposium*, the longing for being immortal and to live forever like the gods. Chini was also captivated by what underlines the conflict between the human need to multiply when its multiplying threatens to harm its balance on earth while the force to regain and maintain the nature of balance is the force that drives everything. He added that Eros is our passion to be, and our desire to love, to create. He thinks that Eros is not the need to have but the pulse, the force to be. This underlining conflict is the struggle between to be or not to be. This is part of the beauty that stroked Chini in the *Symposium*; the beauty within the struggle to support and hold the balance.

“Eros then,” suggested Gurevitch, “is the god who fights against death. Eros is our passion to be, to move forward, our desire for love, for creation. Our love of life. Eros is not the one who chases, he is the pulse, the force.” We meet this theme in all of Gurevitch’s plays: Eros with his many facets becomes a verb, an action, an accentuating force that leads his protagonists from their netherworld state of darkness back to earth, back to life. Eros, as we will meet him in *Private Investigator*, is the force that investigates, that acts to reveal a far away, almost lost old love.

*The Symposium* awoke in Yoav, an actor who joined the company about ten years ago, a timeless and spaceless feast and celebration--his own youth, “Very little that you should do, whatever happens is whatever needed to be. There is a sense of power, of magic that is entrenched in the flow of the friendship gathering.”

Orit felt that the essence of the text lies in the tension between body and spirit (In the Physical Image language, it would be between WILL and ACTION): while the body holds the force that pulls down, call it the “g” force, the spirit wishes to be free of this

pull, “A human’s life, as in the myth of Sisyphus, would always be entwined in this dichotomy, in this drama.” Tamar deeply trusts that “Falling in love is beyond good and bad, beyond any possible definition.” She expressed her belief that the culture which tries to define Love in words, to define a force that cannot be imprisoned in words in any way or form, only creates degrees of separation from the essence of love.

A senior actor in the company, Pnini, who is the senior in the cast, felt that Plato’s Dialogues touched his emotional creativity. He was excited by the togetherness of the friends who drank, relaxed and shared thoughts and feelings about love. One more reason for his excitement was that he had always had a strong attraction to myth and in his youth, he shared, he felt a secret desire to make love to Diana, the goddess of hunting and the moon. For the youngest in the cast, Oriel, the potential of the word—desire—deeply echoed within him; desire, as desire for life, for beauty, and especially the notion that desire can’t exist as a separate movement. Eros, said Oriel, lives only within a paradigm of a meeting. Eros is a creation that you want to receive from the other, and what creates the movement is a great internal fire, inner burning, longing, an inner need.

For the actor Erez all the themes that were talked about and analyzed in the work felt so monumental and essential in life that it felt to him like standing on a precipice experiencing a deep sensed fear. Gurevitch responded that the way to engage with this kind of material as artists is through our personal life, in small and concrete dosages.

Gurevitch is teaching in his PI acting method that as actors, we courageously re-experience moments in our own life and transform them to the art form we practice.

Erez does not know it yet, but he is about to act a father and a husband who deserts home and family to wander on the ocean shores not knowing where to go or what to do. It is very much like standing on a precipice with a deep fear of falling into the abyss. Did Erez sharing influence or inspire Gurevitch in his writing? It is question this project does not know the answer to; however, this project looks at the actions Gurevitch takes to help awaken, what wants and needs to be awakened within him, through the process he creates.

Amos, who came as an observer and ran the lights during rehearsal, was inspired by Socrates who said after Agathon's speech: "Eros is the need." Amos feels that Plato writes about the longing for that which is not there in our life. He feels that Plato experiences deep sadness from Socrates' absence in his life --Gurevitch identified with Amos' observation. Once again it is noteworthy to bear in mind that the play develops to become Gurevitch's search for his father's lost love.

Yoni, the musician, was inspired by the aesthetic and structure of Plato's world of writing; the layers of the storytelling with which Plato creates his narrative and the edifice of the dialogue between the guests, "It is like learning to write Bach's Chorales," he said. "I enjoyed listening to and learning the *Symposium* from this perspective."

For Tamar, a new actor to the company, Socrates' idea that sometimes the human experience of love gets intimate with eternity, strongly resonated for her: "Sometimes I feel this intimacy on stage," she said, "and then I put this moment, which is being within the flow of acting, in the audience's hands so that they will be the moment's keeper."

What drew Nir, a senior actor who will become the Investigator, was a strong pull and longing for wholeness: “I, myself, yearn for this place in my life. All the time we witness in us this force that pulls us down; however, I feel, if one journeys in the ‘right’ way, it is possible to get to where your heart wishes to be.” Little did Nir know he was going to play the private investigator who would be hired to investigate the lost father and find he was truly searching for the love of his father that was lost for him when he was a child. Searching for missing pieces, needing to feel whole again.

Noam, the assistant director, added that the eternal sense of absence and unremitting desire for becoming whole was strongly manifested for him with Aristophanes’ story about splitting the creature in half, which gave birth to the cry for reunification. Noam was touched by this cry as he feels it is embedded in the human as a timeless call for reconsolidation. “A human life” Noam said, “is rooted within this *longing*, within the *passion for* beauty and that is what captivates me, not the beauty itself.”

Gurevitch feels that this tension between the here and there, this desire for the search for beauty, is where they are right now, “We want to create a show. We have a desire to create a new show and it is clear that somehow, somewhere this show is here with us--it exists already.”

“The sheer fact,” Gurevitch continued, “that we are sitting here: the actors, the musician and myself, it means that there is a show in the room; we do not *know* this show yet. It is a mystery. But it exists, right?” he asked the group, almost to reawaken the trust in them, in him, to ignite the spark, to begin the search. The trust is in his and their creative process which they undertook almost a month ago when they were

invited to take part in the *Symposium's* reading. "I feel that with every new show I do, the process is an act of revealing, of unveiling something which is already subsists here in the room."

Following some of the links between what is being reflected in this circle and some of the characters that were created months later in *Private Investigator* feels like *signs* for the presence of the other entity in the room; the show, that feels as it has started to move and act to become noticed, to be *revealed*. In *Private Investigator*, the Investigator feels that the relations between the people he meets and the sequence of events he exposes are too peculiar to be looked at as accidental. The clues from the unsolved mystery are popping out from the vast unknown and kind of reveal themselves to him: "It is not coincidence, dear Miss Weizmann, this is the fog that circle our small and limited conscious. When this mystery is solved, the fog will dissipate." It feels as from the first steps of creation, Gurevitch walks into the fog, trusting that by walking the path with this group, step by step, the weather will clear up and they will find their show.

Gurevitch then asked, "What is this passion? What is this show, this creation? A passion for what?" He paused and said: "When the show is ready, I believe, we have a passion for the audience. A passion to touch and communicate with the people that came to be there in the theatre, to watch." This holds a close analogy to the previous chapter, where Gurevitch talked about the actors' call to serve the audience, to be the emissaries. This contemplative stage begins to stir and move the intimacy of the actors into the creative process through which they will take their own journey, reveal their characters, and uncover their production.

From the contemplative stage in the circle the process moves into the improvisational stage. Now all the chairs are moved to the back of the room and Gurevitch asks his actors to think of and get ready to improvise scenes on Eros, on passions, on dreams, or on anything which is for them a life force that awakens the power of life in them. Amos wrote from the rehearsal room: “I may not know to say what exactly is this power for me, however, I know that here, in this room which is filled with objects, props and parts of cloth and costumes, that kids for sure could be excited or terrified to explore—this life force is growing” (Amos Ynon, July 2011).



**Figure 3: Reflecting on Eros in the circle (Rehearsal Footage)**

### ***Interview before first rehearsal with Dorrón Jeraci***

After this first *circle*, in a short interview with Dorrón Jeraci, who was filming the whole rehearsal process, Gurevitch said to Dorrón: “I have no way of knowing what this show will come to be. It is clear though that the show is not a modern version of Plato’s *Symposium*. The text is deeply inspiring and thought-provoking; Love and Eros

are central to all people and surely to those who are working in artistic creating. I hope this text will open up something within us and from this ‘something’ a show will be born.” Gurevitch shared that he loves the text and the meetings around it. He thinks the best way to learn, to understand, is through creating, and that reading together was part of the beginning of their creation. “What is Eros? What is love? What is their essence? He asks and answers, “I know our creation will rise out of our inspiration from the *Symposium*—that is what I tell myself. What will come out of it? I have no idea!”

***“I had an idea that we’ll have a child actor in the show.”***

Gurevitch played with the idea that there should maybe be a cupid, a metamorphosis of Eros. Gurevitch asked the stage manager to search. When Jeraci asked if he knows what the main theme of the play would be, Gurevitch said that he thinks that maybe in two month they’ll know. As for now, he added, all of us need first to pull out from our inner life, imagination, to disburse, express, and lay out. To improvise, write texts, to work and try and try. After maybe two or three months we may be able to see what this show is about, he said.

Gurevitch would write in his yearly letter to the Khan members: “Sometimes, it seems, that chaos peeps right out of our mundane life.... and the one who stands on the shore would find sometimes meaningful connections between the objects the depth of the ocean emits before him; between the broken vessels, shredded cloth, stained pages.” Gurevitch feels that something reminds the person on the shore of somethings. This person maybe thinks that these are the remains of a sinking ship. He feels that maybe these objects were his own once. Slowly he realizes that the ocean yields to him remains of his own ship that once was drowned and disappeared into the depth.

Gurevitch was sharing in the letter that what so avidly attracts him to the theatre work is his will to rescue, to liberate from the depth of the ocean of unconscious, what seems as traces, as suggestions, to a deeper meaning, less coincidental, of our own life.

***PART II: Improvisation Stage***

***We improvise – we stir the ocean***

*Being master of my own craft signified, above all,  
knowing how to prepare the storm which threatened me.*

Eugenio Barba

After reading and contemplating, the creative process steps into embodying all that was stirred and expressed; the actors move into the two to three weeks' period of improvisations.

Gurevitch asks his cast to work on improvisational scenes for next consecutive meetings and he wants them to work on ideas and images that relate to Eros, desires, deviations, and dreams. He wants it to come from their own experiences, to relate to what is Eros for them, personally. “Bring a theatrical personal image, something in the spirit of the *Symposium*—but please, something that contains the joy of life. I do want the show to be cheerful, not hefty. I do not wish that all the heavy discussions will make us depressed.” He wishes for them to allow the themes they are working with to interplay with their imagination and be acted out as free, as deep, and as courageous as it can get. He then takes a deep breath and concludes: “Let’s wish us all a successful work and let us hope for the best.”

In the rehearsal’s room there are eleven actors, three very large and long silky pieces of cloth in ocean blue color, big suitcases with many incidental objects, a few ceiling’s fixtures, a projector, a few stands, and a synthesizer, next to which Yoni



Rechter, the musician, can be seen at during most of the rehearsal period. This is the sixth original production Gurevitch is creating with the Khan group, using the same method of the creative process. Every original performance Gurevitch creates with the group feels as a new initiation he is pushing himself and his group to move through.

It is 10:00 a.m., first day of the improvisation period. The large blue silky cloth is there on the rehearsing stage, waiting to be played with, to be explored, maybe to emerge as a stage metaphor. What is the nature of the improvisation? Viola Spolin who is considered the founder of theatre improvisations in America writes: "Improvisation is setting out to solve a problem with no preconception as to how you will do it; permitting everything in the environment to work for you in solving the problem; a predominate function of the intuitive." Improvisation, Spolin states, is a process as opposed to a result, it is setting an object in motion between players as in a game and solving problems together. She stresses that the act of improvisation is a moment in a life, taken without a need for a plot or a story line for communication; it is an art form; organic, a living process (384).

In the rehearsal room the actors create and present improvised scenes developed from a situation or scenario when the inspiration is an energy fortified with intuitive knowledge and one's own experience.

Nir came with an idea for his improvisation. He explores the blue cloth. There are three very long pieces so he needs six actors to try to make these pieces become waves of the ocean. He wants serene morning waves. He wants Orit to emerge from the waves. Like Aphrodite? Like some version of the goddess? He asks the actors to shake the cloths as close to the floor as they can, and asks Amos to hold the projector and

focus it on these low waves. The light Amos projects, while all other lights are off, creates the moon light, and reveals the dancing foam on the moving waves. Right there and then, the ocean appears. An image becomes alive on stage.

While Nir tells Amos what kind of effect he is searching to have with the light, Yoav works with his group of actors on his improvisation idea. He envisions the actors creating the waves with their bodies. He wants them to feel the rhythm of the waves within their bodies and create the motion of the waves as one body of water. He wants them to *be* the ocean and *be* the waves. They begin to improvise with the movement, trying to work as one body. They are only three actors and they need more actors to get the right effect. Soon the entire cast is working with Yoav on his scene. Oriel, who is also a dancer, tries to choreograph the motion. They try again and again, Noam adds the sound effect of ocean waves, and suddenly the *magic* emerges: *we are* on the beach watching the ocean move.

The idea Yoav came up with was that Carmit will sit on the beach and the waves will wash her into the ocean. They try to create that. Then Oriel suggests that maybe the waves will first take from Carmit only part of her belongings; her book, and then her sunglasses, and the third wave will take her into the ocean. They try Oriel's idea and the magic of the scene gets more profound, becomes mythic, and the mightiness of the waves uncover their potential threat. Yoav says that the waves' movement needs to be smooth, relaxed—this contrast between the peaceful movement of the huge body of water and the violence of the act of abduction creates a sense of unrest. The whole scene holds secrets of an ancient shadowy tale.



*Figure 4: Improvising on Creating an Ocean Wave (Rehearsal Footage)*

Yoav feels excited, alive, happy with the collaborating work. He is very much in the creative flow of the director. The energy in the room is a joyful creative energy— all support Yoav in developing and expressing his vision, all actors work as one body; the senior actors and the new ones. The improvisational work on the scene elevates the creative energy of the cast and they soon start to play with ideas of how this scene can become part of their production: “Maybe the waves will emit the first monologue of the play?” “Maybe the waves carry and bring to shore the whole script of the play?” “Or maybe the waves steal things left on the shore and bring them to the stage?” Gurevitch is already there. Watching, listening. Maybe he imagines the ocean pull from its depth a child it once swept from the shore?



*Figure 5: Improvising on Drowning (Rehearsal Footage)*

Before showing the scene to Gurevitch, Yoav reminds his team of the main stages in the scene; the energy, the rhythm, all being one wave at a time, and the calm energy with which they should abduct the book, the glasses, and Carmit.

Show time. Gurevitch likes what he sees and instantly gets inspired: “Let’s try something.” He gets the three pieces of the silky cloth; each piece is stretched across the stage by two actors, one on each side. “Let’s make a joke, let’s play like kids. You will create the sound of a terrible ocean storm.” The actors, entirely and wholeheartedly engaged in the game, shake the pieces of cloth from very low to extremely high waves, adding terrible stormy sounds as only kids can do. Gurevitch, by now, is deeply engaged, totally in his creative flow. He works with the actors, trying to perfect the effect of the ocean and enrich the *magic* moment, keeping the joyfulness, while working on precision. Svetlana, the stage designer, comes in to offer her sensitivity, experience and talent in creating *magic* on the stage.

Carmit is replaced with Yoav and Erez who are now standing on a table that rolls between the pieces of the cloth, as a drowning raft. Erez falls into the ocean, pooled from the raft by the storm. Yoni is improvising something lyrical on the keyboard. Gurevitch, however, wants to hear mighty, stormy music. The lead is now fully in Gurevitch's hands; who is doing what, what is the story, how the light needs to be, working with Yoni for getting the right music, the right rhythm. Inspired by Nir and Yoav's improvisations Gurevitch takes the lead and experiments with pieces of cloths, a table on wheels, and a stormy ocean. The group is there collaborating with him, ready to follow, to help him express his ideas and his imagination as precisely as he wishes for it to be. At the same time, the group throw ideas for optional happenings, for technical solutions, ideas that may give a form to the magic he is searching to create on stage for himself as the playwright/director and for us, the spectators. He needs to feel the ocean on stage and sense with an unsettledness the power it holds *right here and now*. In this first day of improvisations, and throughout the rehearsals, Gurevitch shares why he needs the magic to be there as they rehearse. He needs to feel that there is a life-force in the action and the images, and in each scene they create. That is the only way he can *know* as a playwright and director how valid the scene is for what he works to create for their show.

Gurevitch listens carefully to all the ideas. Some he wants to try. In fact, the magic words in the room are: "Let's try it," which he says when a new idea he likes comes either from himself or anyone in the room: actors, choreographer, musician, or the stage manager. He asks the actors to try again and again and again, searching for anything that takes place on stage to be clear and precise to the smallest details. This

is the only way for him to see the scene in its entirety, to know its value for the world of their show, and to choose for it to stay or be thrown back into the ocean.



*Figure 6: Gurevitch improvises on the drowning father (Rehearsal Footage)*

The ocean can also be seen as a metaphor for the rehearsal room. The creative energy stirs the ocean, making it throw its ideas into the surface. Some ideas they will take and some will sink back into the depths. The cast and the creative team during the improvisations are all stirring with their creative energy their personal ocean, that interweaves with each other into one body of water. It is through this process of acting and stirring with their creative energy that the show slowly rises up towards the surface.

When a metaphor, like the stormy ocean, is created in the rehearsal room, it becomes an osmotic channel to the underlining human force that gushes into it and through it. On stage, when the ocean storms, it is that human force of being that the spectators experience. Gurevitch climbs on the swirling table and shows Itamar how to spin on the raft, which is lost in the storm that Itamar was caught in. Itamar tries, again

and again, until the life of the magic is breathed into the scene. Gurevitch feels that they can take a short break. Before dispersing for their break, one actor asks “When does all of this takes place in the show?” Gurevitch laughs, “After act II.” Of course, as of now, neither he nor anyone has the slightest idea, or even more, if it will stay as a scene in the show. After a very long time of searching for the storm he was after, Gurevitch sits down and says, “Something to think about... I mean, this scene is far from being perfect, and I am not sure yet what we are going to do with it” Another actor says, “It is very beautiful,” and Gurevitch replies, “There is something in it, but I don’t know yet what it is.”



*Figure 7: Improvisation on the Children’s Room (Rehearsal Footage)*

The next morning some actors come with new ideas for a scene and some come to rework on their original improvisation, as Gurevitch asked them to develop it. In the morning before Gurevitch joins the rehearsal, they have about two hours to work. All the actors are proficient in this improvisational work and are deeply engaged creating and improvising theirs and their friends’ scenes. Part of everyone being so competent

and so involved has to do with the relational level of work among them. The senior actors in the group embrace the new actors and help them feel safe, help them feel as an organic part of the creative team. What happens here will be felt throughout the whole process of creating this show.

In her improvisation, Irit stands in the entrance to what seems to be a psychiatric hospital, holding in one hand a suitcase and a heavy brick in the other hand. She holds the brick very close to her heart. Slowly we will understand that this block is part of her heart. She goes straight to the doctor's desk. There she stands, breathing heavily, bent from the weight of the brick. She wants to be admitted. The doctor asks to see her papers. She searches in her suitcase, never for a moment putting the brick down. The brick is part of her body; she cannot move it or put it down. She has to carry it. The doctor checks her files and refuses to admit her. She is not disturbed enough. She refuses to leave. Two nurses come and carry her against her will outside of the hospital. A deep sense of her inner being, of despair is directly emerging from Irit's improvisation. Amos Ynon wrote so precisely, "Theatre has its secrets that permits our *being* to emerge out through its metaphors" (Ynon, 2011).

In a private interview with Irit she recalls, "I presented all my papers to the receptionist and the doctor, and they didn't accept me. I was not crazy enough for them. Where is the line between being crazy and/or being normal?" Towards the end of the day's rehearsal, gathering in a circle, they contemplate about the other kind of desire, the *desire* to get crazy. A desire not talked about as much. Gurevitch wonders if one is permitted to get crazy in that hospital the woman with the brick wished to be admitted into. Irit felt that yes, in there, she would have that permission.



Irit came to audition for *Passing Shadow* (1999), the first original show Gurevitch wrote and created with the Khan Group. She became part of the group and has worked with Gurevitch ever since. Irit shared that Gurevitch would direct them to bring improvisations on the places in them that they are usually afraid to touch, “He connects it later to *his* layers of fear and to all our layers of fear.” Irit paused for a minute and said: “In the improvisation, it is like in a treatment room. There is something freeing; no critic; profound interest; deep listening. Very pleasant.”

In her daring improvisation with Oriel, he is her child lying in bed next to her, and they begin to kiss. She recalls, “We worked on fears. Fear that you can create an abnormal relationship with your child. It is a kind of fear, I believe, every mom experiences.” Irit was daring and brought up this unspoken subject that moms are afraid to talk about—the taboo is over-terrifying, however, Irit wanted to explore it. She said, “There is something in the process of doing the improvisations that is freeing. It frees you to touch upon subjects that otherwise the fear of the taboo would block you from touching.”

Irit deeply feels that the actors and Gurevitch create a language together. While the actors bring ideas, he responds and comes with his own ideas. It is mutual. “He takes everything in. Then he goes home and comes back with scenes. Maybe the characters we bring into the improvisation won’t be in the play at all. Maybe their life force, their energy will. Their struggles, their joys. Maybe the images we bring will become the metaphors.” Irit believes that the improvisations they bring give a lot of strength to the group. She feels that through the improvisation they create a strong working group. It gives them a strong sense of self confidence. “I would recommend it

to any group working in theatre” she said. “You feel that the group and this process will keep you safe. Gurevitch never criticizes what we bring into the improvisation, he just watches us.”

In an interview with Nir, he said:

Sometimes a poem opens and connects me and wakes me to my life. The improvisations, as a poem, evokes in Miki [Gurevitch] his creative life. I know he is inspired and influenced by our improvisations. I am not always sure what worked for him, but I know that our creative expressions of our being in this place, in this time in life, is influencing the emerging of the new piece of theatre.

The improvisation rehearsals continued for about three weeks. One morning Gurevitch came in with a scene; the first written scene of this new production.

## CHAPTER V: PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

### THE REHEARSAL PROCESS CONTINUOUS--SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

#### *PART III: Beginning the Script Development*

#### *SECTION I: The Presence of the Theatre is Being Explored*

*Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough.*  
George Washington Carver

#### *The first Scene: The first dramatic time zone*

Looking at the creative process we get a one-time view of how Gurevitch along with his actors moves into an initiation process where they create together an original production. We observe the creation as it moves through its ups and downs, its rises and falls, its success and failure. We look at how the creative process with Gurevitch provides forward motion for himself and the whole group as they work toward the ultimate product. We watch as the process moves from the inception of an idea to a full production; from trust in yours and your colleague's creativity and proficiency, to losing trust, from feeling confident in the process to being in panic, and all the time continuing to the promised goal—revealing the show in the room.

Transitioning into working on written scenes moves the process to a pivotal moment. There is an intensive shift of energy, attention, and focus from the improvisations, where the actors freely experiment and play to a new stage where they effort to understand a clear intention and state of a given situation—it is a sharp movement which gets underway when the actors begin to work with the written scenes Gurevitch brings to the room. When the first scene arrives into the rehearsal room this intensive shift takes its place.

“I wrote the first scene” Gurevitch said, “and added that it may or may not become the scene that opens the show. In its structure, the scene was inspired by the exposition scene in the *Symposium* in which the teller of the story meets a friend who tells him what he heard a few years ago from a third friend, a much older friend, about the big feast that took place thirty years ago in Athens. The drama that took place in that feast in Athens is the story of the *Symposium* and is told by a third removed teller.”

When reading the *Symposium*, Gurevitch asked the translator, Professor Margalit Finkelberg, why were these three layers of distancing? She thought that distancing strengthens the focus on the main theme, the theme of love. The distancing is instrumental to express that it is all a play about the energy of love and how it branches to touch our humanity. As in the *Symposium*, the first scene Gurevitch brought to the rehearsal is an exposition to the love drama. The exposition takes place in three different time zones, which relate to the three levels of *Symposium*’s distancing.

The first time-zone is in present time, when the show begins. The audience is seated, the lights in the house dimmed just a bit, and Etai, a young actor in the Khan, enters the stage and approaches the audience directly:

**Etai** (*To the audience*): It all began *once* when I was still an acting student and I met Yoav Hayman on the street.... I said to him, “Hi Yoav, I swear that just a while ago I was looking for you...”

(*Yoav enters*)

**Etai** (*continues*): I wanted to ask you about that show you did in the Khan Theatre *On Behalf of Love*. I heard about it from Uri Rothschild. I understand you were in that show...

### *The second time-zone*

*Yoav enters and now Etai speaks directly to him and the audience enters the second-time zone in the exposition---once (somewhere in the past) --when Etai met Yoav on the street. Now, a door in time opens and the past immediately transforms into present stage time. For in the theatre, the art of the present moment, every action on stage becomes right now for the actors and their audience. This technique of a story within a story, breaking old dramatic structures, creates new structures that embody the mimetic themes of the reality the show seems to wish to express. The theme of love, timeless energy, an action that moves life, does not present itself in a linear fashion. The stage allows Gurevitch to use time itself as a metaphor: the story within a story within a story transforms the old story into an archetype. The audience enters the time zone of the show *On Behalf of Love*, which was created and performed thirty years ago in the Khan. The dance between the time zones takes the audience to a timeless show on the theme of love that is ever perpetuating in human life.*

From the stage conversation, the audience understands that this show was actually created on behalf of the unrequited love of one of their colleagues, which took place in the first years of the Khan, about thirty years ago. The only actor that was in that show and is still part of the Khan is Pnini who is quite old by now. Yoav then tells Etai that he was not in that show as he was a young child then; however, he *heard* about that show at a dinner with Pnini, not too long ago:

**Yoav:** There was an actor in the theatre. His name was Albert Moses. He was a big clown. One day when the actors came to the theater, they saw him totally depressed. They were trying to make him talk but they

couldn't. This depression lasted for more than a few days, until they, at last, made him speak. He told them that he fell in love with a girl but she does not want him and that he is totally broken and does not want to live. They had an idea to create a show for her in hope of awakening the love in her. For a whole month, they were rehearsing. When the show was ready, they found the girl and somehow they tricked her into coming to the show.

This show the Khan's actors created took place thirty years ago, in the first days of the Khan Theatre.

**Etai:** Did it succeed?

**Yoav:** It was a good show.

**Etai:** And the girl? Did she fall in love?

**Yoav:** Why are you asking me this question before we start? Do you want people to get bored?

**Etai:** So let's start. I want to know how it ended.

*(The rest of the actors enter the stage from the audience side).*

Yoav and Etai continue their dialogue while the rest of the actors enter the stage from the audience side. As they enter they relate directly to the audience greeting them with a hand or a head gesture. They go to the costume stand and change their clothes. They are getting ready for the show. Which show? What stage in time are we in right now? Though we are flying in time, we clearly see that we *are* in the beginning of *that* show where all the actors organized to help their friend to do the show for his beloved in the hope of bringing her back to him. However, in our consciousness, at the

same time, we are with the Khan actors, as they had just waved to us when they entered the stage from our side of the theatre.

The *magic door* of theatre opens, enchanting our creative imagination, pulling us to follow the story of love through the mythic eyes of the theatre that is as ancient as the theme it presents. The line of where we are in time right now diffuses for moments and it jumps from bits of the show from thirty years ago to the present time. We slowly learn that we are watching a rehearsal of the renewing of that show *On Behalf of Love*.

**Actors:** cheers! Good luck!

**Etai:** On the stage in front of the audience?

**Yoav:** On the stage in front of the audience. And then Friedlman...

**Etai:** Who is Friedlman?

**Yoav:** An actor. One of the Khan's elders. Friedlman pulled a piece of paper from his pocket and gave it to one of the youngest actors to read.

*(Friedlman pulls a piece of paper from his pocket.)*

**Yoav:** And the young actor looked straight at the girl who was sitting in the audience and read.

**Etai:** *(Reads from the paper)*

Gurevitch tells Etai that he wants him to read the words as a poem. That is to take the words outside of the purposeful context (making that girl fall in love). He wants it to be lyrical but not sentimental, soft but clear; he wants to hear the longing. He wants the intention of the actor not to be in the future, but to be here in present time, allowing the soul to express its longing. They work and Gurevitch keeps searching

for that feeling, that tone, that music with which he wrote this love letter. The actor understands the call for love he feels is embedded in the text, for there is, in the letter, a true longing for a union. Gurevitch was saying, “There needs to be here a great excitement, the excitement of the whole show and of this moment. It can be an extremely meaningful moment. This show may create a huge difference in someone’s life.” That is the life of Moses, Gurevitch says, “You are exalted from love, from the show and from wanting to reach out to the girl, to move her, through his love, not yours. He wrote it and asked you to read it.” The Action and State feels much clearer to Etai, he tries again, and again speaks directly to that girl sitting in the audience, imaginary yet real:

**Etai (Reads):** Hi. Surprise. I knew you would come. This stage tonight belongs to you. The actors, the scenery, all the lights, everything, everything is directed to one heart: your heart. Every word we will say here tonight, every sound, every movement, is for you, my love. This is the last move that was left, none else. This is not an act of despair. No. No...

*(Etai has a hard time reading the next word. Friedlman helps him).*

**Friedlman:** A leap.

**Etai:** A leap. You are sitting among these people in the theatre, we call them audience, so close, yet so far away. You’re looking at me, at us, my heart beats like a drum. Yours as well? You ask yourself what will be? How did I fall into this trap? Don’t be afraid. Nothing bad will happen to



you. Only at the end of the show I will ask again the question I have asked you then, that night...”

*(The actor who plays Friedlman takes the paper from him and continues to read...).*

**Friedlman:** Open your heart. We created this show for you, I beg you, accept it, this is the present I give you with my friends in the theatre, the actors, the stage workers, the make-up staff, the dresser, the props manager, all gathered to help me. I knew you would be here tonight.

Please listen...

Where are we in time when Friedlman reads? Is this a rehearsal? Is this the show itself? The one from thirty years ago? Is Friedlman playing Albert Moses? Maybe himself? The focus around the theme of love intensifies. All the time zones are now dancing on behalf of the beloved, on behalf of love. Gurevitch is running the scene again and again, directing the actors to try different timing for the entering, different rhythms. Watching his work, one can see clearly that when the timing, the rhythm, and the action gets to be *right*, the magic awakens and the scene is breathing present time life on stage. The metaphoric life becomes alive here and now. Gurevitch takes the time and works to create a scene which fulfills its potential to be poetic and emotional and truly beautiful and touching scene. It holds a thread of love that goes through thirty years of the Khan theatre, through the actors’ lives, all the way to present moment when the actors share it with their Khan audience. Love becomes a shared moment between actors and audience, here in their shared time.

Working on the first scene, Gurevitch and his group create this new world that may stay in the show or may just go back into the eternal space of possibilities, to be recrafted and return masked in a different form. However, observing the rehearsal process, it is clear that Gurevitch and the group work with every new scene as it is here to stay. This depth of work with each new scene holds a key secret to the creative process in which they work and through which they reveal, as Gurevitch says, “The production that is already there in the room.”

In the second scene Gurevitch brought a few days later, the play moves from the exposition layer and enters the inner layer of the play. The doorway for this entrance is through a dream one of the actors had dreamt and which one day he told the cast:

**Yoav:** (*To Etai and the audience*) and then one of the actors told a dream he had dreamt a few weeks ago, and somehow he connected his dream to Moses’s trouble with love. A terrifying storm in the ocean, and he is caught in the water, alone on a raft which battles the huge waves.

The pieces of the blue cloth that have lain all this time still on the stage floor begin to move. An unsettling ocean sound fills the space; it is an immense storm. When the light rises, we see Etai on the raft, struggling with the mighty waves.

Gurevitch uses his magic cloak as Prospero in *The Tempest* and like Shakespeare’s magician, once again sends the spirit Ariel to awaken the ocean and to storm the waters. Observing his process in the rehearsal room, we see how tuned Gurevitch is to his soul and the images she reveals to him. When watching Gurevitch directing, one can feel when his soul is fully awakened and takes the lead. At this point he is not sitting on his chair any more. He is out there on his feet, giving detailed

instructions, sometimes acting out what he means, replacing an actor and doing it himself, orchestrating it all: tells Ynon how he wants the lights to be, tells Yoni what kind of music he wants to have, and he allows his soul to move him, allows his soul to utterly express itself. Gurevitch would say that one enters the present moment through being in the body, and from that place and time one creates.

Gurevitch gives instructions to Etai who works hard to balance himself on the table, which is steered by two actors who hide under the cloths that create the waves. Gurevitch says to Etai, “You read a letter, and in it was written that someone had a dream. *Immediately, you are a character in a dream* in a terrifying storm. One moment you are Etai reading a letter, next you are in a storm struggling for your life.”

Gurevitch is excited from what unfolds on stage. What does this storm awaken within him? Does he know? From observing the moment, it is clear, that the spirit in him, his creative spirit, connects to a call from somewhere in his inner life. That call loudly voices itself and tries to be heard. The working metaphor of the ocean awakens Gurevitch’s creative and emotional energy which leads his work in the rehearsal room. The person in the storm touches something in him that wants to be looked at, and he listens carefully—this process gives birth to what will follow, to the next scene he will write.

The ocean becomes a secret passage through which the scene moves from the exposition into the inner drama. Through this metaphorical doorway, which disappears from stage within a momentary blackout, we move into a bedroom where we find the dreamer asleep in bed. For this dreamlike shift from stormy ocean to a peaceful

bedroom to occur, in close to no time, the actors rerun this whole sequence many times to move this transition to perfection.

Gurevitch knows that for the magical effect to occur on stage, all the parts involved in the transition need to be perfectly orchestrated. Timing of lights shift, music, movement on stage, the order of actions, who is moving what and where it is staged—all require clear communication, focus, concentration, and strong collaboration -- Gurevitch appears to be an extremely proficient manager during this critical part of the process. It becomes a breathtaking theatre piece with its beauty, magic, mystery, the emotional stir it creates, and the sheer joy this artistic creative moment stimulates. Will this scene stay in the show?

In the next couple of weeks more scenes come into the rehearsal room. There is an inner plot which begins to unfold and it branches into two stories. One story is a direct extension of the first scene, the exposition, and it revolves around the life of the actors who are renewing the show *On Behalf of Love*. The center of this story is the actor, Moses, for whom the show *On Behalf of Love* was created in hope of helping him make the woman he loves return his love. Moses played the role of the young character, Michael, when the Khan renewed *On Behalf of Love* ten years ago. Moses is now in his late sixties, much too old to play young Michael. As this branch of the story advances, we understand that the theatre hires a young actor to play this role. When Moses finds out, he is not willing to give up, and he begins to fight to get his role back.

As the rehearsals continue we see how the actors relate to this section of the play as the *theatre* part. The *theatre* part evolves around the life of actors in the Khan Theatre, and it holds the meta-theatre structure Gurevitch is applying to most of his

original productions; mirroring the nature of theatre, breaking the illusion of the fourth wall and inviting the audience into contemporary life of the artists they are watching, into the behind the scenes creative process which is unfolding and they are watching. The second branch of the inner plot is seemingly the continuation of the actor's dream we entered through the terrible storm. This part, which the group referred to as the *drama*, revolves around the disappearing of a man—a father and a husband. One day a woman appears in the private investigator's office. She asks his help in finding her missing husband. We learn that their son, Ariel, began to come into his parents' bed every night which forced his father to leave and sleep on the sofa. One night the father left the bed, left the house, and disappeared from their lives. Since that night, the son sleeps in the parents' bed and nothing can wake him up. His old friend, Michael, is called to help. When Michael arrives, he meets Tamar, Ariel's girlfriend, and falls in love with her.

At this point, there are two different links that are the passages which connect between the two layers of the plot. One link is the dream one of the actors dreamt that moves through the stormy ocean into Ariel and his parents' story. The second link is the character of young Michael, Ariel's good friend, that Moses, the elder actor wished to play.

### ***Before leaving for summer vacation***

The group works with this plot for a few weeks. Gurevitch rehearses and stages what he wrote so far. He wants to have a good idea about the overall direction of the plot and the structure of the play before leaving for the summer break. He shares with his group, "I want to leave for the vacation when each of you and myself have a clear

sense, at least a clear direction, about who you are in the show and what the play is about.”

A week before the summer vacation Gurevitch works on the recently new scene in which the missing father is on the shore. The father watches the ocean when suddenly he sees a boy rising from the waves. We meet here the boy Gurevitch began to imagine while reading the *Symposium*; a character of maybe having in their show. The boy is now played by Itamar, a young Khan actor. Gurevitch asks Itamar to use a real bow and arrow prop. He wants to try some variation on the Cupid theme. In the first option, the boy rises with the bow and shoots an arrow into the father’s heart. The father holds the arrow which entered his heart and falls to the ground. In the second option, Gurevitch asks Itamar to pantomime the whole shooting without the actual bow and arrow. Erez, the father, gets the imaginary arrow right in his heart and holds it. All in the rehearsal room, once again, are involved and throw optional ideas and Gurevitch listens. If there is an idea that inspires him, he tries it out. They try again and again until they run out of rehearsal time.

Gurevitch says to the group, “I don’t know yet. It is a pretty scene, but we need to search more. Please, for next week, I want each to think of and bring ideas for this scene of the father and the ocean. I hope to move on and write more scenes during this weekend.” Gurevitch encourages the actors to try to find and bring clothing to the rehearsals that will help them feel the direction of their character as well as help him: “It will help me a lot, it will be more authentic, more alive.”

Gurevitch asks his characters to assist him, to reveal themselves some more, like one would ask his soul what she needs, to talk to him. He calls the actors to get deeper

into collaborating with the creative process. In the rehearsal room one can see how attentively he is watching them both, his actors and his characters; how is he listening to them, studying their aliveness, heeding to their stories, to the life they bring to the stage. He constantly questions the search: is it what the show in the room tries to reveal to him? In Pirandello's *Six Characters In Search of a Playwright*, the characters' lives are inseparable from their creator; their fate becomes his fate, or rather his essence becomes their fate? In an interview after the show, Gurevitch had shared how within this process of creating the show, he found within himself, his father's lost love for him. No doubt the dramatic web he creates leads him through his characters into his own labyrinth to become part of his fate.

When an actor in rehearsals closes in, disconnects from the creative flow, Gurevitch can sometimes become a wounded animal and attack. Gurevitch cares desperately for the acting process and the actors are always central to his theatre. Nevertheless, he can be at his worst when an actor seems obstinate or lazy, or just does not get what Gurevitch is looking for. It seems to block Gurevitch's view and cuts off his creative process. It can be seen with artists as it is seen in children, where both do not like the flow of their creative process to be interrupted.

### ***Final day before the summer vacation***

Gurevitch runs through all the scenes they have worked on thus far. After the run-through, they gather into reflecting for the final circle before vacation.

Erez feels that there is something uneven in the quality of the scenes. Yoav loves his own scene with Carmit; he feels it is light and funny while it touches deeply life's truth, and it is meaningful and authentic. Noam feels that the scenes with Pnini are

very funny and very painful. Erez cannot understand who these people are and the scene does not become a touching experience for him. Erez feels as well that the first scene, the exposition, what they call *the theatre*, is too loaded with layers and meaning about life and theatre. He feels it is slightly confusing in relation to the inner play, and it feels for him somewhat inorganic.

Unlike Erez, Pnini loves the exposition. Erez adds that for an opening scene he feels it is kind of static, not really breathing. Gurevitch said that he does not yet sense a clear spine, the one through-line inception that everything in the play originate from: “I believe this is the biggest problem right now.” Gurevitch recalled all the scenes they have so far: the scenes with Etai—in the exposition and as Michael in *the drama*, the Ariel story, Erez in the father’s story, the story of Carmit, Moses the older actor, and the story of the investigator. He said that it all feels like too much.

Carmit thinks that the exposition has too much detailed information. She felt lost with too much information. Etai felt that his character’s through-line was cut off, kind of neglected. Gurevitch paused for a moment and said, “Everything is connected; however, there is no one theme to follow.” Tamar thought that there is a philosophical question that the play asks and that this is the connecting thread for her. Carmit felt that there is a center around the son that comes to his parents’ bed every night. This is quite a known scenario within a family’s life. However, he is 25 years old, and this makes the situation touch the sad, the funny, the tragic and the comic in our human life. Everyone, unanimously, agreed that the ocean works fabulously.



Gurevitch concluded saying, “I feel and resonate with all that you share. I need to think about it all now. All that you say is correct—however, I have no idea what to do.” He said that in a kind of serious tone. And then he added, “Not yet”.

It is on him now, the playwright, to go home, to walk in the streets of Tel Aviv with his Dog, Gulliver, to imagine, and to dream. “The ideas can come to me outside during my walks.” He said in an interview with Smadar Hirsh after the premier of the *Dragon Beloved*, “My walks are the time to think. The creative process is the unconscious part of the work. Every time it happens I think it is a kind of magic. The first moment is out of my control. Only later I watch it, analyze it, criticize it, bring into it understanding, experience...” (Gurevitch, October 2009). Sumer vacation is a built in part of the creative process.

In September, after many walks, inspired by the feedback, comments, and ideas from his cast, he arrives with new scenes, new solutions. Scenes that bring us closer to feel Ariel’s old wound that keeps him in bed, to better feel the cry of the father who holds Eros’ arrow in his heart, to face the fear and longing of Moses, the old actor, and to imagine the tragic, the comic, and the beauty as its big kaleidoscopic human container.

## ***SECTION II: Moving apart from the Symposium***

*How out of the reality, suddenly, the acting emerges?*

Amos Ynon

### ***Returning from the break***

Coming back from the summer break Gurevitch invites everyone to the circle. He says: “I think I finally understood that my attempt to stick to the *Symposium* works against the show we are creating. The inspiration that led me to write our exposition

came from the exposition part in the *Symposium*. In the *Symposium*, the participants are talking about Eros and I thought that in our show, we will create a drama on Eros or a dramatic outcome from Eros. But somehow the creation we are in does not yield to this idea.”

Gurevitch shares that he was trying to see what they had so far. He sees that the show at that point is still a rehearsal for renewing the old show about love, originally created by the Khan’s Group about thirty years ago. The actor called Moses is the only actor from the original show who is still in the theatre. Moses insists he can play the same role he did in the old show. The role he played then was of the young friend, Michael, who falls in love with Tamar, the girlfriend of his sleeping friend, Ariel.



*Figure 8: The Child with the Wet Hair (Private Investigator, Gurevitch’s Website)*

Gurevitch adds that he identified two layers of the dramatic reality in the show:

1. In one layer there is a twenty-five-year-old son, Ariel, who comes into his parents’

bedroom every night, gets into their bed and with that forces his father out of bed. This layer is referred to as *the drama 2*. In the second layer, there is a group of actors who are rehearsing this show about Ariel and his parents. The group wants the young actor in the company, Etai, to replace the older actor, Avram Moses, and take from him the role he played in the original production. This layer is referred to as *the theatre*.

There was one more thing Gurevitch said he *understood* during the break-- the son, Ariel, does not have to get out of bed. He needs to stay there. Gurevitch felt that part of the tension built in the show would be in how they are going to get him out of bed. "And somehow," he added, "the two plots: the actors' plot, *the theatre* section, and the parents and son plot, *the drama* section, need to accrete, need to merge."

What is the creative process at this point, the inner map that Gurevitch follows? Wandering inside his labyrinth of creating, what leads him, what directs him into his next step, his next idea, his next scene? Relooking into Gurevitch's PI method of acting, the philosophy and practices it hold, may open a view into a deeper understanding of the process he follows.

Bring your life to the stage, Gurevitch tells his actors and his students. Bring your own fears, longing, needing, wishing. Your experiences will reveal to you their image and you will create this life's metaphor on stage. In PI practice, Gurevitch breaks the teaching into three parts: in the first part the students bring to class scenes about pivotal experiences from their life. In the second part, they create a PI scene in which they identify the seed in their life's scene; the WILL, STATE, CONFLICT, and the energy. Only then Gurevitch moves to work on written dramatic scenes.

In Gurevitch's creative process when making theatre, the Physical Image, the acting method he developed, can be looked at as a model to the structure with which he has built the play thus far; creating two parallel yet linking worlds. One world they called during the rehearsals, *the drama*, and one they called the *theatre*. As we will see in this section, as the two plots unfold, one world, *the theatre*, will be the under-streaming life; the fears, longing, needing, wishing of the characters' life in *the drama* layer of the play--thus far. Gurevitch's philosophy and practices which are imbedded in his PI method models his creative process in writing and directing, his process of creating his theatre.

The next question that came in the circle was: What is the through-line that connects the two worlds, the two plots: the actors' plot, *the theatre* section, and the parents and son plot, *the drama* section? Gurevitch said: "The complication with the old actor is not with the age, but rather generational." Continuing with his reflection, he said that he sees a triangle that connects the theme of love with being old and being young in a cultural and personal way. In one of the triangle's vertices there is Ariel's friend, Michael, who falls in love with Ariel's girlfriend. Old and young actors in the company are fighting about acting the same role. "There are two battles here" said Gurevitch. "There is the fight over the role and there is the fight over the love of the girl. There is an undercurrent competition over the girl they both fall in love with." In the second triangle's vertices, there are two old man: the old actor, Moses, and the father. Both feel that they are being thrown out of their lives. In the third triangle's vertices, there is an investigator. He is hired to watch and inspect it all. "There are

two old guys who struggle” Gurevitch concluded, “And one that studies and examines, the investigator.”

The getting old and the generational theme invites a stronger focus. Chini thinks that the seed of their show is an older actor that his theatre’s company wants to throw out. Gurevitch adds that it needs to be clear that, “You, Chini, and Nir, both acted with him in the Khan twenty years ago. You are in the show, and you do not want that he, who is not more than ten years older than you, will stay and work here. He feels young, but for you he is too old.” Gurevitch clearly sees in part of the through-line of the drama an act of castration; he sees an elderly person being thrown out of his bed by his son and his wife, and another elderly man who is not “allowed” to fall in love with a young woman and is being pushed out of his role, out of the production and he is fighting for his life:

**Moses** (*Enters the rehearsal room*): Who is playing Danielle? Do you want to throw me out?

**Heiman**: Moses, forty years passed...

**Moses**: So, forty years passed. I have more experience. More weight on stage. I don’t look twenty-five but I can look thirty-five, forty. What does it matter? I’m in excellent shape. Believe me. I can do a split. Can you do a split? Until last year, I could do a split from the air. What happened? I am doing yoga, I eat very healthy, I take care of myself. If you want, I’ll put on some makeup, though I don’t think I need to.

**Friedlander**: Moses please listen... (September version, scene 6)

Rethinking and narrowing the understanding of what is the seed of the show is crucial to the process. Gurevitch and the group sensed that there is truth in that direction in relation to their show, and Gurevitch immersed into exploring the battle of the old actor and the fall of the missing father, his counterpart in the drama. In the next couple of months, Gurevitch developed and extended the *theatre* part in the play and accordingly the *inner drama*. In his process of searching to merge the two plots, Gurevitch develops the two worlds in an analogical method. As the plot progresses, the two sections resemble each other more and more.

In one of the scenes, when drunkenness rises, the boundaries between *the theatre* and *the drama* worlds gets slightly defused. Moses, who fell in love with the actress who plays Tamar in *the drama*, comes drunk to the rehearsal and loses the boundaries between his own life and the theatre and cries out his personal desperate love to Tamar during their scene:

**Tamara:** (*almost in tears*) Avram, you're drinking, and you don't say the right lines, and it frightens me, because I don't feel confidence myself ...

(*Hyman and Friedlander enter*)

**Moses:** (*takes her hand, quietly*) Don't be afraid, I'll help you feel secure. Rely on me, ok?

**Tamara:** Ok.

**Moses:** Can I ask you something?  
(*pause*)

**Tamara:** What do you want to ask from me?

**Moses:** (*maybe follows acting instruction, maybe begging*) Love me.

Truly. Love me.

**Hyman:** *(to Friedlander)* Take him from her, do me a favor.

**Moses:** If I feel that you love me... it'll bring me back...

Tamara: I love you...

*(Etai, who plays Daniel, the young actor, enters)*

**Moses:** I don't feel it *(drinks from the bottle of Vodka)* make me feel it...

**Tamara:** *(maybe to Moses, maybe to Friedlander and Hyman)* It really embarrasses me. It's very hard for me like that...

**Friedlander:** Avram enough, come lie down, you drank too much.

**Moses:** I didn't drink too much.

**Friedlander:** You can't do it with a bottle of vodka.

**Moses:** Of course, of course. Only now, just to relax a bit. I don't want her to feel that I'm stressed. She will feel less unconfident like that. I want to give her confidence (September 21 version, scene 18).

In this special scene, we follow Moses' transition into acting from the painful state of the reality of a man that stands on the threshold of old age and strives to grasp onto his dissolving youth. In this instant of transition, we witness the moment in which from painful reality the acting emerges.

The transition into acting from the reality and into reality from the acting is in the heart of the art of theatre, in the heart of Gurevitch's Physical Image Method, and in the heart of his creative process when making theatre. We see throughout the *theatre* part of the play how Gurevitch enters the archetypal world of the reality in

relation to old age in contemporary culture, in relation to life and work within the theatre, and in relation to the process of the art of acting.

The actor Moses, drinking more and more in a desperate attempt to get a grip on whatever is left of his courage, from his sense of being before he crashes, talks about his fears, about the shadows that haunt him. As this scene progresses we learn that Moses talks about his life through the monologue of the missing father's character from this same show they are renewing, the show he was part of thirty years ago. Gurevitch transitions in this scene from theatre into reality; Moses, the actor in the show, realizes his life through the life of the missing father's character in the drama.

It is fascinating to follow how Gurevitch captures in this one scene, through Moses' experience, the emergence of acting from the agony of life, and the rising of the spectator's identification with a dramatic character. Moses as he recognizes himself in the dramatic character of the missing father embodies the shared experience an audience feels with the theatre.

**Hyman:** Moses, you can't do that. Give up. You are half drunk. Leave it and let the new guy work. We have a show tomorrow.

**Moses:** *(to Friedlander, as he is revealing a secret)* For few days now there has been a big bird, a vulture or something, following me. All the time. From the moment I leave the building into the courtyard and then into the street, I can feel him. On top of the trees, on the electric poles, on the roofs. Whenever I look up, he is there. Sometimes he is actually hovering above my head. At night, when I'm at home, I hear the flap of his wings on the roof. Sometimes he cries and my blood freezes.



**Friedlander:** Avram, this is a text from the show. Word by word.

**Moses:** You see. I have not forgotten anything. When I'm relaxed, I remember.

**Hyman:** It's just not your text.

**Moses:** What is not my text.

**Hyman:** This is not your text.

**Friedlander:** This is the text of the father.

**Moses:** The text of the father?

**Friedlander:** Of the father.

**Moses:** How did he get into me? (Scene 18)

In Moses' scene, as in the PI method, the actor's agony and fears underline the same essence in the missing father's haunted monologue; its WILL, STATE, CONFLICT, and the core of its emotional energy. The same relations that Gurevitch practices in his PI method between an actor's life and acting, the metaphorical action that emerges from the life, we can observe in the relations between these two worlds he has created so far in this rehearsal process.

Gurevitch plays with the language of acting which is rooted in life's conditions. He moves Moses to realize his fraught state, he moves him to drop all theatre masks, and he leaves him bare naked to cry for love:

*(Moses drinks from the vodka. To Tamara)*

**Moses:** I love you. *(on his knees)* I love you. I'll give you my soul, my body. My life is in your hands. Do with them whatever you want. I'm dead without you (Scene 18).

In the other generational end of this double-edged sword is the young actor who was invited to play Daniel. He is there on stage watching it all, and for his part, wishing to end this embarrassing confusion and get the role. The young generational presence brings the scene to its climatic peak, to the essence, the seed of the play, the through-line Gurevitch and his group chooses to follow:

**Etai, the young actor:** (*angry*) Enough of this circus. I've been told this is a serious theater.

[...]

**Moses:** (*to Etai*) Why are you gluing yourself to her like mandavoshkes?<sup>15</sup>

**Friedlander:** Avram enough, come.

(*Tries to pull him out*)

**Etai:** (*to Moses*) Excuse me... can I tell you something? With all respect... I know your rights here... and what you did and everything, but this is inappropriate... this is not in your honor.

**Moses:** (*stands up and pushes him away*) You are not the keeper of my honor!!! You take care of your own honor.

(*On his knees again, to Tamara*) You can save me.

(*To Friedlander and Hyman*)

They haven't learned yet, these kids, no one tells them what does it take, this thing, to be a human (*To Etai in contempt*) Not in your honor...

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<sup>15</sup> pubic lice

all this talking they taught you... honor... what else? High spirit...?  
 Courage? Nobility?... Shit on you.

**Tamara:** I can't do it (*She leaves. Etai follows her*) (Scene 18)

The image of the hunting vulture which appears in Moses' recurring dreams, is the same haunting vulture that is the hovering shadow that links the *theatre* to the *drama*. We will meet the missing father, from the *drama*, expressing his fears and his desperate need for a human touch through this same monologue. In a scene with his young assistant, after he tells her the whole story about the vulture that haunts him, he takes a long pause and says, "Can I ask you something?" As she looks confused, he says:

**Father:** Before I left (*the house...*) I felt...I began to feel... I felt that I need... it may sound weird to you...(pause) a touch... I need that someone will touch me... maybe I can ask you, because I do not have, know anybody else. Maybe you can... touch me (Scene 24).

Once we hear the same monologue coming from the father and his cry for a human touch, the agony of Moses echoes in the father's words. The deep despair of Moses we were witnessing in scene 18, in the *theatre* part, is now layered as a subtext which fuels the emotional burning pain of the missing father in scene 24, in the *drama* section.

Gurevitch's creative process in this part of the work stems from the same philosophy and practices embodied in his method of acting. When beginning to work on a new production, Gurevitch always brings to the process his investigating into his own

wounds as well as his joys, as one of the senior actors in the Khan says: “Miki always writes about his own life. In *Private Investigator*, the story that Miki (Gurevitch) wrote was absolutely on him, on his life as a child with his parents who separated when he was about three years old. I think it was the deepest he ever wrote.”

The *dramatic* world Gurevitch creates is an archetypal link to the nature of the generational gap phenomena and its manifestation in the contemporary social world, including the social and cultural life in the theatre world. This archetypal narrative embodies and mirrors some strong essence of the conflict and the pain of the phenomena in the western contemporary cultural and the individual life within it. Being in his sixtieth year when creating *Private Investigator*, Gurevitch probably understands the depth of the experience it holds.

Gurevitch changes the name of the play and it is at this point entitled: *A Touch*. They have now 26 scenes, eight of which are the *theatre* world and fourteen the *drama* world. Gurevitch expanded the main plot in each section and developed subplots for each. In the *theatre* part, the director of the show is having an affair with one of the young actresses, and the two young actors, Etai who plays Daniel and Tamara who plays Tamar, begin a love affair. In the *drama* part, the story becomes more complicated as the main plot branches into three protagonists: The father, the son, and the investigator.

### **SECTION III: Removing the Theatre Layer**

*The soul tells about itself in an intuitive way  
through her own language and images.*  
Michael Gurevitch

After about two months a certain dynamic was created that brought the decision to remove the *theatre* layer from the show. The actors' stories developed into a strong, powerful drama—the power of acting and what it means to lose the ability to act, the ability to mirror life for oneself and for others. Letting go of the *theatre* layer was agreed upon in spite being a powerful piece of theatre; Gurevitch and the actors felt that the *theatre* section of the plot does not contribute to the volume and the meaning of the main show, which is the *drama* layer. They felt that *the theatre* takes much of the needed focus and attention from *the drama*. At one point, the group and Gurevitch decided to do a run-through without the *theatre* part—as a tryout—and after that run the decision was made. The whole *theatre* section was removed, and sadly for all, Pnini and Etai had to leave the production. It was a huge letting go moment practice for all.

This section moves to the last month of the rehearsal period where the creation of *Private Investigator* came to its last version. It looks at the last and most dramatic shift the play took, at how what was cut out came back into the drama as a strong part of the underlining invisible forces that move the dramatic action and the main themes which were explored in this production.

At least once a week, all would come to the circle and Gurevitch asks to hear what they think and feel about the written scenes, the unfolding of the plot, the staging, and shares what he thinks and feels. Gurevitch needs the feedback of the

group, however, only after they tried and experienced the work in rehearsals, never just following the reading of the scenes.

After the *theatre* part was removed, the title of the play got its final name: *Private Investigator*. Gurevitch realized that the investigator is as a vessel who investigates its own content, and the unfolded drama is the unfolding of his own internal life that the investigator is inspecting, searching, and studying. The external layer of the play-within-a play of the earlier version moved into a self-investigation act, while the *drama* section became his own inner unfolded life he is investigating: the drama of the missing father, the son who cannot wake up, and the mother who calls him to investigate this agonizing mystery.

This shift in the play points to a particularly interesting part of Gurevitch's creative process. The meta-theatrical layer of the play--the *theatre* part is being removed, however, it finds a different form through which to be weaved back into the play. Gurevitch needs the meta-theatre layer as a reference point to ground the stage and the spectator in the context of present time: the time in which the audience sits in the theatre and a show is acted for them on stage. In *Private Investigator*, part of this *theatre* layer was embodied in the character of the Investigator and part stayed in the stage stratum. In *Private Investigator*, the actors bring in and take out the shifting scenery. They openly create and remove the bedroom, the Investigator's office, the ocean, and they enter the stage to get dressed in front of the audience while transforming to become characters in the drama.

Hence, we observe that although a whole section was cut, nothing of what was created indeed disappeared; all, somehow, has found its way back into the play and

production. The creative process is comparable to stirring deep waters, and whatever surface holds content and energy, that continues the stirring. All the ideas, images, feelings, emotions, intentions which rise from the depth become sources for Gurevitch to play with. Some will develop into scenes that will create the production and some will move to become the underlining forces of a scene or character.

A perfect example alluding to this process could be seen in Eugenio Barba's book *On Directing and Dramaturgy*, where he talks about Georges Clouzot's documentary with Pablo Picasso in which Picasso is shown how he paints. In the movie, in front of the camera, Picasso takes a white canvas and begins to paint. Several times, when the painting seems finished and everyone is in awe, Picasso begins to disarrange everything. On top of the present painting he draws other scenes and figures, which he interweaves or overlays on the earlier ones, cancelling them out. Finally, on a new canvas he paints the picture which he mentally and emotionally extricates from the struggles with which he was confronted while painting the previous ones (85).

***Dream technique: The language of the soul***

To help create this intricate drama while moving in-between these two circles that are imbedded in one character, Gurevitch "calls" into his creative process the human phenomena, which are known "messengers" that move between the internal and external worlds of human experience. They exist between layers of human reality, messengers such as dreams, memory/flash backs, and synchronicity. Gurevitch applies these "messengers" and uses them as theatrical and dramatic techniques. Through this dream-like language Gurevitch moves between the worlds while creating a fantastic layer next to a mundane layer when both are rooted in exploring the reality of the

investigator. These tools serve Gurevitch by setting his imagination free to explore beyond common reality boundaries into the internal spheres of his characters. However, by just telling the audience they are going to watch a dream, any surrealist or supernatural occurrence in the scene is “accepted” as it is grounded in an acknowledged dream reality.

The ocean element, which was created in the improvisation sessions, is the master magic device into the mystery of the inner-world, and into the reality of dream. Originally the play began with one of the actors telling a dream his friend had. Through the dream the plot moved into a stormy ocean and through the ocean into the drama of a wounded family whose father disappeared and whose son refuses to wake up. But even though this first dream was cut out of the play, *Private Investigator*, in its search to reveal the mystery of the wounded family, uses the language of dream. “When we come face-to-face with our dark side,” writes Connie Zweig, a co-author of *Meeting your Shadow*, “we use metaphors to describe these shadow encounters: meeting our demons, wrestling with the devil, descent to the underworld, dark night of the soul, midlife crisis” (3). Gurevitch invites the dream, a psychic technique of the soul, and uses it on his stage as an artistic device that helps him explore what he searches for in this show.

As the show begins, all the lights go down, the audience sits in the dark listening to a voice over of “The Forest Master”, an ancient ballad about the demon master of the forest who threatens and terrifies a boy who rides with his father through the forest in the dark of the night. Lights come up on a shore line of an ocean and the Investigator, with his back to the audience, stands there, facing the ocean. The ocean covers the



whole floor of the stage. The waves continue to ripple as the investigator's office furniture is moved in by actors: his gramophone, his table and his chair. The man who stands on the shore watches the one whom the ocean threatens to drown. Someone comes into the office to request an investigation: a woman whose husband disappeared. The audience does not know it yet, however, everything that will unfold before them on stage through the evening will be the unfolding of the Investigator's personal inward drama.

***The mother's dream (scene 2)***

**Mother:** My husband disappeared

**Investigator:** when

**Mother:** five days ago

**Investigator:** (takes a notebook and writes) tell me.

**Mother:** I'm not sure what to tell, but... that night I dreamt a strange dream. I am sleeping. The clock ticks twelve).

As the word "dream" is said, a bed enters the stage by two actors. Irit, the Mother, begins to walk backwards in synch with the entering bed. When the bed halts in place she gets into it. Music. The clock ticks twelve.

**Mother:** Suddenly a boy with wet hair gets out of the bed, looks at me, and leaves the room.

From the bed comes out a boy with wet hair and walks out. It is a moment of magic, as he appeared from nowhere known to the viewer, like in a dream. No one can see the hole in the bed through which he came in. The father follows him and they both leave.

**Mother:** I got out of bed, but both disappeared in the corridor. I heard a door slam.

There is a sharp sound of a slammed door and the Investigator moves in his chair, alarmed, and turns his head around to look. It seems at first sight that we watch the dream through the mother's imagination; however, the Investigator's reaction to the door wakes the viewer to wonder what is going on. The dream-world now seems to come from the Investigator's point of view, as if he daydreams that sharp moment when the father left the house. We watch a delicate layered structure of time, memory, dream, and a state of mind. The door slam is the stage cue for everything that relates to the dream to disappear from the stage—as if the Investigator woke up from his daydreaming.

The mythic energy of the boy who was abducted by the demon of the forest in the ballad (that the investigator had listened to) reappears here as a dream entity in the mother's dream. He is now in a form of a boy with wet hair who gets out of bed and leaves the house followed by the father. Next time we meet him, he is rising from the waves, facing the missing father, who anxiously observes him until he disappears again into the waters. Like the father in the ballad, the father in the *drama* keeps losing the boy. There is something eerie about the boy with the wet hair who never speaks. It is as if he were once taken by the ocean, and the ocean, when it storms, pulls him back. There is also an energy of a secret in him, a secret one would long to reveal, or perhaps reconnect with. The strong metaphoric presence of the ocean lends itself to the boy, and the dream merges the poetic, the ghostly, and the mystery of its unsolved puzzle.

### ***The investigator's dream***

In this part, for clarity, I'll relate to the Investigator conducting the investigation as the *Investigator* layer and will relate to the subject of his investigation--his inner life--as *the drama*.

The Investigator is not sure how accurately the mother told her dream. He visits the mother in her home and finds that her son Michael, who is twenty-five years old, sleeps in his parent's bed (scene 10):

**Investigator:** Tell me please, Dear Mrs. Weitzman, can it be that you were not too accurate with your story?

**Mother:** What story?

**Investigator:** The one on the night your husband disappeared?

**Mother:** What do you mean?

The Investigator then retells his version of the mother's dream. As he begins to tell his version of the dream, the tone of the dream world enters the stage with music, change of lighting, and the mode of acting. What the audience will see now on stage is the Investigator's confrontation with his own *inner drama* layer.

**Investigator:** Can it be that instead of coming to my office and telling me that your husband disappeared, you should have said—my son is asleep?

**Mother:** I don't understand.

**Investigator:** Let me try.

(Music, change of lighting).

You were in bed. The clock struck twelve.

(A midnight stroke is heard)

Suddenly, out of bed came a boy with wet hair, looked at you and left.

(From the bed comes a boy with wet hair, looks at the mother and leaves.) You went back to sleep. Right after that, your son Michael came. (Michael enters)

He woke you up. You woke up your husband. (She wakes up the father.

The father leaves the bed and exits the stage. There is a sound of a door slam. Michael enters the bed. The lighting changes again)

**Investigator:** It was not the first time your son came to your bed at night?

(Mothers nods her head)

How many times before Mr. Weitzman disappeared?

Mother: I am not sure.

**Investigator:** Two, three?

(Mother is silent)

Four, five?

(Mother is silent)

More?

(Mother is silent)

I won't make it hard on you, but the truth needs to be said: your husband left the house, as every night, you, Mrs. Weitzman, drove him away from the bed.

In the development of this scene a main question arises: why a twenty-five years-old man needs to come every night into his parents' bed to sleep? A few months back Gurevitch said to the group, "Maybe this is the mystery of the play, why the son Michael sleeps in his parents' bed and never wakes up? Maybe this is what the audience will hope to find out? Maybe this will be the suspense that will hold the tension?" Did Gurevitch know the answer at that point? The mother then tells the Investigator that her son is afraid of the dark and cries in his dreams. The Investigator says:

**Investigator:** Dreams? Maybe I will not have an option. I will have to enter his dream.

**Mother:** How would you enter his dream?

**Investigator:** There are techniques.

Gurevitch is probably also winking to his audience that most of them possibly had their dreams visited by a therapist or at least heard about Sigmund Freud's "techniques" for entering dreams. On stage, the word "techniques" immediately evokes the dream-world; the music dream motive enters, the light changes, and the big silky ocean cloth that covers the dreamers becomes once again the passage through which the action on stage enters the dream. The Investigator literally enters the bed and lies next to Michael. He wants to enter Michael's dream; however, as the drama moves on, he will realize, he entered his own dream.

At one point while rehearsing this dream, which went through many versions, Gurevitch said to Nir, the Investigator, "You did not know that this is what is going to happen, (meaning when you will step into Michael's dream--you will actually enter your own dream). You do want to understand why Michael sleeps all the time, so when you

are inside the dream, you are surprised and amazed with what you find and see.” To Uriel, who plays Michael, Gurevitch says that in this scene the clear similarity between you and the Investigator needs to be seen. Gurevitch asks Erez, the father, to closely watch the bed and what is going on there, and to Irit, the mother, he says, “A deep passionate energy force awakens within you toward the Investigator, something that longs for this love making.” He wants Tamar, playing Tamara the girlfriend, to wear something that the mother wore, something that embodies and refers to their being the same person at different times.

This is a complicated scene. To create the magic of the dream on stage, the *technique* needs to be mastered by all involved, and Gurevitch, through collaborative exchanges of ideas, brainstorming solutions, through many rehearsals, makes sure they all master the technique—so that they, and their audience, will have a believable authentic dream to enter and explore.

When the dream begins, the audience hears a sound of the stormy ocean. A huge wave rises and covers everything on stage including the bed, the Investigator, and the mother. Uriel, concealed by the wave, leaves the bed and the stage and Irit gets into bed, sits in it, and making the wave’s cloth become her blanket. She sees the Investigator who stands there and invites him to her bed. They make love under the blanket. The father, wearing his coat, enters and watches them. Michael enters dressed as the Investigator. We hear “The Lord of the Forest” ballad. Mother disappears (through the hole in the bed.) We hear the doorbell.

**Investigator:** Who is that?

**Michael:** No one.

**Investigator:** Why are you asleep? Whose dream is it?

**Michael:** Yours, only yours. One man can dream only one dream.

(Enters Tamara. She wears the mother's gown. She softly touches the Investigator's head and speaks to him as if he were Michael:

**Tamara:** You were crying in your sleep again. What did you dream? How come that such a sweet child, funny, cheerful, wise, beautiful, one day such a thing happens to him?

(The Investigator sits in bed)

**Michael:** (Looks at them, in the Investigator's tone) Good question. The man covered him. Like the lava covered Pompey.

(All the actors, from the backstage, are heard singing *A child of Stars*)

The search for this child, a child of stars which was so alive and joyful, is painfully clear, almost transparent in relation to the mystery: the child is asleep because he is buried deep underneath the man whom he grew to become: buried like Pompeii under the lava. The boy with the wet hair, the adult son Michael, his love, Tamara, the missing father, the mother and the Investigator—all the generational stratum are players in the dream. All the generational conflicting forces are embodied in one person who tries to investigate this phenomenon which exists within himself. When the *theatre* section was cut out, the essence of the generational conflict, maybe its source became the drama the investigator is examining.

In the next chapter we will look at *The Dragon Beloved*, a drama of a man that fearing his process of aging tries to renounce it in any way he can. One technique he uses is projecting his fear at his aging wife, believing that by alienating her from his

life, he will solve his “problem.” Again, Gurevitch takes the social generational responsibility and moves it inside, into its source, into the ground in which this phenomenon sprouts from, into the individual psyche. In both plays, *Private Investigator* and *The Dragon Beloved*, we learn that only by accepting human nature for what it is (birth, aging, and death), one can get in touch with own humanness and begin to restore society from its deep generational prejudice.

After the work on the dream, back in the circle, Gurevitch says: “OK, in my eyes, the most precise scene in the show so far is the dream scene. We have here employed together, the comic element, and the poetic, and the strange, the bizarre--*and that is how it needs to be all the time!*” The essential aspect of Gurevitch’s creative process lies in his wish to move through this journey with great joy, “This is not life—this is the stage, the theatre.” In joy, of course, Gurevitch does not mean laughing and dancing all the time, but rather being fully engaged in the flow of creating, in the present time. That is freeing the mind and the imagination and constantly searching—when working on a light cheerful scene, or when touching your character’s most painful wound.

In its last version, the dream was simplified and in it only the Investigator and Michael remained. Again, another powerful, exciting, and intriguing scene was disintegrated to its many parts only to be reintegrated into its more distilled form that felt just right for this creation.

Gurevitch’s creative process can be looked at as the disintegrated body of the god of theatre, Dionysus, who was torn to pieces by the Titans who boiled and ate him. His Grandma, Rhea, Zeus’ mother, made Dionysus whole again. In his process, Gurevitch needs to see and experience the parts of what wants to be expressed in him,



to then boil and digest it, and come to his artistic *knowing* for what feels whole to him, for how and what needs to stay in the show.

### ***Michael's dream***

During the next visit, the Investigator finds Michael out of bed and dancing. “Are you out of your bed?” he asks Michael. “It is a dream” Michael says to the Investigator and tells him about the “crack” in his heart that he became aware of one night. A “crack” in his love for Tamara. By now the audience experiences the dream on stage as one more of the Investigator’s memories. It is the Investigator who recalls the crack in his heart; the fracture that caused him, many years ago, to distance himself from the love of his life and to end in losing her forever—and search after her forever.

He will go from there to find the missing father and continue his investigation into his heart, almost like a heart doctor, but not before he’ll get a few more clues.

### ***Technique of Internal Synchronistic Events***

*“It is not a coincidence, dear Mrs. Weizmann, this is the fog that circles our small and limited conscious. When this mystery is solved, the fog will dissipate.”*

The Investigator (Scene 10)

The same evening before the Investigator enters Michael’s dream, he asks Mrs. Weitzman about her husband’s pharmacy:

**Investigator:** When do they close your husband’s pharmacy?

**Mother:** At seven.

**Investigator:** So, she must be at home by now (searches in his notebook)  
what is the pharmacy’s name?

**Mother:** Mina.

**Investigator:** Did you know that she is my secretary's sister?

**Mother:** What a coincidence.

**Investigator:** It is not a coincidence, dear Mrs. Weitzman, this is the fog that circles our small and limited conscious. When this mystery is solved, the fog will dissipate.

Synchronistic events, which Jung describes as a meaningful coincidence of two or more events, is where something other than probability of chance is involved (Jung 520). Gurevitch, in his life, as he would sometimes share, feels that synchronistic occurrences are either pointing the way for him or giving him confirmation that he is proceeding in the right direction. The critical factor is the meaning of the subjective experience that arises in the person that experiences these synchronistic happenings. Such synchronistic events occur to most people in daily life, but as with dreams, if we do not acknowledge them and pay attention to them, they remain insignificant.

These synchronistic events may be invisible yet tangible, they are in the realm of the mind and the physical territory; they come together through the psyche and its own secret design irrespective of the ego's conscious demands.

Gurevitch relates to dreams and synchronic events as messengers from the unconscious, the interconnected energy's constant dialogue in the universe, messengers from the mystery that unites internal life with universal occurrences in the character's drama. When the Investigator is asked by his secretary's lover: "May I know what does the gentleman investigate? The Investigator replies: "I am investigating the dark tunnels of the soul, and the mysterious nature of the coincident." In his drama,

Gurevitch uses this phenomenon as a technique to create a dream-like world where all in it is interconnected.

Do the boundaries our thoughts create make our reality? Are we creating the boundaries as we create the fourth wall? In Gurevich's theatre, the boundaries of reality are expanded, the fourth wall of the mind dissolves and opens itself up to the possibilities, like in his theatre. In his creative process Gurevitch invites the audience to converse directly with the art of theatre, to watch and feel the metaphor on stage as the image of their own reality. Like theatre, for Gurevitch, a synchronic event can give the audience a sense of direction in a boundless time and space—something that maybe is worth opening our attention to.

This synchronistic knowledge becomes a clue for the Investigator to trace the father. The mother gives him a picture of the father and suggests that he should look in the streets next to the ocean. The Investigator follows the dots and finds the father on the street next to his secretary, Mina's sister's place. The coffee shop where they will soon sit is just around the corner.

***The scene about the missing father***

*This is not Psychology;  
this is a gushing inner force that wishes to erupt.*  
Michael Gurevitch

We observe throughout the rehearsal process that Gurevitch does not examine the characters he creates through their psychological states but through existential forces imbedded in their beings that are active in them. In scene 12, the Investigator meets the father in a coffee shop. Even though the father insists he is not hungry, the Investigator orders food and vodka. When the food arrives, the father is the only one

who eats. As the Investigator talks, the father's eating becomes obsessive, uncontrollable. There is a deep loneliness in the scene. The more the investigator talks, the more the father is trapped there in facing his loneliness. He eats to shut out, to conceal this loneliness, this hunger for un-loneliness. The Investigator says to him: "Since you have left home, your son is asleep. I ask myself why? Do you love your son?" The father replies "He is a young man," and continues: "A child, by his sheer growing up, he sends the parents to exile. In their home, in their bed, to exile. Like the Eskimos. To die in the snow." The father's loneliness is part of an ancient fear, a fear born out of the mythic prophecy that informed Laios, Oedipus' father, that his son will one day murder him. Trying to kill Oedipus, and with that the prophecy, became an archetypal metaphor of a man who is blind to the nature of things and tries to stop his unavoidable death by clinging with all his might to his youth. Does this wall of fear create this unbearable loneliness?

Gurevitch is saying to the actor that this is not psychology, but there is an inner force that is gushing out here. Something in the core of the father's being erupts, and you, he says to the actor, want to strangle it with food. The focus of the action is not on pity but the drama of these forces that acts within the father; the force is the aloneness that holds the hunger for connection, for love, and the one who fears this bottomless hole wants to cover it.

The *voice*, Gurevitch searches to hear in his actor's act, reflects his search within his creative process. In Garcia Lorca's text "Theory and Play of The Duende", a text about the Duende, which he describes as "the mystery, the roots that cling to the mire that we all know, that we all ignore, but from which comes the very substance of art....

the Duende is a force, not a labor, a struggle not a thought” (4). The concept of the Duende as described in this essay by Lorca deeply corresponds with Gurevitch’s artistic creative inclinations. Lorca speaks in his text about subterranean forces that threaten to gush... about the dark abyss that must be engaged and struggled with in any meaningful expression of art. For Lorca, the great artists are the decipherers of the nation’s soul: They represent the soul as an individual citizen and the soul of the community.

Lorca believes that primordial irrational desire for the abyss is an essential root for any creation. Lorca, in his talk about the Duende, speaks about the artist’s inspiration, the artist’s struggle with the irrational, with the demons, and with his own death. Duende is a talk about the nature of inspiration (Lorca 4).

Like Lorca’s investigation into the Duende, Gurevitch is searching deep into the reality which embodies the inner forces that moves the plot. In *Private Investigator*, this phenomenological undercurrent exists throughout the drama. The ultimate example for a metaphor on stage that embodies the primordial forces, along with long forgotten memories and hidden wound is the ocean. The ocean, through which, in one version of the play, the whole drama surfaced and gushed from. At one point, the stormy ocean tears from its depth and through to its surface a child. Throughout the show the child with the wet hair will reappear, always silently like a ghost, a memory—maybe a wound of loss which has been reopened, the force of deep suffering longing to be healed. Or as Gurevitch said when he stood on the shore of the ocean in Tel-Aviv “I was standing there for long minutes.... Waiting... maybe some kind of Aphrodite will show up...”

Gurevitch does not wish to create psychological dramas: his inspiration is sourced from a desire to touch through his art the ground forces of being. There is a need to touch and give a form to forces as loneliness, fear, feel of loss. The need, however, is not a problem to be solved, it is a phenomenon to be looked at and experienced. The point of view is existential and the scene, the drama, is its expressed form.

The father later meets his assistant, Mina (scene 18). They meet on a street by the ocean. After talking about clients and medications, the father asks Mina if she can touch him. He needs a human touch he says. Does he ask for a soft, kind human touch, or did he ask for fire? Fire as love, as passion, as spark of life? The archetype of Aphrodite, the goddess whom the ocean was her womb, awakens through its many forms. To heal the wound of loneliness? Or perhaps to just cover it again?

Gurevitch is very personal in his creation. During rehearsals, it was clear he is investigating into his own life. He would share his childhood experiences with his father, who got wounded in the army, and disappeared from his life when he was a young child, for a long time. Nir, who plays the Investigator says: “The story that Miki wrote was absolutely on him, on his life as a child with his parents who separated when he was about three years old. I think it was the deepest he ever wrote.” As he asks his actors to bring their own life into the stage, into their art of acting, so does he bring his own life to be explored in the rehearsal room.<sup>16</sup>

Looking back on his work with the Physical Image Method in Nisan Nativ Acting Studio sharpens the understanding of the inner map he follows while in the rehearsal

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<sup>16</sup> Private interview. May 28, 2014. Tel Aviv.

room. In preparation for a Physical Image exercise based on personal life experience, Gurevitch advised Maria, one of the students at school, to follow a core event in her life. Following Gurevitch's advice, Maria decided on doing a scene about her separation from her father—the fundamental source for the new scene was the need to be loved and embraced by everyone—on and off stage. After a talk with Gurevitch, he suggested that Maria should try to work with the empty space, the black hole, that opened and stayed within her when she separated from her father; this space that she felt needed to hold them both. “Make the stage be this space, be the trigger for you, make it touch your need for this father's love.” Gurevitch suggested, “Allow yourself to be in the turbulent waters.” Gurevitch suggested Maria to make the stage the trigger for her need for success, for receiving love on stage. Working with Gurevitch, Maria, and every actor, knows that allowing the turbulence in is their life long journey.

### ***The energy of love***

The energy of love branches and appears in many relational forms within the Investigator's inquiries. Gurevitch continues to move his protagonist along the streets by the ocean, pushing him to move deeper in his investigation into the force of Eros who leads his life. As the Investigator wanders in the streets, he meets Tamara, Michael's beloved girlfriend. Tamara tells him how she first met Michael.



*Figure 9: The Investigator Memory of his First Date with Tamara (Gurevitch's Website)*

As this scene begins the Investigator asks Tamara if he can come with her to her apartment to talk. At that point the scene turns to become a flashback where Michael enters the stage and replaces the Investigator while the Investigator moves aside to become the observer, thus observing his own memory of how, one night, Tamara allowed him to come with her to her apartment. Before leaving the street to go to the apartment, Michael and Tamara kiss passionately, and then Michael says, "How can this moment be held? With this evening. The empty street. With the light in your window, the scent of the rain." The Investigator watching it all repeats to himself: "How can this moment be held? With this evening. The empty street. With the light in your window, the scent of the rain..." This technique of flashback intensifies the realization for the audience that everything they see on stage emerges from the point of view of the Investigator; that they were invited to intimately partner with him as he tells how the force of love moves within him and affects his whole being (scene 8).





*Figure 10: Another Memory of the First Date (Private Investigator's Program)*

The next time the Investigator meets Tamara he is in his office. When she enters, he listens to a record playing romantic dance music. The mother had just left after learning from the Investigator that her husband is alive. Before she left she wanted to know if he has love in his life and he tells her how, when he was young, he caused the woman he loved to slip away from his life; how in his youth, he lost his beloved.

We are moving close to the end of the play. By now the audience recognizes in Michael the young Investigator and stays with him while he is dancing with his loss. When Tamara tells the Investigator that she is going away with someone else as Michael is still asleep, the Investigator's old wound of loss opens and he asks, "How can you?"

**Tamara:** He stopped loving me. Without us noticing, a fracture was formed.

**Investigator:** A fracture in love?

**Tamara:** It seems like that. Without us noticing.

**Investigator:** It seems like that...

As an act of despair, he pulls out his notebook. A fraction... how can he notice all the fractions life creates? Remember them all? See them, understand? From the Investigator rises the voice of the artist who, like the Investigator, cannot hold all of what was experienced, which is flooding him as a boundless ocean. As he is waving his notebook in front of Tamara, he says:

**The Investigator:** How can we get in here this evening, with its sounds, the empty streets, the light in the window...The first kiss, sleepless nights, loves, separations, longings, the crying of your beloved that does not end, does not end, does not end, like a river flowing into the ocean. How can we get in here the old man with the small dog, the old man with the shopping bag, the old man who looks at his son's face and does not recognize the face?

From the Investigator's disillusion emerges the artist who feels flooded by immeasurable life experiences, "It is impossible to avoid the feeling of missing. From the feeling that we could have done so much more." The man who investigates his life and the one who creates this art blend for a moment, watching one another almost as in an act of love. In the end of this scene, as if flooded by a loving, painful memory, the Investigator says his last goodbye to Tamara: "My beautiful one, my love, my Tamara."

***The play moves towards its end***

It is night outside, and as the play moves toward its end, the father leaves the shore and begins to walk into the ocean. In the distance, out of the waves, we see the child. He calls for him, and the father takes off his coat and scarf, follows the child,

and slowly disappears in the ocean. Some may think that this is an act of suicide—outwardly, this is what it appears to be. However, if we do not see just into appearance, the father disappears into the metaphoric ocean, following the boy who stands there, so somewhere in the depth of the ocean, he may reconnect with him.

Michael woke up, he asked about Tamara, but she was already gone, and the mother asks the investigator if they could have done anything:

**Mother:** Everything could have been different. No?

**Investigator:** How different?

**Mother:** Maybe, if we would have understood something. We would have fixed one tiny mistake; everything would have looked different.

**Investigator:** How different? Today, I am in your age and I know: there is no “different”. When I was a child, father turned off all the house lights and gave me his hand and led me through all the rooms to convince me that there is no need to be afraid of the dark. Today I understand: he did it to convince himself. He held my hand, a child’s hand, so that he would not fear the night.

Nothing could have been different.

The child, whose life was taken by the forest’s demon while he is calling for his father, is a force that embodies deep longing: for the child, for the father, and for the love that was there between them. There is profound grief and unbounded yearning for the father and his child whose worlds were caught in the Fear Kingdom of the forest’s demons.

However, the protagonist of this story begins to see that these experiences he moves through are but the materials which create the life he is having. The change in him begins when he starts to see and accept his experiences for what they are, just life's experiences. "However," says the Investigator. "What however?" asks the mother, and he replies:

**Investigator:** This investigation woke me up. I met father, I met you mother. Without fear. I met Tamara. It is me. I am the child. I am the man. I am the one who is alive. I am the dead. I am the murderer.

Listening to the Investigator, we recognize that Gurevitch comes to terms with his drama. All the experiences are inherent parts of this life; that is what happened, and it could not be different. It does not come from a defeated place, but from clearly seeing that this is what is present right now. And maybe the healing is in the ability to have the courage to look and see and the compassion to accept and hold this human unfolding life. For Socrates, in Plato's *Symposium*, Eros is an action, a constant search for balance and beauty. The Investigator, as Eros, is searching for meaning, for beauty, amid the turbulence of his life.

The tragic force--the wound in the play--lies in the un-fulfillment, in the longing to have what was lost, in the fear: however, the act of creating is not tragic. The creative process is the force, the desire, the joy, the healing, it is life. As Gurevitch would often say that if he would have not been allowed to create, he would have died. Or find a way...

## CHAPTER VI: *PASSING SHADOW AND THE DRAGON BELOVED*

### *What Does Gurevitch Search to Realize Through the Stage?*

#### *Knocking on Hades Gate*

Throughout his creative work in his theatre productions Gurevitch is in an ongoing conversation with the force of love, which is looked at in his drama as the energy source of life. As in *Private Investigator* as well as in these two-following productions, *Passing Shadow* and *The Dragon Beloved*, the investigation into love turns its focus into the family unit and enters the children's room. These two productions evolve to touch again Gurevitch's revisited theme of love and the emotionally entangled relations within the family unit. He explores the dissolution of the family as an emotional unit. It is a kaleidoscopic gaze of a family that emerges as one unit that breaks out and explodes to its many planes. And again, as in the story of Dionysus whose body was disintegrated only to come back into its whole as the god of theatre, so does Gurevitch through his creative process, the metaphorical stage, and the prism of the physical image, is knocking on Hades gate to explore the wounds and the broken parts only to find the grace of life through them.

When Gurevitch became the artistic director of the Khan Theatre in 2001, in his annual letter to the theatre members he passed on what Federico Garcia Lorca had said after the premier of *Yerma*, which seems to be Gurevitch's credo of the theatre: "Theatre that does not feel the pulls of the raving events of the time is not entitled to call itself theatre... the role of the theatre is to mirror life in the deepest sense of the word not in the journalist meaning of it" (2001-2002 Khan Program). I have chosen to work with these three plays/productions, *Passing Shadow* (1999), *The Dragon Beloved*

(2009), and *Private Investigator* (2011), as I see in them, a clear, vibrant mirror of Gurevitch's connection to the "raving events of time".

### **PASSING SHADOW**

*Passing Shadow* is the first show Gurevitch wrote and directed in the Khan Theatre while working with his unique collaborative rehearsal technique through which he created all his original productions with the Khan group. "The uniqueness in this kind of a work," he said in an interview after *Passing Shadow* was premiered, "is to collaborate and bring into the creative process all the creators involved and make it a spontaneous process for all as in a children's play" (Interview with Gad Keinar). Nir, a former student of Gurevitch, and a Khan actor who took part in all the original productions Gurevitch created in the Khan, said that,

In the Nisan Nativ Acting Studio, Gurevitch allows himself and the actors to be free and wild. He brought this freedom to the Khan and In *Passing Shadow* there was fun and joy and freedom to create as I do not remember in any other show in the Khan. For Gurevitch it was a dream come true. Gurevitch would often share that to have a strong creative group to collaborate and create together, as he has with the group in the Khan Theatre, is a dream which came true for him.

What was important to Gurevitch in this first original show was to create with the group a production that would be born out of very personal and intimate experiences coming from each one of them. As part of the process of creating a new piece, Gurevitch shared in an interview after *Passing Shadow*, "We all go through an intertwined process in which we touch and reveal new individual personal material

along with finding its expression through an image, a metaphor. These unfolding experiences are taking place throughout the rehearsal process” (Interview with Keinar).

Gurevitch began his rehearsals where no one, including himself, knew the play’s name or what it was going to be about. He initiated the rehearsal process by inviting his actors to participate in an improvisational session guided by only a single instruction: that they should do whatever they want and choose to do.

After about an hour of open-form improvisational work, Gurevitch asked the actors to reflect on the extent to which they responded to their authentic internal impulses. The actors replied that upon reflection they only acted on a very small portion of their inner impulses. For instance, Gurevitch was curious to know how much the actors brought into the improvisation concerns from their inner world which they might have wanted yet didn’t dare to. The actors commented that while they explored many different social aspects in the improvisation, they ultimately brought a very small piece of their private life into the experience.

Gurevitch and the actors realized that they allowed themselves to bring into their work something between ten to fifteen percent of their inner authentic impulse. Instead, they improvised with familiar social interactions. Gurevitch understood that this specific group’s difficulty, at the time, was to express their individuality, to authentically be in the improvisation the individuals they were. Instead, due to social fears, taboos and other obstructions, they *concealed* most of what they essentially wanted to work on. “I saw what the theme of the show was,” said Gurevitch, “the theme of this play became the social structure or the social entity standing against a passing shadow that threatens to enter” (Interview with Gad Keinar).

After the improvisation stage, when the group began to work on scenes Gurevitch wrote, he told them a story about a small city on the ocean's shore where a dragon threatens its people. The first scene they worked on was about the people standing in front of the cave waiting for the dragon. This scene did not stay in the production, however, just as in the process we observed in *Private Investigator*, during the rehearsal process the dragon was internalized. "The dragon," said Gurevitch, "transformed from being a general mythic symbol to a personal and concrete content. As in *Private Investigator*, Eros became a main player, however in *Passing Shadow* the audience is facing the dreadful and destructive potential that is imbedded in the god when the family chooses to oust him.

*Passing Shadow* is a show in eleven scenes with no words where the actors *speak* through their body accompanied by music in the genre of the silent movie. Throughout the show their voice is not heard but **once**, before the family dinner. Father comes from work, wants to make love to mother, she refuses because of the children, he ends up pushing her under the table where she sucks his penis. The brother enters and he is stricken by the bizarre faces his father makes while trying to hide his orgasm. The scene becomes hilariously funny as the father looks back at his son and out of his orgasm, utters the only spoken words in the show: "Where is mother?" This scene pictures a conservative, middle class hypocrisy in which any sign of sex is a taboo, a frenzy, of uncontrollable oral sex acted under the dinner table.

"The choice to give up the spoken word," says Gurevitch in an interview, "was made with the actors during the rehearsal process. An emotional expression by the body has a powerful expression potential. The words always are directed at the reason. The



challenge was to find the way to tell a very detailed plot without using any words” (Shochat October 1999). Irit, who played the mother, shared her experience working with no words saying that, “The soul talks in a more transparent way through the body, through the silence.”

The scenes move through the life of a family from the comic to the tragic, from reality into fantasy, from the grotesque to the melodrama; they are a mixture of styles Gurevitch wished to explore on stage as part of the many possible dramatic expressions of the body. The play takes on the conventions of silent movies, such as Charlie Chaplin’s *City Light*, *The Great Dictator*, and *Gold Rush*, to mention a few. And just as in a silent movie, before each scene its name is projected on the wall or enters on the stage on a pole.

The play begins with a woman who returns to her home town after being away for thirty years. She meets her father and her young brother with whom she initiated incestuous relations thirty years ago when she was a teenage girl. She meets them in the old neighborhood’s coffee house where she so loved to spend time with her family. From there her memory takes us to a joyful moment with her parents in this same coffee house forty-five years earlier. A magician comes and plays with the girl. He shows her his magic with fire and balloons. The girl is fascinated. He then folds a table napkin and creates a magical penis. The young girl happily shows the magic to her parents who flee with her from the place in horror. The seed of Eros begins to germinate within the girl. This awakened force makes her fascinated and excited and alive, and it fills her parents with dread. The fear that feeds the society’s taboos, the cultured wall,

is awakened in the play. On the stage we see the shadow character who embodies the taboo and its other side: the powerful nature which evokes it.

Through flash back scenes, we learn that she was raised in a conservative atmosphere of a bourgeois family. As a young teenager, she begins to realize her sexuality, which eventually, fascinated with this new inner drive, out of ignorance, she gets involved in sexual relations with her brother, which ends in her pregnancy. This forbidden love caused her to be expelled from home by her mother. The family, who began as a strong loving unit, is shattered. All the love that was once so alive between these people was impeded, and she sees her father, brother and her mother, who is now sick and in a wheelchair, look like people whose lives have been forced out of their bodies.

A sub-plot, with a parallel story of suppression and denial, sheds more light on the forces that drive the family into their dire condition. The sub-plot tells the story of the coffee house waiter whose homosexual relations were exposed by the father. The exposure, causing a great fear, made him eliminate his lover from his life. The sub-plot ends tragically when the grief-stricken lover hangs himself and so ends his life. Thirty years later, the woman who returned finds the waiter who is now old, withered, and as her family, without any spark of life left in him. In *Passing Shadow*, the family's grieving remains unresolved as a manifestation of an unsettled explosion of a family organic unit. Gurevitch, a child of divorced parents, would explore this explosion and its effect throughout his creative work.

The sexually-driven forces against an unmitigated denial held a poisonous effect on the family. However, as in *Private Investigator*, in this production, the whole stage

becomes a metaphorical space of the woman's inner psyche. The returned woman character enters the stage, which will soon become a theatre production of her mind, to be looked at, investigated, re-experienced and to be healed by. Gurevitch, once again, invites his protagonist, as he invites his audience,<sup>17</sup> to enter the theatre and allow its mimetic powerful nature to help her look at her life to be reintegrated and healed. Beginning the play with the woman returning to her childhood home allows Gurevitch to move the investigation through dreams and memories presented in a non-linear order as well as moving from concrete spaces such as the children's room to allegorical spaces such as the dark alley in the back of stage through which the shadow character enters and exits the woman's life. To grow into her integrated life, the woman needs to face her shadows and see her bourgeois family for what they were and to come to terms with what shattered her life, to accept her experiences and to find reconciliation in her present life as an adult woman thirty years later.

Eight years later, in his show *The Dragon Beloved* (2009), unlike in *Passing Shadow*, Gurevitch would take his protagonist all the way to the underworld, the Kingdom of Hades and Persephone, to help him see through his conditions and choice-making, to unlock his and his family's love, and to save their lives.

Eli Rozik, in his article "The Transient Shadow" writes about the two types of characters featured in the play: the realistic, human type that includes: the father, mother, brother, young girl, waiter, and the waiter's lover, and two allegoric characters, the Magician and the Shadow, which are physical personifications of

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<sup>17</sup> We will meet Gurevitch's clear and direct invitation for his audience to enter the theatre in the *Dragon Beloved*.

internal states. Applying Jungian psychoanalysis, Rozik looked at the shadow character in the play as “the personification of the suppressed and thus unconscious entity of the psyche.” The shadow character then embodies “those qualities that one dislikes most in other people.... the shadow contains the overwhelming power of irresistible impulse” (Rozik 199).

For Jung, “Like all archetypes, the shadow is usually projected on real human beings, who becomes bearers of such projections” (Jung, *Dreams* 50). The shadow is a manifestation of an instinctual urge in the form of a primordial and symbolic image. In contrast to the nature of the shadow, states Rozik, “the Magician personified the positive thrill of the adult” (200). The Magician, as an archetype, arouses pure natural excitement, which soon moves into becoming the oppressed shadow.

These two primordial drives which act as conflicting forces within the girl’s psyche threaten the unity of the family as it moves to unavoidable destruction in this drama. However, the threat will enforce itself only if the family will refuse to realize and accept its existence as a natural force their child did not choose but was inherently born with. The child who revealed this archetypal force is led with his parents, by the shadows that work from within, to its grieving end. The fear and fascination these forces arise become in the drama taboos which tragically manipulate the parents to destruction. The love of the mother for her daughter is shadowed through this manipulation; the absence of this love suffocates the mother, and we see how life drips out of her, makes her sick and pushes her first into a wheelchair and finally into her death.

In *Passing Shadow* the focus is on the individual versus society, the family unit versus its individual members. The genuine improvisational process with which the theme was revealed and chosen to become the seed of the production, the way it was unfolded by this director and group of actors, became a model for all the original productions Gurevitch ultimately created in the Khan theatre to the present day.

The style of the show that has no words and is stretched from the lyric to the popular Charlie Chaplin-like slapstick, from farce to the tragic, to melodrama, serves Gurevitch's intention to tell the story in various layers of meaning. Gurevitch shared that the story is being told ". . . not only in the layer of the events and happenings but also in the symbolic connotation and the layers it helps to reveal." One example for Gurevitch is a scene that takes place in the coffee house when, suddenly, the magician takes out a flower from in between the mother's legs, it is magic; nevertheless, he pulls out a flower from in between the legs of an adult woman. The mother will soon refuse to accept this flower when it will bloom within her daughter. There is potential poison imbedded in the beauty of this flower.

The premise of this model is that the visual, the musical, and the poetry experienced on stage is part of the poetic language of the drama; that these theatrical elements are the symbolic language that holds the layers of reality it wishes to express.

The magician creates for the girl through his magical tricks a penis. This trick frightens the parents. And one of the critics wrote, "...and who is the magician if not the artist that his work is to bring before the society its taboos and free them from their terror?" (Fucs 1999).

*Passing Shadow* does not conclude in a dramatic resolution for the family. The production merely aims to uncover and mirror the potential tragic destruction within a family who refused to realize their miracles and their shadows.



Figure 11: Just Before Family Dinner (Gurevitch Website)



Figure 12: Father Delight with Mother Under the Table



Figure 13: Night in the Children's Room (Gurevitch Website)





Figure 14: A Passing Shadow (Gurevitch's Website)



Figure 15: Mother Tries to Eat the Unbearable Sadness (Gurevitch's Website)



Figure 16: Daughter Returns Home After Thirty Years (Gurevitch's Website)



Figure 17: Looking Back (Gurevitch's Website)

### ***THE DRAGON BELOVED***

Gurevitch in *The Dragon Beloved* moves his protagonist and his audience to the point of resolution through exploring and playing with the nature of theatre. While unfolding the drama through music, dance, theatre styles, poetry and colloquial language, Gurevitch experiments especially with the dimensions of illusion in the theatre including space and time, the illusionary nature of the fourth wall, the illusionary internal wall between spectator and his/hers own perceived reality that may transcend through their experience in the theatre, and the protagonist and what would be seen as illusionary walls between his innate life force of love and his dramatic life. He invites the audience to surrender to the experience the theatre is about to offer them and open themselves to the potential transformation that lives within this union. It is this sharp focus of Gurevitch and his group while creating *The Dragon Beloved*, on new and old theatrical forms woven in with the dramatic content they wished to express, that makes it so valid for my work.

In the theatre, at 8:30 p.m. before the red curtain rises, the protagonist of *The Dragon Beloved*, an aging man and loyal audience member of the Khan Theatre named Weizmann, is invited to the stage to become the hero in a play about his life. Throughout the evening, Weizmann will watch his life being mercilessly penetrated and “torn apart” by the theatrical act. While becoming on stage both the spectator and actor in the show about his life, Weizmann will observe, experience, and re-dream his life, and by the end of his evening in the theatre his conceived perception of his reality, the constructed mask he wore all his life, will shatter and a pathway will open for hidden new layers of his being to emerge. Weizmann will go home freer and happier as



the actors wished for him and their audience members who came to watch the show: “Come, get up, unload your emotional baggage and then return, each to your home, lighter, freer, ready once more to take on the burden of life” (*Dragon Beloved 1*).



*Figure 18: Weizmann is Invited by the Actors to the stage (Rehearsal Footage)*

When Weizmann steps on stage a magical world full of enchanted colors, sounds, mythic creatures and mythological characters begins to spin on stage around him. The actors invite Weizmann to tell his story. As I personally watched from my sit in the theatre, some restless thoughts aroused in me, “Is it going to be a real playback theatre? Are we going to hear a story and watch a live show about a real audience member’s life? Is this man an actor? Are they going to pick me also? Do I want to expose my life before these people? Do I want to reveal any of my secrets?” Gurevitch’s Meta-theatre technique in the beginning, the play within a play structure, is potentially shaking and steering the inner life of his audience, inviting them to re-experience their own being while in the theatre. Gurevitch is spinning the web of his art form, which will hopefully get him to fulfill his promise to send his audience home feeling lighter and freer.

Weizmann will move through four main phases in relation to his performed story, four levels of proximity to the theatre, before the show will end and he will surrender to move through the experience of his own transformation:

PHASE 1: Weizmann is on stage willing to participate and becomes an actor in his own staged story, which lasts a very short time. The actors begin to enact an Idyllic childhood memory Weitzman is sharing with them on stage. In his story, one night, his father, whom he did not see for many months, returned from the army. He brought, to his three years old son, a gift he found in a cave. Weizmann's willingness to participate ends the minute the actors want to step a bit deeper into his story. He gets scared; the theatre threatens to shatter his mask, to expose him, and he backs up to his sit in the theatre. However, the theatre through its tricks will pull Weizmann back into its experience; Weizmann will meet the demon who was locked in the jar his father found in a cave for him.

PHASE 2: In the second phase Weizmann watches his life story from his seat in the theatre. The actors then ask his permission to continue to perform his life story without him. Occasionally he rushes to the stage as he would disagree with how the actors act out his life and, for example, insists that his mother never betrayed his father: "Excuse me... that is not right... that isn't 'Weizmann's life'... People know me here; this is embarrassing for me" (p 12).

PHASE 3: As the show progresses, Weizmann stays on stage interchanging between being a spectator and willing to move closer to the experience

of the theatre, to be pulled into the theatre world and become a character. He meets the magical child demon who lives in the jar his father once brought him. The audience learns that the jar's demon is the spirit of presence, the embodiment of present moment—the zone in which theatre and life are happening. The demon is the allegorical character in the show who embodies the art of theatre, the fleeting art of present time. Weizmann is hypnotized by the demon. He looks at him as at a lost friend. It is now with the child demon in hand that the actors will take Weizmann into the world of Orpheus and Eurydice and lead him through the thread of myth and time to meet the ghosts that hold his soul prisoner in the past. Just as Gurevitch and his group, with their “tools,” will pull the audience into the experience of the theatre.

All that time, Ora, Weizmann's wife sits in the theatre and watches her husband's deceptions. She sees how her husband tells the actors that he is a widower, and unable to tolerate his deceptions any longer, she goes to the back stage and demands to talk to one of the actors. We learn from Ora of how once they were very much in love and how Weizmann distanced himself from her as they grew older and signs of old age began to appear: “The panic, my Panic. Of old age. Of the weariness. Of the back pain. Like before giving birth. Old age is the pregnancy of death. But death is something no one wants.... But why would he say he is a widower?” asks the actor, and Ora replies, “He is ashamed of me” (58).

“Orpheus reveals something extremely essential for me,” says Gurevitch while relating to his process with *The Dragon Beloved*,

In every given moment, you need to save Eurydice from the underworld, and Eurydice can be a new creative piece, it can be love, and it can be your sense of life, of being alive, et. al. In fact, the most essential death is not the one that we face in the end of life; with this one there is nothing we can do. The nastiest and most aggressive is the death that resides in our routine, boredom, in taking life for granted, in our habits that hold negative energy, the death that is within us when we are still alive” (Gurevitch interview with Shochat, 2009).

PHASE 4: In this last phase, the show is almost over, Weizmann is on stage back in his “real” life: “A play is like a man, a gushing wound” (1), the actors tell the audience in the beginning of the show, and Weizmann re-experiences his wounded life on stage and now as the classic hero he comes to the moment he need to choose. His wife Ora enters the stage led by one of the actors and sits by her husband. Her hand is shaking unwillingly. Weizmann draws himself away from her. The demon moves to stand behind him—pulling him back to present time zone, to life, to love. Ora gently rests her head on Weizmann’s shoulder. Slowly and very tenderly, he puts his hand on her shoulder. Ora feels the choice he is taking, the change, the opening, the vulnerability, the love, and the joy that fills this moment of transformation. Weizmann chooses to allow the divinity of the theatre to transform the course of his life.



**Figure 19: Reflection Through Time;  
Looking Back (Gurevitch's Website)**



**Figure 20: Reflection Through Time;  
Looking Forward (Gurevitch's  
Website)**

And once again, as I was sitting there in the dark, as in *Passing Shadow*, I felt this warm joyful love energy rise in my body. I felt it rushing through my own doors, my own habits, my own fears of being, my own delusional walls. It was an Aristotelian moment of purification, a healing moment. And I thought, what a quintessential social change moment. It comes to be not through the idea but through the heart's experience, in the moment of shared experience with and through the theatre art.

Death is unavoidable, however death in the midst of life is the greatest threat, and *The Dragon Beloved* is a play about death who possesses the hero's soul and spirit while he is still alive. Fears of his conditioned humanness--aging, sickness, and death and fears from his society and how it perceives these conditions--moves him to trick himself to hide from his life by constructing high walls that utterly shadow his soul.

The theatre, itself, in *The Dragon Beloved* becomes a metaphor for love, creativity, and most of all the joy of life, while the "real world" of the hero signifies the slow surrender to degeneration and death of the spirit in life. The play opens questions on love and "couple-hood" and how love may or may not last through time.

In an interview with Gurevitch on *The Dragon Beloved*, he confesses, “What is dear to me in life is the ability to love and the ability to create. This is for me the essence, the core of life, because this is what stands in front of death (Interview with Shochat, Dec 2008)”.

In this drama, as in the ancient drama *The Bacchae*, where the god of theatre is leading the protagonist, the ruler of the city (Pentheus, who embodies the boundaries and taboos of the city) to be ripped apart by his followers, the Maenads, Weizmann life’s story is being torn by the actors all with the intention of moving him, against himself, to courageously reclaim his inner force of love, and to move to redeem his life. This time, unlike in *Passing Shadow*, which was created eight years earlier, Gurevitch is pushing his protagonist to the underworld to help him reclaim his life. When Weitzman, the audience member, re-finds his love, it becomes the healing remedy to his “gushing wounds.”

What makes this play particularly special for my study is the group ways of exploring the facets of the theatre art form, such as its dream-like quality, its illusionary boundaries, its symbolic language, and above all its mimetic and healing nature, while weaving it all into the theme of their play, and make the means become the essence of the narrative all the way to its resolution. As in the *Bacchae* the theatre itself, signified by Dionysus, is a critical participant of the play.

The fixed imagination of Weizmann, his knowledge and life which relies on the mask he had constructed, is being shaken by the theatre. The theatre art form and its spirit can be a strong force that penetrates the boundaries Weizmann worked so hard to build. Weizmann in the starting point of the show lacks the ability to penetrate and

see through the layers of his reality. However, his sight is being changed, and he gains access to the vision of his spirit unavailable to him before. To experience the theatre is to understand that it speaks to us indirectly, through actions and symbols, not through an imposed cultural order. Gurevitch and the actors move Weizmann through the theatre's magical language, expand his imagination, move him beyond his mask, and help him travel beyond his boundaries.

### ***Looking through the prism of myth***

I experience Gurevitch's work as a constant search into the theatrical possibilities (e.g., use of myth, Meta-theatre operations, Greek classic themes, chorus, mask, use of many theatrical styles and genres), as his way of investigating human nature and of expressing one through the language of the other.

In "Mask of Dionysus," Helen P. Foley discusses the nature of Dionysus and the theatrical means used in the classic era to dramatically express Dionysus' nature and understand his myth as an emblematic personification of human nature. Foley explores the interwoven nature of theatricality and meaning in Euripides' *The Bacchae*, where for the first time the "god of theatre" himself appears as a personified character on stage. Dionysus demonstrates that his essence--mimetic art of human nature--is essentially a theatrical act, and for Foley, "a stage exploration of the nature of illusion, transformation, and symbol" (108). Foley sees in *The Bacchae* a play through which Euripides explores the ways art penetrates, breaches and expresses human nature in both its revealed and concealed layers.

In *The Dragon Beloved*, the protagonist Weizmann, as king Pentheus in *The Bacchae*, is unwilling to allow the full presence of the god of the theatre in his life;

however, unlike Euripides, through Gurevitch, Dionysus/the theatre, finds the cracks in Weizmann's resistance, enters his being and there, through experiencing the presence of Dionysus, the hero attains *Anagnorisis* and reaches his true destiny, which is to choose and embrace life and love, and with that save himself and reunite his family. In her study of the nature of Dionysus and the way it is manifested in *The Bacchae*, Foley becomes a valuable tool in the exploration of Gurevitch's theatricality and, in particular, when analyzing his work, *The Dragon Beloved*, and the inner movement of the play as a modern version of Euripides' *Bacchae*.

In *Private Investigator*, as in the ancient drama *Oedipus*, the protagonist finds himself investigating his own life to find the culprit he is after. Gurevitch, when exploring the nature of Aphrodite finds out that he is questing the love of his father that he lost when he was a child. This is typical for Gurevitch to operate on a known myth or folk tale as a foundation when he starts his search into his new play. This integration of the ancient and contemporary becomes part of Gurevitch's poetic language and part of his creative signature. We meet this distinctive language in *Private Investigator*, in *The Dragon Beloved*, in his last production *A Very Old Song*, just mention a few. The poetic language becomes for Gurevitch a tool to explore layers in the spirit and psyche of his characters, freeing the theatre from the chains of confined realism, as he would often stress his belief of the theatre's role saying that "the role of the theatre is to investigate and open hidden layers that people sometimes would choose to ignore. Why it is so important to reveal these layers? Because they are part of our reality whether we acknowledge them or not. When people shut the door in the face of what works in their reality—all the layers of reality are still working behind



closed doors, leading a life without conscious choice, without consciously awakened influence” (*Introduction to Theatre*, TV program). The use of myth, dreams, and synchronicity are means Gurevitch employs. As in the use of meta-theatre, these means become the meaning he wishes to express.

For meeting the inner life of the child, Gurevitch creates the ability to look at his world through the child’s eyes and, simultaneously, through the adult’s heart which longs to reconnect to the child. In *Private Investigator*, the child holds the key to this mystery and to its unceasing creative investigation—where is the father? Why is the child sick and cannot wake up? Why is the mother dying? Why is the husband estranged from his wife?



*Figure 21: Weizmann Heart Starts to Open*



*Figure 22: “Don’t Look Back Now, Not Until You Get Back Home” (Gurevitch Website)*

## EPILOGUE

In 2001 I watched *Passing Shadow* in the Khan Theatre in Jerusalem. Years later I still recall the experience of catharsis I felt towards the end of the show, sitting in the dark, watching the mother obsessively devouring food in a desperate attempt to suffocate the tragic forceful pain and agonizing loss caused by her own estranging of her daughter thirty years ago. Then, moving with her to the last scene to see her as an old and sick woman who cannot even recognize her beloved daughter who came back to reconcile, I felt I was experiencing a visceral *understanding* of the concept.

Sitting there in the theatre, I felt stricken with sadness over this human tragic condition, however, in a paradoxical way, this tragic fall of the mother who dragged the whole family with her awoke within me a deep clarity, a profound momentarily awakening into the forces of the taboos within me. I noticed a clear inner movement toward a conscious intention to choose the love energy in my life above all. I was intensely moved by an experience that felt like a clear seeing through my own culturally captured habituations. I saw how community's taboos conditioned reactive patterns which clouded my conscious choice, shadowed my inner balance--and how much of potential damage it holds.

This paradoxical moment where the family's tragedy became an awakening positive, healing experience for me, reached its common purpose, its paradoxical success, as Francis Ferguson asserts in his introduction to Aristotle's *Poetics*, "The chorus, and through it, the audience has attained that mode of action, *theoria*, contemplation of the truth, which Aristotle graded as the *ultimate goal* of a truly human life" (13). Gurevitch understood the main theme of their coming show after the actors'

improvisational experience, saying that “the theme of this play became the social structure or the social entity standing against a passing shadow that threatens to enter” (Interview with Keinar).

Revisiting the healing function of catharsis through my experience deepened the knowing that it was meant to draw the spectator’s attention towards supporting and improving social, collective, and human relationships. By reexamining the space between performance and spectator, I felt that the responsibility [response-ability] that is imbedded in this space is an essential part to Gurevitch’s work.

The desire to see into the whole process from its inception to the end-product I have watched, to study the internal and external process Gurevitch and his group moved through to create that shared transformative experience, resulted in the project of this dissertation. I embarked into exploring the creative process that moves Gurevitch in his theatre-making. I followed my plan and studied the method of actor training Gurevitch developed, observed the ways in which he implemented his method through a two-year program in the Nisan Nativ Acting Studio. I witnessed a six-month collaborative rehearsal process which Gurevitch developed to create an original production based on an original play that he wrote during the rehearsal process. And finally, I have further studied and analyzed two additional productions Gurevitch created while following his distinct methods, to better understand the essence of what he wishes to express.

The deeper I entered the project of this study, the clearer I began to see the through-line of Gurevitch’s creative path; his philosophy and practices that translates into a set of principles which underline his artistic work from the first exercise he conducts in his acting class to the meaningful, authentic, and influential productions.

As Professor Ariel Hirschfeld wrote about his art, “The entirety of his work carries a salient personal signature that weaves together the comic and tragic, the grotesque and the lyric, and in which an outstanding, unerring acting is performed, and where deeply layered drama is woven into a completion and great beauty” (Hirschfeld letter to EMT Prize Committee. Jerusalem, 2005).

I felt drawn for my own purposes and, hopefully, for benefiting everyone else to extract the main principles which this study finds as being part of the map that moves Gurevitch’s creative process in his theatre making.

### ***The principles***

The first two main principles can be traced all the way back to the *Poetics*. Aristotle believed that all poetry comes from two instincts in human nature, that of imitation and that of harmony and rhythm (*Poetics* 55). Aristotle says, states Francis Fergusson in his introduction to Aristotle’s *Poetics* that, “Poets, like painters, musicians, and dancers, all *imitate action* in their various ways” (4). Fergusson emphasizes that “By *action* he means, not physical activity, but a movement of spirit, and by *imitation* he means, not superficial copying, but a representational of the countless forms which the life of the human spirit may take, in the media of the arts: musical sound, paint, word, or gesture” (4).

Aristotle refers to the shared experience in the theatre as an experience that comes from the mimetic act where the spectator recognizes the movement of the spirit on stage in him, while the harmony and rhythm refers to the pleasure of form which usually considered “purely esthetic.”

It is these two aspects: human (life) content and form, for which Gurevitch developed his methods and techniques as tools with which to explore and create his theatre. These artistic principles which remain alive through a long history of human creation have been observed in this study as the leading thread through Gurevitch's creative process. Both in his Physical Image Method of training and in the process of creating original productions, Gurevitch connects various forms of archetypal mythic themes with the immediacy of human content which emerges on stage through his actors, using the Physical Image Method to create a dynamic, authentic, contemporary theatre.

### ***Principles of Gurevitch's creative process***

#### ***Working with and teaching actors:***

1. In their art actors practice *being* the character rather than *acting* the character in any given production. Every show they act in is a show about them and about their internal human journey manifested through the plot of the show.
2. Actors can be looked at as scape goats. On stage, they re-live in their bodies the joyful as well as the very agonizing human conditions. As the tragic heroes, they are willing to look at their essence for the healing of the community.
3. The Physical Image Method is both a philosophy and a tool; it serves as a topographic map for the acting art and it invites the actor's work to become a lifetime of explorative journey.
4. Essentially, all that is being acted on stage happens in the body and nowhere else.
5. A stage is a metaphoric space; we can't copy life. An actor creates images and needs to be precise and effective, mirroring a state and a will with utmost clarity. This is the art. The actor is a poet, instead of creating words he creates physical images. His voice is part of his body and so is the text.

6. The bodily image encapsulates the theatrical drama; a physical action that stems from a clear, conscious inner objective and clear state, while the words, when incorporated into the act, are an extension of the physical body.
7. Acting is a metaphor that becomes a live reality on stage. It's not copying life but a metaphorical reality, a physical image.
8. The physical image is a physical event in action. The action stems from a clear will and a clear state.
9. On stage, everything is "as in life," it is never the "actual life".
10. Actors need to journey beyond their boundaries. To reveal through acting new territories and grow through that as artists.
11. One needs the "right" reason for becoming an actor so he can hold the energy, dedication, degree of strength and courage required from this profession. a good intention is the will to create, to express life through the art. To become a good artist.
12. A creation is usually a revelation not an invention: "To reveal one should clearly see, become aware. The ego deludes seeing clearly what is there."
13. A conscious knowing of an actor's WILL and STATE releases a precise action and moves the WILL energy from a subjective state to an objective state expressed on stage. Having a clear conscious "WILL" is in the heart of the actor's authentic action on stage.
14. Always search for the connection between the main underlining intention that moves the character to certain action and the momentary intentions. And always look for the common ground between these intentions and their resultant actions.
15. Drama does not exist without a conflict.
16. Our way to be in the world is through our body. With my body, *I act* and with my soul/mind/spirit *I want*.
17. The Physical Image Method for actors identifies the stage as a metaphoric space of life.
18. "When you go on stage it is not the time to wait for inspiration; the inspiration is there within you, wired already in your body/mind. You just allow it to relive itself in your body on stage." (Gurevitch, in rehearsal)

of *Uncle Vanya*) The method becomes a mean for Gurevitch to free the artist to create.

19. The spoken word on stage is an action.
20. As with all actions, the symbols of words are birthed from the body. The role of the actor is to transcend the symbol to a physical energy, to ground the words and to give it a physical body.
21. The actors manifest their words through their voice and need to connect voice to a Will, to a STATE, and to an ACTION.
22. The objective, the WILL on stage does not stop until the actors leave the stage.
23. An actor needs to be first herself in a situation.
24. Actors, in their advanced stage of training, need to evolve into creative theatre artists.
25. What is interesting in theatre is to see how *you*, for example, are acting Hamlet. The story is the same, however, each time it is utterly different as it is somebody else's life's journey—and when you play Hamlet, it is nothing but your own life's journey.
26. The stage is the space where the boundaries of the imagination opens-up.
27. Actors need to journey beyond their boundaries. To reveal through acting new territories and grow through that as artists.
28. The art of acting, as any art, holds the language of expressed life.
29. Gurevitch wishes for his actors to discover the strong bond between life and art and the affinity between personal freedom and creation.

#### **Gurevitch's attributes and principles for making original theatre production:**

1. Making theater that is not moved by a populist trend and the immediate taste of the audience. A theatre which follows a clear artistic approach, nonetheless, is not detached from its audience.



2. Creating a stable and a long-term company that doesn't build on a stardom hierarchy but grows a collaborative group of artists which are part of the creative process of any new production.
3. Theatre as a place to explore, experiment, create.
4. Creating long-term relationships with the actors allows for a space of trust and invulnerability the actors need to free their creativity, deepen their exploration and create a distinctive meaningful theatre together. No tenured track is offered.
5. Everything you create needs to have roots in your own life's experience.
6. Gurevitch aims to "empty" his mind before beginning the work rather than fill it with data and analysis. Free his mind as much as possible from the old, creating space for a new to be expressed.
7. What becomes the through-line of the production, becomes the map, the compass that moves the creation.
8. Working on a production is learning and searching what is happening in the play and what is happening within us.
9. A piece of art is a mysterious creation not a moral action.
10. Theatre is a process; the audience may think they came to see a story but they are watching a process. A process of actions and situations that are taking place on stage right now in front of people who are watching it unfold while they are part of this experience.
11. Open yourself to the possibilities--and pay attention.
12. Trust that there is already a show in the room that awaits to be revealed.

***For further exploration and final words***

In this study, I have focused on Gurevitch's Physical Image Method, both in actor training and in the creative process. Given the richness of looking at this artist and at his heritage and his legacy, I hope that in time, Gurevitch's work and maybe this study will be looked at for further exploration, such as Gurevitch's work in the context of the Israeli theatre, exploring his volume of dramatic work, his work as an artistic director

in the Khan Theatre, and how he succeeded to maintain the quality of a small repertoire theatre following his sense of responsibility to the art, to the culture, to his audience. It may be valuable in the future to look at Gurevitch's theatre work in the context of the Israeli Theatre and the changes the theatre moved through since Israel was recognized as a legal country by the United Nation in 1949.

This year Gurevitch is concluding eighteen years of being an artistic director in the Khan Theatre. In the premier of his adaptation of Dario Fo's, *The Strange Story of an Anarchist*, which was the last show he directed while serving as the Khan artistic director, Gurevitch bowed and expressed deep gratitude to the Khan audience for many years of devotion and dedication to their theatre. I feel that this dissertation is an homage, a service for a true and authentic artist. And I bless Gurevitch for many more years of creating and expressing what he wants to expose and of "revealing" the shows which are already in his room.

#### **Last words...**

**In the scientific world**, Ilya Prigogine's, the Nobel Prize recipient in Chemistry, words echo what Gurevitch believes lies in the heart of the theatre art:

The universe like art is a creation out of the possibilities. The art is a metaphoric expression of the world and every moment in life we come to a breaking point of new possibilities. Before the breaking point life is deterministic, however, *when we approach the breaking point, there are always the choices. Every breaking point holds the possibilities*" (Ilya Prigogine).

**In the spiritual world,** Pope Francis' words on the human spiritual dimension echo what Gurevitch believes lies in the heart of the theatre art:

Inseparably connected to the human dimension is the concept of human freedom, which is the power to choose this or that.... It is in this, in our free choice, that the possibility of love is made real... and it is the individual choice of action that embodies the essential force of political change (Pope Francis).

**In the theatrical world,** Gurevitch follows this philosophy and it is in the core of all his theatre creations. He trusts that the drama is a conflict, a struggle, and in its center, lies the conscious ability of the hero to choose: "It is in this, in our free choice, that the possibility of love is made real, and it is in this same raw space that the struggle, the human conflict is embedded" (personal interview, July 2014).

## APPENDIX

## THE PLAYS GUREVITCH WROTE AND DIRECTED

**Plays he wrote and directed in Nisan Nativ Acting Studio:**

*Angels are not forever, Stanislavsky, A Journey towards the sea, Orpheus, The stone and the roses, Noyman - a soldier's fairytale, Me, Yuda and the chief of staff's sister (with Daniel Lappin), The small distance between love and body, Sleep and fire, Many waters (with Daniel Lappin).*

**In "Habima National Theatre" he directed:**

*Accidental Death of an Anarchist, Filumena, Salome, Caviale E Lentichis, Sanger, A Little Hotel on the Side, The House on Sheinkin Street, Ricky's Kindergarten, The Labor of Living, Winter Feast, Marius, The Witch. In "Cameri Theatre" he directed Macbeth, The Imaginary Invalid, The Sixteenth Lamb, Antigone, A Funny Thing Happened, The Twelfth Night, Father of the Groom, Marriage, Kroom. In "Haifa Theatre" he directed The Trojan War Will Not Take Place, Max & Moritz, Bury the Dead, Amadeus (in co-op with "Habima").*

**In "Beer-Sheva Theatre" he directed:**

*Much Ado About Nothing.*

**In "Beit-Lessin Theatre" he directed:**

*Holy Water, The Venetian Twins (in co-op with "Beer-Sheva"), Jacko.*

**He directed third-year students at Nisan Nativ's Acting Studio in the shows:**

*They Were All My Sons Except For Naomi, Black Was the Night, A Midsummer Night's Dream, My Affair with Gaya.*

Since May 2001 serves as Artistic Director of the Khan Theatre, where he directed his plays:

*Transient shadow, A Word of Love, We Are the Cavalry, Happiness, The Winners, The Dragon's Beloved, The Winners* (with Daniel Lappin), *The Dragon's Beloved, The Investigator, A Very Old Song*. He also directed *Fighting for Home* (satire based on Aristophanes), *The Miser, The King's Clothes* (in co-op with "Habima"), *Life Is A Dream, Othello, The Cherry Orchard, Eating, Uncle Vanya, The Strange Story of an Anarchist, The Comedy of Calandro*.

**Michael Gurevitch awards:**

The Finkel award for **Ricky's Kindergarten**, the Dr. Gamzo Tel Aviv Museum award, the Margalit award and also Best Director in 1999 for **Transient Shadow**, in 2004 for **The Miser**, and in 2005 for **Happiness**.

Receiver of the Landau award for 2004.

Receiver of the Emet award for 2005, honoring his direction work and his contribution to Israeli theatre.

Receiver of an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy awarded from The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. 2012.

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## ABSTRACT

THE ARTIST AS TRAGIC HERO:  
THE CREATIVE PROCESS  
OF PLAYWRIGHT, DIRECTOR MICHAEL GUREVITCT

by

BILHA BIRMAN RIVLIN

December 2018

**Advisor:** Dr. James Thomas

**Co-Advisor:** Dr. David Magidson

**Major:** Theatre

**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

“*Know Thy Own Self and Be Moderate*” is the saying carved on Apollo’s temple in Delphi. The Greeks believed that when we lose our *inner knowing*, we become alienated and delusional. In this dissertation, I explore the distinct creative process of the playwright and director Michael Gurevitch and his role in the Israeli theatre in the light of the tragic hero’s dramatic path as originated in the Dionysian Festivals of ancient Greece. This study sees the artist’s creative process as the dramatic journey of the tragic hero where both mirror life in the deepest sense of the word while the essence of their path becomes the destiny of the society.

Drawing on resources such as personal interviews, video footage of live rehearsals, recordings of original productions, and archived materials, this dissertation examines the philosophy that inspires and informs Gurevitch’s creative work, along with the distinct method he developed and the tools and techniques with which he originates and devises his original productions. Gurevitch’s creative process is examined by

focusing on and exploring three main sections within his process of theatre making: 1. Methods and philosophy of teaching acting, 2. The unique rehearsal process with which he creates his productions, and 3. Close analysis of three original productions.

Gurevitch experiences the drama as a conflict, a struggle within which center exists the ability of the hero to consciously choose for his highest good and with that choose for the highest good of the community. Gurevitch along with his actors, become co-creators of a theatre event that exceeds either of their art alone.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Bilha Birman Rivlin was born in Tel Aviv where her love and fascination with the theatre began at three years old, when her father took her with him to the Yiddish Theatre that came to perform in town. She feels that the dreamlike world that emerged on stage wired its mystic expression in her mind for the rest of her life.

After her four-year studies in acting and directing in the theatre department at Tel Aviv University, Bilha followed her acting teacher, Nola Chilton, to found the new experimental Israeli theatre in the old part of Tel Aviv: *Neve Tsedek Theatre*. The theatre performed original Israeli drama that was co-created and developed by the *Theatre* group led by Mrs. Chilton. Later Bilha pursued her love of puppetry, story performance, and strong attraction to myth, folk tales and Jewish mysticism, and founded her own theatre, the *Moon Theatre*. There she created, produced, and performed her shows around the country. Bilha was invited by *the Israeli Education Ministry* to develop and conduct seminars in drama, puppetry, and theatre technique and the ways to apply these arts to school curricula.

In 2003, Bilha left Israel and moved to Ann Arbor Michigan with her husband and their three children due to a two-year work invitation for him. That was when her story began to change. Owing to unexpected course of event the family prolonged the stay, Bilha went back to school at Eastern Michigan University where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Communication, Media, & Theatre Arts with honors, and her Master of Art in Communication, Media, & Theatre Arts Interpretation/Performance Studies. She is near completion of a PhD in Theatre Studies and Directing from Wayne State University in Detroit.