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FRIEDRICH LUDWIG SCHRÖDER'S *VORSCHRIFTEN ÜBER DIE SCHAUSPIELKUNST**

Schröder and the Debate on the Art of Acting

Although Friedrich Ludwig Schröder (1744-1816) is chiefly known to scholars as the prototype of the Stürmer actor, he was in the vanguard of the movement to reform acting which, in the second half of the eighteenth century, gradually replaced the prevailing French declamatory style with the so-called “natural” style of acting. This trend saw the spread in Germany of the advances inaugurated by David Garrick in England.¹ Nonetheless, we should also point out that Schröder was in every sense a “man of the theatre”: not just an actor, but also a playwright (albeit of no great distinction), an impresario and a manager. He made his name as an actor in the leading roles of Shakespeare (being instrumental in bringing the original plays to German audiences), Lessing, Goethe and Schiller, but he had had experience of all the genres in vogue in German theatres in the eighteenth century, from ballet (in which he made his stage *début*) to operetta, and from farce (*Niedrigkomische*) to comedy, whether predominantly *divertissement*, *commedia seria* or the plays of Molière.

His name and career are closely linked to the city of Hamburg, the second largest city in the German kingdom after Vienna, which boasted a flourishing theatrical scene that drew not only the best companies appearing in Germany but also foreign troupes, notably French, Italian and English. It was in Hamburg that Friederike Caroline Neuber (1696-1760), in collaboration with the theoretician Christoph Gottsched, launched her attempt to put German theatre on a more literary standing, replacing the repertory of the strolling companies with text-based plays in the French mould. And it was in Hamburg that Schröder's stepfather, the actor Konrad Ackermann, put up the building which for two years housed the Nationaltheater (1767-1769). This brief experience, in which Gotthold Ephraim Lessing played a part, paved the way for theatrical companies throughout Germany to be established

* Translated by Mark Weir, Università di Napoli “L'Orientale”. This essay draws on my most recent book featuring Schröder and the brief work he wrote for actors and speech makers (cf. S. Bellavia, *La lezione di Friedrich Ludwig Schröder. Lo sviluppo della recitazione realistica nella Germania del secondo Settecento*, Acireale-Roma, Bonanno, 2010). In an appendix to the book I give an Italian translation of Schröder's work, based on the edition produced by Hartmann in 1821.

¹ Schröder was born in Schwerin in 1744 (according to all the sources except Schütze, who in *Hamburgische Theatergeschichte*, 1794, gives the year of his birth as 1743. Cf. J. F. Schütze, *Hamburgische Theatergeschichte*, Leipzig, Zentralantiquariat der DDR, 1975, p. 317). He was the son of an organist and the actress Sophie Charlotte Schröder (née Bierreichel). Within a few years his mother remarried, with Konrad Ackermann, actor and director of a theatrical company. On the death of his step-father Schröder took over the direction of the Hamburg theatre in collaboration with his mother; he was to serve as its director for two more periods in his lifetime, the last in 1810. He died in 1816.

on a permanent footing in the last three decades of the century, while this venue saw the development and culmination of the reform begun by Neuber and Gottsched.

When the Nationaltheater venture failed, management of the theatre was handed back to Ackermann, and on his death it passed definitively to Schröder. During the three periods, spanning five decades, in which he managed the theatre (from 1771 until a few years prior to his death in 1816), it was not a matter of merely keeping it running. He set out to finally turn into reality those ideas for reform which had been outlined by Lessing and which had informed the brief life of the Nationaltheater. This meant the dissemination and realisation of the “bourgeois” idea of the actor and acting, going hand in hand with a revision of the repertory and the imposition of conduct which was morally, and hence professionally, irreproachable: discipline, probity and decorum were Schröder’s watchwords and the grounding for the so-called “Hamburg school”.

However, this is not all. Besides the indubitable *savoir faire* which he brought to his theatrical enterprises, the manager of the Hamburger Theater was endowed with a speculative approach which corresponded to the contemporary *Zeitgeist*. To adopt the expression used by Martin Huber in *Der Text als Bühne*, the theatre was an authentic “cultural model” able to respond to the fundamental questions posed by the theoreticians and in the literary milieu. It thus came to represent the common aesthetic principle underlying the activity of the senses, their hierarchy, the issue of the relationship between perception and knowledge, between sense and sentiment; and in terms of art, more specifically between intellect and sensibility, between rules and creative liberty, between instinct and technique. Standing as a model and a means of observation and self-observation, German theatre in the second half of the eighteenth century was the point of confluence for the theoretical developments auspicated in the various disciplines, bestowing on the actor, who was naturally the fulcrum of theatre, a central role in the cultural panorama as a whole.

Although Schröder did not possess the stature of a philosopher, he was aware of the profound link connecting the development of German theatre, and above all the new art of acting (only elevated to the status of artistic activity in the mid-eighteenth century), to the evolution of contemporary thought. He owed this awareness to Lessing, who acted as his guide and constant point of reference. In becoming the greatest German actor in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, he not only profited from the example of his illustrious predecessors, above all Conrad Ekhof, who has gone down in history as the “father of German acting”, but he also confronted the fundamental issues in the ongoing debate concerning the theatre. In this debate the task of the actor was becoming more and more central, requiring not only the sort of disquisitions that were coming out of France but also a practical regulation, if acting were to prove itself worthy of the status of an art. When Lessing read François Riccoboni’s treatise *L’Art du Théâtre* (1750), he set about not only translating it into German but also producing a sort of manual for acting, entitled *Der Schauspieler* (1754). However he did not manage to complete the manual, and it

remained just a fragment, in two almost identical versions, subsequently published as part of his “dramatic legacy” by his brother Karl in 1786.²

Once we come to know and analyse Schröder's activity in the light of his context, it is clear that he followed and emulated Lessing's attempt. The most striking evidence for this is the *Vorlesung* (Lesson) that he delivered to the actors of the Hamburger Theater on 17 November 1810, on the occasion of his appointment as its manager, for the third and last time. Based on *L'Art du Théâtre* – although, like Lessing before him, Schröder did not endorse all of Riccoboni's assertions – his *Vorlesung* was printed first as *Auszüge aus Franz Riccobonis Vorschriften über die Kunst des Schauspielers, mit hinzugefügten Bemerkungen* (*Compendium of the norms of François Riccoboni on the actor's art, with additional annotations*). Following publication in 1814 in the *Allgemein Deutscher Theater-Anzeiger*, and again five years later in the biography of Schröder produced by Meyer, it was published once again in 1821 with the title *Vorschriften über die Schauspielkunst. Eine praktische Anleitung für Schauspieler und Declamatoren* (*Norms on acting. A practical guide for actors and declaimers*), which is exactly what Lessing had attempted to produce over 50 years previously.

Our purpose here is to consider Schröder's *Vorschriften* not so much for their contents but for what they tell us about the context in which they were formulated. For they stand as a concrete testimony to, and fruit of, the development that German acting underwent in the second half of the eighteenth century. They clarify the influence exercised by Lessing and his critical and dialectic relationship with French aesthetics of representation, on which he based his own ideas for the reform of German theatre. Moreover, they explain, and bear out, the affirmation of Hoffmeier that ‘only with Schröder did the theory of acting gain acceptance. And Lessing was his guide’.³

New Actor, New Rules

Schröder had the *Vorschriften über die Kunst des Schauspielers* (*Norms on acting*) printed in 1810, when, in his sixty-sixth year, he decided to take on the direction of the Hamburger Theater once more, having already been manager from 1771 to 1780 and again from 1786 to 1798. This was in fact to be the swansong of his artistic activity, which had begun in Hamburg in the company of Konrad Ackermann. His stepfather had been both an excellent comic actor and, in the words of Schütze, ‘an active [manager], a lover of order, zealous to achieve the best in his art and ensure the

² ‘The whole of physical eloquence is divided up into expression: 1) through movement [...and...] 2) through tones’. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Der Schauspieler*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Karlsruhe, im Bureau der deutschen Classiker, 1823, IX, *Theater (1754-1758)*, p. 268. In this statement from the beginning of the fragment Lessing was referring to how the body was to be carried. He divided up bodily language into movements of the body (which can in turn be broken down into: deportment, meaning modifications of the body when it is in movement or about to move; static attitude or posture, concerning the modifications of the body when it is still) and of its adjuncts (head, face, hands and feet); and also in tones, which concern ‘the deportment or modifications of the body in moving from one place to another’ (p. 269). The way a person moves is indicative of character: ‘Holding a foot rigid and tense is the way of walking of a proud, vainglorious individual’ (p. 270). Each of these subdivisions was to have been analysed in all its possible manifestations, but Lessing was unable to complete this task.

³ Friedrich Ludwig Schmidt, *Denkwürdigkeiten des Schauspielers, Schauspieldichters und Schauspieldirektors* (1772-1841), ed. by H. Uhde, 2 vols., Hamburg, W. Mauke, 1875, I, p. 227.

public got what they wanted'.⁴ He had enabled the young Schröder to frequent some of the leading talents of the day, including Michael Boeck, Friederike Hensel and above all Conrad Ekhof, who made a name for himself for a style of acting which was at last "true to life" and "natural", as opposed to the artificial and mechanical declamation required by the French academic tradition.

Reacting to the impulses for innovation which emerged in the cultural panorama of his day, Ekhof had realised that the rules ensuring the passage from mechanical acting to a true and natural style, so as to convince the spectators to believe in what they were witnessing, had to be sought in first-hand contact with reality, which was therefore the prime source of inspiration for the actor.⁵ And in re-establishing contact between the world of art and the real world he rejected the old-style declamation, paving the way for two major developments in the art of acting. On one hand realistic acting, of which Schröder was to be the leading exponent; and on the other the approach described by August Wilhelm Iffland, in which the actor did not 'simply declaim the verse for the ear, making it a melody' in a style devoid of that 'empty oratorical pomposity' which, far from capturing it, 'left the audience cold'; an actor who 'did not preach sentiments and judgements [but] delivered them as the result of reflection and experience'.⁶ In Ekhof, both gesture and voice could continue to abide by the classical precepts of oratory, but there was a new desire to communicate the profound meaning of what was being represented.

From Ekhof onwards, starting mid-way through the century, the predominance of sense gradually became the 'distinctive trait of natural expression in German acting';⁷ and Schröder took this as his watchword in formulating what was to be known as the "Hamburg school" style, which imposed itself throughout Germany in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Moreover, Schröder was to reaffirm the validity of this approach when he published his *Vorschriften über die Schauspielkunst* in 1810.⁸

The starting point for the *Vorschriften*, as we have seen, was François Riccoboni's treatise *L'Art du Théâtre*. Published in France sixty years earlier, it had had a decisive influence on the development of Ekhof and on the activation of that "pedagogical-theatrical impulse" which was another aspect of the legacy received by Schröder, as

⁴ J. F. Schütze, *Hamburgische Theatergeschichte*, p. 316. Of course Schütze did not fail to point out that the company's repertory was made up primarily of ballets and plays of no great intrinsic value, but he does acknowledge that this was due to the need to cater for the public's tastes and wishes, and that Ackermann did his best to raise the level, mediating between the imperatives of his art and financial solvency.

⁵ 'Acting is: to fashion Nature through art so as to get so close to her that the resemblances must be taken for reality; or else present things that have actually happened so naturally that they seem to be happening for the first time'. Thus Ekhof in 1753 in his first speech outlining the programme of the Schwerin Academy to members. Cf. G. Heeg, *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestalt. Körper, Sprache und Bild im Theater des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main and Basel, Stroemfeld, 2000, p. 178.

⁶ August Wilhelm Iffland in Eduard Devrient, *Geschichte der deutschen Schauspielkunst*, 3 vols., Berlin, Henschelverlag, 1967, I, p. 415.

⁷ G. Heeg, *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestalt*, p. 159. See also pp. 215-216. In *Über die gegenwärtige französische tragische Bühne* (1800) Wilhelm von Humboldt stated that for the German actor, 'subject matter, sensation, expression come first, and are often the only thing he cares about' (ibid., p. 167).

⁸ Cf. S. Bellavia, 'Dalla rappresentazione all'espressione. Il contributo tedesco allo sviluppo della recitazione nel Settecento', in *Teatro e Letteratura. Percorsi europei tra '600 e '900*, ed. by S. Bellavia, Roma, Bulzoni, 2009, pp. 105-106.

can be clearly seen in everything he did in the Hamburger Theater, not least in his decision to inaugurate his final period there by treating his actors to a *Vorlesung*.⁹

In Germany Riccoboni's treatise, recognised by scholars today as pioneering the so-called "anti-emotionalist" style of acting (in which the better the actor's performance, the less he is emotionally involved in what he is representing), found a widespread audience, exerting a substantial influence on the reform of acting which took place across Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century, with Ekhof and Schröder respectively as its initiator and greatest protagonist. The man who was instrumental in the treatise's dissemination on German soil was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, the author of the celebrated *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, which Schütze hailed as the only lasting achievement to survive from the venture of the Hamburger Nationaltheater, that began and ended in the building put up by Ackermann where Schröder made his entire artistic career.¹⁰

As soon as it came out in France, *L'Art du Théâtre* was reviewed by Lessing in the *Berlinische Privilegierte Zeitung*.¹¹ He then translated and published it in its entirety in the fourth issue of *Beiträge zur Historie und Aufnahme des Theaters*, the monthly journal which Lessing had founded jointly with his brother-in-law Christlob Mylius.¹² We can identify two reasons for Lessing's immediate interest in the French treatise. One was the passage in which Riccoboni argued that the actor had to learn to 'feel' his own emotions and judge his movements without actually seeing them. Here Riccoboni touched on what for German theorists and men of the theatre was the crux of a new conception of the actor's role, namely his ability to dominate his own physical resources, making his body 'speak' and 'communicating his thoughts in such a way that they could produce a lasting impression'.¹³

At the same time Lessing responded to the practicality of the French treatise. It had been written to train and guide actors rather than merely to offer theoretical considerations, and this was the aspect Lessing focused on in the review that came about before the translation in the *Beiträge*.¹⁴ He exhorted all those who cared about drama, as well as actors of course, to add the French treatise to their own libraries: the former would find it agreeable reading matter, and the latter a useful aid in their activity. He went on to say that the work had a solid pragmatic grounding in which the identification and cataloguing of the general principles of acting were followed by a whole section devoted to the actor's training.

⁹ F. Bender, 'Vom "tollen Handwerk" zur Kunstübung', in *Schauspielkunst im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. by F. Bender, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 1992.

¹⁰ Cf. J. F. Schütze, *Hamburgische Theatergeschichte*, p. 340.

¹¹ Cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, 'Riccoboni, le fils, *L'Art du Théâtre à Madame ****', *Berlinische Privilegierte Zeitung*, no. 88, 23 July 1750.

¹² In his preface to the translation of François Riccoboni, Lessing stated that it had been promised to readers in the previous issue, whereas in fact the announcement had spoken of the publication of *Dell'arte rappresentativa* by Luigi Riccoboni (François's father) and the treatise of Rémond de Sainte-Albine. Apparently *L'Art du Théâtre* struck Lessing as so innovatory (see further on) that he changed his mind. Cf. O. Uwe, *Lessings Verhältnis zur französischen Darstellungstheorie*, Frankfurt, Peter Lang; Bern, Herbert Lang, 1976, p. 164.

¹³ Cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Der Schauspieler*, pp. 265-276.

¹⁴ Cf. G. Piens, 'Einleitung', in François Riccoboni, *Die Schauspielkunst. 'L'Art du théâtre. 1750'. Übersetzt von Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Angefügt: Friedrich Ludwig Schröder Auszüge aus Franz Riccobonis Vorschriften über die Kunst des Schauspielers mit hinzugefügten Bemerkungen*, ed. by G. Piens, Berlin, Henschelverlag, 1954, p. 7.

In view of all this it is hardly surprising that *L'Art du Théâtre* should have immediately begun to circulate in the actors' academy established by Ekhof, the first of its kind in Europe. This was in Schwerin, which just happened to be Schröder's birthplace.¹⁵ By 1753 Ekhof, the "German Garrick", had already realised that the actor's task went well beyond memorising and declaiming the poetic text. This is why, in the academy's periodical gatherings, the participants were required not only to read through the scripts to be staged but also to offer a critique of the repertory, making a detailed analysis of the characters and roles to be performed, but also of the duties of each actor in their common life together.¹⁶ And last but not least, they had to contribute to the debate on the fundamental principles of the art of acting including its aims, which were the appropriate means to achieve them and how these means were to be used.

In the record of the session held on 15 June 1754 (one year on from Ekhof's first meeting with Lessing, brought about by Christian Felix Weisse),¹⁷ we read:

At the end of a year's meetings we managed to arrive at the intimate essence of acting, and we have observed that this consists in the imitation of nature; at the same time we also realised that the theory has only truly been acquired when one is able to make fully credible on stage the feigned mood, by means of a skilful use of the body's movement and attitudes [...]. The foundation for our observations has been *L'art du Théâtre* by Riccoboni the younger, published in translation in the *Beitrügen zur Historie und Aufnahme des Theaters*. We have carried out an attentive reading, point by point, of Riccoboni's treatise, explaining it and illustrating it where necessary with examples and observations. For the benefit of instruction we were careful to take what was good and well expressed, and use them to our advantage, and to avoid or correct what was bad and in error. We acknowledged that the French precede us in this difficult art [...] and so we, who are coming afterwards, feel no shame in considering them our masters and following in their footsteps. Nonetheless our aim is to distinguish their errors from their merits and reject anything not in accordance with nature and verisimilitude.¹⁸

¹⁵ The same year in which Riccoboni was writing his own treatise and Schröder was still to make a proper acting début, Ekhof, then a member of the company led by Johann Friedrich Schönemann, was invited with this company to perform in the castle of Schwerin, in Northern Germany. Their success enabled the company to take up residence in the Duchy of Mecklenburg (which included Schwerin) and Ekhof to set up his academy.

¹⁶ The German scholar Günther Heeg remarks how contemporary efforts to raise the moral probity of actors are reflected in the contributions, proposals and debates that featured in theatrical journals, above all in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Numerous articles were published in the years 1775-1793 in *Theater-Journal* (particularly no. 17, 1781) and *Theater-Kalender*. Cf. G. Heeg, *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestalt*, p. 175.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 208-215. Christian Weiße (1726-1804), man of letters and pedagogue, was one of the leading exponents of the German Enlightenment. He was closely in touch not only with Lessing but also with Gellert, Kleist and the great actress Caroline Neuber.

¹⁸ The account is given in the minutes of the Schwerin Academy, in the account of the session held on 15 June 1754. Cf. 'Journal der Academie der Schönemannischen Gesellschaft', in *Conrad Ekhofs Schauspieler-Akademie*, ed. by H. Kindermann, Wien, R. M. Rohrer, 1956, p. 40.

Thus all the academy's activity was based on the conception of the actor, still unfamiliar at the time, that Ekhof had been elaborating and that Schröder was to take over, almost "by osmosis", in the early years of his career.¹⁹

Thanks to the debate which Lessing had been instrumental in launching in Germany on how drama could be redefined and the role of acting enhanced, following Ekhof the actor was no longer considered a simple means for the reproduction of the *dramatis personae* but rather as the 'creator' of characters – as Lessing put it – alongside and on a par with the dramatist.²⁰ Actors had to be able to reproduce the human qualities with disciplined naturalness, by exercising their imagination and judgement in first constructing and then rendering the character in question. Such a vision automatically excluded the academic precepts and was clearly incompatible with the persistence of the declamatory style of acting.

But if the origin of modern acting, around the mid-eighteenth century, can be identified in the reaction to the laws and precepts which limited the actor's activity, we must remember that this reaction was not against rules *tout court*, but against those that had been established by the French Académie.²¹ Indeed François Riccoboni's stand against declamatory acting was, according to Uwe, the essential reason why Lessing wished to publicise this treatise at once, out of admiration for the coherent way in which the Frenchman distanced himself from the dogma of French classicism: from rules which were manufactured, not deduced, and hence – and here is the crucial point – that did not respond to the logic of empirical thought. For from the mid-eighteenth century onwards (under the impulse of English sensationism, which had a particularly significant influence in Germany) empiricism was beginning to challenge the predominance of French rationalism, bringing with it a re-evaluation of the activity of the senses (until then considered imperfect and deceitful) as a means to knowing reality.

The passage from a rationalistic to an empiric concept of nature did not affect the goal of drama, which in fact remained unchanged through to the end of the eighteenth century, namely to imitate nature and act as a moral authority, but it did entail the development of 'a new style of acting, oriented towards an empirical Nature'²² which in practice replaced the emphasis on the 'exquisitely aesthetic qualities of language'²³ with the will to communicate the sense and profound significance of what was being represented.²⁴ Thus it was not a matter of abolishing the rules, but rather of finding new ones. This was why, as early as 1754, Lessing had attempted a systematic classification of acting in *Der Schauspieler*. The precepts he formulated were quite as rigid as those of classicism, as Uwe remarked, but unlike the latter, which were grounded in the predominance of conventions, Lessing relied on

¹⁹ We should not fail to note that the goals of the Schwerin Academy sessions were established and defined by Ekhof in the light of the reflections contained in the *Beiträge zur Historie und Aufnahme des Theaters*, the monthly journal launched in 1750 by Lessing and his brother-in-law Christlob Mylius to further a culture of the theatre in Germany, something which – as Lessing wrote in the first issue – had never received much attention.

²⁰ Cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, 'Ankündigung', in *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, Stuttgart, Universal Bibliothek, 1999, I, p. 12.

²¹ Cf. O. Uwe, *Lessings Verhältnis zur französische Darstellungstheorie*, p. 167.

²² E. Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theater*, Tübingen and Basel, Francke, 1999, p. 120.

²³ G. Heeg, *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestalt*, p. 159.

²⁴ Cf. S. Bellavia, 'Dalla rappresentazione all'espressione', p. 106.

the gifts of observation and faculty of judgement proper to all human beings, without prejudice.²⁵ And if the declamatory style which still prevailed in the major theatres throughout Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century began to strike him as false and mannered (or “unnatural”), this was not because it was bound by norms but because those norms were ‘independent of the nature of the role, the dramatic situation and the action’.²⁶ In other words they had nothing to do with the will to communicate meaning and thus resulted in falsity, since for Lessing only form imbued with meaning was able to give adequate expression to the sensation of reality.²⁷

Hence the need to elaborate a technique, based on fixed, immutable norms, which would ensure the actor’s perfect outward appearance and thus the correct reception, on the part of the audience, of what he meant to communicate. The publication of *L’Art du Théâtre* made Lessing and the German advocates of “natural” acting realise what they needed, namely a practical guide which could give actors an “easy” and concrete aid in practising their art. This was precisely the objective which, half a century later, underpinned Schröder’s framing of his *Vorschriften*, reaffirming the idea of acting as a doctrine based not only on the inborn talent of the artist but also on fixed rules which could be taught.

At the Root of the Vorschriften

We have seen how German theatre in the second half of the eighteenth century underwent a general renovation, to which Schröder made a substantial contribution. He redefined the image of the actor in both artistic and social terms, achieving that *bürgerlicher Schauspieler* which had been outlined in the pre-eminent programmes for aesthetic and theatrical reform and which in its barely two years of activity the Nationaltheater of Hamburg had sought to put into practice. A “natural” and therefore “credible” actor who could stand as a model of behaviour for the new bourgeois public which filled the boxes and stalls, honouring the vision of the theatre as a *school for manners* which had become current in Germany thanks to the legacy of such early Enlightenment figures as the man of letters Johann Christoph Gottsched and the philosopher Christian Wolff.

In conformity with such a conception, Schröder was convinced that he was charged with a mission that was not merely artistic but also political and moral. We find echoes of this conviction in the few writings of his to have survived the dispersal of his literary output. First of all in the *Vorschriften*, where he constantly calls on his colleagues to maintain a disciplined conduct both on stage and in everyday life. And again in the *Schreiben* (1795) and the *Gesetze* (*Laws of the Hamburger Theater*), which he drew up during his first period as manager and reiterated during his subsequent appointments. In fact he was convinced that if no society can exist

²⁵ Cf. O. Uwe, *Lessings Verhältnis zur französische Darstellungstheorie*, p. 177.

²⁶ G. Piens, ‘Einleitung’, p. 25.

²⁷ Cf. G. Heeg, *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestalt*, p. 159.

without laws, this was all the more true in the case of a theatre, because it was imperative to 'struggle against prejudices and in general improve mores'.²⁸

Nonetheless it was not merely a question of order and decorum. The problem of morality was strictly linked to the acting profession, for as we have seen, in the new *Zeitgeist* an actor could no longer be a strolling player (*Schauspieler*) but was called on to be a true artist, not simply reproducing characters but creating them; in short, an authentic *Menschenarsteller*. What made this difference, as Heeg noted, was precisely the actor's formation, since impersonating or "embodying" a character was a complex procedure, implying on one hand the perfect restitution of the 'life' of the character in question and on the other the interiorisation of the actor's own presence.²⁹ This is why the actor, as a true artist, also had to work at self-improvement, until (in keeping with an idea that was passed on from Ekhof to Goethe) he would behave, in everyday life too, as if he was on stage: 'in normal life too the actor must believe he is exposed to the public'.³⁰

The aim to recreate human nature in its totality, and with the degree of truth and naturalness which the times required (dominated by an idea of knowledge that could be acquired through first-hand observation of reality), had been precisely what from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, as we have seen, had led to the reaction against the rules of the French Académie and the quest for new precepts to discipline the art of acting. One of the first consequences was the popularity, in Germany at the turn of the nineteenth century, of treatises and compendiums laying down the guidelines that were to regulate the practice of the *Schauspielkunst* (art of acting): from Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785-1786), to Goethe's *Regeln für Schauspieler* (1803), and the essays published by Iffland between 1785 and 1811. We can also include, of course, the *Vorschriften über die Kunst des Schauspielers* which Schröder compiled in 1810.

As the progenitor of all these theoretical elaborations we have cited Lessing's unfinished manual *Der Schauspieler* of 1754, inspired by François Riccoboni's *L'Art du Théâtre*, to which we should now pay closer attention. Lessing was attracted by its pragmatic rejection of disquisitions in favour of an analysis of technique so as to

²⁸ This dictum of Schröder is contained in the *Gesetze des Hamburgischen Deutschen Theaters* (Easter 1798), reproduced by Meyer in his biography of Schröder (cf. Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Meyer, *Friedrich Ludwig Schröder. Beitrag zur Kunde des Menschen und des Künstlers*, 2 vols., Hamburg, A. Campe, 1823, II, 232-248). There are not many variations with respect to the version published in the *Annalen des Theaters* in 1792, where there are 48 laws concerning actors, instead of 47; 7 concerning Opera, instead of 10, and 5 concerning the person responsible for wigs, instead of 5. Otherwise the text is practically identical (cf. *Annalen des Theaters*, no. 9, 1792, 3-22). Meyer records that in the Easter 1810 *Gesetze* (1798) the *Anweisung für die Controle* was added by hand, giving the duties of staff employed in the theatre, which included verifying tickets and reservations, and ensuring that there were no disturbances over the assignment of seats (cf. Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Meyer, *Friedrich Ludwig Schröder*, II, pp. 248-250). One can infer that there were already laws regulating the activity of the Hamburger Theater prior to 1792 from Schütze's *Hamburgische Theatergeschichte*, which suggests that Schröder's theatre had possessed a set of internal regulations right from the start.

²⁹ Cf. G. Heeg, 'Der Faden der "Ariadne"', in E. Fischer-Lichte and J. Schönert (eds.), *Theater im Kulturwandel des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 1999, p. 376. The interiorisation of the actor's own presence in the representation of whatever is human is the subject of Heeg's *Repräsentationsgestalt*.

³⁰ 'der Schauspieler soll auch im gemeinen Leben bedenken, dass er öffentlich zur Schau stehen werde'. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Regeln für Schauspieler* (75), in *Sämmtliche Werke*, 40 vols., Stuttgart and Tübingen, Cotta, 1840-1858, XXXV, p. 455.

arrive at the founding principles of acting.³¹ He was also struck by the treatise's systematic exposition, for as a true exponent of the German Enlightenment, he was drawn to the 'logical form in which topics and problems were presented or asserted'.³²

The treatise, as Uwe notes, is divided up into a series of brief chapters arranged by Riccoboni to reflect how an actor must go about learning his craft.³³ There are three typologies of actor: the interpreter of *le Tragique*, of *le Comique* (plays, he maintains, displaying a greater range of emotional expression than in tragedy) and *le bas-Comique* (farce and pantomime), in which 'physicality' plays a more predominant role. He then separates his analysis into what he calls the 'mechanical parts' – meaning gesture and the voice – and the components which go to make up acting proper, which depend on a right understanding or *entendement*. Among the latter the chief element is intelligence, which presides over the others (expression and sentiment, with the relative force, fervour, enthusiasm, nobility) and acts as the regulating principle.

Having laid down the general principles of theory, Riccoboni goes on to give practical indications concerning an actor's training. This starts with the voice, which must possess expressive nuances able to involve and persuade, since from mid-century onwards the actor was expected not just to 'present' but to 'be' the character.³⁴ For the author of *L'Art du Théâtre* (who spearheaded the detached approach to acting) this was not a matter of emotional involvement but rather of using one's intelligence, being aware of the means at one's disposal and possessing the technique to make good use of them. In addition, sensibility was required to understand how they should be calibrated and to judge timing (*le Temps*) and passion (*le Feu*) in acting. Uwe added that sensibility enabled the actor to render the role as a coherent whole, with the maximum of significance, and thereby realise his own expressive possibilities. It brought coherence to the performance, which would be perceived as "artistic" if the innate ability to convert the individual faculties into stage business was accompanied by a perfect technique.³⁵

While it was not possible to pass on intelligence and sensibility (both essential for expression, with its reliance on "feeling"), technique could be acquired and trained, following the basic principles which Riccoboni set out in his treatise. By applying

³¹ 'It is important [...] to grasp the true principles of the art. But how is one to acquire them?'. François Riccoboni, *L'Art du Théâtre*, Paris, C. F. Simon et Giffart, 1750, p. 2. This was the starting point for the treatise, and Riccoboni posed this question in the preface *A Madame ****, the work's dedicatee. We can recall that François Riccoboni (1707-1792), born in Mantua, had followed his father Luigi (the great Lelio) to Paris after the latter had been invited to direct the Italian troupe at the Hotel de Bourgogne in 1716 (where he continued until 1729). François also played an active part in the milieu of Italian drama in Paris, from 1726 to 1750, when his health obliged him to retire from acting and he wrote *L'Art du Théâtre*.

³² N. Abbagnano, *Storia della filosofia*, ed. by G. Fornero, Torino, UTET, 1998, III, p. 569.

³³ Cf. O. Uwe, *Lessings Verhältnis zur französischen Darstellungstheorie*, pp. 145-146.

³⁴ It is this, Riccoboni argues, which distinguishes the actor from the speech maker and the preacher: the latter figures are at a distance from what they say, and appear as themselves. The lawyer speaks on behalf of his client, but he is not the client; the preacher reads the word of God, but he is merely another human being. Whereas the actor who plays a character is required to 'be' that character, resolving the contrast between his own existence as an individual and the representation of the character in favour of the latter. Cf. François Riccoboni, *L'Art du Théâtre*, p. 101.

³⁵ O. Uwe, *Lessings Verhältnis zur französischen Darstellungstheorie*, pag. 149.

these principles one could do away with the 'affectation' of the declamatory style and learn to act with 'naturalness', avoiding the nefarious habit of practising poses in the mirror (which Goethe still advocated in his *Regeln*),³⁶ making rigid movements and forcing the voice to produce tones which were not naturally present. It had always to be borne in mind, however, that not all 'naturally' gifted actors would become great actors, since this depended on their intelligence and sensibility.³⁷

Thus as well as setting out his own principles (which, unlike the classicistic precepts, were only recommendations and not binding dogmas) Riccoboni offered a critique of the existing principles.³⁸ Lessing seized on this aspect, saying in his review of the book:

Riccoboni is unafraid to reveal the errors of the French players without being in the least hypocritical in their regard [...] He is free of all the prejudices which accompany theatrical practice; for example, he fiercely opposes the habit common to some actors of practising their poses in front of a mirror, since this gives rise to an affected performance. [And] he dismisses as humbug the notion that the actor must feel everything he represents on stage, demonstrating that this is impossible.³⁹

Riccoboni proclaimed declamation to be superseded, the product of an 'aristocratic' conception of the theatre, and pointed out its incongruence with the 'general' contents of a role, which are valid and hence common to all human beings, whatever their social standing.⁴⁰ For Uwe this was the first, outstanding merit of his treatise, which was to ensure its validity in a Germany which would have a national theatre and feature the bourgeois actor, starting from Lessing and arriving at Schröder and his *Vorschriften*. Uwe then credits Schröder with bringing out the other crucial thesis in *L'Art du Théâtre*, namely the idea that the artistic value of acting could

³⁶ Cf. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Regeln für Schauspieler* (63), in *Sämmtliche Werke*, XXXV, p. 453. Right from the start, Klaus Schwind maintains, Goethe's *Regeln* had their critics who believed that they led to a mechanical acting style and tended to leave no scope for the sensibility of the individual actor. (cf. K. Schwind, 'Regeln für Schauspieler – Saat von Goethe gesaet', in *Theater im Kulturwandel des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by E. Fischer-Lichte and J. Schönert, 151-183). Among these critics we can mention the actors Heinrich Beck (1770-1822), who in 1809 left Weimar for the Hamburger Theater (returning to Goethe eleven years later) and Carl Wilhelm Reinhold (pseudonym for Zacharias Lehmann, 1777-1841), who went so far as to pen a parody of the *Regeln* (cf. Carl Wilhelm Reinhold, *Saat von Goethe gesaet*, Weimar and Leipzig, 1808). Reinhold, a native of Hamburg – and thus a product of Schröder's "realistic" tradition – was a journalist and playwright, more than an actor, and was taken on in Weimar in 1806. He was convinced of Goethe's greatness in literature but considered him a dilettante when it came to acting. 'Flat, monotonous, mechanical': such were his strictures (and hence the criticisms of a disciple of Schröder) concerning the Weimar style.

³⁷ Explaining the conception of 'nature' in François Riccoboni, Uwe maintained that it covered on one hand the 'everyday' (life's normal course) and 'simple beauty', as opposed to the 'extraordinary' (one of the criteria for the classicist hero) and the 'refined', and on the other hand authentic human behaviour. The epithet 'natural' can be applied to the ordinary behaviour of one and all, given certain premises and as a spontaneous manifestation, rather than behaviour conditioned and falsified by the rules of etiquette. Cf. O. Uwe, *Lessings Verhältnis zur französischen Darstellungstheorie*, pp. 147-148.

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 150.

³⁹ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, 'Riccoboni, le fils, *L'Art du Théâtre à Madame ****'. In the section devoted to *Le Geste* Riccoboni warned: 'be sure not to learn these actions in front of the mirror, because this method is bound to result in affectation. One has to sense the movements one makes deep down inside, and evaluate them without seeing them' (François Riccoboni, *L'Art du Théâtre*, p. 14).

⁴⁰ Cf. O. Uwe, *Lessings Verhältnis zur französischen Darstellungstheorie*, cit., p.146.

“reach” the public only through its formal perfection, revealing the actor’s self-control and ability to manage his own emotions.⁴¹

In reality, this is what Lessing had immediately seized on, and what prompted him to produce his manual in 1754. Bearing in mind the bond of friendship which united Lessing and Schröder, we can suppose that the latter assimilated the fundamental principles of Riccoboni’s work thanks to his precursor.⁴² He used them not only as the basis for his *Vorschriften* but also in developing the “realistic” approach to acting, involving the rejection of conventional declamation, the imitation of nature and the pursuit of an equilibrium between technique and sensibility. Like Lessing, Schröder did not endorse Riccoboni’s positions *in toto*. In fact he dissented from the latter’s anti-emotionalist stance, following Lessing on the role of individual “feeling” in the process of artistic creation. This emerges clearly from what he had to say in 1814.⁴³

The question of the actor’s emotive identification in his character is one of the central questions in *L’Art du Théâtre*. Riccoboni took up a position which was opposed to the one set out by Rémond de Sainte-Albine in *Le Comédien* (1747), the treatise which is traditionally placed at the head of the so-called “emotionalist” approach to acting. In so doing he established the second pole of attraction in the debate which still today represents the major issue in acting.

Schröder, as we have seen, had his own ideas on the subject, and yet he hardly mentions them in the *Vorschriften* (making only minimal observations on Riccoboni’s treatment of ‘expression’ and ‘sentiment’). In fact this work was written to be exactly what the subtitle (added subsequently) proclaims it to be: a practical guide for actors and declaimers which emphasises the link between acting and the ancient art of eloquence, which also underlay Lessing’s *Der Schauspieler*.⁴⁴ As Meyer remarks, Schröder ‘was in the habit of recalling the name of Cicero and referring to the ancient art of oratory’. In this he was quite probably influenced by the reflections of Lessing, for whom he nurtured profound esteem. And as we have seen, in *Der Schauspieler* too the question of emotive identification was secondary, since even if the actor did indeed “feel” what he was acting, this by no means solved all the problems of performance, or indeed of the reception on the part of the spectators of what the

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 156. The formal perfection of acting, Uwe goes on, is constantly threatened by emotion, which, even if it conforms to the role in question, cannot take its natural course on stage, since in the theatre the emotions follow on one another much more rapidly than in reality.

⁴² On the relationship between Schröder and Lessing, and for further consideration of the great German philosopher’s attitude to the theatre, as well as his influence on the evolution of theatrical theory and practice in eighteenth century Germany, see my *La lezione di Friedrich Ludwig Schröder*.

⁴³ Schröder’s position, as Quandt recorded it in 1814 during an interview for issue 33 of the *Allgemein Deutscher Theater-Anzeiger*, is set out, not only in Meyer’s biography and the ‘Zusätzen’ to the *Vorschriften* edited by Hartmann in 1821 (pp. 148-149), but also in E. Buschbeck, *Der Thespikarren. Kleine Theatergeschichte geschrieben von der Zeitgenossen*, Wien, W. Andermann, 1943, pp. 41-43.

⁴⁴ Already in the preface to the first issue of *Beiträge* Lessing lamented the loss of the art of oratory, so highly esteemed among the ancients but disregarded in his own time. Cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Vorrede. Aus: Beiträge zur Historie und Aufnahme des Theaters* (1750), in K. Hammer (ed.), *Dramaturgische Schriften des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, Henschelverlag, 1968, p. 131. Gesture and movement are for an actor what words are to a poet; for the latter, the more sound and refined the “technique” of writing, the more efficacious the evocative power of his poetry. Analogously, the more rooted his knowledge of the principles of physical eloquence, the better the actor’s body can “speak”. Ideally, the actor succeeds in communicating, just as the poet does, even what is not present or visible to the human senses. See S. Bellavia, ‘Dalla rappresentazione all’espressione’, pp. 112-113.

actor was portraying. In fact Lessing focused on the practical art of acting, meaning the actor's acquisition of mastery over his physical resources. This was the indispensable premise for the spontaneous upwelling of the passions, since it was 'through observation, imitation and the control of his body that the actor', for Lessing, 'arrived at true feeling'.⁴⁵ There is no doubt that Schröder would have concurred, for he went on to base his artistic and pedagogical activity on this premise.

Schröder's Lesson

Schröder had a dual purpose in writing the *Vorschriften*. On one hand he sought to complete what Lessing had left unfinished, after being encouraged to do so by his friend and biographer Meyer.⁴⁶ This must not be taken to mean that he set to work on the fragments and carried on the philosopher's work. He could not have done this, because he possessed neither Lessing's competence nor intellectual stature. The person who did take up where Lessing had left off was Engel, who produced his *Ideen zu einer Mimik* at the same time as the publication of the fragments of *Der Schauspieler*.⁴⁷ Engel's volume ranked as the most significant German contribution to the theoretical debate concerning the art of acting. Indeed Heeg maintains that it should be considered not so much a manual for acting as an attempt to draw up a full-blown *Ausdruckstheorie der menschlichen Seele*, or theory of the expression of the human soul.

Having started out from Lessing, Engel went beyond his precursor's intentions. His work aimed to provide actors with the framework to understand and convey sensations and states of mind, but it is a large, complex volume, rich in theoretical speculations, and thus very different to the *Vorschriften*, which was an agile, lucid and schematic book. Unlike Engel, Lessing set out to produce a sort of vademecum, which by concisely setting out the fundamental principles of physical eloquence recognised that only the "mechanical" component of acting could be learnt. And if, as Heeg argues, *Ideen zu einer Mimik* marked the historical culmination of the

⁴⁵ U. Stephan, 'Gefühlsschauspieler-Verstandesschauspieler. Ein theoretisches Problem des 18. Jahrhunderts', in H. Körner, C. Peres, L. Steiner and L. Tavernier (eds.), *Empfindung und Reflexion. Ein Problem des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, Olms, 1986, p. 112.

⁴⁶ Cf. Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Meyer, *Friedrich Ludwig Schröder*, I, p. 231. Meyer believed that Schröder should have concentrated on producing a sort of manual for actors: an easy, clear and comprehensible guide like the one Lessing had tried to write fifty years previously (cf. *ibid.*, p. 221). This aim was to be accomplished in 1810 in the *Vorschriften*.

⁴⁷ Engel, right at the beginning of his treatise, referred to Lessing's attempt, thereby establishing an ideal link with his own work. Cf. Johann Jakob Engel, *Ideen zu einer Mimik*, 2 vols., Berlin, Mylius, 1785-1786, I, pp. 4-6.

predominance of the “natural” in drama,⁴⁸ the *Vorschriften* were conceived with the intention – and here we come to the second element in the dual purpose – of reaffirming the conception and procedure which had constituted the basis of “realistic” acting, whose days Schröder considered to be numbered. To restore an aesthetic climate that had been lost: this was the prime motivation of the manager in 1810, when he was about to take over at the helm for the third and last time. The lesson he delivered on 17 November was an integral part of this project of restoration.

Thus Schröder’s dual purpose consisted in providing simple, concise indications concerning acting and reiterating the founding principles of the Hamburg school. This goes to clarify, as we shall see below, the structure of the *Vorlesung*, which Schröder had printed *als Manuskript* (bearing his autograph signature) for distribution to the actors of his theatre. Rather than setting out to impose rules like Goethe in Weimar in 1803, he wished to pass on some general norms for acting which each actor could make use of as he saw fit.

Based on *L’Art du Théâtre*, the “lesson” was entitled *Auszüge aus Franz Riccobonis Vorschriften über die Kunst des Schauspielers, mit hinzugefügten Bemerkungen. Eine Vorlesung am 17 Nov. 1810 (Compendium of the norms of François Riccoboni on the actor’s art, with additional annotations. A lesson on 17 November 1810)* and began to circulate in the small theatrical fraternity in Hamburg. In 1814 these norms were featured in the *Allgemein Deutscher Theater-Anzeiger*, and finally the *Vorlesung* was published in 1819 (three years after Schröder’s death) in the substantial biography of the actor written by Meyer. Nearly a century and a half later, in 1954, Gerhard Piens used Meyer’s text in bringing out the translation of *L’Art du Théâtre* made by Lessing and Schröder’s “lesson”, preceded by an extensive introductory essay.⁴⁹ At the end of his introduction Piens mentioned that he knew of a book entitled ‘Fr. Riccoboni und Fr. L. Schröder, *Über die Schauspielkunst (On acting)*’, printed in Hamburg in 1821, but had not been able to obtain a copy.

I have found the volume in question (which also exists in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna) in the Universität-Bibliothek in Gießen, and this is the

⁴⁸ Cf. G. Heeg, *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestalt*, p. 303. Engel’s study, according to Heeg, was ‘the last expression of the aesthetic and psychological attempt, which lasted more than fifty years, to limit the threat posed by emotion to the overall economy of character and to clarify it through precision of expression’ (p. 308). Engel was interested not so much in the action itself as in its interior premises, since the involuntary modifications of the body – as Lessing had already stated in *Der Schauspieler* – presuppose a certain inner quality, which gives rise to them, without our knowing exactly how (cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Der Schauspieler*, p. 267). The task of acting was precisely that of bringing the “chaotic” interior premises of the action into an exterior aesthetic order. In accordance with such a conception, Engel began by observing and identifying all the basic sentiments in the human make-up (hate, love, rage, fear, grief, etc.) and went on to indicate how each could be transposed on stage. Conceiving the actions as imitations of interior ideas, he established this transposition according to the principle of analogy, positing a relationship between physical movement and psychic mutation. However, this relationship is not a strict equivalence because while changes in a state of mind act on physical expressivity, they do not determine it. It is always the author who has to “judge”, autonomously, which gesture is right to express a sentiment or state of mind, taking into account the personality of the character, how the scene is developing or at what point it comes in the play as a whole, besides, of course, the meaning to be communicated. Cf. S. Bellavia, ‘Dalla rappresentazione all’espressione’, pp. 113-114.

⁴⁹ Piens used the 1823 edition, which has no variations with respect to the first. In both, Schröder’s lesson comes in the second section of the second volume (pp. 180-215).

edition I refer to in what follows. The exact title reads *Anton Franz Riccoboni's und Friedrich Ludwig Schröder's Vorschriften über die Schauspielkunst. Eine praktische Anleitung für Schauspieler und Declamatoren* (*Norms on acting. A practical guide for actors and declaimers*) and it was published in 1821 by Hartmann in Leipzig, not in Hamburg, as Piens maintained. A comparison of the three editions shows no variants between the one of 1821 and those of 1810 and 1819, with the exception of the inversion of sections eleven and twelve dealing with *Zusammenspiel* (ensemble) and *Zeitmass* (time). Nonetheless the 1821 edition contains a foreword and an appendix giving the author's comments, additions and notes to the various sections of the *Vorlesung*. Most regrettably it has not been possible to identify this author, since his name does not appear once in the volume. I believe that it must have been the publisher, E. H. F. Hartmann, but to date this hypothesis has eluded all attempts at verification.

I decided to investigate this volume in spite of its "obscure" identity because it is surely interesting that just when the acting tradition inaugurated by Schröder was going into decline, with its conception of drama as *imitatio naturae* (following Riccoboni), somebody wished to promote the actor's last text, realising only belatedly – as he himself admits – that Meyer had already included it in his biography.⁵⁰ In such a perspective, this small volume can be seen as more than just a tribute to Schröder five years on from his death. It stands as not only a celebration and recognition of the substantial part the actor played in the evolution of German theatre (helping to give it a central role in the debate being pursued across Europe on the nature, value and function of the drama) but also a contribution to the cause that animated him in the last phase of his artistic career: reiterating the fundamental principles of the "school" in which he had been raised and which he had helped to mould and perfect, when the approach to acting that was emerging in Weimar was beginning to prevail. This last development seems to have prompted Schröder to look back to Riccoboni and revive, sixty years on, the elements that had drawn Lessing to *L'Art du Théâtre* and convinced the latter to champion its dissemination in Germany without delay.

Those elements, as is now clear, consisted in the premises for the development of so-called "natural" acting style to be found in Riccoboni, starting from the resolute reaction against the declamatory style of the French Académie and in the treatise's systematic form, putting its practical aim before any merely speculative considerations. As Riccoboni himself said, reading treatises on acting 'before learning the art of acting' would be like 'wishing to paint without having studied draughtsmanship. [...] In my little book I mean [...] only [...] to clarify precisely and

⁵⁰ Devrient traced the decline of realism in the Hamburg school to around 1830. The process had begun in the literary milieu, thanks to the followers of Goethe and Schiller (probably the real reason behind Schröder's "inexplicable" attacks), who referred to the concept of *Weimerisches Schönheitsideal* in which beauty prevailed over truth. Convinced that they were applying Goethe's injunctions that art was to imitate not nature but the artistic process that underlies it, acting was deprived of 'flesh and blood', in the words of Devrient, and it began to show its 'technical' nature and draw closer to the model of opera: words tended to singing and the gesture became broad and sweeping while movement was predominantly static. Cf. Eduard Devrient, *Geschichte der deutschen Schauspielkunst*, I, p. 185. In fact the acting tradition inaugurated by Schröder faded out but was not forgotten; it continued to exist on the German stage in the first part of the nineteenth century alongside the idealistic tendency. It came back into favour in the 1870s, which Ladislao Mittner characterised as the years of the triumph of realism in Germany. Cf. L. Mittner, *Storia della letteratura tedesca*, 3 vols., Torino, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 1978.

methodically those little principles which have to be learnt before all else, and which [...] will pave the way to the study of a treatise'.⁵¹

In his determination to produce a clear, concise account of the French treatise, Schröder had no scruples about extracting from it only the parts he was interested in. The *Vorschriften*, as the title of the *Vorlesung* printed in 1810 proclaimed, were based not on Riccoboni's volume in its entirety but on a compendium, to which the author then added his annotations and personal reflections. In fact Schröder had no interest in doing justice to the rhetorical qualities of the French text. It was what it said that counted, not how this was expressed. Also because, as we saw above, Schröder wished to produce a basic language, devoid of any sophistication and readily comprehensible to one and all. This may be why, in defiance of all logic, Schröder, as Meyer lamented, did not use the German version of *L'Art du Théâtre* published in the *Beyträge*, which Ekhof had used in the debates in the Schwerin Academy. 'I much regret that Schröder based his observations not on Lessing's translation but on an incomplete summary which he found in a French pocket edition that was no tribute to its publisher. [...] When he sprang on me the surprise of his Lesson, it was too late to question his decision'. Nonetheless this did not detract from the operation's intrinsic merit: 'The reader will not fail to notice that everything that comes after the 12th section pertains not to Riccoboni but entirely to Schröder'.⁵²

To date no one has been able to find the pocket edition which Meyer refers to and which clearly did not form part of the material he was left by the actor: if it had done, this invariably precise and reliable biographer would certainly have mentioned the name of the publisher who had been responsible for such an indecorous volume.

In reality one cannot understand why Schröder, who had both an excellent knowledge of French and Lessing's translation to hand, should have relied on a "travesty" of Riccoboni's treatise when he could perfectly well have made his own version. In addition it is clear that the sections of *L'Art du Théâtre* which were not included in the *Vorlesung* were precisely the ones dealing with how to render the passions, the main focus of Engel's *Ideen* but which Schröder apparently did not wish to go into in this context. As we have said, his objective was to establish the basic rudiments of the art of acting. It may be that the French travesty contained a résumé of all the sections in Riccoboni and that Schröder used it to speed up the process of producing the *Vorlesung*. I nonetheless believe that the choice of what to add to and leave out of the French text was entirely Schröder's own, since the framework of his Lesson emerges clearly in the light of the motivations that prompted him to produce it.

Like *L'Art du Théâtre*, Schröder's lesson began with an analysis of gesture and the voice, what Riccoboni called the 'mechanical parts' of acting, the instruments which

⁵¹ François Riccoboni, *L'Art du Théâtre*, p. 4.

⁵² Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Meyer, *Friedrich Ludwig Schröder*, II, p. 181. 'The name Riccoboni', Meyer wrote, 'calls up pleasant memories in anyone not totally adverse to fine eloquence. Over practically an entire century men and women from this brilliant family earned outstanding merits, particularly with regard to the stage, its subject matter, representation and history. Lessing, in his first collections of dramas, mentioned him several times and in various connections with grateful fondness' (ibid.). He went on to give some biographical details of François Riccoboni, recalling him as the author of the treatise which Lessing had lost no time in translating for the fourth issue of *Beyträge zur Historie und Aufnahme des Theaters*. He ended by regretting that Schröder had not chosen to use Lessing's version as the basis for his Lesson.

any actor must necessarily possess in order to represent a text. They were the subject of the third section of the French treatise, which described how an actor should begin in a low voice, speaking slowly and faintly drawing out the sounds without actually varying them, then suddenly raise his voice, only to return to the original tone.⁵³ The subsequent denunciation of this mode of recitation as the product of 'false reflections on declamation' (meaning an erroneous interpretation of the ancient art of oratory) was what earned Riccoboni the immediate approbation of Lessing.⁵⁴

In the *Vorlesung* we find no mention of 'declamation', and in fact from the first section of *L'Art du Théâtre* it conserves – as we noted above – only the sections dedicated to *la voix* (*die Stimme*) and *le geste*, translated with the term *Bewegung*, i.e. movement, as in the version that appeared in the *Beyträge*, while a literal transposition would have used the word *Gebärde*. The choice of *Bewegung* naturally implied the wish to emphasise, right from the title, how considerations on the actor's use of gesture could not be limited to the arms and the torso but had to cover his whole attitude and bodily movement. As Riccoboni explained, it was the *harmonie* of all the parts of the body which determined *la grace de l'Acteur*.⁵⁵ Harmony and gracefulness: the former term was translated *Übereinstimmung* (concordance, conformity) by both Lessing and Schröder, while the latter was translated respectively *Anmut* (strictly: grace, comeliness, elegance) and *Anstand*, which is really the equivalent of decorum. *Anstand* conveys not only the idea of proper proportions between substance and form, between the parts and the whole (in short, of harmony, the core of the classical aesthetic and crucial for those who aspire to it), but also that of restraint, the product of self control, which is precisely what Schröder required of his actors.

Turning to the fourth term Riccoboni dealt with (the third in the *Vorlesung*, since declamation had been omitted), Schröder once again departed from Lessing's terminology. The French term in question is *Intelligence*, which as we have seen Riccoboni identified as the ordering principle of all the 'non-mechanical' components of acting.

Piëns commented that the French author started out from the idea that there can be no general or generalised sensations and sentiments because each one is differentiated by character and the dramatic situation. *Intelligence* was the ability of the actor to grasp, at each moment, the relationship between the words he was required to utter and the nature of the role, the situation in which the scene took place and the desired effect in the main action.⁵⁶ It is thus a particular expression of the intellect which called into question the actor's judgement and explains why Lessing chose to use the word *Einsicht*, meaning discernment, cognition, and in the wider sense intelligence and intellect (which in German can be translated *Klugheit* and

⁵³ See François Riccoboni, *L'Art du Théâtre*, p. 22. In his treatise Riccoboni defined acting as vehemence and monotony combined, and deplored the fact that in French academic declamation (the result of a misunderstanding of the ancient art of oratory) the verse was pronounced not according to the sense but to the metre: 'Tragic verse', as the author of *L'Art du Théâtre* argued, 'must be uttered in a tone that naturally evokes the thoughts it contains' (p. 21).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵⁶ Cf. G. Piëns, 'Einleitung', p. 28.

Verständnis).⁵⁷ Schröder went further and used the term *Kunstsinn*, which I believe can be translated as “artistic sensibility”. He clearly meant to extol the ability described by Riccoboni as the chief gift of every creative person, who, as Mylius wrote in 1750 in the *Beyträge*, must needs possess *Beurteilungskraft*: the faculty of judgement.⁵⁸

In his annotations the actor stated that *Kunstsinn* enabled the actor to capture the essence of his role and to make it his, endowing his representation with personal, and hence inimitable, characteristics: ‘by giving to each role what pertained to it, “neither more nor less”, each one [had to] become what no other [could] be’.⁵⁹ Thus the characterisation of a role was a process which involved the individual sensibility of the artist, to which Schröder in 1810 clearly gave much more significance than Riccoboni had sixty years previously.

Intelligence and *expression*, or *Einsicht* and *Ausdruck*, were what for Riccoboni set in motion *le jeu*, “playing” in the true sense of the word. And since *expression* involved the communication of emotions which the actor wished to appear as being in the thrall of, the sixth term in the treatise was *le sentiment*, which Lessing translated as *die Empfindungen* (sensations) and Schröder as *Gefühl* (sentiment, sensibility).⁶⁰ These two words were in practice used as synonyms, although in the second half of the eighteenth century, as we learn from the Grimm brothers’ dictionary, a subtle distinction began to be made between these two nouns, as indeed the corresponding verbs *empfinden* and *fühlen*. *Empfindung* (sensation) came to be seen as more subjective, and thus was strictly connected with the intimate feelings of the actor himself, while *Gefühl* was more objective.⁶¹ In texts of the period one comes across the indications *inneres* and *äusseres Gefühl*, meaning inner sentiment (*Empfindung* as defined above) and exterior sentiment, linked to the activity of the senses, as for example, “feeling” as a tactile experience. We observed above how in the context of the *Vorlesung* Schröder

⁵⁷ In the Grimm brothers’ dictionary, the first meaning of *Einsicht* (which refers to *intelligentia* and *judicium*) is that of *Einblick*: a glanced turned ‘on’ something; while the second is more directly linked to the faculty of judgement: ‘whoever lacks *Einsicht* judges incorrectly’. Cf. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 32 vols., Leipzig, S. Hirzel, 1854-1960, XVI, cols. 294-297.

⁵⁸ Cf. Christlob Mylius, ‘Versuch eines Beweises, daß die Schauspielkunst eine freie Kunst ist’, *Beyträge zur Historie und Aufnahme des Theaters*, no. 1 (1750), 1-13.

⁵⁹ Schröder to Meyer, shortly before the publication of *Theaterreise* in 1780, as reported in Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Meyer, *Friedrich Ludwig Schröder*, I, p. 338.

⁶⁰ ‘Expression’, wrote Riccoboni, ‘is the name given to that art by which the actor conveys to the audience all the emotions he wishes to appear to feel’ (François Riccoboni, *L’Art du Théâtre*, p. 36). Only ‘appear to’, since for Riccoboni – as we have seen – on stage the actor must not actually feel but behave ‘as if’ he was feeling the intended sentiments. It was the spectator, not the actor, who had to feel; Schröder subscribed to this position, even though in 1814 he admitted that at times he had lost patience with Riccoboni’s inadequacy: ‘I could not bear this art of signs and seeming when it sought to fix the character of the purely human, the beautiful, the great and the lofty; at this point my ability to make the spectator feel the emotions I appeared to be feeling failed; [...] a look, a tone of voice, a hand timidly raised, indeed even a dumb show enlivened by an inner impulse, speak more truthfully and more convincingly than all the abstract signs of the art of appearances [...]. Whereupon I abandoned the path traced by Riccoboni, plunged into my inner self, and tried to perceive for myself the beautiful and truly human, and represent the truth of this sentiment’ (cf. E. Buschbeck, *Der Theatervorleser. Kleine Theatergeschichte geschrieben von der Zeitgenossen*, pp. 41-43). This passage shows that Schröder was fully in agreement with Lessing’s thesis concerning the spontaneous production of the intended sentiment in the wake of the perfect reproduction of the exterior signs of passion, a topic we referred to above, pp. 12-13.

⁶¹ Cf. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, III, cols. 432-434.

had no intention of pursuing this subject in fact the only comment he made on Riccoboni's text at this point was to recommend moderation to his actors, recalling the lesson of Hamlet.⁶² For the same reason he omitted the six terms which follow *le sentiment* in the French treatise, and indeed constitute its core: *la tendresse, la force, la fureur, l'enthousiasme, la noblesse, la majesté*.⁶³ Besides, it was impossible to lay down precepts on the rendering of sentiments and passions. This was entirely the responsibility of the individual actor, involving his innate sense of taste, proportion and decorum, which can never be separated from truth and naturalness.

Terms six to nine in the *Vorlesung* cover the considerations on comedy and character, on *le bas-Comique* and burlesque: in the French *le plaisant* (amenity), which Lessing translated as *das Lustige* (gay, entertaining) and Schröder as *das Drollige* (strictly, burlesque). Schröder left out the terms *les amans* (the lovers; *die Liebhaber*, in Lessing) and *les femmes*, meaning the female characters in *le bas-Comique*, particularly the roles of the maid (*die Frauenzimmer*). In fact he only talked about characters in general, avoiding any specific treatment of the protagonists of comedy (lovers) and of *Niedrigkomische*.

From this point onwards in the French treatise he was only to take into consideration the sections on *le jeu mute* (pantomime, *stumme Spiel*), *l'ensemble* (which Lessing translated as *Übereinstimmung* and Schröder as *Zusammenspiel*, meaning playing as a team or ensemble acting: Schröder singled this out as a particularly important concept, to which in practice the actor had to pay the greatest attention) and *le tems*, time, which Lessing translated as *die Zeit* but which in the *Vorlesung* becomes *Zeitmass* (*oder die Vorbereitung*). Taken literally, the title of the twelfth section of the *Vorschriften* reads: 'measurement of time (or preparation)' and was presumably so called to point up the allusion to the theatrical craft and the importance of the rhythm of delivery (in which pauses play a significant part) in preparing the spectator to 'allow himself to be acted on' by what he witnesses on stage.⁶⁴

The last terms to be treated in the *Vorlesung*, as Meyer remarked, are entirely original to Schröder, who got rid of all the sections which Riccoboni had grouped under *le Jeu de Théâtre* (except for time). In these sections the Frenchman analysed the various situations in which people could express themselves in public and differentiated between the tone to be used in a court of law, in the pulpit, in the chambers, in academies and on stage. Schröder preferred to devote the last part of his Lesson to emphasising the importance of *Sittlichkeit*, morality, of decency, also in dress, and of the education of children who will appear on the stage. *Erziehung der zum Theater bestimmten Kinder* (*Education of children destined for the theatre*) is the title of the last section, which ends with Schröder's declaration, in difficult times, of the courage he derived from the devotion of those who had remained at his side, and his

⁶² The Prince of Denmark had this to say to the troupe of actors who were preparing the "mouse trap", the performance which was to reveal his uncle, Claudio, as guilty of fratricide: 'use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say the whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness [...]. Be not too tame, neither; but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance: that you o'ertstep not the modesty of nature'. Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (III, 2).

⁶³ Translated by Lessing as *das Zärtliche, die Stärke, die Wut, die Entzückung, das Edle, das Majestätische*.

⁶⁴ We can recall that the topic 'time' in the *Vorlesung* (and hence in the text given in Meyer's biography) came eleventh in Schröder's text but twelfth in the one concerning *Zusammenspiel*. I believe this inversion was a simple mistake on the part of the publisher who brought out the little volume in 1821.

desire to benefit future generations by bequeathing the principles of his own teaching.

Nonetheless Schröder's "lesson" was destined to fade away with the emergence of Romanticism and its challenging of the conception of drama current in last phase of the Enlightenment.⁶⁵ Improvements in costume, divulgation of a bourgeois morality, the emphasis on empathy and inner feeling and the idea of "pure" entertainment all came to considered obsolete. As Ruppert stated, over the *Jahrhundertwende* (the turn of the nineteenth century) 'theatrical reformers took a stand [...] against the founding principles of the Enlightenment theatre, which had been limited to the practical functions of the art and the representation of the bourgeois world'.⁶⁶

The acting tradition inaugurated by Schröder had run its course, but it did not sink entirely into oblivion. In fact it underwent a revival in the middle of the nineteenth century with the predominant idealistic ethos. It informed the art of the "virtuosi" such as Bogumil Dawison, Eduard Devrient and Ludwig Dessoir, who began to revive the expressive power of gesture instead of the conventional harmony of movements, fostering a style, as Dawison put it, which could match up to the scrutiny of truth and nature.⁶⁷ Once resurrected, Schröder's "lesson" was to go on producing its fruits.

⁶⁵ For a brief overview of the origins and development of the Romantic conception of acting see my 'L'attore e il personaggio nella recitazione tedesca, dal realismo di Schröder all'impressionismo di Kainz', *Il castello di Elsinore*, no. 57 (2008).

⁶⁶ R. Ruppert, *Labor der Seele und der Emotionen*, Berlin, Sigma, 1995, p. 180. See, for example, the case of Ludwig Tieck and his *Denkwürdiger Geschichtschronik der Schildbürger*, which Ruppert interprets as a fullblown satire on society and late Enlightenment thinking. Here the butt of the satire is on one hand the moral elevation of the spectator, and on the other the attempt to create emotions, to internalise and feel compassion (ibid., p. 175). Tieck's work appeared in 1796 in his *Volksmärchen (Folk Tales)*, published by Friedrich Nicolai.

⁶⁷ Cf. Z. Raszewski in *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, Roma, Le Maschere, 1957, IV, p. 252.