Theater Games and Stanislavski's System: A Study on the Origins of Viola Spolin's Theatrical Education

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This study investigates the relation between Viola Spolin's methodology of theatrical education and Konstantin Stanislavski's. It elucidates major similarities and differences between Spolin's theater games and Stanislavski's system in more detail than previous research. This investigation belongs to a research project on the origins of Spolin's games, which have been widely adopted in contemporary education. The present study reveals that Spolin shared several essential ideas with Stanislavski: the application of improvisation to theatrical training, the objection to director-centered production, the emphasis on intuition and spontaneity in the creative process, the evocative function of the theatrical situation/circumstances, the value of emotion and memory for creation, and the concept of energy exchange in theatrical communication. In addition, she introduced several games highly similar to the exercises in Stanislavski's system, for example, Exposure, Space Objects, Gibberish, and No Motion Warm-Up. Spolin presumably adopted, directly or indirectly, at least some of the key concepts and exercises from Stanislavski's theatrical works. However, she refused some aspects of Stanislavski's system: the teacher's privilege of approval/disapproval, the strong emphasis on imagination, the psychological view of emotion and memory, and the inhibition of direct communication between actors and the audience. Instead, Spolin developed several unique ideas for theatrical education, for instance, teachers as fellow players, contact as a way to get out into the theatrical environment, body memory as opposed to mental retention, and audience members as fellow players. The results of this study thus provide the insight that Stanislavski's system had a more profound influence, whether as a positive or negative model, on Spolin's theory and practice than as illustrated by previous studies. In this way, the present study casts light upon a significant phase of the history of theatrical methods in education and contributes to a better understanding of the characteristics and underlying philosophy of theater games.

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1. Introduction

This study investigates the relation between Viola Spolin's methodology of theatrical education and Konstantin Stanislavski's. It elucidates major similarities and differences between Spolin's theater games and Stanislavski's system in more detail than previous research. This investigation belongs to a research project on the origins of Spolin's games, which have been widely adopted in contemporary education. Previous studies in this field have often placed greater emphasis on the impact of Neva Boyd's works, rather than Stanislavski's, upon the development of Spolin's method. The present study provides the insight that Stanislavski's system had a more profound influence, whether as a positive or negative model, on Spolin's theory and practice than as illustrated by previous research. It casts light upon a significant phase of the history of theatrical methods in education and contributes to a better understanding of the characteristics and underlying philosophy of theater games.

Viola Spolin (1906-1994) was an actor, director, and educator in the United States who created *theater games* for actor training and child education. She studied the theory and practice of social group work with Neva Boyd at Hull House in Chicago from 1923 to 1926. Spolin first invented the games around 1940 when she worked with inner city and immigrant children at Hull House. As a director of The Young Actors Company in Hollywood from 1948 to 1954, she continued to create and develop the games for theatrical training. Spolin introduced the games into workshops for adult professional actors from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s when she conducted workshops at The Compass and The Second City. Spolin's theory and practice remarkably changed the methodology of theatrical training in the USA and provided the foundations for modern improvisational theater. Spolin also made effective use of theater games in workshops for non-theatrical purposes, such as public school education, mental health, and rehabilitation of delinquent children (Viola Spolin Estate, 2015). Currently, Spolin's improvisational games are widely applied to various fields of education, for example, education in schools and communities, business training in companies, and medical education in the USA and other countries, including Japan.

Spolin mentioned Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) in the acknowledgments in *Improvisation for the Theater* (1963). Stanislavski, a world-famous Russian/Soviet director, developed a revolutionary methodology of actor training called *system*. His main book, *An Actor Prepares,* was first published in the USA in 1936, followed by *Building a Character* (1949) and *Creating a Role* (1961).[1] His methodology was "very much in the theatrical air" in Chicago in 1930s (Coleman, 1991, p. 31). Spolin was introduced to Stanislavski's system when she went to New York to study acting with The Group Theatre in 1935. She built a long-lasting relationship with some notable members of The Group Theatre (Viola Spolin Estate, 2015). Spolin (1999) wrote that she was "grateful for the insights" into Stanislavski's works that she had acquired "at sporadic times" throughout her life (p. xlvii). Researchers like Brone (1990), Scott (2014), and Frost and Yarrow (2016) shared a common interest in

the fact that both Spolin and Stanislavski incorporated improvisation into their theatrical training.

However, Spolin occasionally placed stress on the distance between her methodology and Stanislavski's. According to Coleman (1991), when Spolin attended a Stanislavski system workshop conducted by "somebody in Chicago," such "secondhand (and perhaps bowdlerized)" experience of the system made her recognize its considerable contrasts to her methodology in some respects (p. 31). Coleman (1991) cited Spolin's impressions on Stanislavski's disciples: "their work is in the head and mine is in the space" and "they were in the past. I believe in present time" (p. 31). Spolin distanced herself from Stanislavski's system again in a 1987 interview, saying, "I didn't know his system until I was well out into the world" because she "was a group worker" (Duffy, 2011, p. 46). Duffy (2011) interpreted this statement as Spolin's recantation of her acknowledgment of Stanislavski cited above (p. 8).

In summary, Spolin appreciated the insights she had acquired from Stanislavski's system, but, at the same time, recognized its considerable distance from her own methodology. She rarely commented on the system directly in her publications. Spolin's contradictory attitudes to and silence on Stanislavski's works pose the difficulty of clarifying the relation between their methodologies on the basis of her direct mentions alone.

Several books and academic papers have illustrated the overlaps and distinctions between Spolin's and Stanislavski's methodologies. Moffitt's *Stanislavski and Spolin* (1978) is the most extensive research on this subject, in which the author extracted "intuitive" elements from Spolin's works and "intellectual" ones from Stanislavski's and then synthesized these elements to develop a new system for theatrical training. Moffitt's argument covered, roughly or minutely, most topics that subsequent researchers mentioned when they dealt with the relation between Spolin's and Stanislavski's methodologies. For instance, Moffitt (1978) and Coleman (1991) contrasted Spolin's emphasis on the physical and intuitive with Stanislavski's one on the emotional and intellectual. A historical study by Scott (2014) as well as Moffitt (1978) suggested that both Spolin and Stanislavski put stress on the significant roles of the theatrical situation/circumstances. Moffitt (1978) also described the relation between Spolin's concept of *point of concentration* and Stanislavski's *point of attention* as well as between their conceptions of *theme*. In addition, Schmitt (1990) pointed out the contrasts between Spolin's and Stanislavski's approaches to theatrical communication.

Nevertheless, the overall picture of the relation between Spolin's and Stanislavski's methodologies has not yet been provided, mainly for two reasons. First, previous studies have overlooked some significant similarities and differences between Spolin's theater games and Stanislavski's system. In particular, they have seldom investigated in detail the overlaps and distinctions between Spolin's and Stanislavski's theatrical exercises. Second, newer studies have not always referred to older ones regarding the relation between the two methodologies. Most have briefly described it in connection with the history of theatrical improvisation. The results of individual studies have never been synthesized into one perspective. Therefore, it is important to develop a synthetic view of the relation between Spolin's and Stanislavski's methodologies on the basis of their own writings and the results of previous studies.

In order to contribute to the achievement of this goal, the present study conducts a comparative examination of Spolin's and Stanislavski's published works, mainly the major ones originally edited in their last years and after their deaths to provide the full pictures of their methodologies in detail: the third edition of Spolin's *Improvisation for the Theater* (1999)

and Stanislavski's *An Actor's Work* (2017). In Subsections 2-1, 2-3, 2-5, and 2-7, this study closely examines the similarities and differences between their key concepts pointed out by previous research, especially those that need further investigation, supplementary illustration, and/or modified interpretation. On the basis of these conceptual examinations, in Subsections 2-2, 2-4, 2-6, and 2-8, this study investigates the overlaps and distinctions between Spolin's and Stanislavski's theatrical exercises each of which is closely related to the topic of the immediately preceding subsection.

2. Key Concepts and Exercises in Spolin's and Stanislavski's Methodologies

2.1. Improvisation and Authority of Teachers

As pointed out by Brone (1990), Scott (2014), and Frost and Yarrow (2016), Spolin and Stanislavski both incorporated improvisation into theatrical training. Stanislavski adopted improvisation as a device for actor training and rehearsals for scripted plays, especially in the form called *étude*. In Stanislavski's études, students collaboratively improvise an unscripted scene in a situation decided by the teacher (Stanislavski, 2017). Spolin introduced improvisation to workshops and rehearsals for scripted plays and improvisational theater in a form different from étude: theater games. In Spolin's theater games, players cooperatively solve a problem as determined by the rules of the game (Spolin, 1999).

Both Spolin and Stanislavski grasped improvisation as a means to stimulate and liberate their students' *intuition*. Spolin (1999) explained that theater games lead the players into the intuitive, which she thought is "most vital to the learning situation" (p. 3). Stanislavski (2017) remarked that acting is "above all intuitive" and thus intuition must be "the bedrock" of the theatrical work (p. xxx).[2] When Moffitt (1978) interpreted Spolin's method as intuitive and Stanislavski's as intellectual, he overestimated the intellectual tendency of Stanislavski's system and disregarded its emphasis on the intuitive.[3] Spolin's games and Stanislavski's études both free actors from merely intellectual analyses of scripts and stereotypical performances. Spolin and Stanislavski thus adopted improvisation to develop the *spontaneity* of their students on the basis of the revelatory function of intuition.

In addition, Spolin and Stanislavski shared the objection against the director-centered way of creation in traditional theater that suppresses the spontaneity of actors. Stanislavski invented the system to break away from the theatrical tradition in which actors merely followed the director's instructions (Benedetti, 2008, p. 44). Indeed, the teacher in *An Actor's Work* (Tortsov = Stanislavski) always lets the students comment on their performances, ask questions, and insist on their own opinions. However, Stanislavski did not fully abandon his authority as a theatrical teacher. In *An Actor's Work*, only the teacher can evaluate the students' études in light of the entire system because they usually fail to notice their own problems and weaknesses in acting by themselves. The teacher often strictly criticizes the students' études and rigidly rejects their protests. Moreover, the teacher always gives a long lecture before and/or after études because it is difficult for the students to comprehend the principles of the system in a brief explanation (Stanislavski, 2017). The teacher in *An Actor's Work* knows what is right and what is wrong before the étude is played. The privilege of one-sided evaluation and one-way lecturing allows the teacher to demonstrate strong authority that in turn makes the students dependent on the teacher's approval/disapproval.

Spolin took the objection against the authoritarianism in traditional theater several steps further. She attempted to abandon the authority not only as a director but also as a teacher with the privilege of approval/disapproval. The rules of theater games are displayed simply and concretely for students so that they can evaluate the process and result of the game together with the teacher. Teachers in Spolin's games are expected to be *fellow players* with their students and give them *side-coaching* during the game rather than long lectures.[4] The teacher never knows what is right or wrong before the game is played (Spolin, 1999, pp. 6-9, 20-30). In this way, Spolin's theater games allow the teacher to leave their authority and to solve the problems collaboratively with the students, thus bringing a democratic and playful mood into the classroom. The democratic nature of theater games removes the fear of approval/disapproval from students and allows them to play spontaneously and learn cooperatively through direct experience.

Duffy (2011) suggested that this anti-authoritarian nature of theater games originated in the difficulty of intercultural communication that Spolin encountered when she worked with adult immigrants and their children (pp. 43-45). Spolin's conception of teachers as fellow players can be associated with Boyd's theory on leaders as observing participants (Boyd, 1971, p. 225). The experience as a social worker prompted Spolin to disown the authority as a teacher and develop the democratic methodology of theatrical education.

2.2. Exercise 1: Exposure and Stage Fright

The first exercise that Spolin (1999) introduced in *Improvisation for the Theater* is called *Exposure* (pp. 53-55). The purpose of this game is for players to understand the importance of *focus* through direct experience rather than a lecture. Half of the players stand on stage while the other half remain in the auditorium. Each group looks at the other. When the players onstage show discomfort with being watched, the teacher gives them a task such as counting floorboards. Spolin (1999) explained that the task makes the players onstage relax while they concentrate on what they are doing (pp. 53-55). Each theater game has a unique focus as a task for players to concentrate on and accomplish.

Spolin's Exposure exercise is highly similar to Stanislavski's exercise in the second lesson on "Concentration and Attention" in *An Actor's Work*. In the first lesson, the students experience discomfort when they are onstage and confronted with the dark auditorium like a "black hole" (Stanislavski, 2017, pp. 90-94). At the beginning of the second lesson, the teacher lines up the students along the stage footlights and asks them, "Who has a heel missing?" The students then start to examine their own and others' footwear and never notice what happens in the auditorium. While they concentrate on the task onstage, they thoroughly forget the threat of the black hole. The teacher explains that actors must be absorbed in what is happening onstage to divert their attention from the auditorium (Stanislavski, 2017, pp. 94-95).

These two exercises have similar forms and objectives: They liberate actors from the discomfort with being watched that disturbs their spontaneity. The major distinction is that in Stanislavski's exercise, only the teacher is in the auditorium watching the students onstage, whereas in Spolin's, the teacher remains in the auditorium with half of the students. This is one of the manifestations of the democratic nature of Spolin's teaching method.

2.3. Situation/Circumstances and Imagination

Both Spolin and Stanislavski highlighted the evocative function of theatrical situation/circumstances in which actors live and act. Stanislavski listed "who" (character), "when" (time), "where" (place), "why" (background), "for what reason" (objective), and "how" as the essence of theatrical reality (Stanislavski, 2017, pp. 86-89). Spolin also recognized the value of all these elements but put stress especially on "Where" (place), "Who" (character), "What" (objective), and "Why" (background) as the most important ones (Spolin, 1999, p. 369). Spolin and Stanislavski thus described the elements of theatrical situation/circumstances in much the same way. However, their approaches to theatrical reality have critical distinctions, especially in terms of their conceptions of imagination.

Scott (2014) explained that the actor's imagination plays a vital role in Stanislavski's approach to theatrical circumstances (pp. 110-112). The teacher in *An Actor's Work* often stimulates the students' imagination with the *magic if*: "What would you do if all this really happened?" (Stanislavski, 2017, pp. 54-57, 87). In a scripted play, the author provides several "ifs" and specific circumstances for the actors to stimulate their imagination, and in turn, their imagination fills out and gives depth to the "thoughts, feelings, aspirations, and actions" of the characters (Stanislavski, 2017, pp. 63-66). Every movement and every word of the actors onstage must be "the result of a truthful imagination" (Stanislavski, 2017, p. 88).

Spolin (1986) recognized the value of imagination and Stanislavski's magic if at least to some extent (p. 215). She utilized the power of imagination in the *Animal Images* exercise attributed to Maria Ouspenskaya (a disciple of Stanislavski). However, Spolin (1999) strictly limited the use of this exercise to times when character qualities do not emerge from direct experience (pp. 240-241). She regarded imagination as subjective and inventive. To imagine is to create "one's own ideas of how things should be" (Spolin, 1999, p. 361). Spolin (1999) refused to depend on the player's imagination because the arbitrary "Pre-planning How" kills spontaneity and prevents new experiences (pp. 35-36). She insisted that imagination belongs "to the intellect as opposed to coming from the intuitive" (Spolin, 1999, p. 361).

The alternative concept to imagination in Spolin's methodology is *contact* defined as "physical and visual involvement with the theater environment" that consists of touching, seeing, smelling, hearing, and looking (Spolin, 1999, p. 357). As pointed out by Brone (1990), Spolin considered that "environmental involvement" stimulates the spontaneity of actors, which "leads to freedom, discovery, and creativity" (p. 48). Spolin (1999) introduced the most basic exercises for teaching contact under the category of *Orientation* (pp. 51-86). Through these exercises, players learn to live in the invisible fictional world onstage and, even without any actual objects and stage settings, to make it visible for the audience through their contact and physical actions. In the whole system of Spolin's theater games, the Orientation exercises provide the first steps for players to get "out into the environment" (Spolin, 1999, p. 56).

Spolin (1999) insisted that, in the moment of spontaneity, every part of the players functions as an organic whole, and they are involved within the environment on all levels: physical, intellectual, and intuitive (p. 6). In this respect, she followed Boyd's theory about "dynamic organism-as-a-whole-environment behavior" in spontaneous play (Boyd, 1971, p. 82). From Spolin's viewpoint, the strong dependence on intellectual imagination, as observed in Stanislavski's magic if, disturbs the organic unity between players and the environment. It was probably in this context that she criticized Stanislavski's disciples' works as being "in

the head." Spolin introduced the side-coaching phrases "Out of the head!" and "Into the space!" to remind the players of the importance of contact (cf. Spolin, 1999, p. liii).

2.4. Exercise 2: Space Object and Action without Objects

Despite the differences between Spolin's and Stanislavski's approaches to theatrical situation/circumstances, they developed remarkably similar exercises in terms of living in theatrical reality: *Space Object* and *Action without Objects*.

Spolin's concept of *space objects* refers to invisible objects that become visible through the player's contact. She developed many games in which players learn to act with space objects (Spolin, 1975, pp. 25-26, 55-56). In scripted theater, actors must act mostly with imitative props and stage settings. In improvisational theater, they have only a few or no props and settings. Thus, they must learn the skill to make the invisible visible through physical contact (Spolin, 1999, p. 55). Spolin (1999) insisted that this creation of the reality out of nothing "makes it possible for the actor to take a first step into the beyond" (p. 17). Physical contact with space objects is a device for finding a way toward "the unknown, the intuitive, and perhaps beyond to the human spirit itself" (Spolin, 1999, p. 16).

Spolin's Space Object is highly similar to Stanislavski's Action without Objects.[5] Stanislavski (2017) wrote, like Spolin, that actors must be able to "kill the king without a sword, and light a fire without matches" (p. 47). The teacher in *An Actor's Work* tells the students to play études without props and demonstrates that actors must work on the "realistic detail" and "small truths" of each action in order to make themselves and the audience believe in what they are doing onstage (Stanislavski, 2017, pp. 162, 169, 179). According to Stanislavski (2017), this exercise enables actors to feel "at home on the stage" and improvise a "total and thoroughly justified physical action" spontaneously (p. 169).

Considerable overlaps can be observed between Spolin's Space Object and Stanislavski's Action without Objects. They both highlight the importance of physical actions without actual props that enable actors to liberate their intuition and organically live in theatrical reality. A major distinction is that Spolin consistently insisted on the value of physical contact itself, whereas Stanislavski regarded physical actions as a basis of *belief* in the truth of actions and feelings onstage. When Spolin (1999) wrote that believing is "something personal to the actor and not necessary to creating stage reality," she was objecting to Stanislavski's emphasis on belief in what happens onstage (p. 356).

2.5. Emotion and Memory

Moffitt (1978) and Coleman (1991) contrasted the psychological tendency of Stanislavski's methodology with the non-psychological one of Spolin's. This suggests the distinctions between Spolin's and Stanislavski's approaches to emotion and memory. Levitt (1976) illustrated that Spolin once explored the potential of Stanislavski's exercises for stimulating *emotion memory*, but later moved away from them because she found them too subjective, like belief (p. 83). As opposed to Stanislavski and Lee Strasberg,[6] Spolin was "against the use of recall in a scene" (Brone, 1990, p. 56). Seham (1997) pointed out that Spolin emphasized present activity, direct experience, and environment, whereas Stanislavski and The Group Theatre focused on emotion and memory (p. 33). Indeed, these descriptions highlight significant gaps between Spolin's and Stanislavski's approaches to emotion and memory, but their relation cannot be reduced to simple opposition.

Stanislavski (2017) considered that when actors establish theatrical circumstances and genuinely believe in them, the "'truth of the passions' will arise of its own accord" (p. 56). He explained the *truth of the passions* as "genuine, living, human passions, feelings, the actor's own personal experiences" (Stanislavski, 2017, p. 55). Actors must endorse every moment onstage with their belief "in the truth of the feelings" and "in the truth of the action" through their physical actions (Stanislavski, 2017, pp. 162, 171-174). Stanislavski (2017) introduced the concept of emotion memory in this regard and pointed out its close relation to the memory of the five senses (pp. 204-212). He insisted that actors must equip themselves with emotion memory to be able to evoke their feelings onstage in the given circumstances filled with their imagination (Stanislavski, 2017, pp. 204-208).

Spolin (1999) recognized the significance of emotion in the theater so long as it comes out of "a fresh experience" in theatrical reality and is communicated through *physicalization* (pp. 219-220). She firmly refused to depend on "personal and/or subjective" emotion because she considered that it "does not constitute a theatrical communication" (Spolin, 1999, p. 219). Spolin (1999) also avoided relying on "old emotion from past experiences" to keep away from *psycho-drama*, which she thought "leads players to exploit their emotions instead of experiencing total organic motion" (pp. 219-220). She grasped recall as subjective memory that can be "destructive to the theater reality" (Spolin, 1999, p. 367). Spolin thus distanced herself from Stanislavski's concept of emotion memory and its psychological implications. This is probably why she criticized Stanislavski's disciples as being "in the past."

However, she did not deny the value of memory itself. Spolin (1999) asserted that in *spontaneous selection* without calculation, in contrast to forced recalling of old experiences, "the intuitive gives us past experiences organically as part of a total life process" (p. 367). She introduced the concept of *body memory* (physical memory) as opposed to mental and/or intellectual retention (Spolin, 1999, p. 357). In the explanation of the *Sensory Awareness* exercises, she wrote that they are "the first step in recognizing that physical memory exists within us and can be called up intuitively whenever we need it" (Spolin, 1999, p. 61). Spolin recognized the value of memory in the theater so long as it is retained in one's body and organically remembered through contact with theatrical environment.

In terms of emotion and memory, Spolin thus shared important ideas with Stanislavski, despite their clear distinctions. Spolin's theatrical practice once came close to socio-drama, according to Levitt (1976), under the influence of the socio-political philosophy of the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and Stanislavski's methodology (p. 47). Indeed, she later abandoned the psychological approach and developed the physical perspective on the problems of emotion and memory. (Spolin's objection to psycho-drama is parallel to the criticisms of the "psychoanalytic" aspect of Strasberg's Method in those days.) Nevertheless, she never negated the value of emotion and memory, the evocation of emotion and memory in theatrical reality, or the close connection between memory and physical sensation.

2.6. Exercise 3: Gibberish and Tum-ti-tumming

Spolin (1999) thought that the core of theatrical communication of emotion is in its physical manifestation (p. 220). *Gibberish* is one of the most essential games for players to learn organic physicalization. Spolin (1999) explained Gibberish as "meaningless sounds substituted for recognizable words so as to force the players to communicate by physicalizing" (p. 360). Gibberish removes the player's dependence upon meaningful words and develops

the "expressive physical language vital to stage life" (Spolin, 1999, pp. 112-113). This liberates the flexibility of the flow and intonation of the theatrical dialogue. Spolin's Gibberish exercises thus free the players from the burden of the intellectual choice of words and lead them to communicate physically and spontaneously.

Stanislavski introduced an exercise similar to Spolin's Gibberish: *Tum-ti-tumming*. The word "tum-ti-tumming" is explained as the "arbitrary and non-expressive syllables" that actors use in études instead of meaningful words (Stanislavski, 2008, p. 611). Stanislavski (2008) introduced this exercise in a draft entitled "Dramatization of the Program of the Opera-Dramatic Studio"[7]as a way for actors to revitalize their intonation and liberate it from rigidity and conventionality (p. 611).[8] In this way, Tum-ti-tumming opens up a wide space for the direct subconscious manifestation of actors' feelings. In other words, this exercise revitalizes and liberates "the free human intonation" of actors that is, according to Stanislavski (2008), an "articulator of feelings" (pp. 612-613).

Strasberg also introduced Gibberish in The Group Theatre (Hethmon, 1991, p. 214). One can find almost the same ideas underlying Spolin's Gibberish, Strasberg's Gibberish, and Stanislavski's Tum-ti-tumming. One of Spolin's particular achievements was the invention of several games as small steps for players to be accustomed to talking in Gibberish.

2.7. Communication and Energy

Both Spolin and Stanislavski regarded *communication* as essential for the theater. Schmitt (1990) pointed out the contrast between "Spolin's desire for actors' communion of rhythms, movements, and sounds" with "Stanislavski's desire for the characters' exchange of feelings, thoughts, and actions" (pp. 115-116). This subsection illustrates the overlaps and distinctions between their conceptions of communication in more detail, especially in terms of its contents, participants, and connection to energy exchange.

Spolin developed many games in which players learn to communicate the essence of theatrical reality (Where, Who, What, and Why) with each other as well as with the audience. In the theater game *Who's Knocking?*, for instance, the main player communicates "Who is knocking, Where, for What reason, time, weather, etc." both to the fellow player(s) and to the audience (Spolin, 1999, pp. 105-106). In Stanislavski's études, by contrast, the Where, Who, What, and Why are not the primary concerns of the onstage communication, as these elements are usually told to the actors by the teacher (or the script) in advance. Stanislavski (2017) highlighted the thoughts and feelings of actors/characters onstage as the chief contents of theatrical communication (pp. 251-255). In addition, he strictly inhibited direct communication between actors and the audience, insisting that they must communicate with the audience indirectly and unconsciously (Stanislavski, 2017, p. 249).

Spolin (1999) regarded the audience members as "fellow players" and, on the basis of this idea, expected "a whole new form of theatrical presentation" involving them (pp. 13-14). It is quite natural for players to directly communicate with the audience if the audience members are their fellow players. When Spolin worked for the WPA, she incorporated audience suggestions into the play so as to involve the working-class, largely immigrant, and/or young spectators into the creative process (Levitt, 1976, pp. 101-102; Seham, 1997, pp. 33-34). She kept on trying to involve the audience into the creative experience even in later years. Spolin co-founded the Game Theater in 1965, in which the audience members were "invited to join the company playing theater games in performance" (Viola Spolin Estate,

2015).

However, there is a notable overlap between Spolin's and Stanislavski's conceptions of theatrical communication: They both highlighted energy exchange within it. Schmitt (1990) described Spolin's improvisation as "communion" and also as "a transmission of energy" (p. 115). Spolin explained that energy exchange takes place and "sparks" fly between players when they are truly playing the games and solving the problem (Spolin, 1975, p. 18; Spolin, 1999, p. 24). She interpreted the concept of energy as "the power released in 'explosion' (spontaneity)" (Spolin, 1999, p. 359). Stanislavski (2017) placed stress on theatrical communication through the emission and reception of "invisible rays" (pp. 255-263). He developed the idea of invisible rays on the basis of the concept of *prana* (energy) in the philosophy of yoga (Tcherkasski, 2016, pp. 82-89). Stanislavski (2017) recognized, despite his inhibition of direct communication between actors and the audience, that energy exchange takes place not only among actors onstage but also between actors and the audience (pp. 264-265).

2.8. Exercise 4: No Motion and Mercury

Spolin introduced a series of games called *No Motion* in which players learn to hold their energy. The purpose of the No Motion games is to create "a resting or non-thinking area" in which players can hold their energetic decisions, emotions, wishes, or relationships while they are "busy with onstage dialogue and activity" (Spolin, 1999, p. 176). Spolin (1999) described No Motion as "the preoccupation that holds the energy content of a scene" (p. 176). She explained that the held energy comes out of the non-thinking area bursting through and expressing itself in "unique use of props, dialogue, more intense character relationships, and rising tension within the onstage scene" (Spolin, 2010, p. 96). Spolin's No Motion is one of the most important keys to the moment of spontaneity that contributes especially to developing "real communication" among players (Spolin, 2010, p. 96).

No Motion Warm-Up is an introductory game to No Motion. In this game, each player is told to move their arms up and down "breaking up the flow of movement into a series of stills or frames as on a filmstrip" (Spolin, 2010, p. 96). Spolin (1999) explained that if the player properly puts focus on the still moments (No Motion) between movements, their arms move "effortlessly without conscious volition" (p. 84). It is understandable that both No Motion Warm-Up and the other No Motion games focus on the stillness in the midst of activity. However, Spolin's description does not clearly indicate what players should learn in No Motion Warm-Up in terms of holding and releasing energy.

Stanislavski introduced an exercise highly similar to Spolin's No Motion Warm-Up: *Mercury*. In this exercise, each actor moves one arm up and down, dividing the movement first into four fractions, and then into eight, twelve, sixteen, twenty-four, and more fractions (Stanislavski, 2017, pp. 383-384). According to Stanislavski (2017), this exercise makes actors concentrate on the movement of energy (imaginary mercury) in their arms and develops a "more continuous line of concentration and movement of energy and consequently of the arm itself" (p. 384). He remarked that the actor's energy emerges in "creative, sensitive, fertile, productive action" when it is "encouraged by feeling, launched by the will, guided by the mind" (Stanislavski, 2017, p. 380). In this way, in the Mercury exercise, the fractionization of the movement is closely related to the development of the sense of "inner line of motor energy" (Stanislavski, 2017, pp. 386-387).

The Mercury exercise thus provides an important clue to clarify the significance of No

Motion Warm-Up in terms of energy flow: No Motion Warm-Up potentially enables players to feel the energy flowing in their body through the focus on the still moments between movements. This insight shows the close connection between No Motion Warm-Up and the other No Motion games concerning the feeling and channeling of energy.

3. Conclusion

This study has identified considerable overlaps and distinctions between Spolin's and Stanislavski's methodologies of theatrical education in more detail than previous research. Spolin shared several essential ideas with Stanislavski: the application of improvisation to theatrical training, the objection to director-centered production, the emphasis on intuition and spontaneity in the creative process, the evocative function of the theatrical situation/circumstances, the value of emotion and memory for creation, and the concept of energy exchange in theatrical communication. In addition, she introduced several games highly similar to the exercises in Stanislavski's system, for example, Exposure, Space Objects, Gibberish, and No Motion Warm-Up. Spolin presumably adopted, directly or indirectly, at least some of the key concepts and exercises from Stanislavski's theatrical works. However, she refused some aspects of Stanislavski's system: the teacher's privilege of approval/disapproval, the strong emphasis on imagination, the psychological view of emotion and memory, and the inhibition of direct communication between actors and the audience. Instead, Spolin developed several unique ideas for theatrical education, for instance, teachers as fellow players, contact as a way to get out into the theatrical environment, body memory as opposed to mental retention, and audience members as fellow players. The results of this study thus provide the insight that Stanislavski's system had a more profound influence, whether as a positive or negative model, on Spolin's theory and practice than as illustrated by previous studies. Further research with reference to unpublished materials, such as Spolin's notes, drafts, and manuscripts, is required to clarify the relation between their methodologies more closely.

Notes
1 These three books were first edited and translated from Russian by Elizabeth Hapgood. Benedetti (2008) reported that Hapgood made major cuts and changes to the original texts. Benedetti newly translated these books much more faithfully to the Russian editions and published them as *An Actor's Work* (2008) and *An Actor's Work on a Role* (2010). The present study generally cites Benedetti's edition and refers to Hapgood's editions when the gaps between the different editions are significant.
2 Although these words are found in "Original Draft Preface" printed only in Benedetti's edition, the words "intuition" and "intuitive" are used several times also in Hapgood's editions, related to the major concepts of *subconscious* and *inspiration* (Stanislavski, 2013a; 2013b).
3 Moffitt (1978) was fully aware of the limitation of his interpretation as he "abstracted" the method of motivational analysis from the entire structure of Stanislavski's system (pp. 3-5).
4 Brone (1990) pointed out that Evgeny Vakhtangov, a disciple of Stanislavski, and Lee Strasberg also used the side-coaching technique (pp. 32-33, 41-42).
5 Hapgood's edition includes the concept of *working with air*, which holds almost the same implication as Action without Objects (Stanislavski, 2013a, pp. 116-118).
6 A director of The Group Theatre who studied theatrical methodology with Maria Ouspenskaya and Richard Boleslawski (Stanislavski's disciples).

7 This draft is included as a part of the appendices in volume 3 of Stanislavski's *Collected Works in 9 Volumes* (Russian). This study cites the draft in reference to its Japanese translation.

8 Stanislavski (2017) also introduced Tum-ti-tumming in Chapter 21 in *An Actor's Work* but in a different form and for a different purpose. In this chapter, Benedetti translated the Russian word *татамированием* into "Tum-ti-tumming," which is adopted in this study.

Acknowledgement

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